

THE RISE AND FALL OF CHRISTIAN ROME

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PROLOGUE

When by Divine decree I was elected to the empire, then amidst the many needs of the State I was occupied by none more than the need for the Orthodox and true faith of the Christians, which is holy and pure, to remain without doubts in the souls of all...

Holy Emperor Marcian, Acts of the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

The common subject-matter of these five essays is the civilization and history of Orthodox Christendom, or Christian Rome, in its Mediterranean homeland. The first essay outlines the development of the key concept of the “symphony” between the political and ecclesiastical powers in Christian Rome from the time of St. Constantine the Great to approximately the year 1000. The second shows how Christian Rome viewed its relationship with the Orthodox nations inside and outside its bounds in this same period, and how this relationship worked out in practice. The third discusses the falling away of the Old Rome in Italy from the New Rome of Constantinople in the context of the examination of a controversial thesis by Fr. John Romanides. The fourth describes the decline and fall of New Rome in the last four centuries of her existence until its conquest by the Turks in 1453. And the fifth describes the attempt by the Greeks to re-establish the empire of New Rome by rebelling against the Turks in 1821. The epilogue very briefly discusses the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922-23.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!

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I. THE BYZANTINE SYMPHONY OF POWERS

“The world,” said Tertullian in the third century, “may need its Caesars. But the Emperor can never be a Christian, nor a Christian ever be an Emperor.”¹ He was wrong. And the fact of his wrongness – the fact, namely, that even the most powerful, secular and pagan element in Old Roman society, the very apex of its antichristian system, could be and was converted from blasphemy to piety by the grace of Christ – changed that society forever, renewing it in the image of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, Whom the emperors now recognized.

St. Constantine the Great

To an astonishing degree, the transformation of the old absolutist system of Roman government into the Christian Autocracy that we know as the New Rome, was the work of just one man – Constantine the Great.

After his victory over the pagans at Rome in 312, Constantine broke with tradition by refusing to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. “And because Constantine made no supplication to evil spirits,” wrote St. Augustine, “but worshipped only the true God, he enjoyed a life more favoured by marks of worldly prosperity than anyone would have dared imagine was possible.”² Contrary to many western historians, who assert that he did not break with paganism for diplomatic reasons, the Emperor was not slow to ascribe his victory to Christ and the Cross: “In the royal city he raised this sacred standard and inscribed definitely and indelibly that this saving sign is the preserver of the Roman Empire and the whole kingdom. But when in the most crowded place of Rome they raised a statue to him, he immediately ordered that a long spear in the shape of a cross be put in the hand of his representation and that the following inscription be written word for word in Latin: ‘By this saving and famous sign, the true witness of courage, I saved and liberated your city from the yoke of tyranny, and on liberating it, returned to the Roman senate and people its freedom, its former glory and its celebrity.’”³

He continued to experience the power of the Cross, “the sceptre of kings”, throughout his reign. Thus “wherever the sign of the cross was shown, enemies were turned to flight, while the victors pursued them. When the Emperor heard about this, he ordered the saving sign, as being the most genuine means of victory, to be transferred to the place where he saw one of his regiments weakening. Immediately victory was restored to it, because the warriors at the sight of it were strengthened by a vigour and a power sent from on high.”⁴

¹ Tertullian, in Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 155.

² St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.25.

³ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 40.

⁴ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, II, 7.

In the West the persecution of the Christians was now over. However, in the East the persecution continued under the Caesar Galerius until his death in 311, and in the territories of the Caesar Maximinus until 313. In that year St. Constantine met the new emperor in the East, Licinius, and with him proclaimed an Edict of religious toleration: "Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired; whereby whatsoever divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority".⁵ Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes: "The Edict of Milan decisively rejected many traditions of antiquity. St. Constantine clearly proclaimed that Christianity is not the property of any particular people, but is a universal religion, the religion of the whole of humanity. If formerly it was thought that a given religion belongs to a given people and for that reason it is sacred and untouchable, now the lawgiver affirmed a new principle: that the sacred and untouchable religion was that religion which belonged to all peoples - Christianity. It was obviously not an attempt to bring Christianity under the usual (pagan) juridical forms, but a principled change in those forms."⁶

It was to be a true Renovatio Imperii, renovation of the Empire. As Fr. George Florovsky writes, "the Age of Constantine is commonly regarded as a turning point of Christian history. After a protracted struggle with the Church, the Roman Empire at last capitulated. The Caesar himself was converted, and humbly applied for admission into the Church. Religious freedom was formally promulgated, and was emphatically extended to Christians. The confiscated property was returned to Christian communities. Those Christians who suffered disability and deportation in the years of persecution were now ordered back, and were received with honors. In fact, Constantine was offering to the Church not only peace and freedom, but also protection and close cooperation. Indeed, he was urging the Church and her leaders to join with him in the 'Renovation' of the Empire... Constantine was firmly convinced that, by Divine Providence, he was entrusted with a high and holy mission, that he was chosen to re-establish the Empire, and to re-establish it on a Christian foundation. This conviction, more than any particular theory, was the decisive factor in his policy, and in his actual mode of ruling."⁷

And yet the Triumph of the Cross proved, paradoxically, that God does not need Christian kings in order to save the world. They help - they help greatly. But for almost three centuries from the Resurrection of Christ the Church had survived and grown in the teeth of everything that Jewish and pagan fury could hurl against her, and without the help of any earthly forces.

⁵ Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, 48. 2-12.

⁶ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 27

⁷ Florovsky, "Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert", *Christianity and Culture*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974, pp. 72, 74.

For, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: "there is benefit in the union of the altar and the throne, but it is not mutual benefit that is the first foundation of their union, but the independent truth, which supports both the one and the other. May the king, the protector of the altar, be blessed; but the altar does not fear the fall of this protection. The priest is right who preaches that the king should be honoured, but not by right of mutuality, but by pure obligation, even if this took place without the hope of mutuality... Constantine the Great came to the altar of Christ when it already stood on the expanses of Asia, Europe and Africa: he came, not in order to support it with his strength, but in order to submit himself with his majesty before its Holiness. He Who dwells in the heavens laughed at those who later thought of lowering His Divine religion to dependence on human assistance. In order to make their sophistry laughable, He waited for three centuries before calling the wise king to the altar of Christ, and meanwhile from day to day kings, peoples, wise men, power, art, cupidity, cunning and rage rose up to destroy this altar. And what happened in the end? All this has disappeared, while the Church of Christ stands - but not because it is supported by human power..."⁸

Having said that, the conversion of the Emperor to the Church was an event of the greatest historical significance that brought immeasurable benefits. As Eusebius of Caesarea wrote: "Divine joy blossomed in all hearts as we saw that every place which a little while before had been reduced to dust by the tyrants' wickedness was now, as if from a prolonged and deadly stranglehold, coming back to life; and that cathedrals were again rising from their foundations high into the air, and far surpassing in magnitude those previously destroyed by the enemy. Emperors, too, the most exalted (Constantine and Licinius) by a succession of ordinances in favour of the Christians, confirmed still further and more surely the blessings God showered upon us; and a stream of personal letters from the emperor reached the bishops, accompanied by honours and gifts of money. Old troubles were forgotten, and all irreligion passed into oblivion; good things present were enjoyed, those yet to come eagerly awaited. In every city the victorious emperor published decrees full of humanity and laws that gave proof of munificence and true piety. Thus all tyranny had been purged away, and the kingdom that was theirs was preserved securely and without question for Constantine and his sons alone."⁹

In 324, Constantine defeated Licinius and imposed his rule on the East, thereby delivering Christians throughout the Empire from persecution. Rome was now, not the persecutor, but the protector, of the Christian people. Nearly three hundred years after Christ told the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, that His power came from God, the reason why God thus favoured Rome became evident...

⁸ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945* (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, p. 23.

⁹ Eusebius, *Church History*, X, 2, 10.

Indeed, long before his defeat of the last tyrant, Constantine had started to legislate in favour of Christianity with the following decrees: “on the abolition of pagan games (314), on the liberation of the Christian clergy from civil obligations and church lands from additional taxes (313-315), on the abolition of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment (315), on the abolition of the branding of criminals (315), against the Jews who rose up against the Church (315), on the liberation of slaves at church gatherings without special formalities (316), on forbidding private persons from offering sacrifices to idols and divining at home (319), on the annulment of laws against celibacy (320), on the celebration of Sunday throughout the Empire (321), on the right of bishops to be appeal judges (321), on banning the forcible compulsion of Christians to take part in pagan festivals (322), on the banning of gladiatorial games (325), on allowing Christians to take up senior government posts (325), on the building of Christian churches and the banning in them of statues and images of the emperor (325).”¹⁰ Constantine also defended the Christians against the Jews. He ordered the release of all slaves whom the Jews had dared to circumcise, and those Jews who killed their co-religionists for converting to Christianity were executed.¹¹

Among these decrees the one on absolving the clergy from holding civic office is particularly interesting because it shows the underlying motivation of Constantine’s legislation: “[The clergy] shall not be drawn away by any deviation and sacrifice from the worship that is due to the Divinity, but shall devote themselves without interference to their own law... for it seems that rendering the greatest possible service to the Deity, they most benefit the state.”¹² Some see in this a cynical attempt to exploit the Deity in the interests of the emperor. But a more reasonable interpretation is that Constantine was already feeling his way to a doctrine of the symphony of powers, in which the emperor helps the Church as the defender of the faith and “the bishop of those outside the Church”, while the Church helps the emperor through her prayers – all to the ultimate glory of God and the salvation of men.

Barnes writes: “Constantine allowed pagans to retain their beliefs, even to build new sacred edifices. But he allowed them to worship their traditional gods only in the Christian sense of that word, not according to the traditional forms hallowed by antiquity. The emperor made the distinction underlying his policy explicit when he answered a petition from the Umbrian town of Hispellum requesting permission to build a temple of the Gens Flavia. Constantine granted the request but specified that the shrine dedicated to the imperial family must never be ‘polluted by the deceits of

¹⁰ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

¹¹ L.A. Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 340

¹² Quoted in Charles Freeman, “The Emperor’s State of Grace”, *History Today*, vol. 51 (1), January, 2001, p. 11.

any contagious superstition'. From 324 onwards Constantine constantly evinced official disapproval of the sacrifices and other cultic acts which constituted the essence of Greco-Roman paganism: Christianity was now the established religion of the Roman Empire and its ruler, and paganism should now conform to Christian patterns of religious observance."¹³

"What must have really shocked traditional Romans," writes Peter Salway, "was Constantine's transfer to the Church of certain powers that had always been the prerogative of Roman magistrates. Even Constantine's own praetorian prefect, himself a Christian, was not sure that he had understood the emperor correctly when Constantine decided that either party in a legal action could have the case transferred out of the ordinary courts to the local bishop – and that, if necessary, the secular authorities were required to enforce the judgement. This extraordinary ecclesiastical privilege did not, admittedly, last, but it sheds an interesting light on how revolutionary Constantine was prepared to be."¹⁴

How central Christianity was to Constantine's conception of empire is illustrated by his words on hearing of the Donatist heresy: "Until now I cannot be completely calm until all my subjects are united in brotherly unity and offer to the All-holy God the true worship that is prescribed by the Catholic Church". Again, when the Donatists appealed to him against the judgement of the bishops, he said: "What mad presumption! They turn heavenly things into earthly, appealing to me as if the matter was of a civic nature."¹⁵ And on the decision of the Council of Arles he said: "The bishops' decision should be looked upon as though the Lord Himself had been sitting in judgement." Thus Constantine separated Church matters from civic matters and did not subject the former to State law, but on the contrary tried to conform his legislation to Christian principles. He gave to the Church the full honour due to her as an institution founded by the One True God, no less than the Body of the God-Man Himself, and therefore higher by nature than any human institution, not excluding the Roman Empire itself. Christianity did not simply take the place of the old Roman religion in the State apparatus; for Constantine understood that the Christian faith was not to be honoured for the sake of the empire, or in submission to the empire, but that the empire existed for the sake of the faith and was to be submitted to it. This was most clearly illustrated at the First Ecumenical Council in 325, when the emperor took part in the proceedings only at the request of the bishops, and did not sit on a royal throne, but on a little stool.¹⁶

¹³ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, London & Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 212-213.

¹⁴ Salway, *A History of Roman Britain*, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 249-250.

¹⁵ Actually, the Donatists, having failed in their petition, began to express a similar sentiment: "What have Christians to do with kings? Or what have bishops to do with the palace?" (Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, I, 22).

¹⁶ Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, "The First Ecumenical Council", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 34, № 6, November-December, 1984, p. 9.

Later, when he addressed the Council Fathers he demonstrated that for him the internal peace and prosperity of the Church was even more important than the external peace and prosperity of the Empire: "Now that we, with the help of God the Saviour, have destroyed the tyranny of the atheists who entered into open war with us, may the evil spirit not dare to attack our holy Faith with his cunning devices. I say to you from the depths of my heart: the internal differences in the Church of God that I see before my eyes have plunged me into profound sorrow... Servants of the God of peace, regenerate amidst us that spirit of love which it is your duty to instill in others, destroy the seeds of all quarrels."¹⁷ Again, to the Fathers who were not present at the Council of Nicaea he wrote concerning its decrees: "That which has been established in accordance with the God-inspired decision of so many and such holy Bishops we shall accept with joy as the command of God; for everything that is established at the Holy Councils of Bishops must be ascribed to the Divine will." Indeed, so obedient was he to the Church that, as I.I. Sokolov writes, "at the First Ecumenical Council, according to the witness of the historian Rufinus, the Emperor Constantine said: 'God has made you priests and given you the power to judge my peoples and me myself. Therefore it is just that I should submit to your verdict. The thought has never entered my mind to be judge over you.'"¹⁸

Constantine saw himself as the instrument of God's will for the replacement of false religion with the true: "With such impiety pervading the human race, and the State threatened with destruction, what relief did God devise?... I myself was the instrument He chose... Thus, beginning at the remote Ocean of Britain, where the sun sinks beneath the horizon in obedience to the law of nature, with God's help I banished and eliminated every form of evil then prevailing, in the hope that the human race, enlightened through me, might be recalled to a proper observance of God's holy laws."¹⁹ Whatever Constantine did for the Church he did, not as arbitrary expressions of his imperial will, but *in obedience to the commission of the Church*. Thus the Fathers of the First Council welcomed the Emperor as follows: "Blessed is God, Who has chosen you as king of the earth, having by your hand destroyed the worship of idols and through you bestowed peace upon the hearts of the faithful... On this teaching of the Trinity, your Majesty, is established the greatness of your piety. Preserve it for us whole and unshaken, so that none of the heretics, having penetrated into the Church, might subject our faith to mockery... Your Majesty, command that Arius should depart from his error and rise no longer against the apostolic teaching. Or if he remains obstinate in his impiety, drive him out of the Orthodox Church." As Bishop Dionysius writes, "this is a clear recognition of the divine election of Constantine as the external defender of the Church, who is obliged to work with her in preserving the right faith, and in correspondence with the

¹⁷ St. Constantine, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 71.

¹⁸ Sokolov, *Lektsii po Istorii Greko-Vostochnoj tserkvi* (Lectures on the History of the Greek-Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 15.

¹⁹ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, II, 28.

conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church."²⁰

The most famous definition of the relationship between Constantine and the Church is to be found in two passages from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, which speak of him as "like a common bishop" and "like a bishop of those outside". The first passage is as follows: "[Constantine] was common for all, but he paid a completely special attention to the Church of God. While certain divergences manifested themselves in different regions, he, like a common bishop established by God, reunited the ministers of God in synods. He did not disdain to be present at their activities and to sit with them, participating in their episcopal deliberations, and arbitrating for everyone the peace of God... Then, he did not fail to give his support to those whom he saw were bending to the better opinion and leaning towards equilibrium and consensus, showing how much joy the common accord of all gave him, while he turned away from the indocile..."

In the second passage the emperor receives the bishops and says that he, too, is a bishop: "But you, you are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I also am a bishop, ordained by God to oversee those outside the Church." Eusebius immediately explains that Constantine's "bishopric" here consisted, not in liturgical priestly acts, but in "overseeing [ΕΠΕΣΚΟΠΕΙ] all the subjects of the empire" and leading them towards piety.²¹

So the emperor was not *really* a bishop, but only *like* a bishop, being like the pastors in both his missionary and supervisory roles. And he excelled in both. Thus, on the one hand, he responded vigorously to St. Nina's request that he send bishops and priest to help her missionary work in Georgia, and on hearing that the Christians were being persecuted in Persia he threatened to go to war with that state. And on the other hand, he convened numerous councils of bishops to settle doctrinal disputes throughout the empire, acting as *the focus of unity* for the Church on earth.

The emperor's role as a focus of unity *within* the Church did not mean that he was thought to have power *over* the Church. Thus when St. Athanasius the Great was condemned by a council at Tyre that considered itself "ecumenical", and appealed to the Emperor Constantine against the decision, he was not asking the secular power to overthrow the decision of the ecclesiastical power, as had been the thought of the Donatists earlier in the reign, but was rather calling on a son of the Church to defend the decision of the Holy Fathers of Nicaea against heretics. Of course, being mortal, Constantine was not always consistent in the execution of his principles (as when he refused Athanasius' appeal). But the principles themselves were sound, and he was always sincere in trying to uphold them.

The emperor as focus of unity was especially needed when the Church was

²⁰ A. Tuskarev, *Tserkov' o Gosudarstve* (The Church on the State), Staritsa, 1992, p. 75.

²¹ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 44; IV, 24.

afflicted by problems that affected the whole Church, and needed a Council representing the whole Church to solve them. Such, for example, were the problems of Arianism and the Church calendar, both of which were resolved at the First Ecumenical Council. Since the Church herself, contrary to the assertions of later papist propagandists, lacked a “bishop of bishops” having ecumenical jurisdiction, only the emperor could carry out this co-ordinating function. He alone had the ecumenical authority necessary to compel the bishops from all parts of the empire to meet together in Synods, and remain there until decisions were agreed upon. And he alone could then see that these decisions were put into practice.

There has been much controversy, especially in the Protestant West, over the sincerity of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, on the one hand, and the value of his revolution in Church-State relations, on the other. On both scores the Orthodox Church has had no doubts. Whatever sins or inconsistencies, in faith or works, that Constantine committed during his life, these were washed away in his baptism, which he received on his deathbed. And since then there have been many witnesses to his glory in the heavens. As for the revolution in Church-State relations which he, and he alone, effected in the face of enormous difficulties, it is almost impossible to overestimate its beneficial impact, both in his lifetime and for centuries afterwards. Even if the new “symphony” in Church-State relations brought with it certain new temptations and dangers, this was in the nature of the fundamentally unstable relationship between the Church and the world that “lies in evil”.

Although Constantine was not baptized until he was on his deathbed²², and never received a visible Christian anointing, the Church has always believed that he received the invisible anointing of the Holy Spirit: “Thou wast the image of a new David, receiving the horn of royal anointing over thy head; for with the oil of the Spirit hath the transcendent Word and Lord anointed thee, O glorious one. Wherefore, thou hast also received a royal sceptre, O all-wise one, asking great mercy for us.”²³

St. Constantine died at midday on Pentecost, 337, and was buried in the church of the Holy Apostles amidst the sepulchres of the twelve apostles. For in his person the Church had indeed found an “equal to the apostles”. In his reign the process of converting the world that began at Pentecost reached its first climax...

²² Florovsky writes that one of the reasons why he delayed his baptism “was precisely his dim feeling that it was inconvenient to be ‘Christian’ and ‘Caesar’ at the same time. Constantine’s personal conversion constituted no problem. But as Emperor he was committed. He had to carry the burden of his exalted position in the Empire. He was still a ‘Divine Caesar’. As Emperor, he was heavily involved in the traditions of the Empire, as much as he actually endeavoured to disentangle himself. The transfer of the Imperial residence to a new City, away from the memories of the old pagan Rome, was a spectacular symbol of this noble effort” (*op. cit.*, p. 73).

²³ *Menaion*, May 21, Mattins for the feast of St. Constantine, sedalen.

The Pagan and Heretical Reaction

The transformation of the pagan despotism of Old Rome into the Christian Autocracy of New Rome on the model of the Israelite Autocracy was a gradual, piecemeal process, with many reverses along the way. Just as Constantine himself did not immediately become a baptized Christian after his vision of the Cross at the Milvian Bridge, but was baptized only on his deathbed, so the pagan governmental structure did not become Christian overnight. It was not until the reign of Gratian that the Emperors abandoned the pagan religious title of pontifex maximus, and the Senate was forbidden to offer incense on the altar of the goddess Victor. And official paganism still retained some of its rights until Theodosius' decrees late in the fourth century.

Some of the successors of Constantine, especially in the East, tried to revive the pagan Roman idea of the Emperor as supreme ruler in both religious and secular affairs, and to treat the Church as no more than a department of State. This pagan reaction began already in the reign of Constantine's son Constantius. He had been Orthodox, but converted to the Arian heresy, believing that Christ was not the pre-eternal God but a created being. Consequently, St. Athanasius, who had previously addressed him as "very pious", a "worshipper of God", "beloved of God" and a successor of David and Solomon, now denounced him as "patron of impiety and Emperor of heresy,... godless, unholy... this modern Ahab, this second Belshazzar", like Pharaoh, worse than Pilate and a forerunner of the Antichrist.²⁴ For, as he wrote to Constantius: "Judgement is made by bishops. What business is it of the Emperor's?"²⁵

Another bishop who spoke out against Constantius was St. Hilary of Poitiers. "It is time to speak," he begins; "the time for holding my peace has passed. Let Christ be expected, for Antichrist has prevailed. Let the shepherds cry, for the hirelings have fled... You are fighting against God, you are raging against the Church, you are persecuting the saints, you hate the preachers of Christ, you are annulling religion; you are a tyrant no longer only in the human, but in the divine sphere... You mendaciously declare yourself a Christian, but are a new enemy of Christ. You art a precursor of Antichrist, and you work the mysteries of his secrets."²⁶

Constantius' heretical cast of mind made it easier for him to assume the place of Christ as head of the Church. Thus at the Council of Milan in 355, he said: "My will is law". To which St. Osius of Cordoba, replied: "Stop, I beseech you. Remember that

²⁴ St. Athanasius, in J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, p. 36. In his *History of the Arians* (77) Athanasius also calls him "the abomination of desolation" spoken by Daniel".

²⁵ St. Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 52; P.G. 25, 756C.

²⁶ St. Hilary, in F.W. Farrar, *The Lives of the Fathers*, Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889, vol. I, p. 617.

you are a mortal man, fear the Day of Judgement, preserve yourself pure for that. Do not interfere in matters that are essentially ecclesiastical and do not give us orders about them, but rather accept teaching from us. God has entrusted you with the Empire, and to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church. And just as one who seizes for himself your power contradicts the institution of God, so fear lest you, in taking into your own hands the affairs of the Church, do not become guilty of a serious offence. As it is written, give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We are not permitted to exercise an earthly role; and you, Sire, are not authorised to burn incense."

At about this time, the Persian King Sapor started to kill the clergy, confiscate church property and raze the churches to the ground. He told St. Simeon, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, that if he worshipped the sun, he would receive every possible honour and gift. But if he refused, Christianity in Persia would be utterly destroyed. In reply, St. Simeon not only refused to worship the sun but also refused to recognize the king by bowing to him. This omission of his previous respect for the king's authority was noticed and questioned by the King. St. Simeon replied: "Before I bowed down to you, giving you honour as a king, but now I come being brought to deny my God and Faith. It is not good for me to bow before an enemy of my God!" The King then threatened to destroy the Church in his kingdom... He brought in about one hundred priests and about one thousand other Christians and killed them before the saint's eyes. The saint encouraged them not to be frightened and to be in hope of eternal life. After everyone had been killed, St. Simeon himself was martyred.²⁷

This shows that the Fathers and Martyrs of the Church recognized the authority of kings and emperors only so long as they did not persecute the Church of God. At the same time, non-recognition did not necessarily mean rebellion. Thus although the Fathers could not look upon a heretical emperor such as Constantius as an image of the Heavenly King, they did not counsel rebellion against him, but only resistance against those of his laws that encroached on Christian piety. However, when Julian the Apostate (361-363) came to the throne, passive resistance turned into active, if not actually physical, attempts to have him removed. Thus St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian in his wars against the Persians; and it was through his prayers that the apostate was in fact killed, as was revealed by God to the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia.²⁸ Again, St. Basil's friend, St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: "I call to spiritual rejoicing all those who constantly remained in fasting, in mourning and prayer, and by day and by night besought deliverance from the sorrows that surrounded us and found a reliable healing from the evils in unshakeable hope... What hoards of weapons, what myriads of men could have

²⁷ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, April 17.

²⁸ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 19; V.A Konovalov, *Otnoshenie Khristianstva k Sovetskoj Vlasti* (The Relationship of Christianity to Soviet Power), Montreal, 1936, p. 35.

produced what our prayers and the will of God produced?"²⁹ Gregory called Julian not only an "apostate", but also "universal enemy" and "general murderer", a traitor to Romanity as well as to Christianity³⁰, explicitly denying that his was a power from God and therefore requiring obedience: "What demon instilled this thought in you? If every authority were acknowledged as sacred by the very fact of its existence, Christ the Savior would not have called Herod 'that fox'. The Church would not hitherto have denounced ungodly rulers who defended heresies and persecuted Orthodoxy. Of course, if one judges an authority on the basis of its outward power, and not on its inner, moral worthiness, one may easily bow down to the beast, i.e. the Antichrist, 'whose coming will be with all power and lying wonders' (II Thessalonians 2.9), to whom 'power was given... over all kindred, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwelt upon the earth shall worship him, whose names were not written in the book of life of the Lamb' (Revelation 13.7-8)."³¹

This raises the question: what made Julian the Apostate so much worse than previous persecutors and unworthy even of that honour and obedience that had been given to them? Two possible answers suggest themselves. The first is that Julian was the first – and last – of the Byzantine emperors who openly trampled on the memory and legitimacy of St. Constantine, declaring that he "insolently usurped the throne".³² In this way he questioned the legitimacy of the Christian Empire as such – a revolutionary position very rare in Byzantine history. If, as Paul Magdalino suggests, "each emperor's accession was a conscious act of renewal of the imperial order instituted by Constantine the Great," and "the idea of each new ruler as a new Constantine was implicit in the dynastic succession established by the founder of Constantinople"³³, then Julian's rejection of Constantine was clearly a rejection of the imperial order as such. In this sense he was an anti-emperor as well as an anti-christ.

That this is how the Byzantines looked at it is suggested by what happened at the death of Julian and the accession of the Christian Emperor Jovian in 363: "Themistus assured the people of the city that what they were getting, after Constantine's son Constantius and Constantine's nephew Julian, was nothing less than a reincarnation of Constantine himself."³⁴ Jovian's being a "new Constantine" was a guarantee that he represented a return to the old order and true, Christian Romanity. From this

²⁹ St. Gregory, *First and Second Words against Julian*.

³⁰ St. Gregory, *First Word against Julian*, 35; *Second Word against Julian*, 26.

³¹ St. Gregory, quoted in the Encyclical Letter of the Council of Russian Bishops Abroad to the Russian Orthodox Flock, 23 March, 1933; translated in *Living Orthodoxy*, #131, vol. XXII, № 5, September-October, 2001, p. 13.

³² Cf. St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, October 20, the life of the Great Martyr Artemius who, significantly, had been a witness of the appearance of the Cross to St. Constantine at the Milvian bridge. Another soldier martyred by Julian, St. Eusignius of Antioch, rebuked him citing the shining example of St. Constantine (*Lives of the Saints*, August 5).

³³ Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 2, 3.

³⁴ Magdalino, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

time new Byzantine emperors were often hailed as new Constantines, as were the Christian kings of the junior members of the Christian commonwealth of nations.

A second reason for ascribing to Julian an exceptional place amongst the forerunners of the Antichrist was his reversal of Emperor Hadrian's decree in 135 forbidding the Jews from returning to Jerusalem and, still worse, his helping the Jews to rebuild the Temple, in defiance of the Lord's prophecy that "there shall be left not one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13.2).

By a miracle of God the rebuilding of the Temple was forcibly stopped. St. Gregory the Theologian tells how the Jews enthusiastically set about the rebuilding. But "suddenly they were driven from their work by a violent earthquake and whirlwind, and they rushed together for refuge to a neighbouring church... There are some who say that the church doors were closed against them by an invisible hand although these doors had been wide open a moment before... It is, moreover, affirmed and believed by all that as they strove to force their way in by violence, the fire, which burst from the foundation of the Temple, met and stopped them; some it burnt and destroyed, others it injured seriously... But the most wonderful thing was that a light, as of a cross within a circle, appeared in the heavens... and the mark of the cross was impressed on their garments... a mark which in art and elegance surpassed all painting and embroidery."³⁵

But if Julian had succeeded, then, wondered the Christians, what would have prevented him from sitting in the Temple as God - that is, from becoming the Antichrist himself? And so it is from this time, as Dagron points out, "that the face of each emperor or empress is scrutinized to try and recognize in it the characteristic traits of the Antichrist or of the sovereigns, good or bad, who precede his coming..."³⁶

The Fathers were no less bold in their claims on Orthodox emperors. Thus St. Basil the Great wrote: "The Emperors must defend the decrees of God".³⁷ And according to St. Gregory the Theologian: "The law of Christ submits you [emperors] to our power and our judgement. For we also rule, and our power is higher than yours. In fact, must the spirit bow before matter, the heavenly before the earthly?"³⁸ Again, St. John Chrysostom wrote: "The priesthood is as far above the kingdom as the spirit is above the body. The king rules the body, but the priest - the king, which is why the king bows his head before the finger of the priest."³⁹ And again: "The

³⁵ St. Gregory, in Marjorie Strachey, *Saints and Sinners of the Fourth Century*, London: William Kimber, 1958, p. 78. St. Ambrose of Milan and the fifth-century Church historians Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Rufinus all confirm St. Gregory's story.

³⁶ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 167.

³⁷ St. Basil, *Rule* 79.

³⁸ St. Gregory, *Sermon* 17.

³⁹ St. Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*.

Church is not the sphere of Caesar, but of God. The decrees of the State authorities in matters of religion cannot have ecclesiastical significance. Only the will of God can be the source of Church law. He who bears the diadem is no better than the last citizen when he must be reproached and punished. Ecclesiastical authority must stand firmly for its rights if the State authorities interfere in its sphere. It must know that the boundaries of royal power do not coincide with those of the priesthood, and the latter is greater than the former.”⁴⁰ Finally, we read in a fourth-century document: “The king occupies himself only with military matters, worrying about war and peace, so as to preserve the body, while the bishop covers the priesthood of God, protecting both body and soul from danger. Thus the priesthood surpasses the kingdom as much as the soul surpasses the body, for it binds and looses those worthy of punishment and forgiveness.”⁴¹

Kingship and Tyranny

A clear example of the heavenly refusing to bow down before the earthly was provided by St. John Chrysostom in his relations with the Empress Eudoxia. In 403 a silver statue of the empress was erected in Constantinople, before which the public games were performed. “These,” writes Socrates Scholasticus, “John regarded as an insult offered to the Church, and having regained his ordinary freedom and keenness of tongue [after his first exile], he employed his tongue against those who did these things... The empress once more applied his expression to herself as indicating marked contempt towards her own person: she therefore endeavoured to procure the convocation of another council of bishops against him. When John became aware of this, he delivered in the church that celebrated oration beginning with: ‘Again Herodias raves, again she is troubled, again she dances, and again she desires to receive John’s head on a platter’.”⁴²

A still clearer example of this new assertiveness of the Church towards the Empire is provided by the relationship between the Emperor Theodosius the Great and St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Theodosius was probably more disposed to accede to the desires of the Church than any Emperor since Constantine. Thus in 380 he decreed that everyone should become a Christian: “It is Our Will that all the peoples We rule shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans. We shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity. We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom We adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and

⁴⁰ St. Chrysostom, quoted in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon* (Patriarch Nikon), Warsaw, 1931, part I, p. 68.

⁴¹ *Apostolic Constitutions*, XI, 34.

⁴² Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 18.

secondly by the retribution of Our own initiative, which We shall assume in accordance with divine judgement.”⁴³

While only a general, Theodosius had had a vision of St. Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, investing him with the imperial robe and crown. So, on seeing him at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, the emperor ran up to him, “and, like a boy who loves his father, stood for a long time gazing on him with filial joy, then flung his arms around him, and covered eyes and lips and breast and head and the hand that had given him the crown, with kisses”⁴⁴ – a striking image of the new, filial relationship between Church and Empire. Never before, and not again until the Muscovite tsars of the seventeenth century, was this relationship to be so clearly promulgated.

But if Theodosius thought that the Church would now always support him, as he supported the Church, he was to receive a salutary shock at the hands of the great St. Ambrose of Milan, “the most influential churchman in Christendom” according to John Julius Norwich, “– more so by far than the Pope in Rome, by reason not only of the greater importance of Milan as a political capital but also of his own background. Member of one of the most ancient Christian families of the Roman aristocracy, son of a Praetorian Prefect of Gaul and himself formerly a consularis, or governor, of Liguria and Aemilia, he had never intended to enter the priesthood; but on the death in 374 of the previous bishop, the Arian Auxentius, an acrimonious dispute had arisen between the Orthodox and Arian factions in the city over which he, as governor, was obliged to arbitrate. Only when it finally emerged that he alone possessed sufficient prestige to make him equally acceptable to both parties did he reluctantly allow his name to go forward. In a single week he was successively a layman, catechumen, priest and bishop.”⁴⁵

Now in 388 some Christians burned down the local synagogue in Callinicum (Raqqa), on the Euphrates. Theodosius ordered it to be rebuilt at the Christians’ expense. However, St. Ambrose wrote to him: “When a report was made by the military Count of the East that a synagogue had been burnt down, and that this was done at the instigation of the bishop, You gave command that the others should be punished, and the synagogue be rebuilt by the bishop himself... The bishop’s account ought to have been waited for, for priests are the calmers of disturbances, and anxious for peace, except when even they are moved by some offence against God, or insult to the Church. Let us suppose that the bishop burned down the

⁴³ *The Theodosian Code* XVI, 1, 2; in Stevenson, J. (ed.), *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies*, 1966, p. 160. In 392 the Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius decreed that pagans should “forfeit that house or landholding in which it is proved that [they] served a pagan superstition” (*The Theodosian Code* XVI, 10, 2).

⁴⁴ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 7, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, volume III, Oxford and New York, 1892, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, London: Penguin, 1990, pp. 112-113.

synagogue... It will evidently be necessary for him to take back his act or become a martyr. Both the one and the other are foreign to Your rule: if he turns out to be a hero, then fear lest he end his life in martyrdom; but if he turns out to be unworthy, then fear lest you become the cause of his fall, for the seducer bears the greater responsibility. And what if others are cowardly and agree to construct the synagogue? Then... you can write on the front of the building: 'This temple of impiety was built on contributions taken from Christians'. You are motivated by considerations of public order. But what is the order from on high? Religion was always bound to have the main significance in the State, which is why the severity of the laws must be modified here. Remember Julian, who wanted to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem: the builders were then burned by the fire of God. Do you not take fright at what happened then?... And how many temples did the Jews not burn down under Julian at Gaza, Askalon, Beirut and other places? You did not take revenge for the churches, but now You take revenge for the synagogue!"⁴⁶

"What is more important," he asked, "the parade of discipline or the cause of religion? The maintenance of civil law is secondary to religious interest."⁴⁷ And he refused to celebrate the Divine Liturgy until the imperial decree had been revoked. Theodosius backed down...

St. Ambrose's views on Church-State relations were squarely in the tradition of the Eastern Fathers quoted above: "The Emperor is not above the Church, but *in* the Church," he wrote. "If one reads the Scriptures, one sees that it is bishops who judge Emperors."⁴⁸ He showed an awesome courage in the face of State authority. He knew from his experience as a governor, as well as from his Christian faith, how weak emperors really are. As he wrote: "How miserable even in this world is the condition of kings, how mutable the imperial state, how short the span of this life, what slavery sovereigns themselves endure, seeing that they live not according to their own will but by the will of others".⁴⁹

St. Ambrose strikingly combined the ideals of the political and ecclesiastical rulers as described by St. John Chrysostom: "Fear induced by the leaders does not allow us to relax from lack of care, while the consolations of the Church do not allow us to fall into despondency: through both the one and the other God constructs our salvation. He both established the leaders (Romans 13.4) so as to frighten the bold, and has ordained the priests so as to comfort the sorrowing."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ St. Ambrose, *Letter 40*, quoted in Sergius Fomin and Tamara Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 69.

⁴⁷ Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 164.

⁴⁸ St. Ambrose, in Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: Phoenix, 1997, p. 156.

⁴⁹ St. Ambrose, *Epistle 29*, 18; quoted in Norwich, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁵⁰ St. Chrysostom, *Sixth Sermon on the Statues*. Cf. St. Ephraim the Syrian: "From the Empire - laws, from the priesthood - absolution. When both are soft, it is not good, and when both are cruel it is hard. Let the first be strict while the second is merciful, in the mutual understanding of each other's task. Let threats and love be mixed! Let our priests be merciful, and our emperors

Ambrose displayed these qualities again in 390, when a riot took place in Thessalonica that led to the murder of several magistrates. The Emperor Theodosius ordered the execution of the perpetrators. But there was no trial, and many innocent as well as guilty were killed, perhaps as many as seven thousand.

“News of this lamentable calamity,” writes Theodoret, “reached Ambrose. The emperor on his arrival at Milan wished according to custom to enter the church. Ambrose met him outside the outer porch and forbade him to step over the sacred threshold. ‘You seem, sir, not to know,’ said he, ‘the magnitude of the bloody deed that has been done. Your rage has subsided, but your reason has not yet recognised the character of the deed. Peradventure your Imperial power prevents your recognising the sin, and power stands in the light of reason. We must however know how our nature passes away and is subject to death; we must know the ancestral dust from which we sprang, and to which we are swiftly returning. We must not because we are dazzled by the sheen of the purple fail to see the weakness of the body that it robes. You are a sovereign, sir; of men of like nature with your own, and who are in truth your fellow slaves; for there is one Lord and Sovereign of mankind, Creator of the universe. With what eyes then will you look on the temple of our common Lord – with what feet will you tread that holy threshold, how will you stretch forth your hands still dripping with the blood of unjust slaughter? How in such hands will you receive the all-holy Body of the Lord? How will you who in rage unrighteously poured forth so much blood lift to your lips the precious Blood? Begone. Attempt not to add another crime to that which you have committed. Submit to the restriction to which God the Lord of all agrees that you be sentenced. He will be your physician, He will give you health.’

“Educated as he had been in the sacred oracles, Theodosius knew clearly what belonged to priests and what to emperors. He therefore bowed to the rebuke of Ambrose, and retired sighing and weeping to the palace. After a considerable time, when eight months had passed away, the festival of our Saviour’s birth came round and the emperor sat in his palace shedding a storm of tears.”⁵¹

At this point Rufinus, controller of the household, proposed that he ask Ambrose to revoke his decision. The emperor did not think Rufinus would succeed; “for I know the justice of the sentence passed by Ambrose, nor will he ever be moved by respect for my imperial power to transgress the law of God.” Nevertheless, he eventually agreed that Rufinus should make the attempt.

severe! Let us praise Him Who gave us this double hope!” (A. Muraviev, “Uchenie o Khristianskom Tsarstve u prep. Efrema Sirina” (“The Doctrine of the Christian Kingdom in St. Ephraim the Syrian”), *Regnum Aeternum*, Moscow, 1996, p. 74) St. Ephraim also wrote about rulers: “For he (the leader) is the servant of God, since through him is accomplished the will of God on the righteous and the lawless” (*Interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans*).

⁵¹ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 17.

Ambrose was scathing to Rufinus: “Your impudence matches a dog’s,” he said, “for you were the adviser of this terrible slaughter.” And he said he would rather die than allow the emperor to enter the church: “If he is for changing his sovereign power into that of a tyrant, I too will gladly submit to a violent death.”

Here we find a very important difference between the concepts of true sovereignty, *basileia*, and the unlawful power of the usurper, *tyrannis*. Such a distinction was not new. Aristotle had written: “There is a third kind of tyranny; which is the most typical form and is the counterpart to the perfect monarchy. This tyranny is just that arbitrary power of an individual which is responsible to no-one and governs all alike, whether equals or betters, with a view to its own advantage, not to that of its subjects and therefore against their will.”⁵²

The Holy Fathers developed this idea in a Christian context. Thus St. Basil the Great said: “If the heart of the king is in the hands of God (*Proverbs* 21.1), then he is saved, not by force of arms, but by the guidance of God. But not every one is in the hands of God, but only he who is worthy of the name of king. Some have defined kingly power as lawful dominion or sovereignty over all, without being subject to sin.” A strict definition indeed! And again: “The difference between a tyrant and a King is that the tyrant strives in every way to carry out his own will. But the King does good to those whom he rules.”⁵³

Since Julian revived paganism and made himself a pagan priest, he was a tyrant comparable to the apostate kings of old, like Ahab and Manasseh, and was destroyed by God. St. Ambrose followed in this tradition and asserted: a tyrant is a ruler who attempts to disobey or dominate the Church. And St. Isidore of Pelusium wrote: “If some evildoer unlawfully seizes power, we do not say that he is established by God [the definition of a true king], but we say that he is *permitted*, either in order to spit out all his craftiness, or in order to chasten those for whom cruelty is necessary, as the king of Babylon chastened the Jews.”⁵⁴

⁵² Aristotle, *Politics*, IV, 10.

⁵³ St. Basil, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., pp. 66, 102. The difference between a king and a tyrant is also implicit in the Church services. Thus: “Caught and held fast by love for the King of all, the Children despised the impious threats of the tyrant in his boundless fury” (*Festal Menaion*, The Nativity of Christ, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Seven, second irmos). Again the implication was that the pious worshippers of the true King will reject the threats of tyrants.

St. Ephraim, in the first of his *Hymns against Julian*, makes a similar distinction: “The royal sceptre governed men and cared for cities and chased away wild animals; the opposite was the sceptre of the King who turned to paganism. The wild animals saw it and were glad...” (*Hymns against Julian*, I, 1. Translated in Samuel N.C. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic*, Liverpool University Press, 1986, p. 105)

⁵⁴ St. Isidore, *Letter 6 to Dionysius*.

Ideas about Kingship

Before attempting to answer the question: what kind of state was the Christian Roman Empire?, let us remind ourselves of some of the different concepts of kingship in ancient times. "In every people," writes the French linguist Émile Benveniste, "we can observe that special functions are attributed to the 'king'. Between royal power in the Vedas [of India] and Greek royal power there is a difference which comes out when we compare the following two definitions: In the Laws of Manu the king is characterized in one phrase: 'the king is a great god in human form'. Such a definition is confirmed by other utterances: 'there are eight holy objects, objects of veneration, worship and good treatment: Brahman, the holy cow, fire, gold, melted butter, the sun, the waters and the king (as the eighth)'. This is opposed by the definition of Aristotle: 'the king is in the same relationship with his subjects as the head of a family with his children'. That is, in essence, this despotism in the etymological sense of the word was a master of the house - a complete master, without a doubt, but by no means a divinity....

"For the Indo-Iranians the king is a divinity, and he has no need to attach legality to his power by using a symbol such as a sceptre. But the Homeric king was just a man who received royal dignity from Zeus together with the attributes that emphasized this dignity. For the Germans the king's power was purely human."⁵⁵

So Rome, according to Benveniste, tended towards the oriental, despotic, god-man model of kingship. However, there was always a tension, in the early pagan Roman Empire, between the earlier, more democratic and aristocratic traditions of Republican Rome and the later, more despotic traditions adopted by Augustus from the East (especially Cleopatra's Egypt). Only by the time of Diocletian, in the late third and early fourth centuries, had the oriental, despotic tradition achieved clear dominance.

But the Christian Roman emperors beginning with Constantine had more than Greco-Roman traditions to draw on: there were also the traditions of Israel. They had as models for imitation not only the pagan Greek and Roman emperors, such as Alexander and Augustus, but also the Old Testament kings, such as David and Solomon. In the end, a creative synthesis was achieved, which enabled the Christian Roman emperors to look back to both David and Augustus as models and forerunners. And into this synthesis went a third element: St. Paul's teaching that the Roman emperor was "the servant of God" (Romans 13.4), the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ - Who chose to become a man as the Son of David and a taxpayer as the subject of Augustus.

⁵⁵ Benveniste, *Slovar' Indoevropskikh Sotsial'nikh Terminov* (Dictionary of Indo-European Social Terms), Moscow: "Univers", 1995, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 48, 49.

However, the tension between the pagan (Roman) and Christian (neo-Roman or Byzantine) elements of this synthesis continued to trouble the empire for centuries. G.A. Ostrogorsky writes: "The Byzantine State structure was not created by Christian Byzantium itself. It was created, first and above all, by the Roman Emperor and pagan Diocletian, and secondly, by Constantine the Great, who stood on the boundary between the old and the new Rome, between paganism and Christianity. This circumstance determined the destiny of Byzantium. According to their State consciousness, the Byzantines always remained Romans; they proudly called themselves Romans right up to the 15th century, on the eve of the fall of the Empire. Moreover, they knew no other name for themselves. But in spirit – and the more so as time passed – they were Greeks. But at the same time and first of all they were Christians. Transferred into the sphere of another culture, the form of Roman Statehood served as a vessel for the Greek-Christian spirit. No less than the Byzantine people, and still more, did the Byzantine Emperors feel themselves to be Romans – the heirs and successors of ancient Rome, right up to Augustus. With the form of Roman Statehood they absorbed also all the prerogatives and attributes of Imperial power in ancient Rome. But to these prerogatives there also belonged the prerogative of the first-priesthood. The Emperor was not only the supreme judge and army commander, but also the Pontifex Maximus; the religious life of his subjects was subject to him as a part of public law. In ancient Rome, where the State religion was the cult of the genius of the divine Emperor, this was completely natural. In Christian Byzantium such a position, it would seem, was unthinkable. Further development also demonstrated its impossibility, but not a little time passed before the new spirit broke through the ways of the old traditions. The very title Pontifex Maximus was removed only half a century after the Christianization of the Empire (by an Edict of the Emperor Gratian in 375), while the remnants of the first-hierarchical character of Imperial power were visible for longer.... This viewpoint was not eastern, but simply typical of the given period, and was based not on Byzantine, but on ancient Roman ideas. At that time it was inherent both in the East and in the West; in the Middle Ages it lost its power both in the West and in Byzantium. And it is important that it lost its power in the East in proportion as the Byzantine principles began to triumph over the Roman..."⁵⁶

One idea that was to prove critical in defining the status of the emperor was that of the earthly king as being the image of the Heavenly King. Though pagan in origin, immediately after the Christianization of the empire this idea was borrowed and modified by Christian writers, who purified it of the tendency, so natural to pagan thought, of *identifying* the earthly and the Heavenly, the image and its archetype. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote to the Emperor Theodosius II: "In truth, you are a certain image and likeness of the Heavenly Kingdom"⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ostrogorsky, "Otnoshenie Tserkvi i gosudarstva v Vizantii" ("The Relationship of the Church and the State in Byzantium"); quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

⁵⁷ St. Cyril, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 72.

The first Christian to use this comparison was Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote of St. Constantine: "The kingdom with which he is invested is an image of the heavenly one. He looks up to see the archetypal pattern and guides those whom he rules below in accordance with that pattern." "The ruler of the whole world is the second Person of the All-Holy Trinity - the Word of God, Who is in everything visible and invisible. From this all-embracing Reason the Emperor is rational, from this Wisdom he is wise, from participation in this Divinity he is good, from communion with this Righteousness he is righteous, in accordance with the idea of this Moderation he is moderate, from the reception of this highest Power he is courageous. In all justice one must call a true Emperor him who has formed his soul with royal virtues, according to the image of the Highest Kingdom."⁵⁸

Already in the first three Christian centuries the Roman Empire had been regarded as the providential creation of God for the furtherance and strengthening of His rule on earth. Now that the emperor himself was a Christian and was acting in such a successful way to spread the faith throughout the *oikoumene*, the idea that his earthly kingdom was a reflection of the Heavenly Kingdom was readily accepted. But this in no way implied the spiritual subjection of the Church to the Empire. And when the emperor began to support heresy and persecute the Orthodox, his "image status" was immediately lost. At no time more than in the fourth century do we find Christians bolder in their confession against false emperors, or more prepared, as we have seen, to emphasize the superiority of the Church to the Empire...

Understood in a Christian way, the idea of the emperor as the image of the Heavenly King excluded both the pagan idea of the despotic king-god-man and the equally pagan idea of democratism. Thus Eusebius: "The example of monarchical rule there is a source of strength to him. This is something granted to man alone of the creatures of the earth by the universal King. The basic principle of kingly authority is the establishment of a single source of authority to which everything is subject. Monarchy is superior to every other constitution and form of government. For polyarchy, where everyone competes on equal terms, is really anarchy and discord. This is why there is one God, not two or three or even more. Polytheism is strictly atheism. There is one King, and His Word and royal law are one."⁵⁹

Even those Fathers who insisted most on the inferiority of the State to the Church accepted that the State could only be ruled by one man - although, according to Roman conceptions, the monarchy need not be *hereditary*. Thus St. Basil the Great wrote: "Even the king of the birds is not elected by the majority because the temerity of the people often nominates for leader the worst one; nor does it receive its power by lot, because the unwise chance of the lot frequently hands over power to the last; nor in accordance with hereditary succession, because those living in luxury and

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

flattery are also less competent and untaught in any virtue; but according to nature one holds the first place over all, both in its size and appearance and meek disposition."⁶⁰ Again St. Ambrose of Milan wrote: "One God, one empire, one emperor."⁶¹

K.V. Glazkov writes that St. Ephraim "noted that God's unity of rule in the Heavenly Kingdom and Caesar's unity of rule in the earthly kingdom destroy polytheism and polyarchy... The holy hierarch Gregory the Theologian remarked that there exist three basic forms of rule: monarchy – rule by one man, which contains in itself faith in one God or, at least, in a highest God; polyarchy or aristocracy – the rule of the minority or of the best, which is bound up with polytheism; and, finally, the power of the majority, which St. Gregory calls anarchy (democracy), which goes hand in glove with atheism. The saint affirmed that the Orthodox venerate monarchy insofar as it imitates the unity of God, while polyarchy presupposes a scattering of His might, a division of His essence amidst several gods. And, finally, anarchy, the rule of the people, theologically includes within itself the atomization of God's essence, in other words, power is so fragmented that it becomes almost impossible to attain to the very existence of God."⁶²

This teaching of the fourth-century Fathers on the significance of autocratic power was confirmed, over four centuries later, by St. Theodore the Studite: "There is one Lord and Giver of the Law, as it is written: one authority and one Divine principle over all. This single principle is the source of all wisdom, goodness and good order; it extends over every creature that has received its beginning from the goodness of God..., it is given to one man only... to construct rules of life in accordance with the likeness of God. For the divine Moses in his description of the origin of the world that comes from the mouth of God, cites the word: 'Let us create man in accordance with Our image and likeness' (Genesis 1.26). Hence the establishment among men of every dominion and every authority, especially in the Churches of God: one patriarch in a patriarchate, one metropolitan in a metropolia, one bishop in a bishopric, one abbot in a monastery, and in secular life, if you want to listen, one king, one regimental commander, one captain on a ship. And if one will did not rule

⁶⁰ St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 8.

⁶¹ St. Ambrose, quoted in Archimandrite Luke, "Church, Monastics, Empire", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 56, № 4, p. 11.

⁶² K.V. Glazkov, "Zaschita ot liberalizma" ("A Defence from Liberalism"), *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), № 15 (1636), 1/14 August, 1999, pp. 10, 11; *Sacred Monarchy and the Modern Secular State*, Montreal, 1984, p. 4; St. Gregory, *Sermon* 3, 2. The exact words of St. Gregory are: "The three most ancient opinions about God are atheism (or anarchy), polytheism (or polyarchy), and monotheism (or monarchy). The children of Greece played with the first two; let us leave them to their games. For anarchy is disorder: and polyarchy implies factious division, and therefore anarchy and disorder. Both these lead in the same direction – to disorder; and disorder leads to disintegration; for disorder is the prelude to disintegration. What we honour is monarchy..." (*Sermon* 29, 2).

in all this, there would be no law and order in anything, and it would not be for the best, for a multiplicity of wills destroys everything."⁶³

The idea that monarchy is the natural form of government because it reflects the monarchy of God, was a new concept of great importance in the history of ideas. The pagan states of the Ancient World were, for the most part, monarchical. But none of them believed, as did the Christians, in a single God and Creator. Moreover, as often as not, they invested the king with divine status, so that no higher principle or source of authority above the king or emperor was recognized. In the Christian empire, on the other hand, sacred and secular power were embodied in different persons and institutions, and both emperor and patriarch were considered bound by, and subject to, the will of God in heaven.

Of course, there were real dangers in attributing too exalted an authority to the emperor, and some of the iconoclast emperors earned the epithets "beast", "tyrant" and "forerunner of the Antichrist" in Byzantine liturgical and hagiographical texts when they tried to revive the pagan idea of the king-priest. However, in spite of their constant struggle to prevent the emperors invading their sphere, the Byzantine patriarchs continued to assert the independent and sacred authority of the anointed emperors. They pointed to the examples of Kings David and Solomon, who, while deferring to the priesthood, were nevertheless quite clearly the leaders of the people of God in a more than purely political sense.

The same predominance was enjoyed by the emperors in Byzantium. In Byzantium, therefore, writes Dagron, "the Old Testament has a constitutional value. It has the same normative character in the political domain as the New Testament has in the moral domain..."⁶⁴

The Sanctity of Kingship

We have seen that the great fourth-century bishops of the Church, in both East and West, vigorously upheld the sovereignty of the Church in "the things that are God's". This led in some cases to serious conflict with the emperors. Thus Saints Athanasius and Basil and Gregory had to defy the will of Arianizing emperors in the East, as did Saints Osius and Hilary and Ambrose in the West; while St. John Chrysostom reproached the Empress Eudoxia and suffered banishment for his boldness.

However, there were several emperors who were conscientious in protecting the rights of the Church – the western emperors Arcadius, Honorius and Valentinian III, for example, and the eastern emperors Theodosius I and II. The latter sent emissaries

⁶³ St. Theodore, *The Philokalia*, volume IV, p. 93; in Sobolev, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁴ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

to the Council of Ephesus, at which Nestorius was condemned, instructing them not to interfere in the arguments about the faith. For it was not permitted, he said, for any of them who was not numbered among the most holy bishops to interfere in Church questions.⁶⁵

But as the fifth century wore on, and the chaos caused by the heretics increased, the emperors were called upon to take a more active role in Church affairs. Some “interference” by them was even sanctioned by Canon 93 (Greek 96) of the Council of Carthage in the year 419: “It behoves the gracious clemency of their Majesties to take measures that the Catholic Church, which has begotten them as worshippers of Christ in her womb, and has nourished them with the strong meat of the faith, should by their forethought be defended, lest violent men, taking advantage of the times of religious excitement, should by fear overcome a weak people, whom by arguments they were not able to pervert”. As an ancient epitome of this canon puts it: “The Emperors who were born in the true religion and were educated in the faith, ought to stretch forth a helping hand to the Churches. For the military band overthrew the dire conspiracy which was threatening Paul.”⁶⁶

That the Emperor, as well as the hierarchs, was required to defend the faith can be seen in the life of St. Hypatius of Rufinianus: “When Nestorius had left for Ephesus, and the [Third Ecumenical] Council had assembled, on the day when he should be deposed, Saint Hypatius saw in a vision that an angel of the Lord took hold of Saint John the Apostle, and led him to the most pious Emperor [Theodosius II] and said to him, ‘Say to the Emperor: “Pronounce your sentence against Nestorius”.’ And he, having heard this, pronounced it. Saint Hypatius made note of this day, and it was verified that Nestorius was deposed on that very day...”⁶⁷

St. Isidore of Pelusium declared that some “interference” by the emperors was necessary in view of the sorry state of the priesthood: “The present hierarchs, by not acting in the same way as their predecessors, do not receive the same as they; but undertaking the opposite to them, they themselves experience the opposite. It would be surprising if, while doing nothing similar to their ancestors, they enjoyed the same honour as they. In those days, when the kings fell into sin they became chaste again, but now this does not happen even with laymen. In ancient times the priesthood corrected the royal power when it sinned, but now it awaits instructions

⁶⁵ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 69-70. However, Theodosius II, contrary to his instructions to others, interfered heavily, and to the detriment of the truth, in the “robber council” of Ephesus in 449. Later examples of emperors who occupied a scrupulously neutral approach with regard to the debates of the bishops include Constantine IV at the time of the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-681 and Basil I during the “Photian” and “anti-Photian” councils of 869-870 and 879-880 (Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 305).

⁶⁶ *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Eerdmans edition, pp. 488, 489.

⁶⁷ St. Hypatius, in Holy Transfiguration Monastery, “The Seat of Moses”, quoted in *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston, 1982, p. 65.

from it; not because it has lost its own dignity, but because that dignity has been entrusted to those who are not similar to those who lived in the time of our ancestors. Formerly, when those who had lived an evangelical and apostolic life were crowned with the priesthood, the priesthood was fearful by right for the royal power; but now the royal power is fearful to the priesthood. However, it is better to say, not 'priesthood', but those who have the appearance of doing the priestly work, while by their actions they insult the priesthood. That is why it seems to me that the royal power is acting justly..."⁶⁸ Such "interference" was justified, in St. Isidore's view, because "although there is a very great difference between the priesthood and the kingdom (the former is the soul, the latter - the body), nevertheless they strive for one and the same goal, that is, the salvation of citizens".⁶⁹

Emperors had to intervene especially when heretics became violent - as when the Monophysite heretic Dioscuros murdered St. Flavian. Thus it was the decisive intervention of the new Emperors Marcian and Pulcheria that made possible the convening of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451 which anathematized the Monophysite heresy. For, as Marcian said at the Council: "When by the decree of God we were elected to the kingdom, then amidst the very many needs of the State, there was no matter that occupied us more than that the true and Orthodox faith, which is holy and pure, should remain in the souls of all without doubts."⁷⁰

Imperial "interference" was welcomed by the bishops at such times. Thus St. Leo, Pope of Rome, wrote to the Emperor Marcian: "I have learned that although the impious Eutychius is in exile as he deserves, in the very place of his condemnation he is still more desperately pouring out many poisons of blasphemies against Catholic purity, and, in order to ensnare the innocent, he is with the greatest shamelessness vomiting that which the whole world was appalled at in him and condemned. And so I think your grace with complete justification ordered that he be sent to a more distant and remote place."⁷¹ Again he wrote to Emperor Leo I: "You must unceasingly remember that Royal power has been entrusted to you, not only for administering the world, but also and in particular to rule the Church."⁷²

At such times, when the bishops were betraying the truth, the pious emperors stood out as the representatives of the laity, which, as the Eastern Patriarchs were to declare in their encyclical of the year 1848, is the guardian of the truth of the Church. At such times they were indeed higher than the clergy, if not by the grace they had received, at any rate in view of the fact that the clergy had forsaken their vocation and trampled on that grace they had received. At such times, the emperors were indeed images of the Heavenly King, their vocation being, like His, to witness to the

⁶⁸ St. Isidore, *Tvorenia* (Works), Moscow, 1860, vol. 3, pp. 400, 410.

⁶⁹ St. Isidore, in Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 244.

⁷⁰ St. Marcian, in Sobolev, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁷¹ St. Leo, in Sobolev, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁷² St. Leo, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

truth. For as the King of kings said to Pilate: “You say that I am a king. For that I was born, and for that I came into the world, to witness to the truth” (John 18.37).

It was in this sense that St. Leo the Great wrote to the Emperor Theodosius II that he had “not only the soul of an Emperor, but also the soul of a priest”. And for the Emperor Marcian he wished “the palm of the priesthood as well as the emperor’s crown”.⁷³ For, as Dagron points out, “the emperor could not remain neutral. He was the guarantor and often the principal architect of the unity of the Church. Thus the Orthodox or heretical council unanimously celebrated the sovereign ‘guarded by God’ by giving him without niggardliness the title of ‘teacher of the faith’, ‘new Paul’, ‘equal to the apostles, illumined like the bishops by the Holy Spirit’. At the end of the fourth session of the council held in Constantinople in 536, the bishops expressed the conviction of all in declaring that, ‘under an Orthodox emperor’, the Empire had nothing and nobody to fear; and Patriarch Menas concluded: ‘It is fitting that nothing of that which is debated in the holy Church should be decided against the advice and order [of the emperor].’” It is in this context that one has to understand the at times highly rhetorical expressions often applied to the rulers. Dagron again: “The distinction between the two powers was never as clearly formulated as while there was a disagreement between them. When there was concord or the hope of harmony, the celebration or hope of unity carried the day. Nobody found anything wrong when the synod that condemned the heretic Eutyches in Constantinople in 448 acclaimed Theodosius with the words: ‘Great is the faith of the emperors! Many years to the guardians of the faith! Many years to the pious emperor, the emperor-bishop (τω αρχιερει Βασιλει).’ The whole world is equally agreed, a little later at the Council of Chalcedon, in acclaiming Marcian as ‘priest and emperor’, at the same time as ‘restorer of the Church, teacher of the faith, New Constantine, New Paul and New David’. At the same time Pope Leo congratulated Theodosius II, and then Marcian, on the sacerdotalis industria, on the sacerdotalis anima, and on the sacerdotalis palma with which God had rewarded them, and he declared to Leo I that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in matters of the faith.⁷⁴ Except during periods of tension, the adjective sacerdotalis was part of the formula of the pontifical chancellery for letters addressed to the emperors of Constantinople. The composers of elegies were not behindhand, in the West as in the East. Procopius of Gaza underlined that Anastasius had been elected to be a bishop before being named emperor, and that he reunited in himself ‘that which is most precious among men, the apparatus of an emperor and the thought of a priest’;

⁷³ J. Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Again, Pope Leo I wrote to Emperor Leo I: “You must always remember that royal power has been given to you not only to rule the world, but also and in particular to rule the Church.” (Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 73). Of course, this “rule” over the Church was not to be understood literally, but rather in the sense of powerful help, and when the emperor fell into heresy, the popes reverted to a more assertive posture, as we shall see in the next chapter. (V.M.)

Ennodius of Pavia (473-521) proclaimed Theodoric to be 'prince and priest'; Venantius Fortunatus, in the second half of the 6th century, called Childebert I 'Melchisedech noster, merito rex atque sacerdos'; towards 645 and anonymous panegyric characterised Clotaire I as quasi sacerdos; Paulinus, bishop of Aquileia, in 794 encouraged Charlemagne to be 'Dominus et pater, rex et sacerdos'. To justify the canonization of a king, they said that he had been led during his reign acsi bonus sacerdos. We are in the domain of rhetoric, but that does not mean that they could say anything and break the taboos. Even if the words have a metaphorical and incantatory meaning, even if their association distilled a small dose of provocation, there was nothing abnormal in affirming that the ideal emperor was also a priest."⁷⁵

Justinian the Great

And so by the time Justinian the Great ascended the throne in the early sixth century, the Gelasian doctrine of a strict demarcation of powers between the Emperor and the Church was giving way, in both East and West, to a less clearly defined Leonine model in which the Emperor was allowed a greater initiative in the spiritual domain, and was even accorded a quasi-priestly status. This enhanced status was used by him in his ambitious aim of reuniting the Christian world, parts of which had seceded from the Empire for religious reasons. Thus the Western Church had broken with Constantinople because of the Monophysitism of the Emperor Anastasius, and Italy was under the sway of barbarians; while the Semitic and Coptic parts of the Eastern Empire had fallen into Monophysitism or Nestorianism.

Justinian pursued his aim in two ways: in the West, through war and a mixture of concessions and pressure on the papacy, and in the East, by intensive theological negotiations with the heretics (led by himself).

In relation to Old Rome he was successful. Under Belisarius' generalship Italy was reconquered for the Empire, and "the ancient and lesser Rome," in Michael Psellus' words, was returned to the dominion of "the later, more powerful city". A Byzantine governor ruled Northern and Central Italy from Ravenna; Byzantine titles were lavished on the Roman aristocracy; and the Pope commemorated the Emperor at the liturgy.⁷⁶ Tactfully, Patriarch John Kappadokes of Constantinople continued to recognize the primacy of the see of Old Rome⁷⁷, and Pope John II responded by exalting the emperor as high as any western bishop had ever done: "'The King's heart is in the hand of God and He directs it as He pleases' (Proverbs 21.1). There lies the foundation of your Empire and the endurance of your rule. For the peace of the Church and the unity of religion raise their originator to the highest place and

⁷⁵ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315.

⁷⁶ Tom Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Which, however, he declared to be one church with the see of New Rome (Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 214).

sustain him there in happiness and peace. God's power will never fail him who protects the Church against the evil and stain of division, for it is written: 'When a righteous King sits on the throne, no evil will befall him' (Proverbs 20:8)."⁷⁸

The negotiations with the Monophysites in the East were less successful. Nevertheless, the union, however fleeting, of the five ancient patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in one Orthodox Church under one right-believing Emperor, was a great achievement. And there could be little doubt that the single person most instrumental in achieving this union was the emperor himself: if the five patriarchates represented the five senses of the Body of Christ on earth, then the head in which they all adhered – again, *on earth* – was the emperor.

This unity was not achieved without some pressure, especially on the Roman patriarchate. However, writes Meyendorff, “without denying the dangers and the abuses of imperial power, which occurred in particular instances, the system as such, which been created by Theodosius I and Justinian, did not deprive the Church of its ability to define dogma through conciliarity. But conciliarity presupposed the existence of a mechanism, making consensus possible and effective. Local churches needed to be grouped into provinces and patriarchates, and patriarchates were to act together to reach an agreement valid for all. The empire provided the universal Church with such a mechanism...”⁷⁹

Thus, as in Constantine’s time, the emperor acted as the focus of unity of quarrelling Christians. The importance of this function was recognized by all – even by the heretics.

In consequence, as L.A. Tikhomirov points out, even when a Byzantine emperor tried to impose heresy on the Church, “this was a struggle that did not besmirch the Church and State power as institutions. In this struggle he acted as a member of the Church, in the name of Church truth, albeit mistakenly understood. This battle was not about the relationship between the Church and the State and did not lead to its interruption, nor to the seeking of any other kind of principles of mutual relationship. As regards the direct conflicts between Church and State power, they arose only for particular reasons, only between given persons, and also did not relate to the principle of the mutual relationship itself.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ A. Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great: the Emperor and Saint*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982, p. 82.

⁷⁹ Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 291.

⁸⁰ L.A. Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg: “Komplekt”, 1992, p. 162. Again, Alexander Dvorkin writes: “Even if abuses of power by this or that emperor were accepted by some weak-willed patriarch, sooner or later they were nevertheless rejected by the people of God and the church authorities” (*Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 178).

As if to symbolize the unity he had achieved, Justinian built Hagia Sophia, the greatest church in Christendom. "I have surpassed Solomon," he cried on entering the church. The other, no less enduring expression of this unity was Justinian's codification of Roman law, which united the old and new in one coherent body. These laws included the famous *Sixth Novella* (535), which contained the most famous formulation of the principle of the symphony of powers: "The greatest gifts given by God to men by His supreme kindness are the priesthood and the empire, of which the first serves the things of God and the second rules the things of men and assumes the burden of care for them. Both proceed from one source and adorn the life of man. Nothing therefore will be so greatly desired by the emperors than the honour of the priests, since they always pray to God about both these very things. For if the first is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God, and the other adorns the state entrusted to it rightly and competently, a good symphony will exist, which will offer everything that is useful for the human race. We therefore have the greatest care concerning the true dogmas of God and concerning the honour of the priests..., because through this the greatest good things will be given by God - both those things that we already have will be made firm and those things which we do not have yet we shall acquire. Everything will go well if the principle of the matter is right and pleasing to God. We believe that this will come to pass if the holy canons are observed, which have been handed down to us by the apostles, those inspectors and ministers of God worthy of praise and veneration, and which have been preserved and explained."

Several points in Justinian's *Sixth Novella*, which was addressed to Patriarch Epiphanius of Constantinople, need to be emphasized. First, both the priesthood and the empire are said to "proceed from the same source", that is, God. This has the very important consequence that the normal and natural relationship between the two powers is one of harmony and symphony, not rivalry and division. If some of the early Fathers, in both East and West, tended to emphasize the separation and distinctness of the powers rather than their unity from and under God, this was a natural result of the friction between the Church and the pagan and heretical emperors in the early centuries. However, now that unity in Orthodoxy had been achieved the emphasis had to return to the common source and common end of the two institutions. The unity of the Christian world under the Christian emperor had as its foundation-stone this "symphony" between the emperor and the patriarch, the symphony being grounded in their common origin in God.

The *Seventh Novella* (2, 1) admitted that "the goods of the Church, which are in principle inalienable, could be the object of transactions with the emperor, 'for the difference between the priesthood (*ιερωσυνη*) and the empire (*βασιλεια*) is small, as it is between the sacred goods and the goods that are common to the community.'"⁸¹

⁸¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

Secondly, however, insofar as the symphony in the *Novella* existed, not only between two men, but between two *institutions*, the priesthood and the empire, it extended beyond the relationship between emperor and patriarch.

As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes: “Symphonicity in Church administration only began at the level of the Emperor and Patriarch, and continued at the level of the bishop and eparch (who also received the blessing of the Church for his service) and was completed at the level of the parish priest and its founder. With such a deep ‘enchurchment’ from all sides of the life of the Orthodox Empire, and the symphonicity of all levels of the Church-State pyramid, the violations of symphony at the highest level were, while annoying, not especially dangerous. The most important thing still remained the service of ‘him who restrains’, which was carried out by the Orthodox Emperor in symphony with the whole Church, and not only personally with the Patriarch. The decisive factor was the personal self-consciousness of the Emperor and the activity based on that. Thus Justinian conceived of himself completely as a Christian sovereign, and strove throughout the whole of his life to make the whole world Christian. His symphony with the Patriarch was desirable as a useful means towards that end, but it was not an end-in-itself. During Justinian’s time five Patriarchates entered into the Empire, including the Roman, and the Emperor did not establish ‘symphonic’ relations with all of them personally (as, for example, with Pope Vigilius, who did not want to accept the decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council). But symphony with the whole Church did exist, and a proof of this is provided by the 5th Ecumenical Council, which was convened through the efforts of Justinian and accepted the dogmatic definitions against the heresies that he presented; and by the multitude of saints who shone forth during his reign and who related completely ‘symphonically’ to him (for example, St. Sabbas the Sanctified); and by the general flourishing of Christian culture.”⁸²

Thirdly, it is not any kind of harmony or symphony that is in question here, but only a true symphony that comes from God and leads to the good. As I.N. Andrushkevich points out, the word “symphony” [consonantia in the original Latin] here denotes much more than simple agreement or concord. Church and State can agree in an evil way, for evil ends. True symphony is possible only where both the Church “is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God” and the State is ruled “rightly and competently” - that is, in accordance with the commandments of God.⁸³

⁸² Alferov, “Ob uderzhanii i symphonii” (“On Restraining and Symphony”), <http://www.monarhist-spb.narod.ru/D-ST/Dionisy-1./htm>, pp. 9-10.

⁸³ Andrushkevich, “Doktrina sv. Imperatora Iustiniana Velikago” (“The Teaching of the holy Emperor Justinian the Great”), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), № 4 (1529), February 15/28, 1995, pp. 4-12.

Where these conditions are not met, what we have, as A.V. Kartashev, the minister of religion under the Russian Provisional Government, points out, “is no longer symphony, but cacophony”.⁸⁴

Justinian himself, in his preface to the *Novella*, pointed out that, although he was an Autocrat, he could not exercise dominion over the priesthood. This meant that he was obliged to allow the priests to follow their own canon law.

Thus he qualified the absolutist principle of Roman power, namely, that *whatever is pleasing to the emperor has the force of law* with the words: *unless it contradicts the holy canons*. And in his *Novella 131* he decreed: “The Church canons have the same force in the State as the State laws: what is permitted or forbidden by the former is permitted or forbidden by the latter. Therefore crimes against the former cannot be tolerated in the State according to State legislation.”⁸⁵

“As regards the judicial branch,” writes Nikolin, “coordinated action presupposed not simply mutual complementation of the spheres of administration of the ecclesiastical and secular courts, but, which is especially important, the introduction into the activity of the latter of the moral-educational content inherent in Christianity.

“In a single service to the work of God both the Church and the State constitute as it were one whole, one organism – ‘unconfused’, but also ‘undivided’. In this lay the fundamental difference between Orthodox ‘symphony’ and Latin ‘papocaesarism’ and Protestant ‘caesaropapism’.”⁸⁶

Of course, the principle that the Church canons should automatically be considered as State laws was not always carried out in practice, even in Justinian’s reign; and in some spheres, as Nikolin points out, “in becoming [State] law, the [Church] canon lost its isolation, and the all-powerful Emperor, in commenting on the canon that had become law, was able thereby to raise himself above the canon. The Christian Emperor received the ability to reveal the content of the canon in his own way (in the interests of the State). Justinian’s rule provides several confirmations of this. The rules for the election, conduct and inter-relations of bishops, clergy and monks, for the punishment of clergy, and for Church property were subjected to his reclamation. Bishops received broad powers in State affairs (more exactly, numerous State duties were imputed to them).”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Kartashev, *Vossozhdanie Svoyatoj Rusi* (The Recreation of Holy Russia), Moscow, 1991, p. 83.

⁸⁵ This included the Canons that forbid resort to the secular power in Church matters: *Canon 12, Fourth Ecumenical Council; Canons 11 and 12 of Antioch; Canon 3 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council*. Justinian did not always observe this restriction on his power.

⁸⁶ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁸⁷ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

For example, in episcopal elections there was a contradiction between Justinian's laws, according to which the electoral body was to include the leading laymen of the locality – an enactment which gave an avenue for imperial influence on the elections through the local potentates, - and the laws of the Church, according to which only bishops were to take part in the election. In practice, the Church's laws prevailed in this sphere, but Justinian's laws remained in force.⁸⁸

The recruitment of bishops to undertake secular duties was contrary to the apostolic canons as leading to a secularization of the Episcopal calling. In general, however, this did not take place, and the enormous benefits of the symphony of powers continued to be felt throughout Byzantine history.

As Nikolin writes, "Justinian's rule was a rule in which the mutual relations of Church and State were inbuilt, and which later lasted in Byzantium right up to the days of her fall, and which were borrowed in the 10th century by Rus'. In the first place this related to the principle: 'Ecclesiastical canons are State laws'. Moreover, the Christian direction of Justinian's reforms told on the content of the majority of juridical norms. This was most vividly revealed in the resolutions of questions concerning the regulation of individual spheres of Church life. Church communities were now provided with the rights of a juridical person. In property questions they were given various privileges...

"A particular feature of Justinian's reforms was that as a result of them State power was transformed into a defender of the faith. This was most clearly revealed in the establishment of restrictions on the juridical rights of citizens of the empire linked with their confession of faith:

- Pagans and Jews were deprived of the right to occupy posts in state or societal service, and were not able to possess Christian slaves.
- Apostates, that is, people going over from Christianity to paganism or Judaism were deprived of the right to compose wills and inherit, and likewise were not able to be witnesses at trials;
- Heretics were not able to occupy posts in state or societal service; they were deprived of the right of inheritance; they could make bequests... only to Orthodox. There were even stricter measures adopted in relation to certain sects."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ See Bishop Pierre L'Huillier, "Episcopal Elections in the Byzantine East: a few comments", *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, № 1, Spring, 1968, pp. 4-7, and *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, Crestwood, NY; St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, pp. 36-38, 40, 41.

⁸⁹ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, 34.

It is from the reign of Justinian that the Roman Emperor is evaluated primarily for his services *to the Church* rather than for his secular successes. As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes: "After the holy Emperor Justinian any Christian monarch must confess, and reverently and unhypocritically believe that '*Christian piety is the foundation of the strength of the empire*'. For greater clarity let us indicate an example. The Emperor Justinian himself, while paying great attention to theology, Divine services and the building of churches, completely neglected the army and the navy, which under him came to a state of decline. But for his unfeigned piety and faith the Lord protected the empire from invasions and subjected to Justinian a part of the barbarians. After him the iconoclast emperors Leo the Isaurian and Constantine Copronymus were outstanding military commanders who reorganized the army and repelled opponents (the Arabs and Bulgars) far from the empire. But the heresy they introduced and their general impiety shook the foundations of Byzantium from within and brought it to the verge of extinction. Therefore amongst the qualities of an exemplary ruler *his faith and piety occupy the first place*. For the sake of these the Lord protects his kingdom from many woes. *His practical capabilities* in raising national life are already *in the second place*."⁹⁰

The Dissonance of Powers

Justinian's formulation of the Symphony of Powers had been consciously based on Chalcedonian Orthodoxy: the unity of kingship and priesthood in one Christian Roman State was likened to the union of the two natures, human and Divine, in the one Person of Christ. It is therefore not surprising to find that under succeeding emperors who renounced Chalcedonian Orthodoxy and embraced heresy, the Symphony of Powers was also renounced – or rather, reinterpreted in such a way as to promote the prevailing heresy. Thus the emperor, from being a *focus* of unity in the religious sphere, became an *imposer* of unity – and a false unity at that.

The empire suffered accordingly: vast areas of the East were lost, first to the Persians, and then to the Muslim Arabs. As religious unity collapsed, so did the unity of nations. St. Anastasius of Sinai considered these defeats to be Divine punishment for the heresy of the Monothelite emperor Heraclius.⁹¹

Of course, this was not the first time that an emperor had been tempted to apply violence against the Orthodox. Even the great Justinian had come close to overstepping the mark in his relations with the Roman Popes.

In the final analysis, however, he did not overstep the mark because a real unity of faith between the Old and New Romes was achieved in his reign.

⁹⁰ Alferov, "Monarkhia i Khristianskoe Soznanie" ("The Monarchy and Christian Consciousness"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_11.htm, p. 7.

⁹¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

But this was no longer the case a century later, in 655, when the Orthodox Pope St. Martin was martyred for the faith by a heretical emperor acting in concert with a heretical patriarch. The heretics then proceeded to torture the famous monk and defender of the Church against Monothelism, St. Maximus the Confessor. They wished him to acknowledge the power of the emperor over the Church, as if he were both king and priest like Melchizedek. But Maximus refused. When his interrogators asked: "What? Is not every Christian emperor a priest?" the saint replied: "No, for he has no access to the altar, and after the consecration of the bread does not elevate it with the words: 'The holy things to the holy'. He does not baptize, he does not go on to the initiation with chrism, he does not ordain or place bishops, priests and deacons, he does not consecrate churches with oil, he does not wear the marks of the priestly dignity - the omophorion and the Gospel, as he wears those of the kingdom, the crown and the purple."

The interrogators objected: "And why does Scripture itself say that Melchisedech is 'king and priest' [Genesis 14.18; Hebrews 7.1]?" The saint replied: "There is only One Who is by nature King, the God of the universe, Who became for our salvation a hierarch by nature, of which Melchisedech is the unique type. If you say that there is another king and priest after the order of Melchisedech, then dare to say what comes next: 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, of whose days there is no beginning and of whose life there is no end' [Hebrews 7.3], and see the disastrous consequences that are entailed: such a person would be another God become man, working our salvation as a priest not in the order of Aaron, but in the order of Melchisedech. But what is the point of multiplying words? During the holy anaphora at the holy table, it is after the hierarchs and deacons and the whole order of the clergy that commemoration is made of the emperors at the same time as the laity, with the deacon saying: 'and the deacons who have reposed in the faith, Constantine, Constans, etc.'" Equally, mention is made of the living emperors after all the clergy'."⁹²

Again he said: "To investigate and define dogmas of the Faith is the task not of the emperors, but of the ministers of the altar, because it is reserved to them both to anoint the emperor and to lay hands upon him, and to stand before the altar, to perform the Mystery of the Eucharist, and to perform all the other divine and most great Mysteries."⁹³

When Bishop Theodosius of Caesarea claimed that the anti-Monothelite Roman Council was invalid since it was not convened by the Emperor, St. Maximus replied: "If only those councils are confirmed which were summoned by royal decree, then there cannot be an Orthodox Faith. Recall the councils that were summoned by royal decree against the homoousion, proclaiming the blasphemous teaching that the Son

⁹² Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁹³ *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

of God is not of one essence with God the Father... The Orthodox Church recognizes as true and holy only those councils at which true and infallible dogmas were established."⁹⁴

In 663 Constans II, the persecutor of Saints Martin and Maximus, moved his capital from Constantinople to Syracuse in Sicily. "For the Sicilians," writes John Julius Norwich, "those five years were one protracted nightmare. The honour, such as it was, of finding their island selected for the capital of the Roman Empire was as nothing in comparison with the extortions of the imperial tax-gatherers - for the satisfaction of whom, we are told, husbands were sold into slavery, wives forced into prostitution, children separated from their parents. Nor can we tell how long these deprivations might have continued had not the Emperor unexpectedly come to a sudden, violent and somewhat humiliating end. There was, so far as we know, no preconceived plan to assassinate him, far less any deeply hatched conspiracy; but on 15 September 668, while he was innocently lathering himself in the bath, one of his Greek attendants... felled him with the soap-dish."⁹⁵

Constans' successor, Constantine IV, restored the capital to Constantinople, rescued the Empire from the Arabs, and convened the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680, which anathematized Monothelism and restored Orthodoxy.

In the next century, the iconoclast Emperor Leo III's heretical, quasi-Muslim understanding of the nature of icons went hand in hand with a resurrection of the pagan model of the *imperator-pontifex maximus*. In fact, insofar as the Muslim Caliph considered himself to be both a king and a prophet, Leo could be said to have borrowed his theory of kingship ("I am both king and priest"), as well as his iconoclasm, from the Muslims. It was therefore eminently fitting that his main critic in both spheres should have been St. John of Damascus, a functionary at the Caliph's court. "What right have emperors to style themselves lawgivers in the Church?" asked St. John. "What does the holy apostle say? 'And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers and shepherds, for building up the body of Christ' (I Corinthians 12.28). He does not mention emperors... Political prosperity is the business of emperors; the condition of the Church is the concern of shepherds and teachers."⁹⁶

Again, the Seventh Ecumenical Council wrote: "God gave the greatest gift to men: the Priesthood and the Imperial power; the first preserves and watches over the heavenly, while the second rules earthly things by means of just laws."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, p. 322.

⁹⁶ St. John of Damascus, *Second Apology against those who attack the Divine Images*, 12. It may be pointed out, however, that I Corinthians 12.28 includes among the gifts that of "governments" (κυβερνησεις), which could plausibly be interpreted as referring to political government.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 91. As Gervais Dumeige points out, the Seventh

Some years later, in a document probably written early in the ninth century in Constantinople, but ascribed to the earlier Orthodox Pope Gregory II, Leo III's claim to be both king and priest⁹⁸ is fittingly refuted, while it is admitted that *true* kings are in *some* ways like priests: "You write: 'I am Emperor and priest'. Yes, the Emperors who were before you proved this in word and deed: they built churches and cared for them; being zealous for the Orthodox faith, they together with the hierarchs investigated and defended the truth. Emperors such as: Constantine the Great, Theodosius the Great, Constantine [IV], the father of Justinian [II], who was at the Sixth Council. These Emperors reigned piously: they together with the hierarchs with one mind and soul convened councils, investigated the truth of the dogmas, built and adorned the holy churches. These were priests and Emperors! They proved it in word and deed. But you, since the time that you received power, have not completely begun to observe the decrees of the Fathers..."⁹⁹

The Pope also wrote: "You know, Emperor, that the dogmas of the Holy Church do not belong to the Emperor, but to the Hierarchs, who can safely dogmatize. That is why the Churches have been entrusted to the Hierarchs, and they do not enter into the affairs of the people's administration. Understand and take note of this... The coming together of the Christ-loving Emperors and pious Hierarchs constitutes a single power, when affairs are governed with peace and love".

And again: "God has given power over all men to the Piety of the Emperors in order that those who strive for virtue may find strengthening in them, - so that the path to the heavens should be wider, - so that the earthly kingdom should serve the Heavenly Kingdom."¹⁰⁰

One person in two distinct natures: one power in two distinct functions: the Chalcedonian basis of the symphonic doctrine of Church-State relations is clear. And just as the symphonic doctrine of Church-State relations reflects Chalcedonian Orthodoxy, so the absolutist theory of Church-State relations reflects both Monothelism and Iconoclasm. Just as Monothelism denies that there is more than one will in Christ, so the absolutist theory denies that there is more than one will in the government of the Christian commonwealth, declaring that the will of the

Ecumenical Council in Nicaea was freer than "Constantinople II [the Fifth Council], which felt the strong pressure of the Emperor Justinian, and more even than Constantinople III [the Sixth Council] where the presence of Constantine IV risked imposing on the conciliar debates... At Nicaea the men of the Church dealt with the affairs of the Church, under the direction of a man of the Church who knew the desires and wishes of the sovereigns. It was on a path prepared in advance that the bishops were able to advance freely" (*Nicée II* (Nicaea II), Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1978, p. 195).

⁹⁸ Leo also claimed to be the first pastor of the Church in the image of the Apostle Peter: "God has put in our hands the Imperial authority, according to His good pleasure... bidding us to feed His faithful flock after the manner of Peter, head and chief of the Apostles." (*Eclogue*, preface)

⁹⁹ Pope Gregory II, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Pope Gregory II, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 82.

emperor can take the place of the will of the hierarchs. And just as Iconoclasm destroys the proper relationship between the icon and its archetype, saying that icons are in fact idols, so absolutism destroys the proper relationship and distance between the earthly type and his Heavenly Archetype, so that the emperor becomes, in St. Maximus' words, "another God incarnate" - that is, an idol. For this, no less than for his iconoclasm, Leo III is justly called "forerunner of the Antichrist" in the Byzantine service books, and was anathematized by the Church as "the tormentor and *not Emperor Leo the Isaurian*".

And so, just as the Seventh Council brought to an end the period of Christological debates, so it brought to an end the debates over the role of the Emperor in the Church. The Emperor was an icon of Christ the King, but only so long as he remained Orthodox. He was in the Church, but not above it.¹⁰¹ As the Council put it in a concise and inspired definition of the Church-State relationship: "*The priest is the sanctification and strengthening of the Imperial power, while the Imperial power is the strength and firmness of the priesthood.*"¹⁰²

St. Photius the Great

With the fall of iconoclasm in Byzantium in 843, there also fell the absolutist theory of Church-State relations preached by the iconoclast emperors. Although the new dynasty of Macedonian emperors was one of the strongest in Byzantine history, the patriarchs of the period were in no mood to concede more power than was necessary to it, however Orthodox it might be. One reason for this was the particularly prominent - and damaging - role that the emperors had taken in the recent persecutions, in which several of the leading hierarchs themselves had suffered (St. Methodius had been in prison, while St. Photius' parents had been martyred). The early Roman emperors had persecuted the Church at times - but they had been pagans in a pagan society, and were therefore simply expressing the prejudices of the society in which they lived. Later emperors in the post-Constantinian era, such as Constantius and Valens, had also persecuted the Church - which was worse, since they were supposed to be Christians, but again, they had not been the initiators of the persecution, but had responded to the pleas of heretical churchmen. However, the iconoclast emperors enjoyed the dubious distinction of having been at the head of their heretical movement; they were heresiarchs

¹⁰¹ *Menaion*, May 12, Service to St. Germanus of Constantinople, Vespers, "Lord, I have cried"; Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 88. In two hagiographical texts, Theosterict's *Life of Nicetas of Medicion* and St. Methodius' *Life of Euthymius of Sardis*, Leo is given the apocalyptic title of "beast" (D.E. Afinogenov, "*Povest' o proschenii imperatora Feofila*" i *Torzhestvo Pravoslavia* (The "Tale" of the Forgiveness of the Emperor Theophilus and the Triumph of Orthodoxy), Moscow: Ilarik, 2004, pp. 26, 28). The later iconoclast emperor, Constantine Copronymus, was also anathematized and denied the title of emperor: "the tyrant, and not Emperor" (*op. cit.*, p. 89). Even more emphatic was the anathematization of Emperor Leo V the Armenian: "the evil first beast, the tormentor of the servants of Christ, and not Emperor Leo the Armenian" (*op. cit.*, p. 94).

¹⁰² Quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 91.

themselves, not simply the political agents of heresiarchs. "The ancient heresies came from a quarrel over the dogmas and developed progressively, whereas this one [iconoclasm] comes from the imperial power itself."¹⁰³ The patriarchs therefore laboured to raise the profile of the patriarchate in society, as a defence against any return to antichristianity on the part of the emperors.¹⁰⁴

This new intransigence of the patriarchs in relation to the emperors had been foreshadowed even before the last period of iconoclast persecution. For on 24 December, 804, as Dagron writes, "Leo V brought Patriarch Nicephorus and several bishops and monks together to involve them in coming to an agreement with those who were 'scandalised' by the icons and in making an 'economy'. The confrontation gave way to a series of grating 'little phrases' that were hawked about everywhere and which sketched a new theory of imperial power. The clergy refused to engage in any discussion with this perfectly legitimate emperor who had not yet taken any measures against the icons and who wanted a council of bishops to tackle the problem. Emilian of Cyzicus said to him: 'If there is an ecclesiastical problem, as you say, Emperor, let it be resolved in the Church, as is the custom... and not in the Palace,' to which Leo remarked that he also was a child of the Church and that he could serve as an arbiter between the two camps. Michael of Synada then said to him that 'his arbitration' was in fact a 'tyranny'; others reproached him for taking sides. Without batting an eyelid, Euthymius of Sardis invoked eight centuries of Christian icons and angered the emperor by reusing a quotation from St. Paul that had already been used by John of Damascus: 'Even if an angel from heaven should preach to us a gospel different from the one that you have received, let him be anathema!' (Galatians 1.8). The 'ardent teacher of the Church and abbot of Studion' Theodore was the last to speak: 'Emperor, do not destroy the stability of the Church. The apostle spoke of those whom God has established in the Church, first as apostles, secondly as prophets, and thirdly as pastors and teachers (I Corinthians 12.28)..., but he did not speak of emperors. You, O Emperor, have been entrusted with the stability of the State and the army. Occupy yourself with that and leave the Church, as the apostle says, to pastors and teachers. If you did not accept this and departed from our faith..., if an angel came from heaven to preach to us another gospel, we would not listen to him; so even less to you!' Then Leo, furious, broke off the dialogue to set the persecution in motion."¹⁰⁵ What is remarkable in this scene is the refusal of the hierarchs to allow the emperor any kind of arbitrating role - even though he had not yet declared himself to be an iconoclast.

¹⁰³ Theosterictus, *Life of St. Nicetas of Medicion*; in Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁴ It is perhaps significant that several of the patriarchs of the period - notably Tarasius, Nicephorus and Photius - had worked as laymen in the imperial administration before becoming patriarchs. The same was true of St. Ambrose of Milan. Evidently close experience of imperial administration from within is a good qualification for a patriarch who has to stand up against imperial power!

¹⁰⁵ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

Of course, the bishops probably knew the secret motives and beliefs of the emperor, so they knew that any council convened by him would have been a “robber council”, like that of 754. Moreover, the Seventh Ecumenical Council had already defined the position of the Church, so a further council was superfluous. However, the bishops’ fears were probably particularly focused on the word “arbitration” and the false theory of Church-State relations that that implied.

The Church had allowed, even urged, emperors to convene councils in the past; but they had never asked them to arbitrate in them. Rather it was they, the bishops sitting in council, who were the arbiters, and the emperor who was obliged, as an obedient son of the Church, to submit to their judgement. The bishops were determined to make no compromises with this last relic of the absolutist theory of Church-State relations.

It was St. Theodore the Studite who particularly pressed this point. As he wrote to the Emperor Leo V: “If you want to be her (the Church’s) son, then nobody is hindering you; only follow in everything your spiritual father (the Patriarch)”.¹⁰⁶ And it was the triumph of Studite rigorism – on this issue, at any rate – that determined the attitude of the patriarchs to the emperors after the final Triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm in 843. For Patriarchs Methodius, Photius and Ignatius, all of whom were later canonized, quite consciously tried to exalt the authority of the patriarchate in relation to the empire.

However, in order to justify this programme, they needed a biblical model. And just as the Emperor Leo had used the figure of Melchizedek, both king and priest, to justify his exaltation of the role of the emperor, so Patriarch Photius used the figure of Moses, both king (as it were) and priest, to exalt the role of the patriarch.¹⁰⁷ Only whereas Melchizedek had been seen by Leo as primarily a king who was also a priest, Moses was seen by St. Photius as primarily a priest who also had the effective power of a king: “Among the citizens, [Moses] chose the most refined and those who would be the most capable to lead the whole people, and he appointed them as priests... He entrusted them with guarding the laws and traditions; that was why the Jews never had a king and why the leadership of the people was always entrusted to the one among the priests who was reputed to be the most intelligent and the most virtuous. It is he whom they call the Great Priest, and they believe that he is for them the messenger of the Divine commandments.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ St. Theodore, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 94.

¹⁰⁷ Ostrogorsky writes: “My reposed friend N.M. Belaev indicated that in the art of medieval Byzantium the ideas of the Kingdom and the priesthood were incarnate in the images of Moses and Aaron, while in the early Byzantine period both ideas were united in the image of Melchizedek, and that the turning point here must be seen to be precisely the VIIth century” (quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 105).

¹⁰⁸ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

However, St. Photius soon came into conflict with Pope Nicholas of Rome over his encroaching on the prerogatives of kings. Moreover, Nicholas introduced the heretical Filioque into the Creed, for which Photius had him anathematized. But this ecclesiastical and dogmatic struggle also had a political aspect insofar as Nicholas, reasserting the Gelasian model of Church-State relations, but also going further than that in an aggressively papist direction, claimed jurisdiction over the newly created Church of Bulgaria, where he wanted to introduce the Filioque. If “caesaropapism” had been the greatest danger in the iconoclast period, it was its opposite, “papocaesarism”, that was to be the greatest danger in the post-iconoclast period.

Until now, Rome had been the most consistently faithful to Orthodoxy of all the patriarchates. But her consciousness of this fine record had bred an incipient feeling of infallibility, which led her to encroach on the prerogatives both of the other patriarchates in the Church and of the emperor in the State. St. Photius stood up in defense of the Eastern Church and State. In 879-880 he convened a Great Council in Constantinople, which was attended by four hundred bishops, including the legates of Pope John VIII. It anathematized the Filioque and firmly restricted the Pope’s jurisdiction to the West. The Pope’s legates signed the decisions...

As regards the emperor, in a letter to the Emperor Basil who exiled him, St. Photius reminded him of his fallibility and mortality.¹⁰⁹ But on the other hand, in his letter to the bishops in exile dating to the same year (870), he gave due honour to the emperor: “While before us the divine Paul exhorts us to pray for sovereigns, so does Peter too, the chief of the apostles, saying, ‘Be submissive to every human institution for the Lord’s sake whether it be to the emperor as supreme,’ and again, ‘Honor the emperor,’ But still, even before them, our common Master and Teacher and Creator Himself from His incalculably great treasure, by paying tribute to Caesar, taught us by deed and custom to observe the privileges which had been assigned to emperors. For this reason, indeed, in our mystical and awesome services we offer up prayers on behalf of our sovereigns. It is, accordingly, both right and pleasing to God, as well as most appropriate for us, to maintain these privileges and to join also our Christ-loving emperors in preserving them.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ “Remember that you are a human being, even though you are Emperor. Remember that we are clothed with the same flesh, whether we are kings or private persons, and that we share the same nature. Remember that we have a common Master and Fashioner and Judge... Respect nature, revere the common laws of mankind, revere the common rights of the Roman Empire. Do not allow an unheard of story to be told of your life: namely, once an emperor who professed goodness and kindness, having made a high priest a friend and co-parent, under whose hands he himself and his empress were anointed with the chrism of emperorship and put on this office, by whom he was exceedingly loved and to whom he had given pledges and awesome assurances, whom he showed to all that he loved exceedingly and cherished; him he gave up to exile and bitter hunger, wore down with countless other ills, while he was praying on his behalf, and sent on to his death.” (D.S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, pp. 164-165).

¹¹⁰ White, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

Moreover, in his advice to the newly baptized Bulgarian Tsar Boris-Michael St. Photius gave the tsar authority even in matters of the faith: "The king must correct his people in the faith and direct it in the knowledge of the true God".¹¹¹ According to Dvorkin, the emperor was "the supreme judge and lawgiver, the defender of the Church and the preserver of the right faith. He took decisions on the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace; his juridical decision was final and not subject to appeal; his laws were considered to be God-inspired, while his power was limited only by the laws of morality and religion. On the other hand, however, once he had issued a law, the emperor himself fell under its force and he was bound to observe it."¹¹²

However, in the preface to a law code entitled the *Epanagoge*, which was compiled between 879 and 886 but never published, and in whose composition St. Photius probably played a leading part, the authority of the Patriarch is exalted over the Emperor. The pro-patriarchal "bias" of this document is already evident in the foreword, where, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, "it says that 'the law is from God', Who is the true Basileus... [And] in the *Digests* we do not find the following thesis of Roman law: 'That which is pleasing to the emperor has the force of law'. Thus the emperor is not seen as 'the living law' (νομος εμψυχος)."¹¹³

The Emperor is the living law, says the *Epanagoge*, only when there is not already a written law: "The Emperor must act as the law when there is none written, except that his actions must not violate the canon law. The Patriarch alone must interpret the canons of the ancient (Patriarchs) and the decrees of the Holy Fathers and the resolutions of the Holy Synods" (*Titulus* III, 5). In fact, as Dagron writes, "The emperor is defined as a 'legitimate authority' (ενομος επιστασια), contrary to the Hellenistic and Roman tradition which declares him to be 'above the laws', being himself 'the living law' and only submitting to the laws of his own free will... In the first article [of *Titulus* III] the patriarch is defined as the living and animate image of Christ by deeds and words typifying the truth (εικων ζωσα Χριστου και εμψυχος δι' εργα και λογων χαρακτηριζουσα την αληθειαν)... Everything that the patriarch gains, he steals from the emperor. In place of the emperor traditionally called - as in the letter of Theodore the Studite - 'imitator of Christ' there is substituted a patriarch called the image of Christ, and in place of the emperor as the living law - a patriarch as the living truth... The idea of the emperor-priest, which was condemned in the person of Leo III, is succeeded by the prudent but clear evocation of a patriarch-emperor, or at least of a supreme priest to whom revert all the attributes of sovereignty. If he is the living image of Christ, the patriarch participates like him in the two powers. He is a New Moses and a New Melchizedek."¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ St. Photius, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 95.

¹¹² Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 586-587.

¹¹³ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 42.

¹¹⁴ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

The document then proceeds to contrast the rights and duties of the Emperor and the Patriarch. "The task of the Emperor is to protect and preserve the existing popular forces by good administration, and to reestablish the damaged forces by careful supervision and just ways and actions" (*Titulus II, 2*). "The task of the Patriarch is, first, to keep those people whom he has received from God in piety and purity of life, and then he must as far as possible convert all heretics to Orthodoxy and the unity of the Church (heretics, in the laws and canons of the Church, are those who are not in communion with the Catholic Church). Also, he must lead the unbelievers to adopt the faith, striking them with the lustre and glory and wonder of his service" (*Titulus III, 2*)... "The aim of the Patriarch is the salvation of the souls entrusted to him; the Patriarch must live in Christ and be crucified for the world" (*Titulus III, 3*). "The Emperor must be most distinguished in Orthodoxy and piety and glorified in divine zeal, knowledgeable in the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and in the definitions of salvation through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Titulus II, 5*). "It particularly belongs to the Patriarch to teach and to relate equally and without limitations of both high and low, and be gentle in administering justice, skilled in exposing the unbelievers, and not to be ashamed to speak before the face of the Emperor about justice and the defence of the dogmas" (*Titulus III, 4*). "The Emperor is bound to defend and strengthen, first of all, all that which is written in the Divine Scriptures, and then also all the dogmas established by the Holy Councils, and also selected Roman laws" (*Titulus II, 4*).

Although it is evident that a more exalted place is accorded to the patriarch in the *Epanagoge*, it is nevertheless striking that the emperor is still given an important role in defending the faith. However, the word "emperor" is carefully defined to exclude what St. Basil or St. Ambrose would have called a "tyrant": "The aim of the Emperor is to do good, which is why he is called a benefactor. And when he ceases to do good, then, it seems, he corrupts the meaning of the concept of Emperor by comparison with the ancient teachings" (*Titulus II, 3*).

In the last analysis, Photius' conception of the kingship seems "to the right of centre" of the patristic consensus, if Justinian's *Novella 6* is seen as the centre. This is probably to be explained by the need felt by the Patriarch to counter the absolutism of Leo III's *Eclogue* and to check the still sometimes intemperate acts of the contemporary emperors (Photius himself was exiled more than once). Moreover, St. Photius probably felt able to express such a bold attitude in relation to the emperor because of the exceptional power he wielded in post-iconoclast Byzantium.

This power was seen as extending even over the other patriarchates of the East. Thus Dmitri Shabanov writes: "As the editor of the *Nomocanon in 14 Tituli*... St. Photius often writes that on the territories of the East the Patriarch of Constantinople has all the canonical rights that the Roman Pope has on the territories of the West. For example, in *Titulus I, 5* and in *Titulus VIII, 5* of the *Nomocanon in 14 Tituli* St.

Photius writes directly that Constantinople has the prerogatives of the old Rome and is 'the head of all the Churches' of the oikoumene, that is, of the Roman Empire...

"According to St. Photius' idea, the transfer of the prerogatives of the Roman bishop to the bishop of Constantinople gives the latter the right to speak out in the capacity of the highest court of appeal for the whole of the East.

"St. Photius' conception of the equal status of the sees of the Old and New Rome was accepted at the Great Council of Constantinople of 879-880 (many canonical monuments and some of the Holy Fathers called this Council the Eighth Ecumenical Council). The Council of 879-880 was convened to rescind the decisions of the preceding Council of 869 at which particular emphasis was placed on the rights of the eastern Patriarchs. In spite of the rescinded decisions of the Council of 869, the Great Council of Constantinople of 879-880 in general made no mention of any rights of the eastern Patriarchs, but decreed in its first canon that the Roman and Constantinopolitan sees had equal judicial rights, thereby removing the right of appeal to Rome to the decisions of the Constantinople court, which in this way was recognized as the highest court of appeal for the whole of the East."¹¹⁵

The process of reducing the pentarchy of patriarchates to a diarchy (Rome and Constantinople) had begun in the time of Justinian in the sixth century. It gathered pace when the three Eastern patriarchates fell under Muslim rule in the seventh century and were virtually reduced to the status of metropolitan districts of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate.¹¹⁶ From the time of St. Photius, moreover, the diarchy was sometimes seen rather as a Constantinopolitan monarchy, insofar as the decline and corruption of Rome in the early tenth century during the "pornocracy of Marozia" greatly reduced her prestige and influence. Moreover, in missionary work beyond the bounds of the empire (the Armenians and Syrians in the East, the Moravians in the West, the Khazars, Bulgars and Russians in the North), where the emperors had previously taken the initiative, the patriarch was now the prime mover.¹¹⁷ Thus the patriarchate was becoming ever more truly "ecumenical" ...

At the same time, it must not be thought that St. Photius denied the traditional doctrine of Church-State symphony. Thus the *Epanagoge* concludes: "The State consists of parts and members like an individual person. The most important and necessary parts are the Emperor and the Patriarch. Therefore unanimity in

¹¹⁵ Shabanov, "Kanonicheskaya Spravka o prave Vselenskogo Patriarchego Prestola Konstantinopolia - Novogo Rima primat' apelliatsii na sudebnie dela iz drugikh Pomestnykh Tservej" (A Canonical Note on the Right of the Ecumenical Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople - New Rome to accept appeals in judicial case from other Local Churches), <http://portalcredo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=64720>, July 24, 2008.

¹¹⁶ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 241; Shabanov, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

everything and agreement (συμφωνία) between the Empire and the Priesthood (constitutes) the spiritual and bodily peace and prosperity of the citizens" (*Titulus III*, 8).

Thus the iconoclast thesis and the post-iconoclast antithesis in political theology came to rest, in the *Epanagoge*, in a synthesis which emphasized the traditional value of symphony between the two powers, even if the superiority was clearly given to the patriarch (the soul) over the emperor (the body). It must also be remembered that the "consensus of the Fathers" with regard to the emperor-patriarch relationship did not occupy an exact middle point, as it were, on the spectrum between "caesaropapism" and "papocaesarism", but rather a broad band in the middle. In times when the emperor was apostate, heretical or simply power-hungry and passionate, the Fathers tended slightly right of centre, emphasizing the independence of the Church, the lay, unpriestly character of the emperor, and the superiority of spiritual to temporal ends as the soul is superior to the body (SS. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Maximus the Confessor, Photius the Great). But in times when the emperor was a faithful son of the Church, the Fathers were glad to accord him a quasi-priestly role and leadership even in spiritual matters – provided, of course, that he did not undertake strictly sacramental functions (the Fathers of the First, Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils, St. Isidore of Pelusium). It was only the extremes that were definitely excluded: the royal absolutism of the iconoclast emperors and the priestly absolutism of the heretical popes, both of which tended to deny any independent sphere of action to the Church hierarchy, in the former case, and to the emperor, in the latter.

Church Laws vs. Imperial Laws

As we have seen, it was a fundamental principle both of Justinian's and of Photius' legislation that Church canons should always take precedence over imperial laws. As this principle became more generally accepted, more areas of what had been considered purely secular life, having little or nothing directly to do with the Church, came under the influence of the process of "enchurchment". This process was expressed in several new requirements: that the emperors themselves should be anointed in a special Church rite¹¹⁸; that marriages take place in church, and in accordance with the canons; and that lands and monies donated by individuals to the Church should never be secularized, but should ever remain under the control of the Church. Thus one of the *novellas* of Emperor Alexis Comnenus said that it was wrong to forbid a slave a Church marriage in a Christian State, for in the Church a slave is equal to a lord. Again, there were cases of trials of murderers, not according to the civil codex, but in accordance with the Church canons: the criminal besought forgiveness on his knees and was given a fifteen-year penance of standing among

¹¹⁸ This did not come about until the thirteenth century. However, already in the fifth century the patriarch had begun to take part in the ceremony of crowning.

the penitents at the Divine Liturgy.¹¹⁹

However, as was to be expected, there was resistance to this process, if not as an ideal, at any rate in practice; and this was particularly so in the case of marriage law – more specifically, of marriage law as applied to emperors... The first major conflict came towards the end of the eighth century, when St. Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to give his blessing to the marriage of the son of the Empress Irene, Constantine VI, who had cast off his lawful wife and entered into an adulterous relationship with his mistress. The Emperors then turned to the priest Joseph, who performed the marriage, upon which St. Tarasius at first did nothing, “through adaptation to circumstances”, but then excommunicated Joseph. Fearful, however, that too great a strictness in this affair would lead the Emperors to incline towards iconoclasm, the patriarch accepted Joseph into communion before the end of his penance. He was also accepted by the next Patriarch, St. Nicephorus, who was under pressure from the next Emperor, Nicephorus.

In protest against this misuse of “economy”, St. Theodore the Studite broke communion with both patriarchs, and returned into communion with St. Nicephorus only when he had again excommunicated Joseph.¹²⁰ According to St. Theodore, he who was not guided by the Canons was not fully Orthodox. St. Paul anathematised anyone who transgressed the law of Christ. A fortiori the emperors were not exempt from the Canons. There was no special “Gospel of the kings”: only God is not subject to the law.¹²¹

St. Photius faithfully followed St. Theodore’s teaching: when Basil I came to power after murdering his predecessor, he accepted him as emperor, but refused to give him communion. But he was deposed for this, and was deposed again by Basil’s son, Leo the Wise, who shifted the balance of Church-State relations back towards caesaropapism, saying: “from now on the emperor’s care extends to everything, and his foresight (πρνοια, a word which can equally well mean the ‘providence’ of God) controls and governs everything.”¹²² He claimed, according to Dorothy Wood, “to be head of Church and State in the sense that, if the Church as led by the Patriarch was irreconcilably opposed to the Emperor, the Emperor could resolve the conflict”.¹²³ And so when St. Photius’ successor (and nephew), Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic, opposed his fourth marriage to Zoe, the Emperor simply removed him from office, forced a priest to perform the marriage and then himself placed the crown on his “wife’s” head.

¹¹⁹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 102.

¹²⁰ Joseph later fell into the heresy of iconoclasm. See Patrick Henry, “The Moechian Controversy and the Constantinopolitan Synod of January AD. 809”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., vol. XX, part 2, October, 1969, pp. 495-522.

¹²¹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 89-93.

¹²² Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 36

¹²³ Wood, *Leo VI’s Concept of Divine Monarchy*, London, 1964, p. 15.

However, the patriarch did not give in. Commenting that the Emperor was to Zoe “both bridegroom and bishop”¹²⁴, he defrocked the priest that had “married” him and stopped the Emperor from entering Hagia Sophia. Then, when the papal legates recognized the marriage, St. Nicholas resigned from his see, declaring that he had received the patriarchate not from the king but from God, and that he was leaving because the Emperor was making the government of the Church impossible. The Emperor retaliated by exiling Nicholas and putting his friend Euthymius on the patriarchal throne, who permitted the fourth marriage, saying: “It is right, your Majesty, to obey your orders and receive your decisions as emanating from the will and providence of God”!¹²⁵ However, after the death of Leo in 912, Euthymius was imprisoned and St. Nicholas was restored to the patriarchate.

Finally, in the *Tome of Union* (920), fourth marriages were condemned as “unquestionably illicit and void”, and third marriages permitted only by special dispensation. At the same time, “the Emperor’s child by his fourth marriage, Constantine Porphyrogennitus, was legitimized and succeeded to the Empire. Thenceforth Patriarchs issued their own rules about marriages and grounds for divorce; and the emperors did not intervene.”¹²⁶

St. Nicholas explained to the Pope: “What was I to do in such circumstances? Shut up and go to sleep? Or think and act as befits a friend who cares at one and the same time both for the honour of the emperor and for the ecclesiastical decrees? And so we began the struggle with God’s help; we tried to convince the rulers not to be attracted by that which is proper only for those who do not know how to control themselves, but to endure what had happened with magnanimity, with good hope on Christ our God; while we touched, not only his knee, but also his leg, begging and beseeching him as king in the most reverential way not to permit his authority to do everything, but to remember that there sits One Whose authority is mightier than his - He Who shed His Most Pure Blood for the Church.” And to the Emperor he wrote: “My child and emperor, it befitted you as a worshipper of God and one who has been glorified by God more than others with wisdom and other virtue, to be satisfied with three marriages: perhaps even a third marriage was unworthy of your royal majesty... but the sacred canons do not completely reject a third marriage, but are condescending, although they dislike it. However, what justification can there be for a fourth marriage? The king, they say, is the unwritten law, but not in order that he may act in a lawless manner and everything that comes into his head, but in order that by his unwritten deeds he may be that which is the written law; for if the king is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ P.G. 91.197.

¹²⁵ *Life of Euthymius*, quoted in Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹²⁶ Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, p. 334; Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹²⁷ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 90.

The saint went on to say that “an emperor who gave orders to slander, to murder through treachery, to celebrate unlawful marriages, and to seize other people’s property, was not an emperor, but a brigand, a slanderer, an adulterer and a thief”.¹²⁸

The Question of Legitimacy

Another area in which imperial might came up against ecclesiastical right was the very important one of imperial legitimacy and succession. Even late into the Christian period, Roman emperors were so often overthrown by force that J.B. Bury, following Mommsen, called the government of Byzantium “an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution”.¹²⁹ Dvorkin echoes this judgement: “The power of the Byzantine emperor was limited by the right of the people to revolution”.¹³⁰

However, Andrew Louth points out that by the time of the Macedonian dynasty in the tenth century, the idea of legitimate succession from father to son had taken hold.¹³¹

Dagron has shown that the Byzantine concept of legitimacy was a complex one; one could become emperor by dynastic succession from father to son, by being “purple-born (πορφυρογεννητος)”¹³², by marrying a former empress, by being made co-emperor by a living emperor, as well as by usurpation, that is, the overthrow of a living emperor by force.¹³³ Although a usurper would naturally be considered to be the very opposite of a legitimate ruler, he could nevertheless be seen as expressing God’s transfer of power from an unworthy man to one more worthy, as when He “repented” of His choice of Saul and chose David to take his place.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ St. Nicholas, “Epistle 32”, P.G. 111: 209-213; Fr. George Poullas, “Indestructible Towers”, *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. 26, 2009, no. 2, p. 15.

¹²⁹ Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9.

¹³⁰ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

¹³¹ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 213.

¹³² That is, born in the πορφύρα, a special room lined with porphyry which Constantine V had constructed in the imperial palace as birth-place for his son. Being born in this room then came to confer on the new-born, writes Dagron, “a sacred character: the divine unction from the womb of his mother... [St.] Theophano, in order to explain to Leo VI that he was born in the purple without experience of unhappiness or poverty, said to him: ‘You have been anointed from the womb’” (*op. cit.*, p. 61).. Several emperors, including Constantine VII, Zoe and Theodora, claimed the throne primarily on the basis of their being “born in the purple”,

¹³³ Dagron, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

¹³⁴ “In the middle of the 9th century, the Khazars dispatched an envoy to [St.] Constantine/Cyril, who had landed in their country to evangelize it; and this ‘astute and malicious’ man asked him: ‘Why do you persist in the bad habit of always taking as emperors different people coming from different families? We do it according to the family?’ To which the missionary replied by quoting the example of David, who succeeded to Saul when he was not of his family by the choice of God.” (Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34).

The comparison between the Byzantine idea of legitimacy and the Chinese “mandate of heaven” is not completely frivolous. For in the Chinese system, as Roberts writes: “Confucian principles taught that, although rebellion was wrong if a true king reigned, a government which provoked rebellion and could not control it ought to be replaced, for it was *ipso facto* illegitimate.”¹³⁵ Similarly in the Byzantine system, as Lemerle writes, “usurpation... has... almost a political function. It is not so much an illegal act as the first act in a process of legitimation... There is a parallelism, rather than an opposition, between the basileus and the usurper. Hence the existence of two different notions of legitimacy, the one ‘dynastic’ and the other which we might call (in the Roman sense) ‘republican’, which are not really in conflict but reinforce each other: the second, when the usurper fails, reinforces thereby the first, and when he succeeds, recreates it, whether the usurper attaches himself to the dynasty or founds a dynasty himself.”¹³⁶

And yet: what if a usurper came to power by the murder of his predecessor? Even here the Church usually crowned him. Thus in 865 St. Irene Chrysovalantou revealed that the Emperor Michael III was to be murdered. However, she said, “do not by any means oppose the new Emperor [Basil I], who shall come to the throne, though murder be at the root of it. The holy God has preferred and chosen him, so the enemy himself will not benefit.”¹³⁷ St. Photius also accepted the new emperor – but refused him communion in church.¹³⁸

“Despite his obscure origins,” writes Judith Herrin, “Basil I’s family maintained control over Byzantium for nearly two centuries, from 867 to 1056. In the tenth century, Constantine VII commissioned a biography of Basil (his grandfather), which invented a noble Armenian origin for the family and traced the portents which led to Basil ‘saving’ the empire from a drunken and dissolute ruler, Michael III, rather than gaining power in treacherous circumstances. By blackening the character of Basil’s patron and colleague, Constantine made sure that his grandfather was given a highly original and invented role, as more legitimate and worthy of the imperial title than Michael. By such means the Macedonian dynasty, as it became known, contributed to a deeper sense of order, *taxis*, and strengthened the imperial office through a proper and controlled line of succession from father to son.”¹³⁹

Sometimes the usurper was crowned, provided certain conditions were fulfilled. Thus when Emperor Nicephorus Phocas was murdered on December 11, 969 by his successor, John Tzimiskes, Patriarch Polyeuctus “declared that he would not allow the Emperor to enter the church as long as he had not expelled the Augusta from the

¹³⁵ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

¹³⁶ Lemerle, in Rosemary Morris, “Succession and usurpation: politics and rhetoric in the late tenth century”, in Magdalino, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

¹³⁷ *The Lives of the Spiritual Mothers*, Buena Vista, CO; Holy Apostles’ Convent, 1991, p. 325.

¹³⁸ White, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹³⁹ Herrin, *Byzantium*, London: Allen Lane, 2007, pp. 146-147.

palace and had not named the murderer of the Emperor, whoever he might be. Moreover, he demanded the return to the Synod of a document published by Nicephorus in violation of justice. The point was that Nicephorus, either intending to remove certain violations of the sacred rites that had been allowed, in his opinion, by certain hierarchs, or wishing to submit to himself even that in the religious sphere which it was not fitting for him to rule over, had forced the hierarchs to compose a decree according to which nothing in Church affairs was to be undertaken without his will. Polyeuctus suggested that the Emperor carry out all (this); in the contrary case he would not allow him to enter the holy church. (John) accepted the conditions; he removed the Augusta from the palace and exiled her to an island called Protos, returned Nicephorus' decree to the Synod and pointed to Leo Valans, saying that he and nobody else had killed the Emperor with his own hand. Only then did Polyeuctus allow him into the holy church and crown him, after which he returned to the Royal palace and was hailed by the army and people."¹⁴⁰

This extraordinary episode tells us much about the real relationship between Church and State in Byzantium. On the one hand, there is no question that although Tzimiskes won the throne through brute force and murder, there was no real attempt to remove him or refusal to recognize him. This indicates that the pagan principle of Old Rome: "might is right", still prevailed in tenth-century Byzantium. Or rather: if might prevails, then this is by the Providence of God, and should therefore be accepted.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, Tzimiskes' *de facto* victory was not felt to be enough in a Christian society: he needed the Church's forgiveness and sacramental blessing. And this the Church felt powerful enough to withhold until several conditions had been met: (1) the removal of Empress Theophano, the widow both of Nicephorus and the previous emperor Romanus and the mother of Romanus' purple-born sons Basil and Constantine, whom Tzimiskes had wanted to marry in order to strengthen his position; (2) the annulment of a caesaropapist decree of the previous emperor; and (3) the new emperor's at any rate formal attempt to find the murderer (everyone must have known that the emperor himself was the murderer, but if he did not accuse himself there was no higher judicial power that could convict him). By obtaining the fulfillment of these three conditions the Church, it could be said, made the best out of a bad job, extracting some good from an essentially evil deed. And so while the Byzantines accepted Tzimiskes as *basileus*, they condemned the deed by which he attained the throne.

¹⁴⁰ Leo the Deacon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 99.

¹⁴¹ There are several examples of this in Byzantine history. For example, in 602 Phocas brutally murdered the Emperor Maurice, and was recognized as the new emperor (Pope Gregory I even heaped praises on him!). Phocas proceeded to "establish bloody terror in the empire (602-610). One contemporary cites the story of a certain man who cried out to God: 'Why did You send Your people such a blood-thirsty wolf?' And the Lord replied to him: 'I tried to find someone worse than Phocas, so as to punish the people for its self-will, but was unable. But don't you question the judgements of God' (Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 439).

Thus, according to Morris, “Leo the Deacon writes of the action... as kathairesis (‘pulling down’) and anairesis (‘destruction’, ‘abrogation’). He comments that if the emperor’s brother, Leo Phokas, had been quicker off the mark, he might have been able to rally support against this neoterismos (‘innovation’, ‘revolution’).”¹⁴² The manoeuvre, writes Morris, was “nicely put by Leo the Deacon, who clearly understood these matters. Tzimiskes, he wrote, ‘took up the reins of the Empire’ at the fourth hour of the day of 11 December 963. In other words he assumed the governance of the empire. But it was not until after his coronation that his position as autokrator was finally legitimized by receiving the blessing of the church.”¹⁴³

But if this resolved the question of Tzimiskes’ legitimacy, it did not wipe out his sin. The best the Byzantines could come up with here was the theory – propounded by the thirteenth-century canonist Balsamon – that the emperor’s anointing washed out all his previous sins!¹⁴⁴ As Morris writes: “In the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, dateable to the beginning of the twelfth century at the latest, we have an angel indicating to the narrator an empty throne in Hell and explaining that it belonged to John Tzimiskes ‘who was not worthy of it, because he murdered Nikephoros Phokas’. Then the wounded Nikephoros is seen reproaching John, saying, “John, Tzimiskes, Lord John, why did you inflict an unjust death on me...” And John replied nothing but “Woe! What have I done?” The invention of the tradition that Tzimiskes’ anointing had washed away the sin of the murder is, of course, another clear indication that he was believed to have been directly implicated.”¹⁴⁵

“The aim,” according to Dagron, “is to convert brute force (το θηριωδες, θηριον αλογον, as Agapetus and Basil write) into a legitimate power, and the historical sources often allude to this conversion. If Theophanes characterizes Leo V, in 814, as ‘very legitimate emperor of the Romans’, this is to signify that this general, who had been called to the Empire by war and popular favour, was able to carry out the mutation which from now on made him a legitimate sovereign by not being too precipitate in the stages of transition, by letting the patriarch act, by ceasing to be an army commander, by conforming himself, not to constitutional rules which did not exist, nor even to more or less uncertain procedures, but to a process that allowed him to leave one role, that of a popularly elected general, for another, that of an emperor elected by God. If, on the contrary, Michael Attaliates and his contemporaries were doubtful that Isaac I Comnenus had succeeded, in 1057, in his passage from ‘tyranny’ to ‘legitimate power’, in spite of his probity and his courage, this was because he had not been able to divest himself of his martial fury, which had given him power but not sacredness... So it is not power that is legitimate, it is he who appropriates it who can become

¹⁴² Morris, in Magdalino, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

¹⁴³ Morris, in Magdalino, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

¹⁴⁴ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁴⁵ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

legitimate by choosing to respect the law..."¹⁴⁶

So by the end of the first millennium of Christian history the Byzantines had reached a pragmatic compromise with regard to the question of legitimacy. They could not stop usurping generals from seizing power, and did not refuse them from exercising that power. They simply hoped that they could tame the beast, and turn his illegitimacy into legality. The important thing was that he respect the Church. On this the Byzantines – in this period, at any rate – made no compromise; and it was this that made theirs a truly Christian State.

¹⁴⁶ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39.

II. THE BYZANTINE SYMPHONY OF NATIONS

The Orthodox Christian Empire of New Rome inherited from its pagan Old Roman predecessor the idea that Rome encompassed the whole oikoumene or “inhabited world”. As Sir Steven Runciman writes, “Ideally, it should embrace all the peoples of the earth, who, ideally, should all be members of the one true Christian Church, its own Orthodox Church.”¹⁴⁷

“In Roman eyes,” as Dominic Lieven writes, “the Roman Empire was a universal monarchy: it encompassed the whole globe, or at least all of it that was worth bothering about. The barbarians beyond the empire’s wall they regarded in terms somewhat similar to nineteenth-century European colonists’ view of ‘natives’. Their only imperial neighbour, the Parthian empire, was considered by the Romans to be ‘an oriental despotism, a barbarian, braggart and motley nation’. As in every other aspect of their culture, the Roman sense of universalism owed much to the Greeks. Alexander had conquered virtually the whole of the known world and although his empire was very short-lived the spread of Hellenistic culture was not. ‘The Greek philosophers, in particular the Stoics, stressed the notion that all mankind formed one community, partaking of universal reason... it was, indeed, the Greeks who from the second century BC had regarded the Roman Empire and the universe (oikoumene) as one... Ideas such as these made a deep impression on the minds of the political and intellectual elite of Rome, and through their influence the two notions of orbis terrarum and imperium came to be regarded in the first century as identical: from then on no distinction was ever made between them.’

“The adoption in the fourth century of Christianity, a world religion which recognized no ethnic or cultural borders, could only increase the Roman imperial sense of universalism. In time Christian clergy undertook evangelizing missions outside their polities’ borders, converting whole peoples to their religion and therefore, in the end, to a great extent to their culture. This the rulers of imperial Rome had never conceived of...”¹⁴⁸

And so, parallel to the concept of the symphony of *powers*, whose model was the relationship between the two natures of Christ, there emerged the concept of the symphony of *nations*, whose model was the hierarchical relationship between father and son. The Roman Emperor was the head and father of a family of Christian rulers, a family not necessarily united by a single political or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but by a common belonging to the civilization of Christian Rome. If we restrict ourselves to speaking only of the Orthodox Christian States and peoples, then within this single religio-cultural commonwealth or civilization there was,

¹⁴⁷ Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Lieven, *Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 9-10.

strictly speaking, only one Christian people, the people of the Romans; and Greeks and Latins, Celts and Germans, Semites and Slavs were all equally *Romans*, all equally members of the Roman commonwealth of nations.

“This doctrine,” writes I.P. Medvedev, “found practical expression in... a hierarchical system of States...The place of each sovereign in this official, hierarchical gradation of all the princes of the world in relation to the Byzantine Emperor was defined by kinship terms borrowed from the terminology of family law: father-son-brother, but also friend... The use of kinship terms by the Byzantine Emperor in addressing a foreign Sovereign was not a simple metaphor or rhetoric, but a definite title which was given on the basis of a mutual agreement, that is, bestowed by the Emperor... And so at the head of the oikoumene was the Basileus Romanon, the Byzantine Emperor, the father of ‘the family of sovereigns and peoples’. Closest of all ‘by kinship’ among the politically independent sovereigns were certain Christian rulers of countries bordering on the Empire, for example Armenia, Alania and Bulgaria; they were spiritual sons of the Byzantine Emperor. Less close were the Christian masters of the Germans and French, who were included in this ‘family of sovereigns and peoples’ with the rights of spiritual brothers of the Emperor. After them came the friends, that is, independent sovereigns and peoples who received this title by dint of a special agreement – the emir of Egypt and the ruler of India, and later the Venetians, the king of England, etc. Finally, we must name a large group of princes who were ranked, not according to degree of ‘kinship’, but by dint of particularities of address and protocol – the small appanage principalities of Armenia, Iberia, Abkhazia, the Italian cities, Moravia and Serbia (group 1), and the appanage princes of Hungary and Rus’, the Khazar and Pecheneg khans, etc. (group 2)...”¹⁴⁹

And so from Spain in the West to Georgia in the East "a great number of peoples made up the autocracy but without any 'ethnic' differentiation between them. The whole racial amalgam lived and moved in a single civilization (apart from some particularities) - the Greek¹⁵⁰, and it had a single cohesive spiritual power – Orthodoxy, which was at the same time the ideology of the oikoumene - autocracy. The citizens of the autocracy were Romans politically, Greeks culturally and Orthodox Christians spiritually. Through Orthodoxy the old relationship of rulers and ruled was replaced by the sovereign bond of brotherhood. Thus the 'holy race' of the New Testament (I Peter 2.9) became a reality as the 'race of the Romans', that is, of the Orthodox citizens of the autocracy of the New Rome."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Medvedev, in Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, vol. I, pp. 138-139.

¹⁵⁰ However, there was no attempt to force Greek (or Latin) upon the non-Greek parts of Christendom. Thus in the East Syriac and Coptic were still spoken by millions, and some of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. Ephraim the Syrian, spoke no Greek at all. (V.M.)

¹⁵¹ Fr. George Metallinos, “Apo ti Romaiki oikoumenikotita ston Ethnistiko Patriotismo” (“From Roman Universalism to Ethnic Patriotism”), *Exodos*, Athens, 1991, p. 38.

This internationalism of the Empire was underlined by the Emperors' diverse nationalities. Thus Constantine was a Roman, Theodosius I was a Spaniard, Justinian I was a Thracian or Illyrian from Skopje, Maurice and Heraclius were Armenians and Leo the iconoclast was Syrian.

The Gauls and Italians

The ideal of "One Faith, One Church, One Empire" survived even in the West, in spite of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the devastation caused by the barbarians. Thus Fr. Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte write: "In reality the barbarian invasions - Visigoths, Lombards, Vandals, Franks, - in spite of their violence did not shatter this national Roman unity; they could only, at the beginning, displace its visible centre: bypassing the Roman political structures, it was around the Church that the conquered people found itself again, and it was the Church that then exercised a real ethnarchy. It was with the Church that the barbarians had to come to terms; the bishop, still freely elected by the faithful and the clergy, was their interlocutor. In Gaul, this ethnarchy was for a long time assumed by the bishop of Arles - a true Roman capital, which bore the name of Constantine, in Spain by that of Cordoba, in Italy by that of Rome."¹⁵²

However, while some elements of Roman life, and especially the Church, survived for many centuries, political unity was shattered quite early on. In the fifth century we see a gradual transition from a situation in which, while there were many barbarian groups inside the empire, they did not threaten its internal stability, and even considered themselves to be Romans, to a situation in which, while still acting like Romans in many ways, the barbarian leaders now considered themselves independent of Rome and began to undermine its traditional way of life. Thus in 410 the Roman legions left Britain, leaving the Roman Britons exposed to barbarian invasions from all sides; in 429 the Vandal Geiseric conquered the province of Africa, cutting off the vital shipments of grain from Carthage to Rome; in the 440s most of Spain was conquered by the Suevi; by 450 the villa culture, an important indicator of Roman life, had ceased in northern Gaul; and in 451 and 452 the Huns under Attila invaded Gaul and Italy, sacking Rome itself.

"The end of the empire," writes Chris Wickham, "was experienced most directly in Gaul. The Visigothic King Euric (466-84) was the first major ruler of a 'barbarian' polity in Gaul - the second in the empire after Geiseric - to have a fully autonomous political practice, uninfluenced by any residual Roman loyalties. Between 471 and 476 he expanded his power east to the Rhône (and beyond, into Provence), north to the Loire, and south into Spain. The Goths had already been fighting in Spain since the later 450s (initially on behalf of the emperor Avitus), but Euric organized a fully

¹⁵² Ranson and Motte, introduction to Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale* (The Fatal Mystification), Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987, p. 11.

fledged conquest there, which is ill-documented, but seems to have been complete (except for a Suevic enclave in the north-west) by the time of his death. By far the best documented of Euric's conquests, though not the most important, was the Auvergne in 471-5, because the bishop of its central city, Clermont, was the Roman senator Sidonius Apollinarius. Sidonius, who was Avitus' son-in-law, and had been a leading lay official for both [Emperors] Majorian and Anthemius, ended his political career besieged inside his home city, and we can see all the political changes of the 450s-470s through his eyes. A supporter of alliance with the Visigoths in the 450s, by the late 460s Sidonius had become increasingly aware of the dangers involved, and hostile to Roman officials who still dealt with them; then in the 470s we see him despairing of any further help for Clermont, and contemptuous of the Italian envoys who sacrificed the Auvergne so as to keep Provence under Roman control. By around 480, as he put it, 'now that the old degrees of official rank are swept away... the only token of nobility that the old degrees will henceforth be a knowledge of letters'; the official hierarchy had gone, only traditional Roman culture remained..."¹⁵³

Now the relationship between the Church and the State in New Rome was understood by analogy with the relationship between the soul and the body: the soul was the Church and the body was the State. However, while certainly illuminating, this analogy had, like all analogies of spiritual things, certain limitations. One was that while the Orthodox Church throughout the world was one, there had never been just one Orthodox State. Or rather, there had been one such State for a short time, in the fourth century. But with the fall of the Western Empire in 476, the West had split up into a number of barbarian kingdoms, some of them Orthodox, most not, and none of them deriving their power from the emperor in Constantinople. Thus while there was only one soul, there appeared to be many bodies.

How, then, was the idea of a single Christendom, a single Christian *oikoumene* animated by a single Christian Faith and Church, to be reconciled with the fact of a multiplicity of Christian States and nations? And, still more importantly, what were to be the relations between the Christian Empire and the newly formed Christian kingdoms?

The first solution was to bestow upon the independent barbarian states a kind of filial status in relation to the Eastern Empire. Thus when the last Western Emperor was deposed by Odoacer¹⁵⁴, Odoacer was made "lieutenant" (*foederatus*) of the Emperor in New Rome. Later, in 489, the Emperor Zeno commissioned the king of the Ostrogoths, Theodoric, to drive out Odoacer, and in 497 Theodoric gained the Emperor Anastasius' recognition.

¹⁵³ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, pp. 23, 24.

Theodoric, writes J.M. Roberts, “was utterly convinced of Rome’s authority; he had an emperor as a godfather and had been brought up at Constantinople until he was eighteen. ‘Our royalty is an imitation of yours, a copy of the only Empire on earth’, he once wrote to the emperor in Constantinople from his capital in Ravenna. On his coins appeared the legend ‘Unvanquished Rome’ (*Roma invicta*), and when he went to Rome, Theodoric held games in the old style in the circus. Yet technically he was the only Ostrogoth who was a Roman citizen, his authority accepted by the Senate; his countrymen were merely the mercenary soldiers of the empire. To civil offices he appointed Romans...”¹⁵⁵

Although Arian German rule had not generally been oppressive for the majority Roman population, the revival of Orthodoxy in both Gaul and the East, where the heterodox, Jews and pagans were coming under increasing pressure, together with the new and friendly relationship between the Emperor and the Pope, began to make the previously tolerant Arian King Theodoric nervous. In 524 he executed the Roman senator and philosopher Boethius on suspicion of plotting with the Byzantines against the Goths. Then, in 526, he sent Pope John I on a humiliating mission to Constantinople to intercede for the Arians in the Empire.

Although the Pope was received with great honour and crowned Justin emperor, he did not succeed in his mission, and on his return he was cast into prison, where he died. Then Theodoric issued an edict allowing the Arians to occupy the churches of the Orthodox in retaliation for the Emperor’s actions against the Arians in the East.

Soon, the legal fiction that the Arian kings of Italy and Spain were in any sense *foederati* of the Orthodox Emperor was abandoned¹⁵⁶, and the new Emperor Justinian prepared to wage war on them, in order to restore the territory of the Roman Empire, on the one hand, and to restore the Orthodox faith to the West, on the other.

The Gothic wars that ensued posed an acute dilemma for the Orthodox Roman populations under Arian rule, a dilemma that was to be felt many times in the future by Orthodox Christians living under non-Orthodox rule: to rebel or not to rebel. The question was: was the Roman Empire the only legitimate political authority for those of Roman descent living on its former territories? Or were the barbarian kings also legitimate powers, the legal successors of Rome in some sense?

¹⁵⁵ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, p. 239. Cf. Judith Herrin, *Byzantium*, London: Allen Lane, 2007, pp. 63-65.

¹⁵⁶ Thus Joseph Canning writes that after the Gothic wars “it seems that no western kings sought imperial confirmation of their rule” from the Roman Emperor (*A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 17).

The question was easily answered – in a positive sense - in the case of the Frankish kings, who immediately entered into a close, harmonious relationship with the Gallo-Roman nobility and episcopate, and even received Baptism under Clovis. It was also easily answered – in a negative sense - in the case of the Vandals of North Africa, whose first king, Gaiseric, a rigorous Arian, had banished Orthodox priests who refused to perform the Arian services and even sacked Rome in 455.¹⁵⁷ Later, in 530, the pro-Roman and pro-Orthodox King Hilderic was overthrown by the anti-Roman and anti-Orthodox Gelimer.

This gave Justinian the excuse he needed, and in a short six-month campaign (533-34) his general Belisarius, supported by the local population, destroyed the Vandal kingdom and placed all the dissident and heretical assemblies under ban. But the Gothic rulers of Italy and Spain constituted a less clear-cut case. On the one hand, they remained socially and legally separate from their Roman subjects and did not adopt Orthodoxy; but on the other hand, they did not, in general, persecute the Faith, and allowed the Romans to follow their own laws.

The dilemma was made more acute by the fact that in Rome itself many suspected that Justinian had deliberately appointed a pro-Monophysite patriarch of Constantinople in the person of Anthimus. And when Pope Agapetus arrived in Constantinople, Justinian said to him: “I shall either force you to agree with us, or else I shall send you into exile.” Whereupon the Pope replied: “I wished to come to the most Christian of all emperors, Justinian, and I have found now a Diocletian; however, I fear not your threats.”¹⁵⁸

So the question of who was the legitimate ruler of the western lands was not so clear to the Roman populations of the West, in spite of their natural sympathy for the Empire, as it probably appeared to Justinian. If they had lived peaceably enough for more than one generation under Arian rulers, why should they rise up against them now?

However, after the murder of the pro-Roman Ostrogothic Queen Amalasantha in 534 by the new King Theodahad, the Emperor had a clear *casus belli*. And then the victories of Justinian’s generals Belisarius and Nerses settled the question: Italy was again Roman and Orthodox. The famous frescoes of Justinian and Theodore in Ravenna’s church of San Vitale commemorate the restoration of Romanity to the heartland of Old Rome. And although there had been many desertions, and the cost of the war had been very great, and the north was soon overrun again by another Arian Germanic race, the Lombards, the leaders of Roman society, such as Pope Gregory I, were convinced that it had all been worth it...

¹⁵⁷ Tim Newark, *Warlords*, London: Brockhampton Press, 1996, p. 323.

¹⁵⁸ Pope Agapetus, in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Milwaukee, 1958, p. 151.

The Spanish

The conflict between loyalty to the Roman Empire and loyalty to the new barbarian states that had sprung up on Roman soil was felt especially acutely in Spain, where an Arian Visigothic regime ruled over a largely Orthodox Christian Romanized population.

Now it might have been expected that when Justinian's armies invaded Spain in the 550s and carved out a Roman province in the south-east called Spania, the Roman inhabitants of the peninsula, who constituted perhaps 90% of the population, would have risen up in support of the Byzantines against their foreign rulers. However, many of the Hispano-Romans fled inland from Cartagena when the Byzantines invaded, including even the most notable Spaniard of the age, St. Leander of Seville. As a result of this loyalty of the Roman Spaniards to the Visigothic regime, the restoration of Orthodoxy in Spain came about, neither through the might of Byzantine arms from without, nor through the rebellion of Hispano-Romans from within, but through the conversion of the Visigoths themselves...

It began in 579 when the Visigothic King Leovigild's eldest son and the ruler of Seville, Hermenegild, married the Orthodox Frankish princess Ingundis. Not only did Ingundis stubbornly refuse to become an Arian even when subjected to torture by the Queen Mother Goisuntha. On arriving in Seville, she and St. Leander succeeded in converting Hermenegild to Orthodoxy. Then several thousand Goths were converted in Seville.

Now Arianism was the national religion of the Goths: every Goth was required to be Arian, just as every Roman was encouraged to remain Orthodox. Intermarriage between the two sub-nations was illegal - but this was not so much a matter of faith, as of national identity. The Goths did not try to convert the Romans because that would have meant a confusion of the races, and they discouraged conversion by insisting on the rebaptism of converts from Orthodoxy. Already, however, some confusion was taking place through the Goths' adoption of Roman manners and dress. If they adopted the faith of the Romans as well, what would distinguish them from their subjects?

And so, writes C.A.A. Scott, "in the political situation of the kingdom the transference of the allegiance of the heir apparent from the Arian to the Catholic confession involved and proclaimed a withdrawal of his allegiance to the king. This ecclesiastical defection was necessarily accompanied by a political rebellion."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ C.A.A. Scott, *Ulfilas, Apostle of the Goths*, Cambridge, 1885, p. 199; quoted in E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp. 65-66.

As David Keys writes, “Hermenegild’s conversion was a massive challenge to the political system as a whole.”¹⁶⁰

However, the rebellion of Hermenegild, though aided by the Orthodox Sueves in the north-west (they converted from Arianism to Orthodoxy in the 550s), and the Byzantines in the south-east, was crushed by King Leogivild (the Byzantine general was bribed to stay in camp¹⁶¹). Hermenegild himself was killed at Pascha, 585 for refusing to accept communion from an Arian bishop in prison. He was immediately hailed as a martyr by Pope St. Gregory, the writer of his *Life*; and St. Gregory of Tours also treated the civil war as religious in essence.

However, the Spanish sources, both Gothic and Roman, speak of him as a rebel rather than a martyr. And “it seems evident,” writes Aloysius Ziegler, “that the Spanish Church did not espouse the cause of the Catholic [i.e. Orthodox] prince against his Arian father”.¹⁶²

So it is clear that those within and outside the country attached different priorities to the purity of the faith, on the one hand, and the integrity of the kingdom, on the other. For the Franks and the Italians (and the Orthodox of other nations who inscribed St. Hermenegild’s name among the saints), the triumph of Orthodoxy justified even the horrors of civil war. But the Spaniards, who, as St. Gregory of Tours wrote, “had adopted this detestable custom of killing with the sword any of their kings who did not please them, and of appointing as king whomsoever their fancy lighted upon”¹⁶³, preferred the peaceful *status quo*. And yet putting the faith first bore rich fruit; for within a very few years, at the great Council of Toledo in 589, the new king, Reccared and the whole of the Gothic nobility accepted Orthodoxy, and Arianism never again lifted its head in Spain. Thus, as St. Demetrius of Rostov writes, “the fruit of the death of this one man was life and Orthodoxy for all the people of Spain”.¹⁶⁴

Led by the Church, Spain now entered perhaps the greatest period in her history. There were frequent councils in which the king and the bishops took part, and at which an extensive programme of legislation was enacted. “Gothic law” was clearly related to the imperial code of Theodosius II; and although the Byzantine province of Spania was reconquered in 628, “it is fairly clear that the late seventh-century Visigoths had the contemporary Byzantine empire as a point of reference..., at least

¹⁶⁰ Keys, *Catastrophe*, London: Arrow Books, 2000, p. 204.

¹⁶¹ St. Gregory of Tours wrote that Hermenegild “joined the party of the Emperor Tiberius, making overtures to the Emperor’s army commander, who was then invading Spain”, but that “as soon as Leovigild ordered his troops to advance Hermenegild found himself deserted by the Greeks” (*History of the Franks*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974, V, 38).

¹⁶² Ziegler, *Church and State in Visigothic Spain*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1930, p. 30. See also Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁶³ St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, III, 30.

¹⁶⁴ St. Demetrius, *Lives of the Saints*, November 1.

as a model for ceremonial, and for a close identification between the episcopacy and the king.”¹⁶⁵ It was the king who effectively appointed the bishops. At the same time, he insisted on bringing the Church right into the process of civil legislation, allowing bishops to take part in the election of kings. Thus “the decisions of the council,” writes Ziegler, “had the strange character of being partly civil and partly ecclesiastical, with the important distinction, however, that the ecclesiastical as well as the civil had the force of statute law for all living within the kingdom... It cannot be denied that the presence of the bishops at these councils had the result of placing the legal code of Visigothic Spain on a philosophical basis and of resting it on principles which expressed to a very large degree the social doctrines of the Christian religion. The enactment of laws by the synod did not have the necessary result of making the Church an integral or essential part of the civic administration, but it did introduce into the laws principles of morality and justice which must ultimately have resulted in the greatest benefit to all the people of Spain...”¹⁶⁶

The Church’s glorification of St. Hermenegild established the principle that *legitimate political power was either Roman power, or that power which shared in the faith of the Romans, Orthodoxy*. A heterodox power could legitimately be overthrown as long as the motive was truly religious – the establishment or re-establishment of Orthodoxy. This did not mean, however, that Christians were *obliged* to rebel against pagan or heterodox régimes; for, as Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) points out, civil war is one of the worst of all evils and is to be undertaken only if the alternative is likely to be even worse in terms of the salvation of souls.¹⁶⁷

The British

The distant province of Britain was in a sense more committed to the new order of Christian Rome than any other for the simple reason that the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, had been proclaimed emperor for the first time precisely in *Britain*, and had taken the title Britannicus Maximus, “the greatest of the Britons”, in 315. However, signs of Romanization are fewer in Britain than on the continent even after four centuries of Roman rule. Romans writing about Britain exhibit a certain antipathy towards this province, which they seem to confuse with the unRomanized Scots beyond Hadrian’s Wall. And the Britons retained, with the Jews, the reputation of being the least assimilated people in the Empire.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps for that reason Britain became the platform for more than one rebellion against the central authorities in the late Empire. Thus in 383 Magnus Maximus,

¹⁶⁵ Wickham, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁶⁶ Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), *The Christian Faith and War*, Jordanville, 1973, p. 12.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Jones, “The Failure of Romanization in Celtic Britain”, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, vol. VII, 1987, pp. 126-139, Cambridge, MA: Pangur Publications; *The End of Roman Britain*, Cornell University Press, 1998.

leader of the army in Britain, seized power in the West and killed the Western Emperor Gratian. Now Maximus was baptized, was a champion of the Church and defended the Western frontier against the Germans well. Moreover, his usurpation of the empire should not have debarred him from the throne: many emperors before and after came to the throne by the same means. Nevertheless, he is consistently portrayed in the sources as a tyrant; and Sulpicius Severus wrote of him that he was a man “whose whole life would have been praiseworthy if he could have refused the crown illegally thrust upon him by a mutinous army”.¹⁶⁹

St. Ambrose of Milan refused to give him communion, warning him that “he must do penance for shedding the blood of one who was his master [the Western Emperor Gratian] and... an innocent man.” Maximus refused, “and he laid down in fear, like a woman, the realm that he had wickedly usurped, thereby acknowledging that he had been merely the administrator, not the sovereign [imperator] of the state.”¹⁷⁰ In 388 he was defeated and executed by the Eastern Emperor Theodosius.

The very fact that western bishops such as Ambrose could recognize the Eastern Emperor Theodosius as a true king while rejecting the British usurper Maximus, was a tribute to the way in which Christian Rome had transformed political thought in the ancient world. In early Rome a “tyrant” was a man who seized power by force; and in Republican Rome tyrants were those who, like Julius Caesar, imposed one-man rule on the true and only lawful sovereigns – Senatus PopulusQue Romanorum, the senate and people of Rome. During the first three centuries of the empire, many generals seized power by force and the senate and the people were forced to accept their legitimacy. However, this changed with the coming of St. Constantine, who became the source and model of all legitimate emperors. Constantine, of course, had seized the empire by force; but he had done so against anti-Christian tyrants and was therefore seen to have been acting with the blessing of God. Now legitimate rulers would have to prove that they were in the image of Constantine, both in their Orthodoxy and in their legitimate succession from the previous emperor. As for who the *real sovereign* was – the emperor or the senate and people – this still remained unclear.

In the years 406-410, British troops attempted to place the “tyrants” Marcus, Gratian and Constantine III on the throne of the Western Empire. Thus Gratian was given “a purple robe, a crown and a body-guard, just like an emperor,” according to Zosimus.¹⁷¹ In 410 the Roman legions left Britain and the British found themselves outside the Roman Empire. As Procopius wrote: “The Romans never succeeded in recovering Britain, but it remained from that time on under tyrants.”¹⁷² St. Gildas the Wise, writing in the 540s, blamed his countrymen, saying that they had

¹⁶⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, I (2, VI).

¹⁷⁰ Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, chapter 19, in the translation by E.R. Hoare.

¹⁷¹ Zosimus, *New History*, 6.2.

¹⁷² Procopius, *The Vandal War*, 3.2.38.

“ungratefully rebelled” against “Roman kings”, and had failed in their “loyalty to the Roman Empire”.¹⁷³

And yet the distinction between true kings and tyrants continued to be made in the land that had been known as “the Roman island”, but which became, from the beginning of the fifth century, “a province fertile in tyrants” (St. Jerome).¹⁷⁴ Thus St. Patrick, the British apostle of Ireland, called the Scottish chieftain Coroticus a “tyrant” because he did not fear God or His priests; “for the sake of a miserable temporal kingdom” he would face God’s judgement on “wicked kings”. Patrick’s use of the terms “king” and “tyrant” is not clear; his definition of the word “tyrant” seems to be a mixture between the old, secular meaning of “usurper” and the newer, more religious, Ambrosian meaning of “unjust or immoral person in authority”.¹⁷⁵

St. Gildas makes a clearer distinction between “king” and “tyrant”. Among past rulers in Britain, Diocletian, Maximus, Marcus, Gratian, Constantine, Constans and Vortigern were all “tyrants”. On the other hand, there had been legitimate rulers, such as Ambrosius Aurelianus, “a modest man, who alone of the Roman nation had been left alive in the confusion of this troubled period... He provoked the cruel conquerors [the Anglo-Saxons] to battle, and by the goodness of our Lord got the victory”. His parents, according to Gildas, even “wore the purple”.¹⁷⁶

And then, at the turn of the century, came the famous King Arthur. He won twelve victories over the Saxons, fighting with a cross or icon of the Virgin Mary on his back, and halted the pagan advance westwards for at least a generation, until his death in 519. Arthur of Britain, with Clovis of France, was the first great king of the post-Roman West, and became the stuff of innumerable medieval legends.¹⁷⁷

As for Gildas’ contemporaries: “Britain has kings [reges], but they are tyrants [tyrannos]; she has judges, but they are wicked. They often plunder and terrorize the innocent; they defend and protect the guilty and thieving; they have many wives, whores and adulteresses; they constantly swear false oaths, they make vows, but almost at once tell lies; they wage wars, civil and unjust; they chase thieves energetically all over the country, but love and reward the thieves who sit with them at table; they distribute alms profusely, but pile up an immense mountain of crime for all to see; they take their seats as judges, but rarely seek out the rules of right

¹⁷³ St. Gildas, *On the Ruin of Britain*, 4.1, 5.1, 15.1.

¹⁷⁴ See Christopher Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998, chapters 2, 8 and 9.

¹⁷⁵ St. Patrick, *Letter to Coroticus*, 21, 19.

¹⁷⁶ St. Gildas *On The Ruin of Britain*, 25. Bede interprets this to mean that they were “of royal race”.

¹⁷⁷ “It is possible that Artos/ Arthur - ‘The Bear’ in Celtic, was the *signum*, or nickname, of Aurelianus himself. A bearskin cloak would have been a distinguishing element of his uniform as a Roman general” (David Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, London: Phoenix, 2006, p. 162). Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman (*King Arthur: The True Story*, London: Arrow, 1993) have made an excellent case for the historicity of King Arthur.

judgement; they despise the harmless and humble, but exalt to the stars, as far as they can, their military companions, bloody, proud and murderous men, adulterers and enemies of God... They hang around the altars swearing oaths, then shortly afterwards scorn them as though they were filthy stones..."¹⁷⁸

Thus by the sixth century it looks as if the problem of formal legitimacy had been solved, at least in the eyes of the Britons themselves. The kings Gildas were talking about were both Christian and "anointed" – they had that link, at any rate, with the anointed kings of Israel and Christian Rome. But they did not fulfill their vows; they were a terror to good works, but not to the evil – and by that criterion they were not true authorities (Romans 13.3), being linked rather with the tyrants of old, the Ahabs and Magnus Maximuses. So the break with Rome was still keenly felt. Celtic Britain had many great monks and hierarchs, but very few great, or even powerful, kings...

By the middle of the sixth century there was little to link the Britons with their Roman heritage - with the important exception of the Church, a Roman institution which was stronger now than it had been in Roman times. Fr. Gregory Telepneff writes that "early Celtic monasticism was Byzantine in character, i.e., a manifestation of the Eastern Orthodox Faith. The cultural hegemony of the Roman Empire, which extended beyond its political borders, decisively shaped the spiritual environment of ancient Hibernia [including the Celtic lands on the mainland of Britain]." ¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ St. Gildas, *On The Ruin of Britain*, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Telepneff, *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs*, Etna, Ca.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998, p. 70. However, Telepneff also provides evidence of the strong influence of the Coptic Church on the Celts. And William Dalrymple has pointed out a very close resemblance between a seventh-century rock-carving from Perthshire depicting Saints Anthony and Paul of Egypt with an icon in St. Anthony's monastery in Egypt, and cites the words of the seventh-century *Antiphonary* of the Irish monastery of Bangor:

*The house full of delight
Is built on the rock
And indeed the true vine
Transplanted out of Egypt.*

"Moreover," he continues, "the Egyptian ancestry of the Celtic Church was acknowledged by contemporaries: in a letter to Charlemagne, the English scholar-monk Alcuin described the Celtic Culdees as 'pueri egyptiaci', the children of the Egyptians. Whether this implied direct contact between Coptic Egypt and Celtic Ireland and Scotland is a matter of scholarly debate. Common sense suggests that it is unlikely, yet a growing body of scholars think that that is exactly what Alcuin meant. For there are an extraordinary number of otherwise inexplicable similarities between the Celtic and Coptic Churches which were shared by no other Western Churches. In both, the bishops wore crowns rather than mitres and held T-shaped Tau crosses rather than crooks or crosiers. In both the hand-bell played a very prominent place in ritual, so much so that in early Irish sculpture clerics are distinguished from lay persons by placing a clochette in their hand. The same device performs a similar function on Coptic stelae – yet bells of any sort are quite unknown in the dominant Greek or Latin Churches until the tenth century at the earliest. Stranger still, the Celtic wheel cross, the most common symbol of Celtic Christianity, has recently been shown to have been a Coptic invention, depicted on a Coptic burial pall of the fifth century, three centuries before the design first appears in Scotland and Ireland." (*From the Holy Mountain*, London: HarperCollins, 2005, pp. 418-419)

However, Wickham writes: "Fewer and fewer people in the West called themselves Romani; the others found new ethnic markers: Goths, Lombards, Bavarians, Alemans, Franks, different varieties of Angles and Saxons, Britons – the name the non-Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of Britain had given themselves by 550, the Romani having left, and a word itself due soon to be replaced by a Welsh term, Cymry, 'fellow countryman'. Even in a part of the former empire unconquered by invaders, that is to say, the Romans were not the Britons themselves, but other people, earlier invaders, who had come and gone. And although of course the huge majority of the ancestors of all these peoples were men and women who would have called themselves Roman in 400, the Roman world had indeed gone, and Roman-ness with it."¹⁸⁰

Moreover, even when the link with Rome was re-established, through St. Augustine's mission to the pagan Anglo-Saxons in 597, the old British tendency to rebellion manifested itself again – and led, this time, to the first formal schism on nationalist grounds in Church history. Unlike the neighbouring Irish Church, which had always expressed willing obedience to the Pope of Rome (from whom it had received its first missionary bishop)¹⁸¹, the older Church of Wales strongly asserted its independence. Thus when the Roman St. Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury, sought union with the Welsh, asking only that they adopt the Roman-Byzantine method of calculating the date of Pascha, correct some inadequacy in their administration of the rite of Baptism, and co-operate with him in the conversion of the pagan Saxons, the Welsh refused.

Two generations later, the Welsh rejected the decrees of the Synod of Whitby (664), which brought about a union of the Celtic and Roman traditions in the British Isles through the acceptance of the Byzantine-Roman Paschalion. They went into schism, and were regarded as schismatics by the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Churches. As an Irish canon put it, "the Britons [of Wales] are... contrary to all men, separating themselves both from the Roman way of life and the unity of the Church".¹⁸²

St. Aldhelm of Sherborne, described the behaviour of the schismatic Welsh thus: "Glorifying in the private purity of their own way of life, they detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the Divine offices in church with us and to take course of food at table for the sake of charity. Rather,.. they order the vessels and flagons [i.e. those used in common with clergy of

¹⁸⁰ Wickham, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹⁸¹ As the Irish saint, Columbanus of Luxeuil, wrote to Pope Boniface IV: "All we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Ghost" (G.S.M Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera* (The Works of St. Columbanus), The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970, p. 34).

¹⁸² A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, 1964, volume I, p. 122.

the Roman Church] to be purified and purged with grains of sandy gravel, or with the dusky cinders of ash.. Should any of us, I mean Catholics, go to them for the purpose of habitation, they do not deign to admit us to the company of their brotherhood until we have been compelled to spend the space of forty days in penance... As Christ truly said: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish'."¹⁸³

By contrast with the Welsh rejection of the Roman missionaries, the pagan Anglo-Saxons accepted them with enthusiasm. By the 680s the last English kingdom, Sussex, had been converted to the faith. Thereafter references to paganism in the sources are remarkably few.¹⁸⁴ The enthusiasm of the English for Christianity may be explained by the fact that, unlike the other Germanic tribes who, for generations before accepting the faith, had been settled within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and had even been employed as *foederati* in the Roman armies, they were newcomers whose conversion to Romanity was the stronger in that it was fresher, less hindered by historical hatreds. They had been called by God from darkness into light by Pope Gregory and his disciples; and their gratitude to St. Gregory, "the Apostle of the English", was boundless. As we read in the earliest work of English hagiography, a monk of Whitby's *Life of St. Gregory*: "When all the apostles, leading their Churches with them, and each of the teachers of separate races, present them to the Lord on Judgement Day in accord with Gregory's opinion, we believe he will wondrously lead us, that is, the English nation, taught by him through the grace of God, to the Lord."¹⁸⁵

From that time English men and women of all classes and conditions poured across the Channel in a well-beaten path to the tombs of the Apostles in Rome (to whom almost all the English cathedrals were dedicated), and a whole quarter of the city was called "Il Borgo Saxono" because of the large number of English pilgrims it accommodated.¹⁸⁶ English missionaries such as St. Boniface of Germany and St. Willibrord of Holland carried out their work as the legates of the Roman Popes. And the voluntary tax known as "Peter's Pence" was paid by the English to the Roman see even during the Viking invasions, when it was the English themselves who were

¹⁸³ *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, translated by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, Ipswich: Brewer, 1979, p. 158. The Welsh Church remained in schism until Bishop Elbod of Bangor restored the northern Welsh to unity in 768 (the southerners followed in 777). Iona was brought into line early in the eighth century through the efforts of the holy Abbots Egbert and Adomnan.

¹⁸⁴ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 168.

¹⁸⁵ C.W. Jones, *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England*, Cornell, 1947.

¹⁸⁶ Peter Llewellyn writes that, during the pontificate of Pope Pascal (early ninth century) "the English colony of the Borgo, near St. Peter's, which followed its native custom of building in wood, lost its houses in a disastrous fire, the first of many to sweep the crowded quarter around the basilica. Pascal, roused at midnight, hurried barefoot to the scene and supervised the fire-fighting operations himself; ever solicitous of pilgrims, he granted the Saxon community estates and money for rebuilding, with woods for a supply of timber." (*Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, p. 254)

in need of alms.

As the English were absorbed into Christian Rome by the Roman missionaries, the symbolism of “Romanity” reappeared in the English land. Thus St. Gregory compared the newly enlightened King Ethelbert of Kent to St. Constantine and Queen Bertha to St. Helena, and according to Fr. Andrew Phillips they “had, it would seem, actually emulated Constantine. Having made Canterbury over to the Church, they had moved to Reculver, there to build a new palace. Reculver was their New Rome just as pagan Byzantium had become the Christian city of New Rome, Constantinople. Nevertheless, King Ethelbert had retained, symbolically, a royal mint in his ‘Old Rome’ – symbolically, because it was his treasury, both spiritually and physically. The coins he minted carried a design of Romulus and Remus and the wolf on the Capitol. Ethelbert had entered ‘Romanitas’, Romanity, the universe of Roman Christendom, becoming one of those numerous kings who owed allegiance, albeit formal, to the Emperor in New Rome...”¹⁸⁷

The Armenians

The unity achieved by Justinian between the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Empire was striking, but it was not, of course, monolithic. Not only were there Roman citizens who were not Orthodox – the Monophysite Copts and Syrians, or the Arian Goths: there were also large bodies of Orthodox that remained outside the bounds of the Empire – for example, the Celts in the West and the Georgians in the East. Moreover, friction continued between the nations of the Byzantine commonwealth. And although nationalism as such is usually considered to be a modern phenomenon stemming from the French Revolution, something similar to nationalism is certainly evident in antiquity. We have seen one example in the Welsh. Another is the Armenians.

Now Armenia can lay claim to having been the first Christian kingdom, having been converted by St. Gregory the Illuminator in the early fourth century. However, in the middle of the fifth century, in the wake of the Byzantine Emperor Marcian’s refusal to support an Armenian revolt against Persia, the Armenian Church ignored and then rejected the Council of Chalcedon. From this time the Armenian Church was alienated from Orthodoxy, but not completely from Romanity. Thus in the council of Dvin in 506, they sided with the Monophysites who were being persecuted by the Persian government at the instigation of the Nestorians.

As Jones writes, they “affirmed their unity with the Romans, condemning Nestorius and the council of Chalcedon, and approving ‘the letter of [the Monophysite] Zeno, blessed emperor of the Romans’.

¹⁸⁷ Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996, p. 15.

“However, when Justin and Justinian reversed [the Monophysite Emperor] Anastasius’ ecclesiastical policy, they were apparently not consulted, and did not follow suit. This implied no hostility to Rome, however, for when in 572 they revolted against Persia they appealed to Justin II. He insisted on their subscribing to Chalcedon as a condition of aid, but they soon went back to their old beliefs. Maurice [an Armenian himself] again attempted to imposed the Chalcedonian position upon them, but the bishops of Persian Armenia refused to attend his council, and excommunicated the bishops of Roman Armenia, who had conformed.¹⁸⁸

“It was thus not hostility to Rome which led the Armenians into heresy... But having got used to this position they were unwilling to move from it.”¹⁸⁹

After the Muslim conquest, the Armenian Church became more and more entrenched, not only in anti-Chalcedonian Monophysitism, but also in a kind of nationalism that made it the first national church in the negative sense of that phrase – that is, a church that was so identified with the nation as to lose its universalist claims. In this way the Armenian Church contrasts with other national Churches in the region, such as the Orthodox Georgian and the Monophysite Ethiopian. Other cases in which national hatred has been suspected to lie beneath religious separatism are the Arian Goths, the Donatist Berbers and the Monophysite Copts and Syrians.

However, Jones urges caution in such inferences: “Today religion, or at any rate doctrine, is not with the majority of people a dominant issue and does not arouse major passions. Nationalism and socialism are, on the other hand, powerful forces, which can and do provoke the most intense feelings. Modern historians are, I think, retrojecting into the past the sentiments of the present age when they argue that mere religious or doctrinal dissension cannot have generated such violent and enduring animosity as that evinced by the Donatists, Arians, or Monophysites, and that the real moving force behind these movements must have been national or class feeling.”¹⁹⁰

In the seventh century all of the patriarchates fell, temporarily, into the heresy of Monothelitism, and in the eighth century the East fell into iconoclasm. But while Orthodoxy faltered – although never in all places at the same time – the underlying unity of Orthodox Christian civilization enabled unity of faith to be recovered before long. It was only after the Muslim invasions in the first half of seventh century, in

¹⁸⁸ Thus the Monophysite Catholicos Moses II refused to participate in a council with the Orthodox: “I shall not cross the Azat river to eat the baked bread of the Greeks, nor will I drink their hot water.” The Orthodox, unlike the Monophysites, used leavened bread and zeon, hot water, in the Divine Liturgy. See Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989, p. 284. (V.M.)

¹⁸⁹ A.H.M. Jones, “Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1959, X, p. 293. See also Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-109.

¹⁹⁰ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

the East, and during the reign of Charlemagne towards the end of the eighth century, in the West, that the first more or less deep and permanent cracks in the unity both of faith and civilization began to appear...

The Jews

The first and most powerful anti-Roman nationalism was that of the Jews. In the Old Testament, the faith of the Jews, though turned in on itself to protect itself from paganism, contained the seeds of true universalism. Thus God commanded Abraham to circumcise not only every member of his family, but also "him that is born in the house, or bought with the money of any stranger, which is *not* of thy seed" (Genesis 17.12). The Canaanite Rahab and the Moabite Ruth were admitted into the faith and nation of the Jews. King Solomon prayed that God would hear the prayer of non-Israelites who prayed in his temple, "that all people of the earth may know Thy name, and fear Thee, as doth Thy people Israel" (II Chronicles 6.33). And by the time of Christ there was a large Greek-speaking diaspora which was spreading the faith of the Jews throughout the Greco-Roman world and winning converts such as the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 11).¹⁹¹

However, the Pharisees, who came to dominate Jewry, were interested only in converts to the cause of Jewish nationalism (cf. Matthew 23.15). It was the Pharisees who incited Christ's death because He preached a different kind of spiritual and universalist Kingdom that was opposed to their nationalist dreams. And after His death the Jews became possessed by an egoistical, chauvinist spirit that was expressed in such a way that, as Rabbi Solomon Goldman put it, "God is absorbed in the nationalism of Israel."¹⁹²

Cyril Mango writes: "By virtue of a long tradition in Roman law, Jews enjoyed a peculiar status: they were a licit sect, their synagogues were protected from seizure, they appointed their own clergy and had recourse in civil cases to their own courts of law. At the same time they were forbidden to proselytise, to own Christian slaves or to build new synagogues."¹⁹³

However, they continually strove to undermine the Empire. Alone among all the nations of the Mediterranean basin, they refused to benefit from, or join in, the Pax Romana. Having asserted, at the Crucifixion of Christ, that they had no king but Caesar, they nevertheless constantly rebelled against the Caesars and slaughtered thousands of Christians.

¹⁹¹ According to Paul Johnson, there were about eight million Jews at the time of Christ, comprising 10 per cent of the Roman Empire (*A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 171).

¹⁹² Goldman, in Douglas Reed, *The Controversy of Zion*, Durban, South Africa, 1978, p. 48.

¹⁹³ Mango, *Byzantium*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980, p. 91.

Thus in 66-70, and again in 135, they rebelled against Rome. In 115-117, in Alexandria, whose population was about one-third Jewish, civil war broke out between the Jews and the Christians. And in 150 the Jews killed 240,000 Greeks in Cyrenaica and 100,000 in Cyprus.¹⁹⁴

The Jews were fiercely anti-Christian. As the Jewish Professor Norman Cantor writes: "Insofar as they thought about the Christians in the first seven or eight decades after the Nazarene's death, the rabbis considered them only a desperate underclass of heretics, at best pathetic, more evidently contemptible and damnable. They made jokes about Mary. She was a whore, they cackled, and Jesus was the offspring of one of her sloppy unions..."¹⁹⁵

At the root of the Jews' fierce hatred of Gentiles and Christians was the teaching of what came to be, from the second century onwards, their major "holy" book – the Talmud. The Talmud (like the later Jewish "holy" book, the Cabbala) purports to record a secret oral tradition going back to Moses and representing the true interpretation of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. In fact, it bears only the most strained and perverse relation to the Torah, often completely corrupting the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, it asserts its own superiority over the Scriptures. As it declares: "The Law is water, but the Mishna [the first form of the Talmud] is wine." And again: "The words of the elders are more important than the words of the Prophets."

This opposition between the true, God-inspired Tradition of the Holy Scriptures and the false, man-made tradition of the Talmud was pointed out by Christ when He said to the Pharisees, the inventors and guardians of the Talmud: "Thus have ye made the commandment of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15.6). "Ye blind guides," He said, "who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23.24). And concerning their disputes, that former Pharisee, St. Paul, said: "Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and striving about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless" (Titus 3.9).

Douglas Reed wrote: "The Talmudic Law governed every imaginable action of a Jew's life anywhere in the world: marriage, divorce, property settlements, commercial transactions, down to the pettiest details of dress and toilet. As unforeseen things frequently crop up in daily life, the question of what is legal or illegal (not what is right or wrong) in all manner of novel circumstances had incessantly to be debated, and this produced the immense records of rabbinical dispute and decisions in which the Talmud abounds.

¹⁹⁴ See I. Antonopoulos, *Agapi kai synomosia* (Love and Conspiracy), Athens, 1979, pp. 36-37 (in Greek).

¹⁹⁵ Cantor, *The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1996, p. 156.

“Was it much a crime to crush a flea as to kill a camel on a sacred day? One learned rabbi allowed that the flea might be gently squeezed, and another thought its feet might even be cut off. How many white hairs might a sacrificial red cow have and yet remain a red cow? What sort of scabs required this or that ritual of purification? At which end of an animal should the operation of slaughter be performed? Ought the high priest to put on his shirt or his hose first? Methods of putting apostates to death were debated; they must be strangled, said the elders, until they opened their mouths, into which boiling lead must be poured. Thereon a pious rabbi urged that the victim’s mouth be held open with pincers so that he not suffocate before the molten lead enter and consume his soul with his body. The word ‘pious’ is here not sardonically used; this scholar sought to discover the precise intention of ‘the Law’.”¹⁹⁶

A dominant feature of these Jewish “holy” books was their hatred of Christ and Christianity. Reed continues: “The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* says: ‘It is the tendency of Jewish legends in the Talmud, the Midrash... and in the Life of Jesus (*Toledoth Jeshua*) that originated in the Middle Ages to belittle the person of Jesus by ascribing to him an illegitimate birth, magic and a shameful death’. He is generally alluded to as ‘that anonymous one’, ‘liar’, ‘imposter’ or ‘bastard’ (the attribution of bastardy is intended to bring him under the Law as stated in Deuteronomy 23.3: ‘A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord’). Mention of the name, Jesus, is prohibited in Jewish households.

“The work cited by the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* as having ‘originated in the Middle Ages’ is not merely a discreditable memory of an ancient past, as that allusion might suggest; it is used in Hebrew schools today. It was a rabbinical production of the Talmudic era and repeated all the ritual of mockery of Calvary itself in a different form. Jesus is depicted as the illegitimate son of Mary, a hairdresser’s wife, and of a Roman soldier called Panthera. Jesus himself is referred to by a name which might be translated ‘Joey Virgo’. He is shown as being taken by his stepfather to Egypt and there learning sorcery.

“The significant thing about this bogus life-story (the only information about Jesus which Jews were supposed to read) is that in it Jesus is not crucified by Romans. After his appearance in Jerusalem and his arrest there as an agitator and a sorcerer he is turned over to the Sanhedrin and spends forty days in the pillory before being stoned and hanged at the Feast of Passover; this form of death exactly fulfills the Law laid down in Deuteronomy 21.22 and 17.5, whereas crucifixion would not have been in compliance with that *Judaic* law. The book then states that in hell he suffers the torture of boiling mud.

¹⁹⁶ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

“The Talmud also refers to Jesus as ‘Fool’, ‘sorcerer’, ‘profane person’, ‘idolator’, ‘dog’, ‘child of lust’ and the like more; the effect of this teaching over a period of centuries, is shown by the book of the Spanish Jew Mose de Leon, republished in 1880, which speaks of Jesus as a ‘dead dog’ that lies ‘buried in a dunghill’. The original Hebrew texts of these Talmudic allusions appear in Laible’s *Jesus Christus im Talmud*. This scholar says that during the period of the Talmudists hatred of Jesus became ‘the most national trait of Judaism’, that ‘at the approach of Christianity the Jews were seized over and again with a fury and hatred that were akin to madness’, that ‘the hatred and scorn of the Jews was always directed in the first place against the person of Jesus’ and that ‘the Jesus-hatred of the Jews is a firmly-established fact, but they want to show it as little as possible’.

“This wish to conceal from the outer world that which was taught behind the Talmudic hedge led to the censoring of the above-quoted passages during the seventeenth century. Knowledge of the Talmud became fairly widespread then (it was frequently denounced by remonstrant Jews) and the embarrassment thus caused to the Talmudic elders led to the following edict (quoted in the original Hebrew and in translation by P.L.B. Drach, who was brought up in a Talmudic school and later became converted to Christianity):

““This is why we enjoin you, under pain of excommunication major, to print nothing in future editions, whether of the Mishna or of the Gemara, which relates whether for good or for evil to the acts of Jesus the Nazarene, and to substitute instead a circle like this: O, which will warn the rabbis and schoolmasters to teach the young these passages only viva voce. By means of this precaution the savants among the Nazarenes will have no further pretext to attack us on this subject’ (decree of the Judaist Synod which sat in Poland in 1631). At the present time, when public enquiry into such matters, or objection to them, has been virtually forbidden by Gentile governments, these passages, according to report, have been restored in the Hebrew editions of the Talmud...

“The Talmud sets out to widen and heighten the barrier between the Jews and others. An example of the different language which the Torah spoke, for Jews and for Gentiles, has previously been given: the obscure and apparently harmless allusion to ‘a foolish nation’ (Deuteronomy 32.21). According to the article on *Discrimination against Gentiles* in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* the allusion in the original Hebrew is to ‘vile and vicious Gentiles’, so that Jew and Gentile received very different meanings from the same passage in the original and in the translation. The Talmud, however, which was to reach only Jewish eyes, removed any doubt that might have been caused in Jewish minds by perusal of the milder translation; it specifically related the passage in Deuteronomy to one in Ezekiel 23.20, and by so doing defined Gentiles as those ‘whose flesh is as the flesh of asses and whose issue is like the issue of horses’! In this spirit was the ‘interpretation’ of the Law continued by the Talmudites.

“The Talmudic edicts were all to similar effect. The Law (the Talmud laid down) allowed the restoration of a lost article to its owner if ‘a brother or neighbour’, but not if a Gentile. Book-burning (of Gentile books) was recommended... The benediction, ‘Blessed be Thou... who hast not made me a goi [Gentile]’ was to be recited daily. Eclipses were of bad augury for Gentiles only. Rabbi Lei laid down that the injunction not to take revenge (Leviticus 19.18) did not apply to Gentiles, and apparently invoked Ecclesiastes 8.4 in support of his ruling (a discriminatory interpretation then being given to a passage in which the Gentile could not suspect any such intention).

“The Jews who sells to a Gentile landed property bordering on the land of another Jews is to be excommunicated. A Gentile cannot be trusted as witness in a criminal or civil suit because he could not be depended on to keep his word like a Jew. A Jew testifying in a petty Gentile civil court as a single witness against a Jew must be excommunicated. Adultery committed with a non-Jewish woman is not adultery ‘for the heathen have no lawfully wedded wife, they are not really their wives’. The Gentiles are as such precluded from admission to a future world...”¹⁹⁷

Sergius and Tamara Fomin write: “To the prayer ‘birkam za-minim’ which was read everyday against heretics and apostates there was added the ‘curse’ against ‘the proud state’ (of Rome) and against all the enemies of Israel, in particular the Christians... [The Christians were also identified with] the scapegoat, on which the sins of the Jews were laid and which was then driven into the wilderness as a gift to the devil. According to rabbinic teaching, the goat signified Esau and his descendants, who at the present time were the Christians.”¹⁹⁸

Another name that the Jews had for the Christians was Edom, and the Roman Empire was called “the kingdom of the Edomites”. Rabbi David Kimchi writes as follows in *Obadiam*: “What the Prophets foretold about the destruction of Edom in the last days was intended for Rome, as Isaiah explains (34.1)... For when Rome is destroyed, Israel shall be redeemed.” And Rabbi Abraham in his book *Tseror Hammor* writes: “Immediately after Rome is destroyed, we shall be redeemed.”¹⁹⁹

The teaching of the Talmud incited the Jews to terrible crimes against Gentiles, especially Christians. Thus “under Theodosius II,” writes L.A. Tikhomirov, “it was discovered that the Jews, on the day of the feast of the execution of Haman [Purim],

¹⁹⁷ Reed, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-91. The Zohar also says: “Tradition tells us that the best of the Gentiles deserves death” (Section Vaiqra, folio 14b, quoted in Webster, *op. cit.* p. 407). For a more detailed exposé of the Talmud and the religion founded upon it, see Michael Hoffman, *Judaism Discovered*, Independent History and Research, 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 201-202.

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in Rev. I.B. Pranaitis, *The Talmud Unmasked*, St. Petersburg, 1892, Bloomfield Books, Sudbury, Suffolk, pp. 43, 80, 81.

had introduced the practice of burning the Cross. The government had to undertake repressions against the blasphemy, but the Jews were not pacified. Under the same Theodosius II, in the city of Imma, the Jews during one of their feasts took hold of a Christian child, crucified him on a cross and with scourges cut him into pieces. The disturbed Christians took to arms, and a bloody battle took place. This incident, as they said, was not unique. The Christian historian Socrates relates that the Jews more than once crucified Christian children. At that time it was not a matter of 'ritual killings', and in such acts only the hatred of the Jews for Christians and mockery of them was seen. In the given case Theodosius II executed those guilty of the murder, but at the same time the government began to take measures to weaken Jewry. Theodosius destroyed the Jewish patriarchate in Palestine and confiscated the sums collected throughout Jewry for the patriarchate. But all these repressions did not quickly pacify the Jews. Under the same Theodosius II there took place in 415 the well-known brawl in Alexandria elicited by the killing of Christians by the Jews. All this boldness of the Jews in the face of a power that was evidently incomparably greater than theirs seems improbable. But we must bear in mind that this was an age of terrible Messianic fanaticism on the part of the Jews. It often drove them to acts that were senseless, in which pure psychosis was operating. Here, for example, is a purely internal incident having no relation to the Christians. At about the same time, in 432, on the island of Cyprus there took place an event that shows to what an inflamed condition the Jews of that time could come. On the island there appeared a man who was evidently mad, called Moses, the same who had led the people out of Egypt through the Red Sea. He declared that he now had an order from the Lord to lead the Jews out of Cyprus into Palestine through the Mediterranean Sea. His preaching attracted crowds of Jews who did not hesitate to follow the prophet. These hordes went to the sea and, at a sign from Moses, began to hurl themselves from a lofty cliff into the water. Many crashed against the rocks, others drowned, and only the forcible intervention of the Christians saved the rest: fishermen dragged them from the water, while other inhabitants forcibly drove the Jews from the shore. This mass psychosis shows to what lengths the Jews could go in the name of the idea of the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel...

"The [Western] Church had already quite early, in the sixth century, begun to take measures to protect Christians from the influence of the Jews. Councils in Orleans in 538 and 545 decreed the suppression of relations between Christians and Jews and, moreover, forbade the Jews from publicly showing themselves during the Christian Pascha, doubtless to cut off the possibility of any blasphemous outrages. But we can understand why these measures could not be maintained, nor were they systematic, and relations inevitably continued, having two kinds of consequences: some they spiritually cut off from Christianity and drew them into heresy, and others they filled with hatred for the Jews."²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii*, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-341, 350.

In about 520, 4000 Christians were martyred by the Jewish ruler of the South Arabian land of Omir (or Himyar), Dû-Nuwâs, for their refusal to renounce Christ. Again, in 555, in spite of their traditional disdain for the Samaritans, the Jews supported them in their rebellion against Byzantium.²⁰¹

During the Time of Troubles that began for Byzantium with the murder of the Emperor Maurice in 602, the Jewish anti-Roman consciousness reached a new peak of frenzy. David Keys writes: “The so-called *Book of Zerubabel*, written by a rabbi of that name in Persian-ruled Babylon in the first quarter of the seventh century AD, prophesied the coming of the Jewish Messiah (and his mother!) and their defeat of the Christian Roman monster – an emperor/pope called Armilus – the son of Satan. Furthermore, a Palestinian Jew called Jacob who had been forcibly baptised by the Romans in Carthage described the Empire in typically apocalyptic terms as ‘the fourth beast’ which was being ‘torn in pieces by the nations, [so] that the ten horns may prevail and Hermolaus Satan... the Little Horn may come.’

“The Jews viewed the apparently imminent collapse of the Roman Empire in the first quarter of the seventh century as evidence that the ‘beast’ (the formerly pagan but now Christian empire) was doomed, that the Devil in the guise of the last Roman emperor or Christian pope would be killed by the (imminently expected) Messiah. They saw the Persians (and a few years later, the Arabs) as the agents who would help destroy the ‘Roman beast’. Violent and often Messianic Jewish revolutionary attitudes had been increasing throughout the second half of the sixth century and went into overdrive as the Empire began to totter in the first quarter of the seventh. In Antioch in AD 608, Christian attempts [by the mad tyrant Phocas] at forced conversion, as the Persians threatened the city, triggered a major revolt in the Jewish quarter. At first the Jewish rebels were successful, and their community’s arch-enemy, the city’s powerful Christian patriarch, [St.] Anastasius, was captured, killed and mutilated. But the revolt was soon put down – and the 800-year-old Antiochan Jewish community was almost totally extinguished.”²⁰²

The situation was no better in the Holy Land. The Jews appealed to all the Jews of Palestine to join the Persians, and Jewish crowds killed the Bishop of Tiberias and 90,000 Christians in one day. When the Persians conquered Jerusalem, most of the Christians were sent into captivity to Persia. However, “the Jews distinguished themselves at this point with a beastly cruelty unique in the history of the world. They spared no money to buy many Christians from the Persians with one purpose only – to gain enjoyment in killing them. They say that in this way they bought and destroyed 80,000 people. The Jewish historian G. Graetz glides silently over this terrible fact, saying only: ‘Filled with rage, the Jews of course did not spare the

²⁰¹ See the life of the Holy Martyr Al-Harith, in St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, House Springs, MO; Chrysostom Press, 1995, vol. II, pp. 351-376; Mango, *op. cit.*, p. 92; Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, chapters 41 and 42.

²⁰² Keys, *Catastrophe*, London: Arrow books, 2000, pp. 91-92.

Christians' and 'did not spare the holy things of the Christians'. Graetz reduces the number of Christians killed to 19,000."²⁰³

The Persians were defeated by the Emperor Heraclius, who banished the Jews of Jerusalem to a distance of three miles from the city, and decreed that all the Jews of the empire should be baptized. But the pendulum swung again when the Byzantines were defeated by the new power of the Arab Muslims. In 638 Caliph Omar entered the Holy Sepulchre, while Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem remarked: "Surely this is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet standing in the holy place." The Jews, however, were delighted; many thought that Mohammed was a prophet who had come to prepare the way for the Messiah. And "even when the Messiah failed to arrive," writes Karen Armstrong, "Jews continued to look favourably on Islamic rule in Jerusalem. In a letter written in the eleventh century, the Jerusalem rabbis recalled the 'mercy' God had shown his people when he allowed the 'Kingdom of Ishmael' to conquer Palestine. They were glad to remember that when the Muslims arrived in Jerusalem, 'there were people from the children of Israel with them; they showed the spot of the Temple and they settled with them until this very day.'"²⁰⁴

Meanwhile, in what remained of the Byzantine Empire there were intermittent attempts to return to the policy of Phocas and Heraclius. Thus Cyril Mango writes that "Leo III ordered once again the baptism of Jews and those who complied were given the title of 'new citizens', but they did so in bad faith, while others, it seems, fled to the Arabs. The failure of this measure was acknowledged by the Council of 787 which decreed that insincere converts should not be accepted; it was preferable to let them live according to their customs while remaining subject to the old disabilities. A fresh attempt was made by Basil I: Jews were summoned to disputations and if they were unable to demonstrate the truth of their religion, they were to be baptized."²⁰⁵ Remission of taxes and the grant of dignities were offered as rewards; even so, after the emperor's death, most of the converts 'returned like dogs to their own vomit'. The last recorded case of forced conversion was under Romanus I, but it only resulted in driving many Jews to the land of Khazaria north of the Black Sea [where they converted the Khazars to Judaism]. From then on such Jews as remained were left to live in relative peace; there was even a reverse migration of them from Egypt into the Empire in the late tenth and eleventh centuries..."²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 343. Graetz admits that the Jews took a greater part in the destruction of Christian churches and monasteries than the Persians themselves (*Istoria Evreev* (A History of the Jews), Odessa, 1908, vol. 1, pp. 28-32).

²⁰⁴ Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem*, London: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 233.

²⁰⁵ Dagron writes: "In reply to Basil's initiative came a pamphlet from the best theologian and canonist of the day, Gregory Asbestas, who did not content himself with defending the dogmas and the canons, but preached rebellion and threatened the imperial power with anathema" (*op. cit.*, p. 207). (V.M.)

²⁰⁶ Mango, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

The attempts by successive (usually heretical) Byzantine emperors to convert the Jews to Orthodoxy by force were contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Christ's parable of the tares and the wheat, in which it is said that the tares should not be destroyed, is interpreted by St. John Chrysostom to mean that heretics should not be killed (which is not to say, however, that they should not be resisted in other ways). As early as the fourth century – for example, in Sulpicius' *Life of St. Martin* – we find the Holy Fathers protesting against the forcible conversion of heretics.

As S.V. Troitsky writes: “Christians are called to freedom (Galatians 5.13), and every religious act of conscious Christians must bear on itself the mark of freedom. The ancient Christian writer Lactantius demonstrated that religion exists only where there is freedom, and disappears where freedom has disappeared, and that it is necessary to defend the truth with words and not with blows (verbis, non verberibus)[*Divine Institutes*, 19]. ‘The mystery of salvation,’ writes St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘is for those who desire it, not for those who are compelled’. The 108th canon of the Council of Carthage cites the law of Honorius that ‘everyone accepts the exploit of Christianity by his free choice’, and Zonaras in his interpretation of this canon writes: ‘Virtue must be chosen, and not forced, not involuntary, but voluntary... for that which exists by necessity and violence is not firm and constant’. ‘It does not belong to religion,’ says Tertullian, ‘to force people to religion, since it must be accepted voluntarily.’ [*Ad Scapulam*, 2]”²⁰⁷

[The Franks](#)

Christian states might challenge the dominance of New Rome. But it was something new for another State to claim to *be* the Roman Empire. The distinction of being the first ruler to claim this belongs to Charlemagne. Already in the middle of the eighth century, the Roman Popes had renounced their citizenship of the New Rome, and turned to the Franks as their secular protectors. Then, in Rome on Christmas Day, 800 Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as “Holy Roman Emperor”. Charlemagne's biographer Einhard claims that he had no idea that the Pope was going to do this; but the deed was done – the Empire had split.

²⁰⁷ Troitsky, *Khristianskaia Filosofia Braka* (The Christian Philosophy of Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, p. 207. On the other hand, the feigned conversion of Jews to Christianity for material gain was also condemned. Thus the eighth canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council states: “Inasmuch as some person who have been misled by their inferences from the religion of the Jews have seen fit to sneer at Christ our God while pretending to be Christians, secretly and clandestinely keep the Sabbath and do other Jewish acts, we decree that these persons shall not be admitted to communion, nor to prayer, nor to church, but shall be Jews openly in accordance with their religion; and that neither shall their children be baptized, nor shall they buy or acquire a slave. But if any one of them should be converted as a matter of sincere faith, and confess with all his heart, triumphantly repudiating their customs and affairs, with a view to censure and correction of others, we decree that he shall be accepted and his children shall be baptized, and that the latter shall be persuaded to hold themselves aloof from Jewish peculiarities...”

Whatever Charlemagne's real intentions in 800, by the mid-ninth century it was clear that for the West the only Orthodox Roman Emperor was the Emperor of the Franks. Thus whereas Charlemagne's "minister of education", the English monk Alcuin still called Constantinople the second Rome, for a later Latin eulogist the second Rome was Charlemagne's capital, Aachen: "Most worthy Charles, my voice is too small for your works, king, love and jewel of the Franks, head of the world, the summit of Europe, caring father and hero, Augustus! You yourself can command cities: see how the Second Rome, new in its flowering and might extent, rise and grows; with the domes which crown its walls, it touches the stars!"²⁰⁸

Charlemagne spoke of "the Christian people of the Romans" without ethnic differentiation, and tried (without much success) to introduce a single Roman law for all the constituent nations of his empire. As Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, put it: "There is now neither Gentile nor Jew, Scythian nor Aquitanian, nor Lombard, nor Burgundian, nor Alaman, nor bond, nor free. All are one in Christ... Can it be accepted that, opposed to this unity which is the work of God, there should be an obstacle in the diversity of laws [used] in one and the same country, in one and the same city, and in one and the same house? It constantly happens that of five men walking or sitting side by side, no two have the same territorial law, although at root - on the eternal plan - they belong to Christ."²⁰⁹

But if Charlemagne's empire was meant to be a restoration of the cosmopolitan Roman Empire, it must be judged to have failed; for it disintegrated after his death into three separate kingdoms and continued to decline into the tenth century. One reason for this was that he failed to create the political bureaucracy and tax and legal systems which were so important in preserving the Roman Empire. Another reason was the fact that the dukes and counts upon whom his administration critically depended expected to be paid in land for the services they rendered, so that the kingdom was stable just so long as it was expanding - and the expansionist phase of its history was already over by the 810s.²¹⁰ The idea of selfless service to the king just because he was the king, the Lord's anointed, had to compete with the idea of the aristocratic band of warriors whose leader was elected because of his military prowess and because he promised greater success in war and therefore more plunder than any other leader. The state was not yet fully a *res publica*, a *public* thing or possession, in the Frankish consciousness; it was rather the private demesne of the king and those of his nobles who had earned a part of the spoils through their service to him.

²⁰⁸ Alcuin, in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 148.

²⁰⁹ Agobard, quoted in R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1988, p. 147.

²¹⁰ However, see the life of St. William of Toulouse (+812), for an example of a completely non-acquisitive warrior lord (*Living Orthodoxy*, vol. V, № 2, March-April, 1983, pp. 3-5).

As Tacitus had written centuries before of the pagan Germans in his *Germania*: “You cannot keep up a great retinue except by war and violence, for it is to the free-handed chief that they look for the war horse, for the murderous and masterful sphere: banquetings and a certain rude but lavish outfit take the place of salary. The material for this open-handedness comes from war and foray.”

The real weakness of Charlemagne’s kingdom was more spiritual than institutional: he took his own achievements, and the weakness of the Eastern Empire (which, since it was ruled at the time by a woman, Irene, was technically vacant according to Frankish law), as sufficient reason to usurp the place of the Basileus in the political sphere and, still more seriously, the place of the Church in the ecclesiastical sphere. As long as the Eastern Emperors had been iconoclast, while Charlemagne himself remained Orthodox, he could have had some justification for claiming the leadership of the Christian world. But since 787 the Eastern Empire had returned to Orthodoxy while he, through his false council of Frankfurt in 794, had become a heretic! Thus in 794, without consulting the Pope, he convened a council in Frankfurt which, probably on the basis of a false translation, condemned the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on icon-veneration and introduced the Filioque – the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* – into the Creed.

The Orthodox rejected the Filioque, because: (a) it contradicted the words of Christ Himself about the procession of the Spirit from the Father *alone* (John 15.26), (b) it involved a change in the Creed, which was forbidden by the Third Ecumenical Council, and (c) it was objectively false, as destroying the monarchy of the Father and introducing a second principle into the life of the Holy Trinity.²¹¹

The Filioque immediately produced conflict between Frankish and Greek monks in Jerusalem. And within the Frankish camp itself; for Alcuin rejected the innovation in a letter to the monks of Lyons, and Pope Leo III had have the Creed *without* the Filioque inscribed in Greek and Latin on silver shields placed outside St. Peter’s. But Charlemagne did not back down: in a council in Aachen in 809 he decreed that the innovation was a dogma necessary for salvation.

The iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian had undermined the “symphonic” principle of Church-State relations when he had declared that he was “both king and priest”. But now Charlemagne was showing himself to be no less of a caesaropapist than the iconoclasts by his imposition of heretical innovations on the Church. Indeed, the former champion of Orthodoxy and Romanity against the heretical and

²¹¹ See St. Photius the Great, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, translated by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Studion Publishers, 1983; Lampryllos, *op. cit.*; “The Filioque: Truth or Trivia?”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, March 21 / April 3, 1983.

despotic iconoclast emperors was now well on the way to becoming the chief enemy of Orthodoxy and Romanity through his heresy and despotism, considering, as Romanides puts it, "that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman!"²¹²

And yet the grandiose claims of the Frankish empire were soon humbled by harsh political reality. For while the Eastern Empire became stronger and stronger after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the Frankish Empire began to disintegrate into three parts. Moreover, the East decisively rejected the claims of the West. Thus in 867 and again in 879-80, St. Photius convened Councils in Constantinople that condemned Pope Nicolas I, who introduced the Filioque for the first time into the Roman Creed, as a heretic. Significantly, the Acts of the 879 Council were signed by the legates of Pope John VIII. Thus both East and West agreed that it was the *Western, Frankish* empire that was not Orthodox. And since both Greeks and Romans and Franks agreed that there could be only one Christian Roman Empire, this meant that the Frankish attempt to usurp the Empire had been defeated – for the time being...

In spite of this, the Franks did not give up their claims. Thus the Frankish position "was clearly spelled out in a letter of Emperor Louis II (855-875) to Emperor Basil I (867-886) in 871. Louis calls himself 'Emperor Augustus of the Romans' and demotes Basil to 'Emperor of New Rome'. Basil had poked fun at Louis, insisting that he was not even emperor in all of Francia, since he ruled only a small part of it, and certainly was not emperor of the Romans, but of the Franks. Louis argued that he was emperor in all of Francia because the other Frankish kings were his kinsmen by blood. He makes the same claim as that found in the *Annals of Lorsch*: he who holds the city of Old Rome is entitled to the name 'Emperor of the Romans'. Louis claimed that: 'We received from heaven this people and city to guide and (we received) the mother of all the churches of God to defend and exalt... We have received the government of the Roman Empire for our Orthodoxy. The Greeks have ceased to be emperors of the Romans for their cacodoxy. Not only have they deserted the city (of Rome) and the capital of the Empire, but they have also abandoned Roman nationality and even the Latin language. They have migrated to another capital city and taken up a completely different nationality and language.'"²¹³

However, the truth was that the Carolingian empire was in schism from the true Christian Empire, much as the ten tribes of Israel had been in schism from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Or, if "schism" is too ecclesiastical term for an essentially political division, then we can put it another way. The unity of East and West under one Roman Emperor, which had been recreated by St. Constantine and partially recreated again by Justinian, was now finally shattered beyond repair by Charlemagne and the Pope...

²¹² J. Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 31.

²¹³ Romanides, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

The Bulgarians

A challenge similar to that of Charlemagne – and more threatening to the power of the Roman emperors – was provided by the Bulgarian tsars... Early in the 860s Khan Boris of Bulgaria was converted to the faith by the famous Greek bishop St. Methodius. Methodius with his brother St. Cyril had originally been invited to the court of Prince Rostislav of Moravia, but the German bishops of Passau and Salzburg persuaded Pope Stephen V to ban Slavonic as a liturgical language, and so St. Methodius and his disciples had had to flee to Bulgaria. In 865 Boris was baptized, probably by St. Photius, and took the name Michael after his godfather, the Emperor Michael. In this way the foundation was laid, not only of the Christianization of Bulgaria, but also of the unification of its two constituent peoples, the Bulgar ruling class and the Slavic peasants, who had been at loggerheads up to that time.

However, Tsar Boris-Michael wanted the Bulgarian Church to be autonomous, a request that the Mother Church of Constantinople denied. So, taking advantage of the rift that was opening up between the Eastern and Western Churches and empires, he turned to Pope Nicholas I with a series of questions on the faith and a request that Bulgaria be given a patriarch. The Pope did not grant the latter request, but in other respects (for example, in relation to permissible food and clothing) he showed greater flexibility than the Byzantines, and Boris was sufficiently encouraged by his reply to expel the Greek clergy and allow Roman missionaries – with the new Frankish heresy of the Filioque – into his land.

Since the Bulgarian Church was within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Pope's mission to Bulgaria was already a canonical transgression and a first manifestation of his claim to universal dominion in the Church. It would never have happened if the West had recognized the authority of the East Roman Emperor, as the Popes had done in earlier centuries.

The same could be said of the later expulsion of Saints Cyril and Methodius from Moravia by jealous German bishops – these were all fruits, in the ecclesiastical sphere, of that division that had first begun in the political sphere, when the Pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans.

After some turmoil, the Bulgarian Church was firmly re-established within the Eastern Church and Empire with its see in Ohrid. A pagan reaction was crushed, the Scriptures and services were translated into Slavonic by the disciples of St. Methodius, Saints Clement and Nahum, and a vast programme of training native clergy was initiated. The conversion of the Slavs to Orthodoxy began in earnest...

However, the virus of national self-assertion had been sown in Bulgaria almost simultaneously with the Christian faith; and during the reign of St. Boris' youngest son, Symeon, Bulgaria was almost continuously at war with the Empire. Autonomy

for a native Bulgarian Church was now no longer the issue: the Bulgarian khans wanted to take the place of the Byzantine emperors. Thus Symeon assumed the title of “tsar of the Bulgarians and the Romans” and tried to capture Tsargrad (Constantinople).

St. Nicholas the Mystic vigorously defended the authority of the East Roman Emperor: “The power of the Emperor, which extends over the whole earth, is the only power established by the Lord of the world upon the earth.” Again, he wrote to Tsar Symeon: “God has submitted the other sceptres of the world to the heritage of the Lord and Master, that is, the Universal Emperor in Constantinople, and does not allow his will to be despised. He who tries by force to acquire for himself the Imperial dignity is no longer a Christian.”²¹⁴

However, Symeon continued to act like a new Constantine, transferring the capital of the new Christian kingdom from Pliska, with its pagan associations, to Preslav on the model of St. Constantine’s moving his capital from Rome to Constantinople. And during the reign of his more peaceful son Peter (927-969) the Byzantines conceded both the title of “basileus” to the Bulgarian tsar (so there were now *three* officially recognised Christian emperors of the one Christian empire, with capitals at Constantinople, Aachen and Preslav!) and (in 932) the title “patriarch” to the first-hierarch of the Bulgarian Church, Damian. Peter’s legitimacy was also recognised by the greatest of the Bulgarian saints, John of Rila.

However, after the death of Peter, in about 971, the Bulgarian kingdom was conquered by the Byzantines), as a consequence of which the local Bulgarian dioceses were again subjected to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. There was a resurgence of Bulgarian power in Macedonia under Tsar Samuel, who established his capital and patriarchate in Ohrid. But this did not last long either. In 1014 the Bulgarian armies were decisively defeated by Emperor Basil “the Bulgar-slayer”, leading to the end of the Bulgarian empire and its re-absorption into the Roman Empire. The Ohrid diocese’s autocephaly was still recognized, but it was demoted from a patriarchate to an archbishopric.

And so Bulgarian nationalism was dealt a decisive blow in both Church and State...

Now it has been claimed that the task assigned to Bulgaria and King Boris by God “could be realized only by an independent, autonomous church, since, if the nation were to be dependent on another people in church matters, it could easily lose its political independence along with its religious independence and disappear from the face of the earth.”²¹⁵

²¹⁴ St. Nicholas the Mystic, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 107.

²¹⁵ Archimandrite Doctor Seraphim, “The Life of King Boris-Michael, Converter of the Bulgarian People to Christianity”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, № 3, May-June, 1985, p. 14.

Perhaps; and yet the idea that each nation-state has to have its own independent church was a new one in the history of Christianity. *De facto*, as a result of the conquest of certain parts of the Roman Empire by barbarian leaders, independent national Churches had sprung up in various regions, from Georgia in the East to England in the West. But the idea of a single Christian commonwealth of nations looking up to its father in God, the Christian Roman Emperor, was never completely lost; and there was still the feeling that *de jure* all Christian nations owed him some kind of allegiance. We have seen this as far afield as England. And even Charlemagne had not disputed this; he (or the Pope) simply believed that *he* was now that Emperor, and that the Empire was now centred, not in Constantinople but in Aachen.

It must be admitted that it was the Bulgarian emperors who made the first serious breach in this internationalist ideal; for they called their kingdom, not by the internationalist name of Rome, but “the kingdom of the Bulgarians and the Greeks” – in other words, a national kingdom composed of two nations, with the Bulgarians as the dominant ethnic element. Coups by individuals were commonplace in Byzantine history. The attempt to place one *nation* above all others was new...

It is perhaps not coincidental that when the Orthodox Church came to anathematise the heresy of nationalism, or phyletism, in 1872, the anathema was directed in the first place against Bulgarian nationalism...

The Georgians

One of the best examples of how a remote Christian nation could nevertheless join the Byzantine commonwealth of nations and benefit from it, was Georgia.

Georgia, the lot of the Most Holy Mother of God, had played only a minor role in Orthodox history since her baptism by St. Nina in the fourth century. However, in 1008 a political and ecclesiastical unification took place between the kingdom of Abkhazia (much larger then than now, with its capital at Kutaisi) and Kartli (with its capital in Uplistsikhe) under the authority of King Bagrat III, who was now called “the king of kings of All Georgia”.

Since the western kingdom contained two metropolias under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Byzantine Emperor Basil II sent an army into Georgia in 1014, but it was soundly beaten. In 1021-1022, however, the Byzantine army, strengthened by the presence of Varangians (probably Russians from Kievan Rus’) overcame the Georgians. But the Byzantines wisely did not crush the Georgian state system, which gradually strengthened under Byzantine tutelage.

Moreover, in the course of the next two centuries Byzantine influence strengthened, and Byzantine liturgical practice became the norm throughout the autocephalous Church of Georgia...²¹⁶ It is from the moment of the union of 1008, writes Aristides Papadakis, "that we may speak of Georgia..."

"The new unity... brought Church and State closer together. The ecclesiastical hierarchy were doubtless advocates of national unity and in this sense were of the greatest benefit to Georgia's Bagratid rulers. The catholicus on the other hand retained control of ecclesiastical affairs and administration, and was even formally recognised as the spiritual king of the nation. However, the Georgian primate along with all major bishops and abbots were temporal princes of the realm as well, and actually sat on the council of state or Darbazi together with the feudal princes of Georgia..."

"Arguably, the two most important members of the new Caucasian monarchy were David II (1089-1125) and Queen Tamar (1184-1212). Both of these Bagratid sovereigns were in the end canonized as saints by the Georgian Orthodox Church. By extending Georgia's power far beyond its historic frontiers, these rulers were in the final analysis responsible for creating a genuine Georgian hegemony not only over Georgians but over Muslims and Armenians as well. David II was surnamed by contemporaries the Restorer or Rebuilder (*aghmashenebeli*) for good reason...His reign constitutes a genuine 'epic period' in the history of medieval Georgia. David's victories against the Muslims were especially important since they paved the way for the Transcaucasian multinational empire of his successors. In 1122 he was able to gain control of Tiflis (it had been for centuries an Islamic town) and to reestablish it as Georgia's capital. But his great triumph was without doubt his decisively humiliating defeat of the Seljuks a year earlier at the battle of Didgori (12 August).²¹⁷ Georgians to this day celebrate the victory annually as a holiday in August.

"In addition to a strengthened monarchy and a magnified Georgia, David II also bequeathed to his descendants a reformed Church. The attention he was willing to devote to the welfare of the Church as a whole, was doubtlessly genuine. He was also evidently concerned with Christian unity and repeatedly labored to convince the separated Armenian community to return to the unity of the Orthodox Church by accepting Chalcedonian Christology and by renouncing schism. His vigorous efforts to establish ecclesiastical discipline, eliminate abuses, and reorganize the

²¹⁶ Hieromonk Gregory (Lurye), "Tysiacha let Gruzinskogo Imperializma" (One Thousand Years of Georgian Imperialism), *Russkij Zhurnal* (Russian Journal), August, 2008; Alexander Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Istorii* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni- Novgorod, 2006, pp. 824-825.

²¹⁷ "On his own testimony, while meeting an attack from the Turks, both he and his enemies saw S. George protecting him; and on another occasion, he was saved from instant death by a special act of faith, when a thunderbolt falling upon him was prevented from hurting him by the golden image of the Archangel Michael which he wore on his breast" (P. Ioseliani, *A Short History of the Georgian Church*, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, p. 115). (V.M.)

Church, culminated in 1103 at the synod of Ruisi-Urbinisi. This meeting – one of the most famous in Georgian history – was presided over by the king who had also convened it...

“It was during [Queen Tamar’s] rule that the great golden age of Georgian history and culture reached its summit. There is no denying the multinational nature of her kingdom by the dawn of the thirteenth century. By then Georgia was one of the most powerful states in the Near East. As a result of Queen Tamar’s numerous campaigns, which took her armies to the shores of the Black Sea, Paphlagonia and further east into Iranian territory, the Georgian state extended far beyond its original borders. By 1212 the entire Caucasus, the southern coast of the Black Sea, most of Armenia and Iranian Azerbaijan, had in fact been annexed to the Georgian state....

“[The queen was in general friendly towards] Saladin, who was actually responsible in the end for the return to the Georgians in the Holy City of properties that had once belonged to them. In contrast, Tamar’s relations with the Latins in the crusader states... were rarely courteous or fraternal. The Orthodox Georgians never actually directly involved themselves with the crusades. This may have been at the root of the friendship Muslims felt for them.”²¹⁸

However, Tamar defeated the Turks when they tried to conquer Georgia. “During two terrible battles she herself saw the finger of God directing her to the fight, and, with her soldiers, witnessed the miraculous conversion of one of the Mohammedan generals who was made prisoner.”²¹⁹

The Georgians in this, their golden age, saw themselves as sons of the Byzantines. Thus Antony Eastmond writes: “The two hundred years before Tamar’s reign saw a very marked change in the depiction of power in Georgia in an attempt to establish an effective form of royal presentation. The Georgian monarchy came increasingly to model itself on imperial rule in Byzantium. The Bagrat’ioni kings began to see themselves as inheritors of Byzantine royal traditions, and displayed themselves as the descendants of Constantine the Great, rather than their own Georgian ancestors, such as Vakhtang Gorgasalan (the great Georgian king who ruled c. 446-510). Between the ninth and twelfth centuries it is possible to trace the way the Bagrat’ionis began to adopt more and more of the trappings of Byzantine political ideas. In the ninth century, Ashot’ I the Great (786-826), the first Bagrat’ioni ruler, showed his dependence on Byzantine ideas by accepting the title of Kouropalates; although the only surviving image of the king shows him in a very abstract, indistinguishable form of dress. By the tenth century the Georgians had adopted a

²¹⁸ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994, pp. 139, 140, 141, 143-144.

²¹⁹ Ioseliani, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

more positive Byzantine identity. At the church of Oshk'i (built 963-73), the two founder brothers, Davit and Bagrat' are shown in a donor relief on the exterior wearing very ornate, 'orientalized', Byzantine costume. All earlier royal images in Georgia, as well as the contemporary image of the rival King Leo III of Abkhazia (a neighbouring Georgian Christian kingdom) in the church of K'umurdo (built 964), had shown the rulers in less distinct, or clearly local forms of dress. The choice of dress at Oshk'I showed the outward adherence of the Bagrat'ionis to the Byzantine political system....

"This gradual process of Byzantinization continued throughout the eleventh century, becoming increasingly dominant. It was encouraged by closer links between the Georgian and Byzantine royal families. Bagrat' IV (1027-72) married Helena, the niece of Romanos III Agyros in 1032; and his daughter, Maria 'of Alania' married two successive Byzantine emperors (Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates).

"By the beginning of the twelfth century, there had been a transformation in the whole presentation of the Georgian royal family. In addition to Byzantine court dress, all aspects of the royal environment became 'Byzantinized'. In the royal churches standard Byzantine forms were adopted...

"At Gelati, built between 1106 and 1130 by Davit IV and his son Demet're (1125-54), this Byzantinization reaches its peak... The point of strongest Byzantine influence at Gelati comes in the fresco scenes in the narthex. These show the earliest surviving monumental images of the seven ecumenical councils... Davit IV himself convened and presided at two sets of church councils in his reign, and clearly saw himself as a successor to the early Byzantine emperors and their domination of the church: Davit IV's biographer even calls him a second Constantine..."²²⁰

The most striking example of Georgia's filial relationship to Byzantium can be seen after the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, when "a Georgian army immediately took Trebizond and handed it over to a relative of the queen [Tamara], Alexis Comnenus. He became the first emperor of Trebizond. The empire of the Great Comneni, which at first existed under the vassalage of Georgia, continued to exist for almost three hundred years, outlasting Constantinople, and was destroyed by the Turks only in 1461."²²¹

As we ponder why little Georgia should have fared so prosperously and heroically at a time when the Byzantine Empire was being defeated by her enemies, we should remember two factors.

²²⁰ Eastwood, "Royal renewal in Georgia: the case of Queen Tamar", in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 284, 285, 286.

²²¹ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 828.

One was the internal unity of the State under its strong and pious rulers. A second was its strictness in relation to heresy. Thus the Georgians were much firmer in relation to the heretical Armenians than the Byzantines were in relation to the heretical Latins during the same period. This refusal to make concessions on the faith for the sake of political gains reaped both spiritual and material fruits for the Georgians.²²²

The unity of the kingdom was not achieved without a struggle, even a struggle, at one point, against a form of parliamentary democracy! Thus “in the first year of Tamara’s reign, an officer of the royal court, Kurltu-Arslan, whose dream was to become the Minister of Defense, insisted that a parliament be established in Iani, where, according to his plan, all internal and external problems of the country were to be discussed, and only after that was a notice to be sent to the king for approval. The Isani Parliament was planned to appropriate the legislative power and leave the monarch a symbolic right to approve decisions already made and give orders to carry out the will of the members of this parliament. Thus, the very foundations of the royal institution blessed by God Himself were shaken and the country found itself face to face with the danger of civil war.

“Tamara ordered that Kurlu-Arslan be arrested, but his followers, bearing arms, demanded the release of their leader. In order to avoid imminent bloodshed, Tamara came to a most wise and noble solution, sending to the camp of the rebels as negotiators two of the most respectable and revered ladies: Huashak Tsokali, the mother of the Prince Rati, and Kravai Jakeli. The intermediation of the two noble mothers had such an effect on the conspirators that they ‘obeyed the orders of their mistress and knelt in repentance before her envoys and swore to serve the queen loyally.’ The country felt the strong arm of the king. Tamara appointed her loyal servants to key government posts...”²²³

Queen Tamara continues in the same tradition; she is called a second Constantine, a David and a Solomon in the chronicles.²²⁴

²²² Thus the Synod of Ruisi-Urbnisis decreed that “an Orthodox Christian was not authorized to contract a marriage either with a heretic or an infidel... Armenians and other monophysite dissidents upon returning to the unity of the Orthodox faith were legally compelled to be rebaptized” (Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 142).

In Tamara’s reign there was an official debate between the Georgians and Armenians at which a great miracle took place: a dog fled in fear from the Orthodox Mysteries of the Georgians, but immediately devoured the sacrifice of the Armenians. As a result, the Armenian nobleman John Mkhargradzeli accepted Orthodoxy and was baptized by Patriarch John (*The Life of St. Tamara*).

²²³ “Holy Righteous Queen Tamara of Georgia”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 53, № 2, March-April, 2003, p. 9.

²²⁴ Eastwood, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

The contrast between Georgia and Bulgaria is instructive: the Georgian kings saw themselves as sons of the Byzantines, and prospered, whereas the Bulgarian tsars saw themselves as rivals, and were brought low...

However, after the death of St. Tamara the Mongols invaded Georgia and gradually brought the country into vassalage. During one invasion, in 1227, the Sultan "ordered that the icons of the Theotokos and our Savior be carried out of Sioni Cathedral and placed at the center of the bridge across the Mtkvari River. The invaders goaded the people to the bridge, ordering them to cross it and spit on the holy icons. Those who betrayed the Orthodox Faith and mocked the icons were spared their lives, while the Orthodox confessors were beheaded... One hundred thousand Georgians sacrificed their lives to venerate the holy icons..."²²⁵

The Russians

In 860 a new nation which St. Photius called "Ros" (ΡωϚ)²²⁶ appeared in the water surrounding Constantinople and ravaged the suburbs. These came from Russia, but were probably Scandinavian Vikings by race (the Finns call the Swedes "Rossi" to this day).

Through the grace of the Mother of God the invaders were defeated²²⁷, and in the treaty which followed the ceasefire the Russians agreed to accept Christianity. A large number of Kievan merchants were catechized and baptized in the suburb of St. Mamas. Later, St. Photius sent a group of missionaries with a Bishop Michael at its head to catechize and baptize in Kiev itself (he may also have sent St. Methodius). Michael began to preach the word of God among the pagans, and at their demand worked a miracle: he ordered a fire to be kindled and placed in it a book of the Gospels, which remained unharmed.²²⁸ Many were then converted to the faith, including Prince Askold, the first prince of Kiev, who was baptized with the name Nicholas and opened diplomatic relations with Constantinople in 867.²²⁹

²²⁵ Archpriest Zakaria Machidatze, *The Lives of the Georgian Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, pp. 403, 404.

²²⁶ The word ΡωϚ appears in *Ezekiel* 38.2, where "the prince of Ros" is seen as heading the coalition of powers called "God and Magog" that invades Israel "from the extreme parts of the north" in the last times. Several interpreters have identified ΡωϚ with Russia. See Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Sobranie Pisem* (Collected Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 840

²²⁷ The feast of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was instituted to commemorate the City's miraculous deliverance (October 1). Ironically, this feast is especially celebrated today, not in Greece, but - in Russia.

²²⁸ Archimandrite Nikon (Ivanov), Protopriest Nicholas (Likhomanov), *Zhitia russkikh sviatykh* (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tutaev, 2000, vol. 1, 15/28 July, pp. 817-818.

²²⁹ According to tradition, Princes Askold and Dir were later martyred. See Protopriest Lev Lebedev, "Pervoe Kreschenie Rusi i Muchenicheskij Podvig Pervogo Russkogo Gosudaria-Khristianina Oskol'da-Nikolaia Kievskogo" ("The First Baptism of Rus' and the Martyric Feat of the First Russian Christian Ruler, Askold-Nicholas of Kiev"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr12/R13_22.htm.

And so St. Photius was able to write to the other Eastern Patriarchs, that “the formerly terrible people, the so-called Ros... are even now abandoning their heathen faith and are converting to Christianity, receiving bishops and pastors from us, as well as all Christian customs... The zeal of faith has burned them to such a degree that they have received a Bishop and shepherd and have accepted the Christian religion with great eagerness and care.”²³⁰

Two years after the defeat of 860, the Slavs of the northern city of Novgorod made an unprecedented change in the form of their political organization, inviting the Scandinavian Vikings under Rurik to rule over them: “Our land is great and abundant, but there is no order in it – come and rule over us.” As N.M. Karamzin writes: “The citizens perhaps remembered how useful and peaceful the rule of the Normans had been: their need for good order and quiet made them forget their national pride, and the Slavs, ‘convinced,’ as tradition relates, ‘by the advice of the Novgorod elder Gostomysl,’ demanded rulers from the Varyangians.”²³¹

As I. Solonevich notes, this appeal was similar to that of the British Christians to the Saxons Hengist and Horsa.²³² However, the results were very different: whereas in Britain the invitation led to a long series of wars between the Britons and Saxons and the eventual conquest of most of England by the pagans, in Russia it led, without bloodshed, to the foundation of a strong and stable State, in which the Germanic element was quickly swallowed up by the Slavs. Thus by inviting the Vikings to rule over them, the Russian Slavs triumphed at one stroke over egoism and self-will in both the individual and the national spheres.

As New Hieromartyr Andronicus of Perm wrote: “At a time when, in the other peoples of Europe, the power of the princes and kings was subduing the peoples to themselves, appearing as external conquerors of the disobedient, but weak, - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and ourselves placed the princes, the prototypes of our tsars, over ourselves. That is how it was when Rurik and his brothers were recognized by Ilmen lake. We placed them to rule over ourselves at a time when we had only just begun to be conscious of ourselves as a people, and when our statehood was just beginning to come into being.”²³³

Of course, the consolidation of the victory, and the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, required many more centuries of spiritual and political struggle, as the Orthodox Autocracy established itself over internal and external rivals.

But “the real state life of Rus’,” writes St. John Maximovich, “begins with

²³⁰ St. Photius, in *P.G.* 102, 736-737.

²³¹ Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow: Pravda, 1989, p. 65

²³² I. Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 214

²³³ St. Andronicus, *O Tserkvi, Rossii* (On the Church and Russia), Fryazino, 1997, p. 132.

Vladimir the Saint. The princes who were before him were not so much ruler-lords as conquerors, for whom the establishment of good order in their country was less important than subduing the rich country to themselves and forcing it to pay some tribute. Even Svyatoslav preferred to live in Bulgaria, which he had conquered, and not in his own capital. It was Christianity, which was brought into Russian first by Olga, who had great influence on her eldest grandsons Yaropolk and Oleg, and then finally by St. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun, who baptised Rus', that laid the firm foundations of Statehood.

“Christianity bound together by a common culture the princely race, which was, they say, of Norman extraction, and the numerous Slavic and other races which constituted the population of ancient Rus'. It taught the princes to look on themselves as defenders of the weak and oppressed and servants of the righteousness of God. It taught the people to see in them not simply leaders and war-commanders, but as people to whom power had been given by God Himself.”²³⁴

Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna writes: “The ideal of Holy Rus', like the formula itself, was not born immediately. Two stages are important in its genesis: the baptism of Rus' and her regeneration after the Tatar conquest. Like any other historical people, the Russian nation is a child of her Church. Greece and Rome, on accepting Christianity, brought to the Church their rich pagan inheritance. The German peoples were already formed tribal units at the moment of their reception of Christianity, and they preserved quite a lot of their pagan past, especially in the sphere of national and juridical ideas, in Christianity. But we – the Russian Slavs – had absolutely nothing before our acceptance of Christianity: neither state ideas, nor national consciousness, nor an original culture. The Eastern Slav pagans did not even have their own gods – the whole ancient Russian pantheon consisted of foreign divinities: Perun was a Lithuanian divinity, Khors – a Scythian-Sarmatian one, Moksha and Veles were Finnish gods. None of them even had a Slavic name. The Russian people gave their untouched soul to Christianity. And the Church gave everything to the Slavs, so that already one generation after the reception of Christianity, under Prince Yaroslav, we were no poorer in a cultural sense, but rather richer than the majority of our neighbours...”²³⁵

It was St. Vladimir's grandmother, St. Olga, who in 957 initiated the Christianisation of her country by submitting to baptism in Constantinople. Her godfather was the Byzantine Emperor himself. However, she did not succeed in converting her son Svyatoslav, and towards the end of her reign a pagan reaction set in, which intensified under Svyatoslav and in the early years of Vladimir's rule.

²³⁴ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origins of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 3.

²³⁵ Archbishop Nathanael (Lvov), “O Petre Velikom” (“On Peter the Great”), *Epokha* (Epoch), № 10, 2000, pp. 37-38

Like Moses, St. Vladimir, the baptizer of Russia, was expelled from his homeland in his youth. But in 980 he returned and conquered Kiev. After a period of fierce idolatry, during which he put to death the first martyrs of the Russian land, Theodore and John, he repented and led his people in triumph out of the Egypt of idolatry and through the Red Sea of baptism in the Dnieper on August 1, 988, and thence into the inheritance of the promised land, the new Israel of "Holy Russia". By his death in 1015 almost the whole of Russia had been evangelized. In view of this, the usual epithet of "new Constantine" granted to the kings of new Orthodox nations was more than usually appropriately applied to St. Vladimir, as Metropolitan Hilarion applied it in his famous *Sermon on the Law and Grace* in about 1050.

Indeed, Russia was not only an *offshoot* of Christian Rome, like Bulgaria or Georgia. Through her racial and dynastic links with Western Europe (especially the Anglo-Scandinavian north-west), Russia became the heir of what was left of the *Old*, Orthodox Rome of the West, regenerating the ideal of the Symphony of Powers just as it was being destroyed in the West by the heretical Papacy. And by her filial faithfulness to Byzantium, as well as through the marriage of Great-Prince Ivan III to Sophia Palaeologus in the fifteenth century, she became the heir of the *Second* or *New* Rome of Constantinople.

Thus Vladimir was not a "new Constantine" in the conventional sense attached to all founders of new Christian dynasties in the early Middle Ages. His kingdom evolved from being a part of New Rome into being its *reincarnation* or *successor* or *heir*. In fact, it became *the Third Rome*...

III. ROMANITY, ROMANIDES AND THE FALL OF OLD ROME

When Emperor Basil II died in 1025, New Rome had reached its peak – politically, militarily and culturally. Some fifty years later, after the disastrous defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert in 1071, she started upon the path of decline that would lead to the Fall of the City in 1204, and again, more permanently, in 1453. In between these two events lay another: the loss of the West’s unity with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and the religio-political civilization of Orthodox Christian Romanity. This fall was accomplished in the historical capital of the West, Old Rome, in the year 1054, when the Patriarchate of Old Rome fell under the anathema of the Great Church of Constantinople. Simultaneously it was announced symbolically in the heavens by the collapse of the Crab nebula (a fact noted by Chinese astronomers of the time). Thus the great star that had been Western Christianity now became a black hole, sucking in a wider and wider swathe of peoples and civilizations into its murky depths. And the New Rome, too, suffered: one of the two “lungs” of Orthodox Christian Romanity had collapsed, and the whole body was now weaker, more prone to disease and less capable of vigorous recovery...

Such an important event has naturally elicited much study and analysis; and in what is now a very well-known lecture, Fr. John Romanides put forward a new and highly controversial thesis: that the schism between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism was not a schism between Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) Christianity, but between the Romans understood in a very broad sense and the nation of the Franks. By the Romans he understands the inhabitants of Gallic Romania (Southern France), Western Romania (Rome and Southern Italy) and Eastern Romania (Constantinople and its dependencies). By the Franks he appears to understand all the Germanic tribes of North-Western Europe – the Franks, the Visigoths, the Lombards, the Saxons and the Normans – with the exception of the “Romanized Anglo-Saxons” (although the Anglo-Saxons were in fact less Romanized than the Franks). Romanides’ argument is that the schism was not really caused by theological differences, – at any rate, between Rome and Constantinople, – but by political manipulations on the part of the Franks, the only real heretics: “The Franks used church structure and dogma in order to maintain their birthright, to hold the Roman nation in ‘just subjection’.”²³⁶ The West Romans, he claims, were never really heretics, but always remained in union with the East Romans of Constantinople, with whom they always formed essentially one nation, in faith, in culture and even in language.

In other articles, Romanides argues that “since the seventh century the Franco-Latins usually received their apostolic succession by exterminating their West

²³⁶ Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine: An Interplay between Theology and Society*, Boston: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 29.

Roman, Celtic and Saxon predecessors, having reduced the West Romans to serfs and villeins of Frankish feudalism. This happened not only in Gaul, but in North Italy, Germany, England, South Italy, Spain and Portugal.”²³⁷ And that the Protestant Reformation, together with the American and French revolutions, constituted the birth of “Re-Greco-Romanisation, but not in its Apostolic form”!²³⁸

Romanides begins his lecture with a tribute to Patriarch Athenagoras and Archbishop Iakovos – two notorious Freemasons who tried to unite Orthodoxy with the heresies of the West. Having failed to see that these two leading contemporary “Romans” are in fact spiritually “Franks”, we should not be unduly surprised to find that he also fails to prove his case with regard to the Romans and Franks of yesteryear.

But we may agree with the comment of Fr. Michael Vaporis in his foreword to Romanides’ lecture, that while “some might not agree with Romanides’ presentation, analysis or evaluation of the events leading to and causing the Schism”, “few will not be challenged to re-think the unfortunate circumstances which led to the tragic division”. Romanides’ presentation *is* challenging - though deeply flawed, as we shall try to demonstrate. And we shall try to rise to the challenge by presenting a more plausible account of the causes of the schism.

The Merovingian Franks

If Romanides had limited his thesis to explaining the pernicious influence of the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne on East-West relations, and on the development of the schism between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, he would have done everyone a service. For Charlemagne not only created a political schism with Constantinople, but also introduced the heresy of the Filioque into his kingdom and rejected the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This is undisputed.

But Romanides casts aspersions even on those servants of Charlemagne who opposed the Filioque, like his English “minister of education” Alcuin. Moreover, he casts the Franks as the villains of the piece much earlier than Charlemagne, quoting St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany (+754) to the effect that the Frankish bishops were immoral warmongers. But he fails to mention that already for two-and-a-half centuries before that the Frankish kingdom had been strongly Romanised and had produced many saints.

²³⁷ Romanides, “Orthodox and Vatican Agreement”, Balamand, 1993.

²³⁸ Romanides, “Church Synods and Civilisations”, *Theologia*, 63, July-September, 1992, p. 428.

Thus Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head write: “Over the course of the seventh century... numerous men and women of the Frankish aristocracy came to be viewed as saints...

“One of the first of these... was Queen Radegund (518-587).... The Frankish female saints of the seventh century were, like Radegund, largely abbesses; the men were almost all bishops. Many had distinctly Germanic names: Balthild, Sadlberga, Rictrude, Wandrille, and Arnulf. Others bore traditional Roman names: Sulpicius, Eligius, and Caesaria. This evidence suggests that the old Roman elite had by now been almost entirely absorbed through intermarriage into the Frankish ruling classes. In the process the Franks had largely adopted a form of Latin as their spoken tongue, known as a Romance vernacular...”²³⁹

Again, he asserts that the Franks enslaved the Orthodox Gallo-Romans of France, and sees the whole of their subsequent history in terms of failed attempts by the Orthodox Gallo-Romans to recover their independence from their heretical masters. But there is no historical evidence for such enslavement... Rather, the Franks were unique among the Germanic tribes of fifth-century Europe in being *Orthodox*. All the other Germanic tribes were *Arians*. So when Romanides speaks of the *enslavement* of the Orthodox Gallo-Romans to the “Franks”, his words can be accepted if they refer to the Franks before they became Orthodox, or to the Arian Ostrogoths and Visigoths (although the evidence appears to indicate that the Gothic yoke was not severe). However, when Clovis (Louis), the king of the Franks, was converted to Orthodox Christianity by his Burgundian (i.e. Germanic) wife St. Clothilde, this was welcomed by the Gallo-Romans as a *liberation* and a *return to Romanity*. Thus St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, congratulated Clovis on his baptism in terms that showed that he regarded his kingdom as still part of the Eastern Roman Empire: “Let Greece rejoice indeed in having chosen our princeps”.²⁴⁰

Moreover, this is also how the East Romans also perceived it. Thus St. Gregory of Tours wrote that Clovis received letters “from the Emperor Anastasius to confer the consulate on him. In Saint Martin’s church he stood clad in a purple tunic and the military mantle, and he crowned himself with a diadem. He then rode out on his horse and with his own hand showered gold and silver coins among the people present all the way from the doorway of Saint Martin’s church to Tours cathedral. From that day on he was called Consul or Augustus.”²⁴¹

After his baptism Clovis proceeded to subdue the Arian Goths to the south and west and *liberate* the Orthodox there from the Arian yoke. There is no reason

²³⁹ Noble and Head, “Introduction” to *Soldiers of Christ*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1995, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

²⁴⁰ St. Avitus, *Letter 4*.

²⁴¹ St. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, London: Penguin Books, 1974, II, 38, p. 154.

to doubt the sincerity of Clovis in this. Everywhere he introduced good laws. "Established at Paris, Clovis governed this kingdom by virtue of an agreement concluded with the bishops of Gaul, according to which natives and barbarians were to be on terms of equality... The Frankish kingdom thereupon took its place in history under more promising conditions than were to be found in any other state founded upon the ruins of the Roman Empire. All free men bore the title of Frank, had the same political status, and were eligible to the same offices. Besides, each individual observed the law of the people among whom he belonged; the Gallo-Roman lived according to the code, the barbarian according to the Salian or Ripuarian law; in other words, the law was personal, not territorial. If there were any privileges they belonged to the Gallo-Romans, who, in the beginning were the only ones on whom the episcopal dignity was conferred. The king governed the provinces through his counts, and had a considerable voice in the selection of the clergy. The drawing up of the Salian Law (*Lex Salica*), which seems to date from the early part of the reign of Clovis, and the Council of Orléans, convoked by him and held in the last year of his reign, prove that the legislative activity of this king was not eclipsed by his military energy."²⁴²

Our main source for early Frankish history, *The History of the Franks* by St. Gregory of Tours (+594), confirms this account. As Chris Wickham writes, St. Gregory, "although of an aristocratic Roman family, seems hardly aware the empire has gone at all; his founding hero was Clovis, and all his loyalties Frankish."²⁴³ Nowhere does he dispute the legitimacy of Frankish rule; and the rebellions that take place are of Franks against Franks rather than Gallo-Romans against Franks. One exception to this rule was the attempt of Bishop Egidius of Rheims to kill King Childebert (book V, 19). But St. Gregory shows no sympathy for him, and records his trial and exile by his fellow-bishops without criticism. As for the independence of the bishops in the Frankish kingdom, this is demonstrated by the completely free election of St. Gregory himself to the episcopate by the people, with no interference by the king.²⁴⁴

As if sensing that his thesis is contradicted by the authoritative testimony of St. Gregory, Romanides seeks in another lecture to downgrade his witness, declaring, on the basis of four supposed "mistakes" in his *History of the Franks*, that "Orthodox spirituality and theology... were not very well understood by the new class of aristocratic administrator bishops created by the Frankish kings".²⁴⁵

²⁴² "New Advent" Catholic encyclopaedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06238a.htm>

²⁴³ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin Books, 2009, p. 200.

²⁴⁴ Abbot Odo, *The Life of St. Gregory of Tours*, translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose in *Vita Patrum*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988, p. 45.

²⁴⁵ Romanides, "Empirical versus Speculative Theology", in *Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine*, p. 53.

It would take us too far from our theme to discuss these “mistakes” in detail. Suffice it to say that, far from undermining the authority of St. Gregory, - a miracle-worker and close friend of St. Gregory the Dialogist, - Romanides only shows that it is he who does not very well understand Orthodox spirituality and theology...

Another great merit of the Frankish Orthodox kingdom was the help it provided in the conversion of neighbouring kingdoms to Orthodoxy. Thus in the late sixth century the Visigothic Prince Hermenegild was converted to Orthodoxy from Arianism by his Frankish wife Ingundis. Not only did Ingundis stubbornly refuse to become an Arian even when subjected to torture by the Queen Mother Goisuntha. On arriving in Seville, she and the Hispano-Roman bishop of the city St. Leander succeeded in converting Hermenegild to Orthodoxy. Then several thousand Goths were converted. For the sake of his new-found faith, Hermenegild rebelled against his Arian father King Leogivild, but, though aided by the Orthodox Sueves in the north-west (who converted to Orthodoxy in the 550s) and the Byzantines in the south-east, he was crushed by Leogivild (the Byzantine general was bribed to stay in camp²⁴⁶). Hermenegild himself was killed at Pascha, 585 for refusing to accept communion from an Arian bishop in prison.

The influence of the Franks was hardly less beneficial in the conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The mission of St. Augustine to England was greatly helped on its way by Frankish bishops; and his conversion of King Ethelbert of Kent was undoubtedly helped by Ethelbert’s wife, the Frankish Princess Bertha and her chaplain, the Frankish Bishop Liutprand. A little later the Burgundian Bishop Felix became the apostle of East Anglia. The seventh and eighth centuries were the golden age of the English Orthodox Church, and the frequent interchange of holy bishops, abbots and abbesses across the Channel was no small factor in this triumph of Orthodoxy in England.

Another great contribution of the Franks to Orthodoxy and civilization in general was the destruction of the Muslim Arab armies by the Frankish leader Charles Martel at Poitiers in 732. However, Romanides argues that the battle of Poitiers was in fact a suppression of a Gallo-Roman revolution that was supported by Arabs and Numidian Romans!²⁴⁷ And yet there can be no question that Charles Martel’s victory was a great triumph of Orthodoxy; for if he had lost, then the Muslims might well have gone on to conquer the whole of Western Europe, which in turn would have put enormous pressure on beleaguered

²⁴⁶ St. Gregory of Tours writes that Hermenegild “joined the party of the Emperor Tiberius, making overtures to the Emperor’s army commander, who was then invading Spain”, but that “as soon as Leovigild ordered his troops to advance Hermenegild found himself deserted by the Greeks” (*History of the Franks*, V, 38).

²⁴⁷ Romanides, “Church Synods and Civilisation”, p. 425.

Constantinople. One is tempted to think that Romanides cannot be serious in bemoaning the great victory of Charles Martel, who was given the title of “Patrician” by Pope Gregory II and saved Orthodox civilization in the West. And yet a reading of his lecture convinces us that he was!

Romanides’ obsession with proving that the Franks were the root of all western evil even leads him to claim that the French revolution was the final, successful rising of the Gallo-Romans against the Franks!

Romanides applies the same scenario to Spain, where the conversion of the Visigoths to Orthodoxy in the late sixth century was supposedly “nominal”. But then why were there so many Spanish saints well into the ninth century?..

West Rome Breaks with East Rome

A generation after Charles Martel’s victory Charlemagne came to power in Francia and set about building that empire that was to be the ancestor, spiritually and geographically, both of the “Holy Roman Empire” of the Catholic Middle Ages and of the European Union of today. This was an extremely important historical development; and there is no doubt that the influence of the Franks on both Western and Eastern Romanity in the centuries that followed until the schism was often negative. Nevertheless, historical justice requires us to take issue with Romanides’ excessively one-sided account and contest his assertion that the fall of the West from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was entirely the work of men of Germanic race who were deliberately trying to destroy Romanity, and not to a large extent the work of men of Italian (and sometimes even Greek) race who were often Romans only in name...

Let us begin with the first act that “brought the Franks into Italy”: the blessing by Pope Zachariah of a dynastic coup d’état in Francia. The last Merovingian rulers were weak and ineffective: real power was concentrated in the hands of their “mayors” or prime ministers. Pope Zachariah had already been heavily engaged in the reorganization of the Frankish Church through his legate in Francia, St. Boniface, the English Apostle of Germany. In 751 the Frankish mayor, Peppin III, Charles Martel’s grandson, sent envoys to him to ask “whether it was just for one to reign and for another to rule”. Zachariah took the hint and blessed the deposition of Childeric III and the anointing of Peppin by St. Boniface in his place.

We may wonder whether this act was right in God’s eyes, and whether Zachariah, the last of the Greek popes²⁴⁸, was interfering rightly in the politics of

²⁴⁸ Andrew Louth writes: “From 680 to 751, or more precisely from the accession of Agatho in 678 until Zacharias’ death in 751 – the popes, with two exceptions, Benedict II and Gregory II, were Greek in background and speakers of Greek, which has led some scholars to speak of a

the West. Be that as it may, his successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly increased the links with “the most Christian king of the Franks”. Having been deserted at a moment of great peril by the iconoclast Emperor Leo, who also deprived the Church of Rome of many bishoprics and their patrimonies, he crossed the Alps and in the summer of 754 gave Peppin the title of “patrician” and blessed him and his successors to rule in perpetuity. Pope Stephen also re-consecrated Peppin and his Queen - perhaps Peppin’s first consecration was deemed to have been illegitimate in that the last Merovingian king, Childeric, was still alive. Or perhaps this second anointing had a deeper significance. For, whether Stephen had this in mind or not, it came to signify *the re-establishment of the Western Roman Empire*, with its political capital north of the Alps, but its spiritual capital, as always, in Rome. For in exchange, the Franks became the official protectors of Rome instead of the Eastern emperors, whose subjects the Popes now ceased to be.²⁴⁹

It is important to note the Pope’s attitude towards the Eastern Emperor at this time: “We earnestly entreat you,” he wrote to Peppin, “to act towards the Greeks in such a manner that the Catholic faith may be for ever preserved, that the Church may be delivered from their malice, and may recover all her patrimony.”²⁵⁰ As Romanides correctly points out, to call someone “Greek” in this period was an insult, implying that he was not “Roman”, i.e. an Orthodox Christian, but rather a pagan or heretic. Of course the iconoclast Leo fully deserved the insult, but the more significant point here is that the insult was hurled, not by a Frank, but by a West Roman of impeccable genes from Romanides’ point of view... Peppin more than fulfilled his side of the bargain with Pope Stephen: he defeated the Lombards, restored the Pope to Rome and gave him the former Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna – the beginning of the Papal States and the role of the Popes as secular as well as spiritual rulers.

At about this time the forgery known as *The Donation of Constantine* was concocted by someone in the papal chancellery. This alleged that Constantine the Great had given his throne to Pope Sylvester and his successors because “it is not right that an earthly emperor should have power in a place where the government of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by the heavenly Emperor”. For this reason he moved his capital to the New Rome, Constantinople. “And we ordain and decree that he [the Roman Pope]

‘Byzantine captivity’ of the papacy. This is quite misleading: most of the ‘Greek’ popes were southern Italian or Sicilian, where Greek was still the vernacular, and virtually all of them, seem to have made their career among the Roman clergy, so, whatever their background, their experience and sympathies would have been thoroughly Roman” (*Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 79).

²⁴⁹ Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor’s regnal year, and began to issue their own coins (Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 47).

²⁵⁰ Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York, 1866, p. 255.

shall have rule as well over the four principal sees, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as also over the Churches of God in all the world. And the pontiff who for the time being shall preside over the most holy Roman Church shall be the highest and chief of all priests in the whole world, and according to his decision shall all matters be settled.”²⁵¹

Now Romanides argues that the purpose of this forgery was to prevent the Franks from establishing their capital in Rome. Much more likely, however, is that its immediate purpose was directed, not against the Franks, - who, after all, were Orthodox and great benefactors of the papacy, - but against the heretical emperor in Constantinople, being meant to provide a justification for the papacy’s stealing of the exarchate of Ravenna from the emperor in exchange for his earlier depredations. But in the longer term its significance was deeper: it represented a quite new theory of the relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical powers. For contrary to the doctrine of the “symphony” of the two powers which prevailed in the East and the Byzantine West, the theory encapsulated in the *Donation* essentially asserted that the head of the Roman Church had a higher authority, not only than any other “priest”, but also than the head of the Empire; so that the Emperor could only exert his authority as a kind of vassal of the Pope.

Of course, there is an inherent contradiction in this theory. If it was St. Constantine who gave the authority to St. Sylvester, then the ultimate authority in the Christian commonwealth rested, not with the Pope, but with the Emperor. But this consequence was ignored in the face of the urgent necessity of finding some justification for the papacy’s expansionist plans.²⁵²

In the context of this article, however, the major significance of the *Donation* consists in the fact that this foundation-stone of the papist heresy was concocted, *not in Francia, but in Rome* - and when the papacy was still in the hands of impeccably West Roman Popes who had, as far as we know, not a drop of Germanic blood in their veins!

The Popes and the Carolingians

Towards the end of the century two further West Roman Popes - Hadrian I and Leo III - placed further solid stones in the edifice of the papist heresy. Now Romanides praises these Popes because they opposed the incipient heresies of Charlemagne - his rejection of the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on

²⁵¹ Translated by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 52.

²⁵² Centuries later, in 1242, a pamphlet attributed to Pope Innocent IV corrected this flaw in the theory of papism by declaring that the Donation was not a gift, but a *restitution* (Charles Davis, “The Middle Ages”, in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 86.)

icon-veneration (although this appears to have been the result of a mistranslation rather than deliberate heresy²⁵³), and the Filioque.

This is fair enough. But Charlemagne's heresies soon collapsed with the collapse of his empire, whereas the heresy of papism continued to strengthen. And, as we shall see, the heresy of papism – the most fundamental cause of the Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches – continued to be pursued in this period, not by the Franks, but by the West Roman Popes – most notably, by Pope Nicholas I.

The attitude of Pope Hadrian can be seen in his reply to an Epistle of Empress Irene and her son. Abbé Guettée writes: “We will quote from his letter what he says respecting the Patriarch of Constantinople: ‘We are very much surprised to see that in your letter you give to Tarasius the title of *oecumenical* Patriarch. The Patriarch of Constantinople would not have even the second rank WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF OUR SEE; if he be *oecumenical*, must he not therefore have also the primacy over our church? All Christians know that this is a ridiculous assumption.’

“Adrian sets before the Emperor the example of Charles, King of the Franks. ‘Following our advice,’ he says, ‘and fulfilling our wishes, he has subjected all the barbarian nations of the West; he has given to the Roman Church in perpetuity provinces, cities, castles and patrimonies which were withheld by the Lombards, and which by right belong to St. Peter; he does not cease daily to offer gold and silver for this light and sustenance of the poor.’

“Here is language quite new on the part of Roman bishops, but henceforth destined to become habitual with them. It dates from 785; that is, from the same year when Adrian delivered to Ingelramm, Bishop of Metz, the collection of the *False Decretals* [which gave the Popes all authority to convene councils and judge bishops]. There is something highly significant in this coincidence. Was it Adrian himself who authorized this work of forgery? We do not know; but it is incontestable that it was *in Rome itself* under the *pontificate of Adrian*, and in the year in which he wrote so haughtily to the Emperor of the East, that this new code of the Papacy is first mentioned in history. Adrian is the true creator of the modern Papacy...”²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Louth writes: “The Frankish court received a Latin version of the decrees of Nicaea II in which a central point was misrepresented: instead of an assertion that icons are not venerated with the worship owed to God, the Latin version seems to have asserted exactly the opposite, that icons are indeed venerated with the worship due to God alone. There is certainly scope for misunderstanding here, especially when dealing with a translated text, for the distinction that the iconodules had painstakingly drawn between a form of veneration expressing honour [*proskynesis*] and a form of veneration expressing worship [*latreia*] has no natural lexical equivalent [in Latin].” (*op. cit.*, pp. 86-87).

²⁵⁴ Guettée, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-261.

That it was the papacy, rather than the Franks, who were behind the major developments in Church-State relations in this period is confirmed by a close analysis of the famous coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800. The context was a grave personal crisis of Pope Leo III, in which he very much needed the support of Charlemagne. For “even though his election had been unanimous,” writes Tom Holland, “Leo had enemies: for the papal office, which until recently had brought its holder only bills and overdrafts, was now capable of exciting the envious cupidity of the Roman aristocracy. On 25 April, as the heir of St. Peter rode in splendid procession to Mass, he was set upon by a gang of heavies. Bundled off into a monastery, Leo succeeded in escaping before his enemies, as had been their intention, could blind him and cut out his tongue. Lacking any other recourse, he resolved upon the desperate expedient of fleeing to the King of the Franks. The journey was a long and perilous one – for Charlemagne, that summer, was in Saxony, on the very outer reaches of Christendom. Wild rumours preceded the Pope, grisly reports that he had indeed been mutilated. When he finally arrived in the presence of Charlemagne, and it was discovered... that he still had his eyes and tongue, Leo solemnly asserted that they had been restored to him by St. Peter, sure evidence of the apostle’s outrage at the affront to his vicar. And then, embracing ‘the King, the father of Europe’, Leo summoned Charlemagne to his duty: to stir himself in defence of the Pope, ‘chief pastor of the world’, and to march on Rome.

“And to Rome the king duly came. Not in any hurry, however, and certainly not so as to suggest that he was doing his suppliant’s bidding. Indeed, for the fugitive Pope, humiliation had followed upon humiliation. His enemies, arriving in Charlemagne’s presence only days after Leo, had publicly accused him of a series of extravagant sexual abuses. Commissioners, sent by Charlemagne to escort the Pope back to Rome and investigate the charges against him, drew up a report so damning that Alcuin preferred to burn it rather than be sullied by keeping it in his possession. When Charlemagne himself, in the early winter of 800, more than a year after Leo’s arrival in Saxony, finally approached the gates of Rome, the Pope humbly rode out to greet him twelve miles from the city. Even the ancient emperors had only required their servants to ride out six.

“But Leo, a born fighter, was still resolved to salvage something from the wreckage. Blackened though his name had certainly been, he remained the Pope, St. Peter’s heir, the holder of an office that had been instituted of Christ Himself. It was not lightly to be given to any mortal, not even Charlemagne, to sit in judgement on Rome’s bishop. In token of this, when the proceedings against Leo formally opened on 1 December, they did so, not within the ancient limits of the city, but in the Vatican, on the far side of the Tiber, in implicit acknowledgement of the rights of the Pope, and the Pope alone, to rule in Rome. Papal officials, displaying their accustomed talent for uncovering ancient documents just when

they were most needed, presented to Charlemagne papers which appeared conclusively to prove that their master could in fact only be judged by God. Charlemagne, accepting this submission, duly pronounced the Pope acquitted. Leo, placing his hand on a copy of the New Testament, then swore a flamboyant oath that he had been innocent all along.

“And now, having triumphed over his enemies in Rome, he prepared to snatch an even more dramatic victory from the jaws of all his travails. Two days after the Pope’s acquittal, Charlemagne attended Christmas Mass in the shrine of St. Peter in the Vatican. He did so humbly, without any insignia of royalty, praying on his knees. As he rose, however, Leo stepped forward into the golden light cast by the altar candles, and placed a crown on his bare head. Simultaneously, the whole cathedral echoed to the ecstatic cries of the congregation, who hailed the Frankish king as ‘Augustus’ – the honorific of the ancient Caesars. Leo, never knowingly less than dramatic, then prostrated himself before Charlemagne’s feet, head down, arms outstretched. By venerable tradition, such obeisance had properly been performed only for one man: the emperor in Constantinople.

“But now, following the events of that momentous Christmas Day, the West once again had an emperor of its own.

“And it was the Pope, and no one else, who had granted him his crown...”²⁵⁵

Now Charlemagne’s biographer Einhard claims that he would never have entered the church if he had known what the Pope was intending to do. And there is evidence that in later years Charlemagne drew back from too sharp a confrontation with Constantinople, dropping the phrase “of the Romans” while retaining the title “Emperor”. Moreover, he dropped his idea of attacking the Byzantine province of Sicily.

Instead he proposed marriage to the Byzantine Empress Irene (or perhaps it was her idea²⁵⁶), hoping “thus to unite the Eastern and Western provinces”, as the chronicler Theophanes put it²⁵⁷ - not under his sole rule, for he must have realized that that was impossible, but perhaps on the model of the dual monarchy of the fifth-century Roman empire. In any case, all these plans collapsed with Irene’s overthrow in 802...²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, pp. 30-32.

²⁵⁶ Herrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958, p. 268.

²⁵⁸ The Byzantines at first treated Charlemagne as yet another impudent usurper; for, as a chronicler of Salerno put it, "The men about the court of Charles the Great called him Emperor because he wore a precious crown upon his head. But in truth, no one should be called Emperor

The important point in the context of this article is that although Charlemagne and his successors went along with the glorification of their role by the Popes, the real initiator of the process, and gainers from it, were not the Frankish kings, but the Popes, who obtained a “pocket emperor” in place of the Eastern Emperor, who could be used against the latter if necessary.

As Judith Herrin writes: “Of the three powers involved in the coronation event of 800, the Roman pontiff emerges as the clear winner in the triangular contest over imperial authority. By seizing the initiative and crowning Charles in his own way, Pope Leo claimed the superior authority to anoint an imperial ruler of the West, which established an important precedent... Later Charles would insist on crowning his own son Louis as emperor, without papal intervention. He thus designated his successor and, in due course, Louis inherited his father’s authority. But the notion that a western rule could not be a real emperor without a papal coronation and acclamation in ancient Rome grew out of the ceremonial devised by Leo III in 800.”²⁵⁹

“Thus was the *Roman empire* of the West re-established. Rome, who had always looked with jealousy upon the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, was in transports of joy; the Papacy, pandering to her secret lusts, was now invested with power such as she had never before possessed. The idea of Adrian was achieved by his successor. The modern Papacy, a mixed institution half political and half religious, was established; a new era was beginning for the Church of Jesus Christ – an era of intrigues and struggles, despotism and revolutions, innovations and scandals.”²⁶⁰

The increased power of the papacy vis-à-vis the Franks after 800 is confirmed by Andrew Louth, who writes: “The *Constitutio Romana* sought to establish a bond between the Frankish Empire and the Republic of St. Peter, but it was a very different relationship from that which had formerly held between the pope and the Byzantine emperor. The Frankish emperor undertook to protect the legitimacy of the electoral process, but claimed no right, as the Byzantine emperor had done, to confirm the election itself. What we see here, in inchoate form, is a way of protecting the legitimacy and independence of the pope...”²⁶¹

save the man who presides over the Roman - that is, the Constantinopolitan kingdom.” As Russell Chamberlin writes: “The Byzantines derided the coronation of Charlemagne. To them he was simply another barbarian general with ideas above his station...” (*Charlemagne, Emperor of the Western World*, London: Grafton books, 1986, p. 52).

²⁵⁹ Herrin, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

²⁶⁰ Guettée, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.

²⁶¹ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

However, after the death of Charlemagne his empire began to break up. And “it was precisely after the fall of the artificial empire of Charles” writes K.N. Leontiev, the disciple of St. Ambrose of Optina, “that the signs which constitute, in their integrity, a picture of a special European culture, a new universal civilization, become clearer and clearer. The future bounds of the most recent western States and particular cultures of Italy, France and Germany also begin to become clearer. The Crusades come closer, as does the flourishing age of knighthood and of German feudalism, which laid the foundations of the exceptional self-respect of the person (a self-respect which, passing by means of envy and imitation first into the bourgeoisie, produced the democratic revolution and engendered all these modern phrases about the boundless rights of the person, and then, penetrating to the lower levels of western society, made of every simple day-time worker and cobbler an existence corrupted by a nervous feeling of his own worth). Soon after this we hear the first sounds of Romantic poetry. Then Gothic architecture develops, and soon Dante’s Catholic epic poem will be created, etc. Papal power grows from this time. And so the reign of Charles the Great (9th century) is approximately the watershed after which the West begins more and more to bring its own civilisation and its own statehood into prominence. From this century Byzantine civilisation loses from its sphere of influence all the large and well-populated countries of the West.”²⁶²

However, the power of the papacy began to grow again when Nicholas I ascended the papal throne in 858. He was a West Roman by birth (his father was the regionarius Theodore²⁶³), who spent his pontificate in violent conflict with the Frankish Emperor Louis II. According to Romanides’ criterion, therefore, he should have been a “good” pope, in that he opposed the “tyranny” of the Franks. But in fact, he was one of the worst of all the popes, trying to impose *his* tyranny on everyone, kings and bishops, easterners and westerners. The history of his championship of the Filioque and his struggle with St. Photius the Great, ending in his excommunication, is well-known to Orthodox readers. Less well-known is his war against Archbishops John of Ravenna, Hincmar of Rheims and others, that brought the Franks briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him.

So serious were the tensions that in 862 Emperor Louis II and the dissident archbishops marched on Rome. “As the Frankish army approached,” writes Llewellyn, “Nicholas organized fasts and processions for divine intervention. One of these was attacked and broken up in the street by Louis’ supporters in the city; the crosses and relics, including a part of the True Cross, were thrown to the ground and the pope himself was barely able to escape by river to the Leonine City. He remained there for two days until, with the promise of a safe-conduct,

²⁶² Leontiev, “Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo” (“Byzantinism and Slavism”), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavism)*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 94-95.

²⁶³ Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, p. 112.

he went to interview Louis. In the Emperor's camp the archbishops overwhelmed him with reproaches and accused him, in Louis' presence, of trying to make himself emperor and of wishing to dominate the whole world – the expressions of resentment felt by a national episcopate in conflict with a supranational authority. Nicholas's excommunication of the bishops was rejected and they in turn anathematized him."²⁶⁴

Nicholas won that particular battle – and promptly opened up the war on other fronts – in Bulgaria, and in Constantinople. In 863 he defrocked St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, in typically papist language.²⁶⁵ The Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin* for 864 responded by speaking of “the lord Nicholas, who is called pope and who numbers himself as an apostle among the apostles, and who is making himself emperor of the whole world”.²⁶⁶ Nothing daunted, in 865 Nicholas declared that the Pope had authority “over all the earth, that is, over every other Church”, “the see of Peter has received the total power of government over all the sheep of Christ”. As he wrote to Emperor Michael III: “The judge shall be judged neither by Augustus, nor by any cleric, nor by the people... The First See shall not be judged by any...”²⁶⁷

In 867 St. Photius convened a large Council in Constantinople, to which he invited the archbishops of Ravenna, Trèves and Cologne who had appealed to him against Nicholas. Nicholas was defrocked. However, Nicholas' successor, Hadrian II, rejected the Photian Council's decree and burned its Acts. Then in 869 he convened a Council in Constantinople led by his legates that reversed the decisions of the earlier Council. Papists have often counted this anti-Photian council as the Eighth Ecumenical – not least, one suspects, because Hadrian demanded that all its participants recognized him as “Sovereign Pontiff and Universal Pope”. “The Pope,” he said, “judges all the bishops, but we do not

²⁶⁴ Llewellyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275. The archbishops of Trèves and Cologne wrote to Nicholas: “Without a council, without canonical inquiry, without accuser, without witnesses, without convicting us by arguments or authorities, without our consent, in the absence of the metropolitans and of our suffragan bishops, you have chosen to condemn us, of your own caprice, with tyrannical fury. But we do not accept your accursed sentence, so repugnant to a father's or a brother's love; we despise it as mere insulting language; we expel you yourself from our communion, since you commune with the excommunicate; we are satisfied with the communion of the whole Church and with the society of our brethren whom you despise and of whom you make yourself unworthy by your pride and arrogance. You condemn yourself when you condemn those who do not observe the apostolic precepts which you yourself are the first to violate, annulling as far as in you lies the Divine laws and the sacred canons, and not following in the footsteps of the Popes your predecessors...” (in Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 305, note).

²⁶⁵ “We declare him,” he says, “deprived of all sacerdotal honour and of every clerical function by the authority of God Almighty, of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, of all the saints, of the six general councils, and by the judgement which the Holy Spirit has pronounced by us” (in Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 298). Note the reference only to six ecumenical councils.

²⁶⁶ Quoted in Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

²⁶⁷ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.

read that any have judged him.”²⁶⁸ St. Photius refused to defend himself at the Council, saying that its thirty-three bishops could not presume to reverse the decision of the three hundred and eighteen bishops who had proclaimed him legitimate Patriarch, and condemned Nicholas, in 867.

In 872 Hadrian II was succeeded by John VIII. His language in relation to Constantinople was scarcely less authoritarian than that of his predecessors. But in time he came to recognize St. Photius’s episcopate as lawful, and in 879-880 sent his legates to the Great Council of Constantinople, which anathematized the Filioque.

In 903 Photius’ successor St. Nicholas the Mystic broke communion with Pope Christopher because the latter reintroduced the Filioque into the Creed of the Roman Church. In 904, however, communion between the two Churches was again restored. But the reappearance of the Filioque in Rome in 1009 under Pope Sergius IV caused the names of the Popes to be removed from the East Roman diptychs indefinitely...

Rome and the German Emperors: (1) The Ottonian Dynasty

In the first half of the tenth century both the Frankish empire and the Roman papacy descended into chaos – the Franks because of the invasions of the Vikings, which precipitated the decentralization of political power on the more primitive and localized basis of feudal vassalage (this was the real cause of feudalism, not Romanides’ idea that it was for the sake of herding the Gallo-Roman Orthodox into slave-labour camps!²⁶⁹), and the Popes because of the moral degradation of “the pornocracy of Marozia”, the famous whore who exercised so much power over the Popes that were her sons or lovers. This disastrous situation had at least this advantage, that it both enabled the East to recover its strength unhindered by the machinations of the Popes and halted the spread of the papist heresy in the West. For how could anyone take the papacy’s claims seriously when it was plunged in a degradation fully equal to that of the Borgias in Renaissance times?

²⁶⁸ Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

²⁶⁹ According to Ivan Solonevich, feudalism could be defined as “the splintering of state sovereignty among a mass of small, but in principle sovereign owners of property”. Contrary to Marx, it had nothing to do with ‘productive relations’ and was far from being an advance on previous forms of social organisation. “It is sufficient to remember the huge cultural and unusually high level of Roman ‘production’. Feudal Europe, poor, dirty and illiterate, by no means represented ‘a more progressive form of productive relations’ – in spite of Hegel, it was sheer regression. Feudalism does not originate in productive relations. It originates in the thirst for power beyond all dependence on production and distribution. Feudalism is, so to speak, *the democratisation of power* [my italics – V.M.] – its transfer to all those who at the given moment in the given place have sufficient physical strength to defend their baronial rights – Faustrecht. Feudalism sometimes presupposes a juridical basis of power, but never a moral one.” (*Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 270 (in Russian))

In 955 two critical events took place. First, the German King Otto I, who had inherited the eastern part of the Carolingian empire, defeated the Magyars in open battle, thereby laying the basis for a powerful kingdom. And secondly the *de facto* ruler of Rome, Marquis Alberic of Spoleto, died and his son Octavian became Pope John XII at the age of sixteen.

“Even for a pope of that period,” writes De Rosa, “he was so bad that the citizens were out for his blood. He had invented sins, they said, not known since the beginning of the world, including sleeping with his mother. He ran a harem in the Lateran Palace. He gambled with pilgrims’ offerings. He kept a stud of two thousand horses which he fed on almonds and figs steeped in wine. He rewarded the companions of his nights of love with golden chalices from St. Peter’s. He did nothing for the most profitable tourist trade of the day, namely, pilgrimages. Women in particular were warned not to enter St. John Lateran if they prized their honour; the pope was always on the prowl. In front of the high altar of the mother church of Christendom, he even toasted the Devil...”²⁷⁰

Retribution was coming, however. Berengar of Lombardy advanced on Rome, and the pope in desperation appealed to Berengar’s feudal lord, Otto of Germany. This was Otto’s opportunity to seize that imperial crown, which would give him complete dominance over his rivals. He marched into Italy, drove out Berengar and was crowned Emperor by John on February 2, 962. However, when Otto demanded that the inhabitants of the Papal states should swear an oath of allegiance to him, Otto, and not to the pope, thereby treating the Papal states as one of his dependencies, the Pope took fright, transferred his support to Berengar and called on both the Hungarians and the Byzantines to help drive Otto out of Italy. But Otto saw this as treachery on the part of the pope; he summoned a synod in Rome, deposed John, and placed Leo VIII in his place. Then he inserted a clause into his agreement with Leo whereby in future no pope was to be consecrated without taking an oath of loyalty to the Emperor.

Although Otto was crowned in Rome, he did not call himself “Emperor of the Romans”, but preferred simply “emperor” - probably because he did not wish to enter into a competition with the Byzantine emperor.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 51. Romanides thinks that this description is biased, coming from the Pope’s Frankish enemies. But even allowing for possible exaggerations, the general degradation of the papacy in this period cannot be doubted.

²⁷¹ It may also have been because he had little admiration for Old Rome, just as Old Rome had little time for him. See Charles Davis, “The Middle Ages”, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83. He instructed his sword-bearer to stand behind him as he kneeled at the tomb of the Apostle, “for I know only too well what my ancestors have experienced from these faithless Romans” (Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 62).

However, Otto did gain the Byzantines' recognition of his imperial title, and persuaded them to send Princess Theophanou, the niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, to be the bride of his son, Otto II. The marriage was celebrated in Rome in 972. Theophanou then introduced another Byzantine, John Philagathos, as godfather of her son, Otto III; he later became head of the royal finances and finally - Pope (or antipope) John XV. This led to a sharp increase in Byzantine influence in the western empire²⁷², and the temporary eclipse of the new papist theory of Church-State relations. Thus in an ivory bas-relief Christ is shown crowning Otto II and Theophanou - a Byzantine tenth-century motif expressing the traditionally Byzantine concept of Church-State symphony.²⁷³

In 991 Princess Theophanou died and the young Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. He "dreamed of reuniting the two empires [of East and West] into one one day, so as to restore universal peace - a new imperial peace comparable to that of Augustus, a Roman Empire which would embrace once more the orbis terrarum before the end of the world that was announced for the year 1000."²⁷⁴ To signify that the Renovatio Imperii Romani (originally a Carolingian idea) had truly begun, he moved his court from Aachen to Rome, introduced Byzantine ceremonial into his court on the Aventine hill, gave a stimulus to the rediscovery of Roman law, and began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor for the hand of a daughter or niece of the basileus, which union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner... The plan for union with Byzantium was foiled (the Byzantine princess he was to marry arrived in Italy just as Otto died). But Otto sought and followed the advice of holy hermits²⁷⁵, and Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court. And when Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999 and took the name Sylvester II, he revived memories, in those brought up on the forged *Donation of Constantine*, of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76. Byzantine influence had already been increasing under Alberic, whose "insistence on the forms of Byzantine administration and court hierarchy... checked the growth of any real feudal devolution of government such as the rest of Europe [outside Rome] was experiencing" (Llewellyn, *op. cit.*, p. 307).

²⁷³ "The image," as Jean-Paul Allard writes, "was more eloquent than any theological treatise. It illustrated a principle that the papacy and the Roman Church have never accepted, but which was taken for granted in Byzantium and is still held in Orthodoxy today: Christ and Christ alone crowns the sovereigns; power comes only from God, without the intercession of an institutional representative of the Church, be he patriarch or pope. The anointing and crowning of the sovereign do not create the legitimacy of his power; but have as their sole aim the manifestation of [this legitimacy] in the eyes of the people." ("Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d'Albe", in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, *Regards sur l'Orthodoxie* (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1997, p. 39 (in French).

²⁷⁴ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 40

²⁷⁵ Both the Greek Nilus of Calabria and the Germanic Romuald of Ravenna (Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121, 125-126). See also Louth, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-281.

²⁷⁶ R. Lacy & D. Danzinger, *The Year 1000*, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, p. 190.

However, Sylvester loved the true symphony, not the forged variety: in 1001 he inspired Otto to issue an act demonstrating that the *Donation of Constantine* was a forgery.²⁷⁷ Moreover, this very unpopist Pope did not believe that he was above the judgement of his fellow-bishops. Thus he wrote in 997: "The judgement of God is higher than that of Rome... When Pope Marcellinus offered incense to Jupiter [in 303], did all the other bishops have to do likewise? If the bishop of Rome himself sins against his brother or refuses to heed the repeated warnings of the Church, he, the bishop of Rome himself, must according to the commandments of God be treated as a pagan and a publican; for the greater the dignity, the greater the fall. If he declares us unworthy of his communion because none of us will join him against the Gospel, he will not be able to separate us from the communion of Christ."²⁷⁸

This must count as a formal abjuration of the popist heresy that had held the papacy in thrall for over two hundred years. Unfortunately, Sylvester was not imitated by his successors. But the courage of his right confession deserves appreciation - even if, to Romanides' chagrin, he was a Frank!

Otto and Sylvester imitated the Byzantine concept of a family of independent kings under one Christian Emperor.²⁷⁹ Thus they handed out crowns to King Stephen of Hungary and the Polish Duke Boleslav. And in a Gospel book made for Otto four states - Roma, Gallia, Germania and Sclavinia (Poland) - are represented as women doing homage to him.²⁸⁰ "Otto even opened up friendly relations with Vladimir, prince of the powerful Russian state of Kiev, who had accepted his Christianity from Byzantium. One can only speculate how different the future history of Eastern Europe might have been had Otto's policy of pacification been followed by subsequent German rulers..."²⁸¹

The forty-year Ottonian period in the history of the papacy has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. According to Voltaire in his *Essay on history and customs* (chapter 36), and some later writers, "the imprudence of Pope John XII in having called the Germans to Rome was the source of all the calamities to which Rome and Italy were subject down the centuries..."²⁸² However, an unprejudiced view that tries to avoid racial stereotypes must accept that the intervention of the German monarchy in Roman affairs - until at least the death of Otto III in 1002 -

²⁷⁷ Charles Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 84. In this exposure he was correct, even if he was wrong in his dating of the forgery to the middle of the tenth century (Allard, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46).

²⁷⁸ Pope Sylvester, *Letter 192*, quoted in Fr. Andrew Phillips, "The Three Temptations of Christ and the Mystical Sense of English History", *Orthodox England*, vol. I, □ 2, December, 1997, p. 6.

²⁷⁹ J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, p. 321.

²⁸⁰ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

²⁸¹ J.B. Morrall, "Otto III: an Imperial Ideal", *History Today*, 14 January, 2011.

²⁸² Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale (The Fatal Mystification)*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987, pp. 59-60.

was not wholly unbeneficial. *Someone* had to put a stop to the scandalous degeneration of the first see of Christendom. And if the Ottonian emperors did not finally succeed in cleansing the Augean stables²⁸³, it was hardly their fault alone.

The rivalries between the Roman aristocratic families, - which were only partly influenced by the desire to keep Rome free from foreigners, - appear to have made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. The Ottonians at least seem to have had good intentions, and the partnership of the German-Greek Otto III and the Frankish Sylvester II - a collaboration "unique in medieval history", according to J.B. Morrall²⁸⁴ - looked on the point of restoring a true unity between the Old and the New Romes. Indeed, for a short period it even looked as if Byzantinism might triumph in the West...

"But the Romans," writes Chamberlin, "rose against [Otto], drove him and his pope out of the city, and reverted to murderous anarchy. He died outside the city in January 1002, not quite twenty-two years of age. Sylvester survived his brilliant but erratic protégé by barely sixteen months. His epitaph summed up the sorrow that afflicted all thoughtful men at the ending of a splendid vision: 'The world, on the brink of triumph, in peace now departed, grew contorted in grief and the reeling Church forgot her rest.' The failure of Otto III and Sylvester marked the effective end of the medieval dream of a single state in which an emperor ruled over the bodies of all Christian men, and a pope over their souls."²⁸⁵

Rome and the German Emperors: (2) Descent into Darkness

After the death of Otto and Sylvester, the papacy descended into a moral morass almost as bad as during the "pornocracy of Marozia". Some writers see this as exclusively the fault of the Germans, who, as Aristides Papadakis writes, turned "the papacy... into a sort of imperial Eigenkirche or vicarage of the German crown. The pope was to be the instrument and even the pawn of the Germans, as opposed to the Romans."²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Thus in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, said that if Pope John XV had no love and was puffed up with knowledge, he was the Antichrist... See John Eadie, "The Man of Sin", in *Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.

²⁸⁴ Morrall, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁵ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁸⁶ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, p. 28. However, Papadakis dates this transformation to 962 rather than 1002, on the grounds that "during the century following the revival of the empire [in 962], twenty-one popes from a total of twenty-five were virtually hand-picked by the German crown" (p. 29). Romanides dates it to 983 ("Church Synods and Civilisation", p. 423). They were both wrong. The pernicious influence of the Germans began only after 1002.

Again, in 1009, according to Ranson and Motte, “the last Roman Orthodox Pope, John XVIII, was chased away and a Germanic Pope usurped the Orthodox patriarchate of Rome: Sergius IV, an adulterer-bishop of Rome who, on ascending the episcopal throne, wrote to the four other patriarchs a letter of communion which confirmed the doctrine of the double procession [of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son – the Filioque heresy] and immediately provoked a break. The four Orthodox patriarchs then broke communion with the pope. Some years later [in 1014], Benedict VIII, who was close to the emperor of Germany, Henry II, had the Filioque inserted into the Creed.”²⁸⁷

However, this is a one-sided point of view. The first half of the eleventh century was characterized by a powerful reform movement against abuses in the Church, and foremost among them: simony and the interference of the laity, including kings, in the appointment of bishops. It was led by the famous Burgundian monastery of Cluny, and supported by the German kings. Thus Louth writes: “The impetus for the reform of the Church came from the German (“Salian”) emperors, Henry II (1002-1024) and Henry III (1039-56), their reliance on the imperial Church (the Reichskirche) in the running of the empire giving them an interest in having a Church free from corruption.”²⁸⁸

Moreover, even if the popes were often hand-picked by the German emperors, they were usually of mixed Italian and German blood, as almost all the aristocratic families of Italy were by this time. Thus in the period before 1045 “the papal office had been held by one or other of the great Roman family of Tusculum.”²⁸⁹ And this family was notoriously immoral...

Thus Peter De Rosa writes: “In 1032, Pope John XIX of the House of Tusculum died. Count Alberic III paid a fortune to keep the job in the family. Who better to fill the vacancy than his own son Theophylactus? Raoul Glaber, a monk from Cluny, reports that at his election in October of 1032 his Holiness Benedict IX was ‘a mere urchin... who was before long to become actively offensive’...

“St. Peter Damian, a fine judge of sin, exclaimed: ‘That wretch, from the beginning of his pontificate to the end of his life, feasted on immorality.’ Another observer wrote: ‘A demon from hell in the disguise of a priest has occupied the Chair of Peter.’

“He often had to leave Rome in a hurry. The first time, on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul 1033, an eclipse of the sun that turned the interior of St. Peter’s into an eerie saffron was sufficient pretext for ejecting him. On his return, a few nobles tried to cut him down during mass. They failed. When Benedict was next

²⁸⁷ Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, introduction to Lampryllos, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁸⁸ Louth, op. cit., p. 297.

²⁸⁹ Louth, op. cit., p. 297.

swept out of Rome, the army of Emperor Conrad swept him back in. In 1046, having been driven out once more for plunder, murder and oppression, he went home to his native Tusculum. In his absence, the Romans chose another pontiff, Sylvester III, a man from the Sabine Hills. Far better, they decided, to break canon law and offend the deity than put up with Benedict IX. After fifty blissful days, the boy-pope was restored by his family, who persuaded Sylvester to go elsewhere.”²⁹⁰

Then Benedict wanted to resign in order to marry. Having dispensed himself of the vow of chastity, and been rewarded with two thousand pounds in weight of gold (equivalent to the whole of Peter’s Pence from England), he abdicated in favour of his godfather, John Gratian, who became Pope Gregory VI. But Benedict’s amour rejected him, so he came back to claim the throne again.

There were now three claimants to the papal throne: Benedict IX, Gregory VI and Sylvester III. The Emperor Henry III convened a Council at Sutri in 1046 at which all three were deposed. Clement II was ordained in their place. However, both he and Gregory VI soon died, so Benedict returned for another eight months. The emperor ordered Benedict to leave. The new pope, Damasus II, soon died – poisoned, it was rumoured, by Benedict. Eventually, Benedict retired to a monastery...

In such conditions of scarcely believable chaos and depravity, it is very difficult to believe in the exclusive purity or Orthodoxy of any single faction or national tradition. The truth is that the see of Rome was falling away from Christ because of the general corruption of the Eternal City’s inhabitants. And in a few years its final fall would become manifest to all in the career of the most papist of all the Popes – Hildebrand, or Gregory VII...

In April, 1073, Pope Alexander II died. “The people of Rome, rather than wait for the cardinals to nominate a successor, were soon taking the law into their own hands. They knew precisely whom they wanted as their new pope: ‘Hildebrand for bishop!’ Even as Alexander was being laid to rest in the Lateran, the cry went up across the whole city.”²⁹¹

So a democratic revolution in the Church effected by the native West Romans brought to power one of the greatest despots in history and the effectual founder of the heretical papacy...

Hildebrand – Höllensbrand, or “Hellfire”, as Luther called him – was a midget in physical size. But having been elected to the papacy “by the will of St. Peter”, he set about ensuring that no ruler on earth would rival him in “spiritual”

²⁹⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

²⁹¹ Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-349.

grandeur. Having witnessed, in 1046, the Emperor Henry III's deposition of Pope Gregory VI, with whom he went into exile, he took the name Gregory VII in order to emphasize a unique mission: to subdue the secular power of the emperors to that of the Popes.

Romanides admits that Gregory VII was Italian (strictly speaking he was an Italian Jew from the Jewish Pierleone family²⁹²) but still tries to tar him with the Frankish brush by saying that he was "descended from the Frankish army of occupation".²⁹³ If he means by that phrase that he sympathized with the reform programme that originated in Francia, and was supported by the German emperors, then he is right. But in fact he turned out to be the fiercest enemy of the German emperors.

Of Gregory VII Henry Charles Lea wrote in *The Inquisition in the Middle Ages*: "To the realization of this ideal [of papal supremacy], he devoted his life with a fiery zeal and unshaken purpose that shrank from no obstacle, and to it he was ready to sacrifice not only the men who stood in his path but also the immutable principles of truth and justice."

Gregory claimed that the Roman Church was "mother and mistress" of all the Churches. But this was a commonplace claim since the time of the West Roman Popes Hadrian I and Nicholas I. His real originality consisted in his claim to have jurisdiction, not only over all bishops, but also over all *kings*.

Of course, the idea that the priesthood was in essence higher than the kingship was not in itself heretical, and could find support in the Fathers. However, the Fathers always allowed that kings had supremacy of jurisdiction in their own sphere, for the power of secular rulers comes from God and is worthy of the honour that befits every God-established institution. Indeed, Gregory's colleague and fellow-reformer Peter Damian had written: "In the king Christ is truly recognised as reigning".²⁹⁴ What was new, shocking and completely unpatristic in Gregory's words was his disrespect for the kingship, his refusal to allow it any dignity or holiness, his denial to Caesar of the things that are Caesar's - because he considered himself to be Caesar!

In Gregory's view *rulers had no right to rule unless he gave them that right*. The corollary of this was that *the only rightful ruler was the Pope*. For "if the holy apostolic see, through the princely power divinely conferred upon it, has jurisdiction over spiritual things, why not also over secular things?"

²⁹² David Allen Rivera, *Final Warning*, chapter 10. <http://www.viewfromthewall.com/>.

²⁹³ Romanides, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁹⁴ Peter Damian, *Letter 8, 2, P.L.* 144, 436.

In 1066, while still Archdeacon of the Roman Church, he had probably been the driving force behind Pope Alexander's blessing William of Normandy to invade England and depose her lawful king, Harold II. In 1073 he wrote to the rulers of Sardinia that the Roman Church exerted "a special and individual care" over them - which meant, as a later letter made clear, that they would face armed invasion if they did not submit to the pope's terms. In 1077 he wrote to the kings of Spain that the kingdom of Spain belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church "in rightful ownership". And in 1075 he threatened King Philip of France with excommunication, having warned the French episcopate that if the king did not amend his ways he would place France under interdict, adding: "Do not doubt that we shall, with God's help, make every possible effort to snatch the kingdom of France from his possession."²⁹⁵

But this would have remained just words, if Gregory had not had the ability to compel submission. He demonstrated this ability when wrote to one of King Philip' vassals, Duke William of Aquitaine, and invited him to threaten the king. The king backed down... This power was demonstrated to a still greater extent in his famous dispute with Emperor Henry IV of Germany. It began with a quarrel between Gregory's predecessor, Alexander II, and the Emperor over who should succeed to the see of Milan. Gregory, following the line of his predecessor (which he had probably inspired), expected Henry to back down as King Philip had done. And he did, temporarily - not because he recognized Gregory's right, but because from the summer of 1073 he had to face a rebellion in Saxony.

"So it was that, rather than rise the slightest papal sanction being granted to his enemies' slurs, he brought himself to grovel - even going so far as to acknowledge that he might possibly have backed the wrong horse in Milan. 'Full of pleasantness and obedience', a delighted Gregory described the royal tone to Erlembald [his demagogic supporter in Milan]. The likelier alternative, that the king might be stringing him along and playing for time, appeared not to have crossed the papal mind..."²⁹⁶

And sure enough, having subdued the rebellion in Saxony, Henry prepared to hit back. He was helped by the fact that many German bishops "had developed an active stake in thinking the worst of the new pope. 'The man is a menace!' sniffed one archbishop. 'He presumes to boss us around as though we were his bailiffs!' Others, recoiling from Gregory's brusque demands that priests be obliged to abandon their wives, demanded to know whether he planned to staff the Church with angels. Such a show of sarcasm had absolutely zero effect on Gregory himself. Indeed, by 1075, his prescriptions against married priests, and simony too, were attaining a new level of peremptoriness. In February, four

²⁹⁵ I.S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ", *History*, vol. 58, □ 193, June, 1973, pp. 174-175.

²⁹⁶ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

bishops were suspended for disobedience. Then, in July, one of them, a particularly inveterate simonist, was deposed. Finally, as the year drew to its close, Gregory unleashed against the sullen and recalcitrant imperial Church the reformers' most devastating weapon of all. 'We have heard,' he wrote in an open letter to King Henry's subject, 'that certain of the bishops who dwell in your parts either condone, or fail to take notice of, the keeping of women by priests.' Such men, rebels against the authority of St. Peter, he now summoned to the court of popular opinion. 'We charge you,' Gregory instructed the peoples of the Reich, 'in no way to obey these bishops.'"²⁹⁷

To add insult to injury, in February by a formal synod of the Roman Church the King's right to confer bishoprics was prohibited. This directly threatened Henry's power-base, since the bishops of the Reich were also important imperial lieutenants and administrators. Finally, a letter came from the Pope demanding that Henry repent of his offences and do penance for them, or else "not only would he be excommunicated until he had made due restitution, but he would also be deprived of his entire dignity as king without hope of recovery".

In January, 1076, Henry convened a Synod of Bishops at Worms which addressed Gregory as "brother Hildebrand", demonstrated that his despotism had introduced mob rule into the Church, and refused all obedience to him: "Since, as thou didst publicly proclaim, none of us has been to thee a bishop, so henceforth thou shalt be Pope to none of us".²⁹⁸ The Pope had "introduced worldliness into the Church"; "the bishops have been deprived of their divine authority"; "the Church of God is in danger of destruction". Henry himself declared: "Let another sit upon Peter's throne, one who will not cloak violence with a pretence of religion, but will teach the pure doctrine of St. Peter. I, Henry, by God's grace king, with all our bishops say to you: come down, come down."²⁹⁹

Gregory replied to Henry's challenge in a revolutionary way. In a Synod in Rome he declared the emperor deposed. Addressing St. Peter, he said: "I withdraw the whole kingdom of the Germans and of Italy from Henry the King, son of Henry the Emperor. For he has risen up against thy Church with unheard of arrogance. And I absolve all Christians from the bond of the oath which they have made to him or shall make. And I forbid anyone to serve him as King."³⁰⁰ By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory "effectively sanctioned rebellion against the royal power..."³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

²⁹⁸ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

²⁹⁹ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

³⁰⁰ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³⁰¹ Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

He followed this up by publishing the famously megalomaniac *Dictatus Papae*: "The Pope can be judged by no one; the Roman church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman Church was founded by Christ alone; the Pope alone can depose bishops and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his own judgements; he alone can use the imperial insignia; he can depose emperors; he can absolve subjects from their allegiance; all princes should kiss his feet; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal court inhibits judgement by all inferior courts; a duly ordained Pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."³⁰²

Robinson continues: "The confusion of the spiritual and the secular in Gregory VII's thinking is most marked in the terminology he used to describe the laymen whom he recruited to further his political aims. His letters are littered with the terms 'the warfare of Christ', 'the service of St. Peter', 'the vassals of St. Peter'..., Military terminology is, of course, commonly found in patristic writings.. St. Paul had evoked the image of the soldier of Christ who waged an entirely spiritual war... In the letters of Gregory VII, the traditional metaphor shades into literal actuality... For Gregory, the 'warfare of Christ' and the 'warfare of St. Peter' came to mean, not the spiritual struggles of the faithful, nor the duties of the secular clergy, nor the ceaseless devotions of the monks; but rather the armed clashes of feudal knights on the battlefields of Christendom..."³⁰³

And so open warfare - military as well as spiritual - broke out between the secular and ecclesiastical powers - and it was the Pope's fault!.. Now Henry began to lose support, and the Saxons rebelled again - this time with the support of Duke Rudolf of Swabia. In October a letter from Gregory was read out to a group of rebellious princes in Tribur suggesting that they elect a new king. Desperate, the king with his wife and child was forced to march across the Alps in deepest winter and do penance before Gregory, standing for three days almost naked in the snow outside the castle of Canossa. Gregory restored him to communion, but not to his kingship...

We shall not trace the rest of the papacy's struggle with the German emperors, which in any case continued for centuries, except to point out that Gregory's revolution against lawful political power contained in itself the seeds of the whole future development of western revolutionary thought.³⁰⁴ For it was here,

³⁰² R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, London: Penguin, 1970, p. 102.

³⁰³ Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 178.

³⁰⁴ As the Russian poet F.I. Tiutchev wrote in 1849: "The revolution, which is nothing other than the apotheosis of that same human I having attained its fullest flowering, was not slow to

as Tom Holland writes, that “the foundations of the modern Western state were laid, foundations largely bereft of any religious dimension. A piquant irony: that the very concept of a secular society should ultimately have been due to the papacy. Voltaire and the First Amendment, multiculturalism and gay weddings: all have served as waymarks on the road from Canossa...”³⁰⁵

Conclusion: The Fall of Old Rome

The fall of any Local Church as large as the Roman is a very complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a few factors: cultural, ethnic or even doctrinal. For it is not only the Church as a collective organism that falls, but also every individual nation and person that chooses to remain with it in its fall; so that all the various unrepented sins and passions of all the members of the Church contribute to the final catastrophe, to God’s allowing the candlestick to be removed from its place and the angel of the Church to be recalled from its altar. If a certain false teaching, such as the Filioque or the papist heresy, becomes the official reason why the True Church cuts off the rotting member, this is only the most visible and measurable symptom of a disease whose depths remain largely unsearched and undiagnosed.

The Roman Church until about the middle of the eighth century was indisputably the senior Church of Christendom with an unequalled record of Christian holiness. Though battered and bowed by successive pagan persecutors and barbarian invaders, she had survived them all and had even managed to convert them to the saving faith. By 754, the date of the martyrdom of St. Boniface of Germany, even the savage German tribes beyond the Rhine were being converted in large numbers with the encouragement and under the banner of the Roman Church. Martyrs and confessors, theologians and hierarchs, hermits and kings of many nations had all entered the ranks of the saints under her omophorion. The papacy itself had produced many saints and martyrs, as well as theologians to match the best that the East could offer: St. Leo the Great,

recognise as its own, and to welcome as two of its glorious ancestors – both Gregory VII and Luther. Kinship of blood began to speak in it, and it accepted the one, in spite of his Christian beliefs, and almost deified the other, although he was a pope.

“But if the evident similarity uniting the three members of this row constitutes the basis of the historical life of the West, the starting-point of this link must necessarily be recognized to be precisely that profound distortion to which the Christian principle was subjected by the order imposed on it by Rome. In the course of the centuries the Western Church, under the shadow of Rome, almost completely lost the appearance of the originating principle pointed out by her. She ceased to be, amidst the great society of men, the society of believers, freely united in spirit and truth under the law of Christ; she was turned into a political institution, a political force, a state within the state. It would be true to say that throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages, the Church in the West was nothing other than a Roman colony planted in a conquered land...” (Tiutchev, “Papstvo i Rimskij Vopros” (“The Papacy and the Roman Question”), in *Politicheskie Stat’i (Political Articles)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1976, pp. 57-58 (in Russian)).

³⁰⁵ Holland, op. cit., p. xxii.

St. Gregory the Dialogist, St. Martin the Confessor, St. Agatho, St. Gregory II. With regard to the consistency and purity of her Orthodox confession, no Church could rival Rome, as even Eastern confessors such as St. Theodore the Studite acknowledged. And in the year 754 *only* the Roman Church stood firm against the heresy of iconoclasm that was raging in the East.

At this critical moment, when the Roman Church stood at the pinnacle of her glory, she began to decline. The most visible symptoms of her decline were: a proud exaltation of herself above other Churches, an opportunist use of her prestige to elicit political protection and secular possessions (the Papal States), and the producing of forgeries to bolster and increase that prestige and those possessions. By 854 the papist heresy was entrenching itself in Rome, together with the Filioque. By 954 moral depravity had turned her into an object of disdain by her former admirers. By 1054 she had been anathematized by the Great Church of Constantinople, and the period of the medieval Roman Catholic papacy so well known for its crusades and inquisition and megalomaniac lust for power was under way...

When contemplating the depth of the fall of the Roman Church, and by contrast the continuance of the Eastern Patriarchates in Orthodoxy for many more centuries, it is tempting, on the one hand, to search for some flaw in the former that predestined her to fall, and on the other, to see some special genius in the latter that predestined them to survive. Thus the Latins are said to have fallen because of their supposedly "legalistic" mentality, lack of mystical feeling - and lack of knowledge of Greek, while the Greeks are said to have survived precisely because of their lack of legalism, their mystical feeling - and their knowledge of Greek. This approach fails to explain how some of the greatest of the Roman Christians, such as Popes Leo the Great and Gregory the Dialogist, were both great lawgivers and theologians - and appear not to have known Greek... But more fundamentally, this approach fails to understand that God will never allow a man or group of men to fall away from Him because of some cultural or psychological defect for which he or they are not responsible. If a man falls, he falls because he has failed to struggle as best he can against the sin that is in him - and for no other reason...

This is not to discount the importance of education, culture and even language in helping to strengthen and preserve the Orthodox faith and life. Periods of spiritual and moral decline often - though not invariably - coincide with periods of cultural decline. This is certainly the case with the pre-schism West, where the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries represent a clear decline, both spiritually, morally and culturally, by comparison with the "golden age" of Western Orthodoxy: the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries.

However, we must be careful not to confuse cause and effect here. Did the cultural decline cause the spiritual and moral decline, or vice-versa? The argument of this article has been that it was spiritual factors – above all, pride and the heresies that pride begets – that caused the decline of the Roman papacy, which in turn produced a gradual cultural deterioration.

Now the basic culture of the whole of Christian Europe was the Byzantine or East Roman; and the West Roman, Frankish, Hispanic, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultures were all variations on that theme. So the cultural deterioration that set in throughout the West from the ninth century can be called the “debyzantinization” of the West, its gradual alienation from the sources and inspiration of Byzantine civilization. However, this gradual alienation, which many historians have remarked on and documented, was not the *cause* of the decline of the West, but its *consequence*.

According to the cultural theory of the fall of the West, the West died because it lost its link with the life-giving streams of Byzantine culture. Romanides’ thesis is a variation on this theme, consisting in the argument that West Rome, as opposed to the Germanic north, never in fact lost that link, but resisted the break to the end, and that West Rome’s eventual separation from her eastern twin was not her fault, but the fault of the evil Franks. I have argued that this thesis is false, that the West, including the city of Rome itself, had been for centuries a Romano-Germanic synthesis, and that West Rome fell away from God and from East Rome because of the evil in herself – in particular, her pride in her own position as head of the Christian world – and not because evil was imposed upon her by barbarians from outside. Although Frankish kings such as Charlemagne had their own ambitions and played their own part in the tragedy, it was the West Roman Popes who manipulated the Franks rather than the other way round.

In particular, Romanides’ racial thesis that only men of Frankish descent led the West away from Christ, rather than men of Italian descent, must be rejected. The builders of the new and heretical papist ideology were mainly of West Roman descent, as were several of the most depraved of the Popes. This is not to say that the Franks were not guilty, too. Indeed, insofar as the whole of the West followed Rome into schism and heresy, the whole of the West was guilty. But while the blind who follow the blind also fall into the pit, and by their own fault, it is the blind *leaders* who must take the main burden of responsibility...

IV. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF NEW ROME

Many causes have been proposed for the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Secular historians have naturally looked for material causes: the loss of Anatolia to the Ottoman Turks, with the consequent loss of manpower and economic resources; the handover of trade into the hands of the Genoese; the debasing of the currency; the feudal system introduced by the Latins; social inequalities between the rich and the poor; and the Black Death... Orthodox historians have gone deeper, proposing the divisions in the Byzantine commonwealth of States between the Slavs and the Greeks, or, most plausibly, the betrayal of the Faith at the Council of Florence in 1439...

And yet there is something not quite convincing in these explanations. While undoubtedly valid up to a point, they fail, individually and collectively, to explain why the Fall took place precisely at this time. After all, the Byzantines had suffered similar disasters on previous occasions. Anatolia had been lost to the Arabs in the seventh century, and again to the Seljuks in the eleventh century – but they had recovered. Before 1204 trade had been in the hands of the Venetians – but they had recovered. Social rest had been rife at the end of the Comnenan period, and again in mid-fourteenth century Thessalonica – but they had recovered. The Black Death afflicted many European states – but they had recovered. As for trouble with the Slavs, especially the Bulgarians, this was not new. And as for falls into heresy, these had been frequent and sometimes prolonged, as in the time of the iconoclasts, but both the Church and the Empire had recovered. There was no reason to believe that this fall into heresy was any deeper than previous falls – the unia of 1439 was rejected almost immediately by the people, and was officially rejected by the hierarchy in 1454 and again in 1484.

A clue to our conundrum is provided by an 8th or 9th century Greek prophecy found in St. Sabbas' monastery in Jerusalem, which says: "The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, *since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State*. Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks."³⁰⁶ If we take this prophecy as God-inspired, as I believe we can, then we have the answer: Constantinople fell in 1453 because something fundamental in the relationship between Church and State went wrong in the Palaeologan period – something which was presumably irreparable in the culture of late Byzantium, and which was so serious, according to God's righteous judgement, as to require the final Fall of the Empire itself...

³⁰⁶ Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii" ("The Destinies of Russia"), *Pravoslavniy Vestnik* (Orthodox Messenger), № 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7. Translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996.

But how? Had not the Church-State relationship almost always been in crisis in Byzantine history? How many emperors had not come to power through murdering their predecessors, or broken the laws of marriage in a particularly flagrant manner, or tried to impose heresy on the Empire, thereby stretching the Church-State relationship to breaking point?³⁰⁷ And how often have these manifest violations of Church-State symphony not elicited the charge of “caesaropapism” against the Byzantine imperial system as a whole? What was so sinister about the apparently peaceful relations between Church and State in the period before 1453 that called for so terrible and final a judgement?

The Slide to Absolutism

In order to attempt to answer these questions, let us go back to the early twelfth century, a time when Church-State relations in Byzantium were not caesaropapist but truly symphonic – especially by comparison with the West, where Pope Gregory VII and his successors had officially and triumphantly rejected the heretical doctrine of papocaesarism – the supreme authority of the Pope in both Church and State.³⁰⁸ For Emperor John Comnenus was in many ways an exemplary emperor, who put into practice the theory of Church-State relations that he expounded to Pope Honorius (1124-1130): “In the course of my reign I have recognized two things as being completely distinct from each other. The one is the spiritual power, which was bestowed by the Great and Supreme High Priest and Prince of the world, Christ, upon His apostles and disciples as an unalterable good through which, according to Divine right, they received the power to bind and to loose all people. The other thing is the secular power, a power directed towards temporal things, according to the Divine word: Give to Caesar that which belongs to him; a power shut up in the sphere belonging to it. These are the two dominant powers in the world; although they are distinct and separate, they act for their mutual benefit in a harmonious union, helping and complementing each other. They can be compared with the two sisters Martha and Mary, of whom the Gospel speaks. From the consensual manifestation of these two powers there flows the common good, while from their hostile relations there flows great harm.”³⁰⁹

However, this letter marks the end of an era. For the later Comneni Emperors took it upon themselves not only to convene Church Councils, but even to take the leading part in them and punish hierarchs and churchmen who did not agree with them. Thus John’s successor, Manuel I, had the following powers in the Church,

³⁰⁷ According to Ivan Solonevich, in 74 out of 109 Byzantine reigns, the throne was seized by a coup (*Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998. p. 77).

³⁰⁸ For a history of the terms “papocaesarism” and “caesaropapism”, see Gilbert Dagron, “Vostochnij tsezaropapizm (istoria i kritika odnoj kontseptsii)” (“Eastern Caesaropapism (a history and critique of one conception)”, <http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=177>.

³⁰⁹ A.P. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie Oчерki Sostoiania Vizantijsko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 101.

according to the canonist Archbishop Demetrius Chomatianos: “He presided over synodal decisions and gave them executive force; he formulated the rules of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; he legislated on the ‘life and the statute’ of the clergy, including the clergy of the bema, and on the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, the elections to vacant sees and the transfer of bishops; he could promote a bishopric to the rank of a metropolia ‘to honour a man or a city’. The frontier thus traced annexed to the imperial domain several contested and contestable zones, but in the name of a right – that which gave the emperor his statute and his title of common epistemonarch of the Churches.”³¹⁰

The meaning of the term “epistemonarch” here is obscure.³¹¹ It may also have been obscure to most Byzantines. But that was all the better from Satan’s point of view; for, as Aristotle said, “the occurrence of an important transition in customs often passes unnoticed”.³¹² However, the Byzantines could hardly fail to notice the use to which the emperors put it – to justify their ever-increasing interference in ecclesiastical affairs. Thus the first of the Angeli dynasty, Isaac, in a novella issued in 1187, justified his hearing complaints of bishops together with the patriarch on the grounds that he had received “the rank of epistemonarch of the Church from him who anointed him and made him emperor.”³¹³

Using this invented power, the Emperors tended to choose patriarchs who would be obedient to them. As George Acropolites wrote: “The Emperors in general want the patriarchs to be humble people, not greatly endowed in mind, who would easily give in to their desires as to law-giving decrees. And this happens all the more frequently with uneducated people; being ignorant in word, they are not capable of bold speaking and bow before the Emperor’s orders.”³¹⁴ Similarly, Nicephorus Gregoras wrote that the emperors chose simple people for the post of patriarch “so that they may unhesitatingly obey their commands, like slaves, and so that they should not offer any resistance.”³¹⁵

And yet they did not always get their way. The extent, but also the limits, of the Emperor’s power were strikingly illustrated by a debate that took place towards the end of the reign of Manuel I. The Emperor convened a Council in order to strike out the following words found in the rite for the reception of Muslims to Orthodoxy: “Anathema to the God of Mohammed, about whom Mohammed says that... He

³¹⁰ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996, pp. 259-260.

³¹¹ It seems to have referred to the monastic duty of gathering together the brothers in church for services. See I.I. Sokolov, “Tserkovnaia politika imperatora Isaaka II Angela” (The Church Politics of Emperor Isaac II Angelus), in *Sot. Grigorij Palama*, St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 166-167.

³¹² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1303 a 22.

³¹³ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 261. See Sokolov, *op. cit.*

³¹⁴ Acropolites, *Chronicle*, ch. 53; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

³¹⁵ Gregoras, *History of Byzantium*, VIII, 2; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

does not beget and is not begotten, and nobody is like Him." However, the hierarchy did not want to strike out this phrase. Then the Emperor "issued a second decree, in which he again insisted on his opinion and then appointed another Council in Scutari, where the Emperor had withdrawn because of illness to make use of the pure country air. Thither the Emperor summoned the Patriarch and Bishops, but Manuel because of his illness could not enter into personal conversation with the Fathers: the matter was conducted through the Emperor's beloved secretary. The latter in the person of the Emperor presented two papers to the Council. These were, first, a document in which Manuel set out his point of view on the question being debated, and secondly, his letter to the Patriarch. The Emperor demanded that the Bishops should sign the indicated document. And in the letter he in every way reproached the Patriarch and Bishops for their stubbornness and defiance, even threatening to convene a Council in which he wanted to entrust the presidency to none other than the Pope of Rome (it can be understood that the Pope in this letter served for Manuel only as a kind of scarecrow). In the same letter to the Patriarch the Emperor wrote: 'I would be ungrateful to God if I did not apply all my efforts so that He, the true God, should not be subjected to anathema.' But the Patriarch and Bishops even now did not want to share the Emperor's opinion. On this occasion the noted Eustathius, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, spoke out with special zeal against the Emperor's demands. He was a man of wide learning, distinguished by the gift of eloquence. He heatedly declared: 'I would consider myself completely mad and would be unworthy of these hierarchical vestments if I recognized as true some Mohammedan God, who was his guide and instructor in all his disgusting deeds.' The unusual boldness with which Eustathius began to oppose the Emperor horrified everyone. The hearers almost froze at these words of Eustathius. The Emperor's secretary immediately set off to inform Manuel about his. The Emperor was indescribably amazed and considered himself deeply offended by Eustathius' words. He said: 'Either I shall justify myself and prove that I do not believe in a God that is the teacher of all impiety, and then I shall subject him who vomits blasphemy against the Anointed of God to merited punishment, or I shall be convicted of glorifying another God, and not the true one, and then I will be grateful that I have been led away from a false opinion.' Patriarch Theodosius set off for the quarters of the Emperor, and for a long time tried to persuade him to forgive the act of Eustathius, and finally, to reduce the Emperor's anger, promised that he, the Patriarch, and the Bishops would agree to accept the removal of the formula about the God of Mohammed from the trebniks. And apparently, the Council did in fact cease to oppose the will of the Emperor. Manuel was delighted, forgave Eustathius and sent the Bishops off to Constantinople in peace. But the Emperor somewhat deceived himself in his hopes. The next day, early in the morning, an envoy of the Emperor came to the Patriarch demanding impatiently that the Bishops should assemble and sign a decree of the Emperor. The Bishops quickly assembled at the Patriarch's, but refused to sign the decree. Although, the day before, the Bishops, probably out of fear for Eustathius, had agreed completely to accept the opinion of Manuel, now, when the danger had passed, they again began to oppose the

Emperor. They began to criticize the decree, found inaccuracies in it, began to demand changes and removals. Learning about this, the Emperor became very angry against the Bishops and showered them with indecent swear-words, calling them 'pure fools'. History does not record what happened after this. At any rate the end of the quarrel was quite unexpected: the historian Gregoras records the ending in only a few words. The Bishops, he says, somehow agreed to reject the formula which had enticed the Emperor, and replaced it with a new one, in which, instead of the anathema on the God of Mohammed there was proclaimed an anathema on Mohammed himself and on his teaching and on his followers."³¹⁶

Now the Church herself began to find ways of justifying the emperor's new power. Canonists were found - Patriarch Theodore Balsamon of Antioch (12th century) and Archbishop Demetrius (Chomatianos) of Ochrid (early 13th century) - who ascribed to the emperor all of the privileges of the episcopate except the conducting of church services and sacraments, but including the traditionally exclusively episcopal domain of defining the faith. According to Balsamon, "the Orthodox Emperors can enter the holy altar when they want to, and make the sign of the cross with the trikiri, like hierarchs. They present catechetical teachings to the people, which is allowed only for local bishops." "Since the reigning Emperor is the Lord's Anointed by reason of his anointing to the kingdom, but our Christ and God is, besides, a bishop, similarly the Emperor is adorned with hierarchical gifts."³¹⁷

According to Balsamon, as Dagrón summarizes his thought: "If the emperor acts in many circumstances as a bishop, this is because his power is dual. His dual competence, spiritual and temporal, can only be understood by the quasi-sacerdotal character of royalty, founded on anointing..."

"The Church is subject to the authority of the emperor and that of the patriarchs. That is established. But what is the authority of the emperor based on? On his role as epistemonarch - that is, on the disciplinary function which he is recognized to have. Balsamon does not reject this explanation and uses it on occasion, for example, with regard to the right of appeal to the emperor in ecclesiastical matters, to show that the decisions of the patriarchal tribunal are without appeal in view of the loftiness of the see, but that the emperor in his capacity as epistemonarch of the Church will have to judge the patriarch if he is personally accused of sacrilegious theft (ιεροσυλη) or heterodoxy..."

"'Insofar as the Emperor, through his anointing to the kingdom, is the Anointed of the Lord, while the Christ [= the Anointed One] and our God is, besides other things, also a Bishop, there is a basis for the Emperor being adorned with hierarchical gifts'. The reasoning is simple, albeit under a complicated form: the

³¹⁶ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124.

³¹⁷ Balsamon, *Interpretation of the 69th Canon of the Council in Trullo*, in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

Anointed One par excellence, Christ, is qualified as bishop by us, so the emperors, who also receive anointing, must be equally considered to be bishops."³¹⁸

We see here how important the sacrament of royal anointing (although this anointing was not yet understood in a more than spiritual sense) had become - and how quite unorthodox conclusions were being justified by reference to it.

Chomatianos is hardly less clear than Balsamon in his caesaropapist views: "The Emperor, who is and is called the general supreme ruler of the Church, stands above the decrees of the Councils; he gives to these decrees their proper force. He is the standard in relations to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the lawgiver for the life and conduct of the priests, to his jurisdiction belong the quarrels of bishops and clergy and the right of filling vacant sees. He can make bishops metropolitans, and Episcopal sees - metropolitan sees. In a word, with the single exception of carrying out Divine services, the Emperor is endowed with all the remaining Episcopal privileges, on the basis of which his ecclesiastical resolutions receive their canonical authority. Just as the ancient Roman Emperors signed themselves: Pontifex Maximus, such should the present Emperors be considered to be, as the Lord's Anointed, for the sake of the imperial anointing. Just as the Saviour, being the Anointed One, is also honoured as First Priest, so the Emperor, as the Anointed one, is adorned with the charismata of the firstpriesthood."³¹⁹

Again, he writes that the transfer of bishops "is often accomplished at the command of the emperor, if the common good requires it. For the emperor, who is and is called the supreme watchman over church order, stands higher than the conciliar resolutions and communicates to them strength and validity. He is the leader of the Church hierarchy and the law-giver in relation to the life and behaviour of priests; he has the right to decide quarrels between metropolitans, bishops and clergy and fills vacant Episcopal sees. He can raise Episcopal sees and bishops to the dignity of metropolias and metropolitans... His decrees have the force of canons."³²⁰

G.A. Ostrogorsky characterizes the ideas of Balsamon and Chomatianos as "merely echoes of old and antiquated ideas".³²¹ But these old ideas, dressed up in new, pseudo-canonical forms, were still dangerous... Thus Dagron writes: "Insensibly we have passed from one logic to another. The rights of intervention recognised by the Church for the emperor are no longer considered as exceptional

³¹⁸ Dagron, op. cit., p. 267.

³¹⁹ Chomatianos, in Ralley and Potlis, *Mega Syntagma ton theion kai ieron kanonon* (Great Collection of the Divine and Sacred Canons), Athens, 1855, vol. V, p. 429; in Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

³²⁰ Chomatianos, in *Toorenia sv. Otsov i uchitelej tserkvi* (The Works of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church), St. Petersburg, 1907, pp. 360-361.

³²¹ Ostrogorsky, "Otnoshenie Tserkvi i gosudarstva v Vizantii" ("The Relationship of the Church and the State in Byzantium"), quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 104.

privileges, but as a manifestation of the quasi-episcopal nature of imperial power. Taken together, they give the temporal power a particular status, and force one to the conclusion that if the emperor is not strictly speaking a cleric 'after the order of Aaron', he is not in any case a simple layman. By contrast with a purely juridical conception, Balsamon sketches, not without prudence, a charismatical conception of imperial power. He suggests that [the emperor's right of] 'promoting' the patriarch is not only the [right of] choosing from a list of three names which is in principle submitted by the assembly of metropolitans, or of imposing his choice on the same assembly in the case of disagreement, as is envisaged in a chapter of the *Book of Ceremonies*: it is above all [the right of] 'creating' him - before the religious consecration in which the metropolitans proceed to Hagia Sophia on the following Sunday -, either by invoking the Holy Spirit, as Balsamon says, or by using the somewhat more neutral formula preserved by the ceremonial of the 10th century: 'Grace Divine and the Royalty that we have received from it promote the very pious person before us to the rank of patriarch of Constantinople.' The 'designation' of the patriarch would be a political prerogative, just as the carving out of dioceses and the promotion of Episcopal sees, to which the emperor has the sovereign right to proceed for a better harmony between the spiritual and the temporal powers; but his 'promotion by invocation of the Spirit' is a religious, if not a liturgical act, which only a charisma can justify..."³²²

Balsamon went so far as to reverse the traditional Patriarch-soul, Emperor-body metaphor in favour of the emperor: "Emperors and Patriarchs must be respected as teachers of the Church for the sake of their dignity, which they received through anointing with chrism. Hence derives the power of the right-believing Emperors to instruct the Christian peoples and, like priests, offer incense to God. Their glory consists in the fact that, like the sun, they enlighten the world from one end to the other with the flash of their Orthodoxy. The strength and activity of the Emperor touches the soul and body of man while the strength and power of the Patriarch touches only the soul..."³²³

Again, Balsamon wrote: "The emperor is subject neither to the laws nor to the Church canons."³²⁴ And yet St. Nicholas the Mystic, Patriarch of Constantinople in the tenth century, had written: "If the emperor is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?... An emperor who gives orders to slander, to murder through treachery, to celebrate unlawful marriages, and to seize other people's property, is not an emperor, but a brigand, a slanderer, an adulterer and a thief"³²⁵.

³²² Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

³²³ Balsamon, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina, T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 120.

³²⁴ Balsamon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 120.

³²⁵ St. Nicholas, "Epistle 32", P.G. 111: 209-213; Fr. George Poullas, "Indestructible Towers", *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. 26, 2009, no. 2, p. 15.

And so the Balsamonite teaching on the role of the Emperor was an innovation that could only lead to the undermining of the Empire and its eventual fall... And this is what in fact happened; for the history of the late twelfth century was bloody and chaotic even by Byzantine standards, as emperors disposed of each other, and the people lost all respect for an emperor once he had been overthrown. Thus when Andronicus I Comnenus, was overthrown, tortured and killed by Isaac II Angelus, the people, as Nicetas Choniates relates, “did not think that this was a man who had not long ago been the Emperor adorned with a royal diadem, and that they had all glorified him as a saviour, and greeted him with best wishes and bows, and they had given a terrible oath to be faithful and devoted to him”.³²⁶ Isaac Angelus deposed several patriarchs, one after another... And he said: “The Emperors are allowed to do everything, because on earth there is no difference in power between God and the Emperor: the Emperors are allowed to do everything, and they can use God’s things on a par with their own, since they received the royal dignity itself from God, and there is no difference between God and them.”³²⁷ Moreover, he ascribed to himself the power to correct what was done in the Church contrary to the Church canons.³²⁸ Moreover, the encomiasts addressed Isaac as “God-like” (ΘΕΟΕΙΔΕΙ) and “equal to God” (ΙΣΟΘΕΕ).³²⁹

When the Emperors, imitating the pagan tyrants, exalted themselves to God-like status, and the people trampled on them in spite of the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed”, everything began to fall apart: both the Bulgarians and Wallachians under Peter and Asen and the Serbs under Stephan Nemanya rebelled, and then, in 1204, the Crusaders seized the City... As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes: “No more than 15,000 Latin crusaders stormed the well fortified city with its population of one million and its five-times larger garrison! After this the same band of wandering knights took possession of the whole of Balkan Greece and founded their Latin empire on its ruins. Nobody thought of resisting, of saving the capital, of defending the Orthodox monarchy. The local Byzantine administration itself offered its services to the new masters. In the lower classes apathy reigned towards all that had happened, and even evil joy at the wealthy city’s sacking. Using the suitable opportunity, local separatists sprang into life: not only Serbia, Bosnia and Bulgaria separated and declared their independence, but also the purely Greek provinces of Epirus, Trebizond and some of the islands...”³³⁰

³²⁶ Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Isaac*, III, 7; quoted in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³²⁷ Nicetas Choniates, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³²⁸ Isaac, *Novella de electionibus pontificum* (Law on the Election of Bishops), P.G. 135: 440; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³²⁹ R.J. Macrides, “From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: imperial models in decline and exile”, in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, p. 278.

³³⁰ Alferov, “Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva” (“Lessons of the Nicaean Empire”), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_05.htm.

J.B. Bury, following Mommsen, called the government of Byzantium “an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution”.³³¹ But during the Macedonian dynasty, the idea of lawful succession from father to son had taken root. So the anarchy at the end of the twelfth century was a regression – but a regression made worse by the fact that now, thanks to Balsamon and Chomatianos, there existed a “canonical” argument for the absolutism of the emperors, and that many Byzantium now treated the emperor with an adulation that was nothing less than idolatrous.

Thus twelve years after the fall of the City, Nicetas Choniates wrote: “For most of the Roman Emperors it was quite intolerable merely to give orders, to walk around in gold clothes, to use the public purse as their own, to distribute it however and to whomever they wanted, and to treat free people as if they were slaves. They considered it an extreme insult to themselves if they were not recognized to be wise men, like gods to look at, heroes in strength, wise in God like Solomon, God-inspired leaders, the most faithful rule of rules – in a word, infallible judges of both Divine and human matters. Therefore instead of rebuking, as was fitting, the irrational and bold, who were introducing teachings new and unknown to the Church, or even presenting the matter to those who by their calling should know and preach about God, they, not wishing to occupy the second place, themselves became at one and the same time both proclaimers of the dogmas and their judges and establishers, and they often punished those who did not agree with them”...³³²

And so God allowed the City to be taken because the symphony between Church and State had been destroyed. Thus was fulfilled the words of Emperor Constantine VII, who correctly understood the meaning of the symphony of powers: “If the Emperor forgets the fear of God, he will inevitably fall into sin and be changed into a despot, he will not be able to keep to the customs established by the Fathers, and by the intrigues of the devil he will do that which is unworthy and contrary to the commandments of God, he will become hateful to the people, the senate and the Church, he will become unworthy to be called a Christian, he will be deprived of his post, will be subject to anathema, and, finally, will be killed as the ‘common enemy’ of all Romans, both ‘those who command’ and ‘those who obey’.”³³³

The Nicaean Empire and the Sacrament of Royal Anointing

After the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204, asks Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), “what remained for the few Byzantine patriots and zealots of Orthodoxy to do? Correctly evaluating the situation, they understood that the process of the fall was already irreversible, that neither the empire nor the capital could be saved by them. Having elected Theodore Lascaris as emperor on the day before the fall of

³³¹ Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9.

³³² Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Manuel*, VI, 31; quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³³³ Emperor Constantine VII, *On the Government of the Empire*.

Constantinople, they left the capital with him and founded a centre of resistance in the hilly and wooded district of Bithynia. It is noteworthy that the centre became the city of Nicaea, the place in which the First and Seventh (the last) Ecumenical Councils had been conducted. Here, to Nicaea, there flowed the church hierarchs who had not submitted to the Roman pope and his puppet – the new patriarch of Constantinople. These zealot bishops elected their own Orthodox Nicaean patriarch. The Nicaean patriarch received St. Savva of Serbia and gave autocephaly to the Serbian Church; and it was he who appointed our Metropolitan Cyril, the fellow-struggler of the right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky. In this way the Nicaean Greeks had communion with the Orthodox in other countries.

“The material and military forces of the Nicaean Empire were tiny by comparison with its mighty enemies: the Latin West and the Muslim East. And in spite of that the Nicaean Kingdom survived for more than half a century. The Providence of God clearly preserved it, destroying its dangerous enemies in turn: the Turks constricted the Latins, and these same Turks were themselves defeated by the Mongols.

“The Nicaean Empire relit in the Greeks the flame of zeal for Orthodoxy and its national-state vestment. It opposed faith and life according to the faith to the society that had been corrupted by base materialist instincts. The first three Nicaean emperors Theodore I Lascaris, John Vatatzes and Theodore II were people of burning faith, firm and energetic rulers and courageous warriors.

“Interesting is the reply of the second Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes to Pope Innocent III. Rejecting the pope’s offer of a unia, and replying to his mockery (what kind of emperor are you, he said, if you sit in the woods and not in the capital), John replied: ‘The emperor is he who rules not walls and towers, not stones and logs, but the people of the faithful.’ And this people was those who for the sake of the preservation of Orthodoxy abandoned the capital and gathered with him ‘in the woods’.”³³⁴

So Romanity survived. In Nicaea the Lascarid Emperors preserved and nurtured the strength of the Roman power in exile... What had changed to turn the wrath of the Lord to mercy? Leaving aside the basic and most essential condition for any real turn for the better – the repentance of the people, - we may point to the fact that the Lascarid Emperors treated the Patriarchs with much more respect than the Comneni and Angeli had done: symphony was restored. And this improvement was reinforced by an institutional or sacramental development that strengthened the autocracy while at the same time restoring the Patriarch to a position of something like equality with the Emperor. This was the introduction, at the coronation of Emperor Theodore I Lascaris, of the sacrament of imperial anointing – visible anointing with holy oil, at the hands of a patriarch ...

³³⁴ Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), “Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva”, *op. cit.*

It had taken several centuries for the enthronement of the emperor to acquire this ecclesiastical character. Alexander Dvorkin writes: "The ceremony of coronation introduced by Diocletian was accomplished by the first official of the Empire. The first Christian emperors continued this practice. For example, Theodosius II was crowned by the prefect of the city of Constantinople. However, at the coronation of his successor, Marcian, the patriarch was already present. [And his successor, Leo, was probably crowned by the patriarch.] On the one hand, this signified that the patriarch had become the second most important official person in the Empire after the emperor himself. But on the other hand, his participation turned the coronation into a religious ceremony. In the course of it the emperor was subjected to a kind of ordination, he received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. From that time the imperial palace became known as the holy palace. The palace ceremonies acquired a liturgical character in which the emperor played a double role: as representative of God on earth and representative of the people before God, the symbol of God Himself and of the Divine incarnation. Nevertheless, during the whole of the first half of Byzantine history the crowning only sanctioned *de facto* the already proclaimed emperor. The ancient Roman tradition of the army and senate proclaiming the emperor continued to remain the main criterion of their [his?] entering into his post. However, in the eleventh century there appeared the opinion among the canonists (such as Patriarch Arsenius the Studite) that the lawfulness of the emperors was founded, not on the proclamation, but upon the patriarchal crowning.

"A special character was given to the position of the emperor by specific petitions in the litanies and prayers read in the churches on feastsdays. In the prayer on Christmas Eve Christ was asked to 'raise the peoples of the whole inhabited world to give tribute to Your Majesty as the magi brought gifts to Christ'. In the songs of Pentecost it was said that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of fiery tongues on the head of the emperor. Constantine Porphyrogennitus wrote that it was precisely through the palace ceremonies that 'imperial power is directed in the needful rhythm and order, and the Empire can in this way represent the harmony and movement of the Universe that comes from the Creator'. The Byzantines believed fervently precisely in such an understanding of the role of the emperor. However, this did not prevent them from taking part in the overthrow of an emperor whom they considered unworthy or dishonourable. His holiness did not guarantee him from suffering a violent death. The Byzantines venerated the symbol, which by no means necessarily coincided with every concrete personality. That emperor whose personality in the eyes of the people and the Church did not correspond to his lofty calling was considered a tyrant and usurper, and his violent overthrow was only a matter of time and was seen as a God-pleasing act...

"The emperor was crowned by the patriarch, and in later Byzantium the opinion prevailed that it was precisely this act of crowning that led him into the imperial dignity. The patriarch received his confession of faith and could refuse to crown him

if he did not agree to change his faith or correct his morals. As a last resort the patriarch could excommunicate the emperor..."³³⁵

The very late appearance of the fully-fledged rite, including anointing requires some explanation... Dagron considers that the Theodore Lascaris' anointing by the patriarch in Nicaea in 1208 was modeled on the westerners' anointing of Baudouin I in Constantinople in 1204.³³⁶ It both bolstered imperial power and strengthened the position of the Church in relation to imperial power: "Far from the historical capital, in the modest surroundings of Nicaea, it would have appeared necessary to materialize the 'mystery of royalty'. The Church, being from now on the only force capable of checking the secessionist tendencies, was able to seize the opportunity to place her mark more deeply on the imperial coronation. Using the request of clergy from Constantinople who wanted the convocation of a council to nominate a patriarch, Theodore Laskaris, who was not yet officially emperor, fixed a date that would allow the new titular incumbent to proceed to the 'habitual' date, that is, during Holy Week [Holy Thursday, to be more precise], for the making of holy chrism (το θειον του μυρου χρισμα). On his side, [Patriarch] Michael Autoreianos, who had just been elected on March 20, 1208, multiplied initiatives aimed at strengthening imperial authority, exhorting the army in a circular letter in which we are astonished to find echoes of the idea of the holy war, remitting the sins of the soldiers and of the emperor, and taking an oath of dynastic fidelity from the bishops assembled in Nicaea."³³⁷

³³⁵ Dvorkin, *Ocheki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, pp. 695-696, 697-698. The patriarch first received the emperor's confession of faith in 491 (Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought 300-1450*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 14).

³³⁶ Dvorkin agrees with him (*op. cit.*, p. 698). So, in a more guarded way, does Vera Zemskova (personal communication, August 11, 2000), who writes that "the rite of anointing arose in Byzantium under the influence of the West, where the sacrament already existed and had its source in the understanding of the sacredness of power that was characteristic for the Barbarians. True, it is impossible to say precisely what kind of influence this was. Even in the history of the intensive contacts between the Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143-1180) and the western sovereigns there is no mention of this subject. The rite appeared after the conquest of Constantinople with the emperors of the Nicaean empire..."

There is in fact little agreement about the date at which this sacrament was introduced in Byzantium. According to Fomin and Fomina, (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 96), it was introduced in the ninth century, when Basil I was anointed with the chrismation oil or with olive oil (*P.G.* 102.765); according to M.V. Zyzykin (*Patriarkh Nikon* (Patriarch Nikon), Warsaw, 1931, part 1, p. 133) - in the 10th century, when Nicephorus was anointed by Patriarch Polyeuctus; according to Canning (*op. cit.*, p. 15) - in the 12th century; according to Dagron (*op. cit.*, p. 282) - in the 13th century. Nicetas Choniates mentions that Alexis III was "anointed" at his coronation in 1195; but according to Vera Zemskova (personal communication) it is likely that this meant "raising to the rank of emperor" rather than anointing with chrism in the literal, bodily sense. In this distinction between visible and invisible anointing lies the crux of the matter, for even bishops, who (in the East) received no visible anointing, were often described as having been anointed. And when St. Photius said of the Emperor Michael III that God "has created him and anointed him since the cradle as the emperor of His People", he was clearly speaking about an invisible anointing.

³³⁷ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

Royal anointing exalted the authority of the emperor by closely associating him with the Church. For the rite had similarities to the rite of ordination of clergy and was administered by the Patriarch. As the Byzantine writer Zosimas wrote: "Such was the link between the Imperial dignity and the First-Hierarchical dignity that the former not only could not even exist without the latter. Subjects were much bolder in deciding on conspiracies against one whom they did not see as having been consecrated by native religion."³³⁸

Another possibility is that the Byzantines introduced anointing at this point in reaction to its downgrading by Pope Gregory VII and his successors, in order to bolster the prestige of the anointed kings in the face of the anti-monarchism of the Popes, who constituted one of the greatest political powers in the world at that time and the greatest threat to the survival of the Byzantine Church and Empire. Against the claims of the Popes to possess all the charismas, including the charisma of political government, the Byzantines put forward the anointing of their Emperors. It was as if they said: a truly anointed and right-believing Emperor outweighs an uncanonically ordained and false-believing Patriarch...

The lateness of the introduction of imperial anointing in Byzantium is paralleled by a similar slowness in the development of the rite of crowning in marriage. Both marriage and coronation are "natural" sacraments that existed in some form before the coming of Christianity; so that they needed not so much replacing as supplementing, purifying and raising to a new, consciously Christian level. This being so, the Church wisely did not hasten to create completely new rites for them, but only eliminated the more grossly pagan elements, added a blessing and then communed the newly-weds or the newly-crowned in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since kingmaking, like marriage, was a "natural" sacrament that predated the New Testament Church, the ecclesiastical rite was not felt to be constitutive of legitimate kingship in Byzantium – at any rate, until the introduction of the last element of the rite, anointing, probably in the 12th or 13th century. After all, the pagan emperors had been recognized by Christ and the apostles although they came to power independently of the Church. The Roman Empire was believed to have been created by God alone, independently of the Church. As the Emperor Justinian's famous *Sixth Novella* puts it: "Both proceed from one source", God, which is why the Empire did not need to be re-instituted by the Church. Of course, the fact that the Empire, like the Church, was of Divine origin did not mean that the two institutions were of equal dignity. Whereas the Church was "the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1.23), and as such eternal, the Empire, as all believing Byzantines knew and accepted, was destined to be destroyed by the Antichrist. The Church was like the soul which survives the death of the body, being by nature superior to it.

³³⁸ Zosimas, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 118.

Having said that, the fact that the Empire, like the body, was created by God was of great importance as against those who asserted, like Pope Gregory VII, that its origin lay in the fallen passions of man and the devil. It was against this political Manichaeism that the institution of imperial anointing in Byzantium stood as a powerful witness. Or, to use a different metaphor: the quasi-Chalcedonian “dogma” of the union without confusion of the two institutions in Byzantium, the one institution anointing and the other being anointed, served to mark it off from the political Monophysitism of the Popes, for whom the Divinity of the Church “swallowed up”, as it were, the “mere humanity” of the Empire.

Another reason for the introduction of imperial anointing in Byzantium may have been a perceived need to protect the monarchy against potential usurpers from within, to bolster the legitimacy of the lawful Emperors against those innumerable coups which, as we have seen, so disfigured the image of Byzantine life in the decades before 1204. As we have seen, the earlier introduction of anointing in Spain, Francia and England had had just such a beneficial effect. And certainly, the need for some higher criterion of legitimacy had never been more sorely needed than in the period of the Nicaean empire, when Roman power appeared to be divided among a number of mini-states.

In previous centuries, the de facto criterion of legitimacy had been: the true emperor is he who sits on the throne in Constantinople, whatever the means he used to obtain the throne. This may have seemed close to the law of the jungle, but it at any rate had the advantage of clarity. The problem after 1204, however, was that he who sat on the throne in Constantinople was a Latin heretic who had obtained his throne, not just by killing a few personal enemies, but by mass slaughter of the ordinary people and the defiling of all that was most holy to the Byzantines, including the very sanctuary of Hagia Sophia. The patriarch had not recognised him and had died in exile. There was no question for the majority of Byzantines: this was not the true emperor.

So the true emperor had to be found in one of the kingdoms that survived the fall of the City: Nicaea, Trebizond and Epirus. But which? For a time, from the year 1222, it looked as if the Epirot Theodore Angelus, whose dominion extended from the Adriatic to the Aegean and who was related to the great families of the Angeli, Comneni and Ducae, had a greater claim to the throne than the Nicene John Vatatzes, who was the son-in-law of the first Nicaean emperor. However, Theodore Angelus’s weakness was that the Patriarch lived in Nicaea, while the metropolitan of Thessalonica refused to crown him, considering that a violation of the rights of the Patriarch. So he turned instead to Archbishop Demetrius (Chomatianos) of Ochrid and Bulgaria, who crowned him in Thessalonica in 1225 or 1227. According to Vasiliev, “he crowned and anointed Theodore who ‘put on the purple robe and began to wear the red shoes’, distinctive marks of the Byzantine basileus. One of the

letters of Demetrius shows that his coronation and anointment of Theodore of Epirus was performed 'with the general consent of the members of the senate, who were in the west (that is, on the territory of Thessalonica and Epirus), of the clergy, and of all the large army.' Another document testifies that the coronation and anointment were performed with the consent of all the bishops who lived 'in that western part'. Finally, Theodore himself signed his edicts (chrysobulls) with the full title of the Byzantine Emperor: 'Theodore in Christ God Basileus and Autocrat of the Romans.'³³⁹

Moreover, from the letters of Metropolitan John Apocaurus of Naupactus, as V.G. Vasilievsky writes, "we learn for the first time what an active part was taken by the Greek clergy and especially by the Greek bishops. The proclamation of Theodore Angelus as the Emperor of the Romans was taken very seriously: Thessalonica, which had passed over into his hands, was contrasted with Nicaea; Constantinople was openly indicated to him as the nearest goal of his ambition and as an assured gain; in speech, thought, and writing, it was the common opinion that he was destined to enter St. Sophia and occupy there the place of the Orthodox Roman emperors where the Latin newcomers were sitting illegally. The realization of such dreams did not lie beyond the limits of possibility; it would be even easier to take Constantinople from Thessalonica than from Nicaea."³⁴⁰

However, Theodore Angelus' position had one weakness that proved fatal to his hopes: he was not anointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Previous Byzantine emperors, including Constantine himself, had received the throne through the acclamation of the army and/or the people, which was considered sufficient for legitimacy. But now, in the thirteenth century, acclamation alone was not enough: imperial anointing by the first-hierarchy of the Church was considered necessary.

But here it was the Lascarids of Nicaea had the advantage over both the Angeli of Thessalonica and the Comneni of Trebizond. For the first Lascarid, Theodore I, had been anointed earlier (in 1208) and by a hierarch whom everybody recognised as having a greater authority - Patriarch Michael IV Autoreianus. As Michael's successor, Germanus II, wrote to Archbishop Demetrius: "Tell me, most sacred man, which fathers bestowed on you the lot of crowning to the kingdom? By which of the archbishops of Bulgaria was any emperor of the Romans ever crowned? When did the archpastor of Ochrid stretch out his right hand in the capacity of patriarch and consecrate a royal head? Indicate to us a father of the Church, and it is enough. Suffer reproach, for you are wise, and love even while being beaten. Do not get angry. For truly the royal anointing introduced by you is not for us the oil of joy, but an unsuitable oil from a wild olive. Whence did you buy this precious chrism (which, as is well known, is boiled in the patriarchate), since your previous stores

³³⁹ Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1958, p. 521.

³⁴⁰ Vasilievsky, quoted in Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, pp. 521-522.

have been devoured by time?"³⁴¹

In reply, Archbishop Demetrius pointed to the necessity of having an emperor in the West in order effectively to drive out the Latins. Theodore Angelus had carried out his task with great distinction, and was himself of royal blood. Besides, "the Greek West has followed the example of the East: after all, in despite of ancient Constantinopolitan practice, an emperor has been proclaimed and a patriarch chosen in the Bithynian diocese as need has dictated. And when has it ever been heard that one and the same hierarch should rule in Nicaea and call himself patriarch of Constantinople? And this did not take place at the decree of the whole senate and all the hierarchs, since after the capture of the capital both the senate and the hierarchs fled both to the East and the West. And I think that the greater part are in the West...

"For some unknown reason you have ascribed to yourself alone the consecration of chrism. But it is one of the sacraments performed by all the hierarchs (according to Dionysius the Areopagite). If you allow every priest to baptise, then why is anointing to the kingdom, which is secondary by comparison with baptism, condemned by you? But according to the needs of the time it is performed directly by the hierarch next in rank after the patriarch, according to the unfailing customs and teaching of piety. However, he who is called to the kingdom is usually anointed, not with chrism, but with oil sanctified by prayer... We had no need of prepared chrism, but we have the sepulchre of the Great Martyr Demetrius, from which chrism pours out in streams..."³⁴²

Nevertheless, it was the feeling that the true anointing must be performed by a patriarch that proved crucial. In the end it was the advantage of having received the true anointing from the true first-hierarch of the Church that gave the victory to the Lascarids. And so this sacrament, which, as we have seen, was so critical in strengthening the Western Orthodox kingdoms at a time when invasions threatened from without and chaos from within, came to serve the same purpose in Eastern Orthodoxy...³⁴³

In any case, the power of the Angeli was crushed by the Bulgarian Tsar John Asen. Then, in 1242, the Nicaean Emperor John III Vatatzes forced Theodore Angelus' son John to renounce the imperial title in favour of the inferior term "despot". And four years later the Emperor John conquered Thessalonica.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ Patriarch Germanus, in Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

³⁴² Archbishop Demetrius, in Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

³⁴³ As Aristides Papadakis writes, "the continuity and prestige conferred on the Lascarid house by this solemn blessing and by the subsequent presence of a patriarch at Nicaea were decisive. For, by then, coronation by a reigning patriarch was thought to be necessary for imperial legitimacy." (*The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, p. 212)

³⁴⁴ J.J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin books, 1996, pp. 188, 189.

Under the rule of the Nicaean Emperors the Empire prospered. They were less luxurious than their predecessors. As Macrides writes: "Their style of rule was partly a response to limited resources, partly to exclusion from Constantinople, the natural setting, and also a reaction to the 'sins' which had caused God to withdraw his support from the Byzantines. John III Vatatzes and his son Theodore II ruled as if New Constantines had never existed. To rephrase Choniates' words of criticism for the twelfth-century emperors: John III and Theodore II did not wear gold, did not treat common property as their own nor free men as slaves, nor did they hear themselves celebrated as being wiser than Solomon, heroic in strength, God-like in looks. Contrary to the behaviour of most emperors, John did not even have his son proclaimed emperor in his lifetime, not because he did not love his son, nor because he wanted to leave the throne to anyone else, but because the opinion and choice of his subjects was not evident. John was an emperor who reprovved his son for wearing the symbols of imperial power, for wearing gold while hunting, because he said the imperial insignia represent the blood of the emperor's subjects and should be worn only for the purpose of impressing foreign ambassadors with the people's wealth. John's care to separate public wealth from his own became legendary. He set aside land to produce enough for the imperial table and had a crown made for the empress from the sale of eggs produced by his hens. He called it the 'egg crown' (oaton). John was an emperor who submitted to the criticism of the church. When his mistress was forbidden entrance to the church by the... monk Blemmydes, tutor to his son, she went to him in a fury and charged him to come to her defence. But he only replied remorsefully that he could not punish a just man. It was precisely the qualities which made him an exceptional emperor which also contributed to his recognition as a saint by the local population in Magnesia..."³⁴⁵

The Question of Church Autonomy

De facto, as a result of the conquest of certain parts of the Roman Empire by barbarian leaders who then became Christian, independent (autocephalous) and semi-independent (autonomous) national Churches had sprung up in various regions, from Georgia in the East to England in the West. But the idea of a single Christian commonwealth of nations looking up to its father in God, the Christian Roman Emperor, was never completely lost; and there was still the feeling that de jure all Christian nations owed him some kind of allegiance. We see this as far afield as Scotland in the far north-west, where St. Columba anointed a king directly in the Roman autocratic tradition, to the Arabian kingdom Himyar in the far south-east, where the anointing was carried out by an Italian bishop, St. Gregory, owing allegiance to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople.

³⁴⁵ Macrides, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-281. The emperor's body was found to be incorrupt and fragrant seven years after his death. See *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, vol. 11 (November), Athens, 1979, pp. 154-156; translated in *Orthodox Life*, vol. 32, № 6, November-December, 1982, p. 44.

The first real conflict over autonomy or autocephaly began with the conversion of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Tsar Boris-Michael wanted autocephaly for the Bulgarian Church and the ordination of native clergy so as to facilitate the work of the Slav missionaries in the country. This was at first refused, but then granted – and then taken away again...

The tendency of the Greek Church was (and to some extent still is) to think that the Church can only be ruled well by Greeks. This tendency was reinforced after 1054, when the Byzantines' last serious rival in the ecclesiastical sphere, Old Rome, fell away from the truth. Now both the Empire and its Church, including all four of the remaining Orthodox patriarchates, were Greek. The word "Greek", which in the time of St. John Chrysostom had been synonymous with "pagan", was now almost synonymous with "Orthodox Christian". This tendency received further reinforcement during the Crusades, culminating in the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 by western soldiers. The Crusaders' barbaric behaviour during this period only further convinced the Greeks that they were superior to all other races, the only truly civilized race on earth. Such a specifically *ethnic* temptation had not existed for the Latins of Old Rome after about the year 600. For by then the West was far less ethnically homogeneous than the East; the Germano-Latin civilization that the senators and anti-universalists had feared was now a reality. There was no single dominant race, and so no temptation to see one nation – as opposed to one see – as superior to all others. But this temptation did exist in the East, where the identification of Hellenism and Christianity, already strong in Greek eyes, became still stronger...

We cannot yet speak of "Greek nationalism" in this period: the Byzantines (unlike their post-1453 compatriots) were still too Orthodox and Roman to fall into that trap. "Rome" stood for the internationalist ideal, and as long as the Greeks called themselves "Romans" – which they did right until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 – they remained, in theory at any rate, anti-nationalist universalists. But in practice a tendency towards anti-universalist nationalism is evident in both the ecclesiastical and the political spheres.

In the ecclesiastical sphere this tendency manifested itself especially in the bestowal or non-bestowal of Church autocephaly on newly baptized nations... Now in the period of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, as Dvorkin writes, "the title 'autocephalous archbishop' was normally used to signify a hierarch independent of his metropolitan and appointed by the emperor (or patriarch)."³⁴⁶ In the West, by contrast, there were no full autocephalies apart from the Roman papacy – the last pretender to that title, the archbishopric of Arles, had been brought into line by St. Leo the Great in the fifth century, while the exarchate of Ravenna disappeared with

³⁴⁶ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 688.

the fall of Byzantine power in the West in the eighth century. However, each Local Church of each independent kingdom – the Anglo-Saxon, the Gallican, the Mozarabic (Spanish), etc. - enjoyed a large measure of autonomy under Rome.

With regards to Bulgarian autocephaly, there was a difference in approach on the part of the Greeks and the Latins. The Latins insisted that this was entirely an ecclesiastical question, and therefore should be decided by the Pope alone. At the Great Council of Constantinople in 879-80, presided over by St. Photius, the Latin delegates demanded the return of Bulgaria to the Latin jurisdiction. The Greeks refused, saying this was beyond their control – such jurisdictional questions were decided by the Emperor. The Latins insisted that it was the decision of the Pope alone. The Greeks insisted that it was the decision of the Emperor alone...

What we may call the political approach of the Greeks to the question of autocephaly had this to commend it, that, historically speaking, the question usually did not arise until an emerging Christian nation became politically independent. At that point, however, it had to be, at least in part, a political question. But what was bestowed for political reasons could be withdrawn for political reasons. That meant that important questions of Church administration were subject to the whims of the secular power. Perhaps this was inevitable, but it was regrettable...

How regrettable is illustrated by the way in which the Bulgars twice received autocephaly when their political position in relation to the Byzantines was strong, and twice had it withdrawn when their position was weak. Essentially, the Greeks used autocephaly as a political bargaining chip, which they tried *not* to bestow unless they had to. The very important, but purely *pastoral* case for the autocephaly of a given Church – the fact that the Church is likely to have better relations with the ruler of the country if it is seen to be the Church precisely *of* that country, that the evangelization of the country is likely to proceed more quickly and thoroughly if the clergy are native and serve in the native language, and that the fusion of faith and patriotism is likely to allow the faith to put down deeper roots and make the country less vulnerable to the inroads of foreign missionaries, - seems to have played little part in their calculations.

What can only be described as the opportunism of the Greeks in relation to the question of Church autocephaly is illustrated by two further examples: in the first autocephaly was given, and in the second it was not... In 1219 the Serbian Church was granted autocephaly by the Nicaean emperor and patriarch, and St. Sava was ordained as the first autocephalous Serbian archbishop. This would probably not have happened if it had not been for a specific conjuncture of political events. In 1204 Constantinople had fallen to the Latins, and Greek Orthodoxy was divided into four main "jurisdictions": Epirus (including the autocephalous archdiocese of Ohrid, to which the Serbian and Bulgarian Churches were then subject), Thessalonica, Nicaea and Trebizond. St. Sava, in his quest that the Serbs be granted autocephaly, decided

to pass by his own archbishop, Demetrius (Chomatianos) of Ohrid. He probably knew that his request would be denied – and he was right, for after his ordination he was abused and accused of all manner of sins by Demetrius... Instead, he went to Nicaea, where he presented the very powerful pastoral case for autocephaly. The Nicaean Greeks were duly impressed both by the case St. Sava presented and by the high culture and great holiness of his personality. Very probably also they were influenced by the political advantage that their bestowal of autocephaly on the Serbs would give them over their Epirot rivals...

As Dvorkin writes, St. Savva “received practically complete independence from Constantinople and jurisdiction ‘over all the Serbian and coastal lands’ (an unambiguous reference to Zeta [Montenegro], which had left to join the Latins). Thus the status of the Serbian Church was in essence equivalent to that of a patriarchate or to the autocephalous Churches of today. The one link with Constantinople that was demanded of it was the commemoration of the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Eucharistic prayer (‘Among the first, O Lord, remember...’). The autocephalous status of the Serbian Church became in many ways a new formula...

“The establishment of the Serbian autocephaly established a subtle, but very important evolution in the meaning of the concept of autocephaly. Before that, with the single exception of Georgia [and Abkhazia], all the autocephalous Churches had been in the empire and had acquired juridical status by a the one-man decision of the emperor or by a decree of an Ecumenical Council. The new autocephalies (that is, Serbia and Bulgaria) were created by bilateral agreement between two civil governments. They reflected the new tendency to view ecclesiastical autocephaly as the mark of a national state, which undoubtedly created a precedent for ecclesiastical relations in recent history, when increasingly passionate nationalist politics – both in the Balkans and in other places – turned the struggle for national autocephalies into the phenomenon we know today as ecclesiastical *phyletism*.”³⁴⁷

By contrast with the Serbs, the Russian Church was never granted autocephaly by Byzantium until its fall in 1453. It is one of the most astonishing facts of Church history that for over 600 years after her baptism by St. Vladimir in 988 the Russian Church remained officially, in Greek eyes, only a junior metropolia of the Great Church of Constantinople. And this in spite of the fact that Russia was vastly greater in both territory and population than Byzantium, and that for most of this period the Russian Great Princes and Tsars were always independent of, and far more powerful than, the Byzantine Emperor. Nor was Russia in any way behind Byzantium in the fruits of holiness: at one time in the twelfth century there were over 50 monks of the Kiev Caves Lavra who could cast out demons, while in the fourteenth century over 100 disciples of St. Sergius of Radonezh were canonized... Perhaps only in one field did the Greeks remain ahead of the Russians: theological science. And yet the

³⁴⁷ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 690.

Russians never fell into heresy in this period. And they expelled their Greek Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev for signing the unia with the Roman Catholics at Florence – while the Greeks allowed him to serve in Hagia Sophia in 1452...

Why did the Greeks not grant the Russian Church autocephaly? The short answer is: because the Russians never asked for it. (Another reason may have been that the figure of a single Russian metropolitan subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch helped in the unification of the vast Russian lands.) But herein lies the crux of the matter: the Greeks never granted autocephaly unless they had to, unless they were asked to, and unless there was some advantage in it for them. For to bestow autocephaly was for them to reduce their own power and prestige as the Universal Empire.

The fault here lies in the political approach to autocephaly. This approach sees the Church as like a State, any diminution in whose territory to form another State must be considered as a loss of power. Properly understood, however, the creation of an autocephalous Church is like the birth of a child. Genuine parents rejoice in the birth of children, and still more in their growth to a powerful maturity and independence. Far from “diminishing the power” of parents, the growth of children to maturity increases their personal glory and honour, gives them security into their old age, surrounded as they will be by the love and care of their grateful children, and strengthens the whole human race for generations to come...

From Michael Palaeologus to Gregory Palamas

In 1261, the first emperor of a new dynasty, Michael Palaeologus, reconquered Constantinople from the Latins. However, on ascending the throne, he changed course in a caesaropapist direction... Moreover, he was closer to the luxuriousness of the caesaropapist Angeli rather than the modesty of the more Orthodox Lascari: “Palaeologus openly set out on the old path of the Comneni and Angeli. Not only was the capital returned, but the old order, the demands and expenses of the antiquated world order that had lived out its time, was also re-established...”³⁴⁸

In fact, as Sir Steven Runciman writes, he was “a usurper who had made himself in turn Grand Duke and regent for the child Emperor John IV, then co-Emperor and finally senior Emperor. The Patriarch Arsenius had grudgingly condoned each step, only when Michael swore to respect the boy-Emperor’s rights. He was so suspicious of Michael’s intentions that in 1260 he abdicated; but, when his successor died a few months later, Michael persuaded him to return, again promising not to harm John IV. But his triumphant recapture of the capital convinced Michael that he was divinely protected. He pushed the boy further and further into the background, and in 1262 he deposed and blinded him. Arsenius, who had been looking on with growing horror, thereupon excommunicated Michael...”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

³⁴⁹ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 67.

The news about the blinding spread, and in Bithynia a rebellion broke out under a blind pretender with the name John Lascaris. The rebellion was suppressed with difficulty. Meanwhile, Michael tried through the clerics to get his excommunication removed. "But Arsenius replied: 'I let a dove into my bosom, but it turned out to be a snake and fatally bit me.' Once, on listening to a rejection, Palaeologus said: 'What then, are you commanding me to renounce the empire?' – and wanted to give him his sword. Arsenius stretched out his hand, and Palaeologus began to accuse the old man of making an attempt on the emperor's life. In vain did the emperor embrace the knees of the patriarch: Arsenius pushed him away and went off to his cell. Then the emperor began to complain: 'The patriarch is ordering me to abandon State affairs, not to collect taxes, and not to execute justice. That is how this spiritual doctor heals me! It is time to seek mercy from the pope'. The emperor began to seek an occasion to overthrow Arsenius, but the patriarch's life was irreproachable. The emperor gathered several hierarchs in Thessalonica and summoned Arsenius to a trial, but he did not come. The obsequious hierarchs tried to demonstrate that the disjunction of the 'soul of the State' from the Church was a disease that threatened order... Palaeologus decided to get rid of Arsenius whatever the cost. Having gathered the hierarchs, he laid out to them all the steps he had taken to be reconciled with the patriarch. 'It seems that because of my deed he wants me to abandon the throne. But to whom am I to give the kingdom? What will be the consequences for the empire? What if another person turns out to be incapable of such a great service? Who can guarantee that I will live peacefully, and what will become of my family? What people ever saw the like, and has it ever happened amongst us that a hierarch should do such things without being punished? Doesn't he understand that for one who has tasted of the blessedness of royal power it is impossible to part with it except together with his life? Repentance is decreed by the Church, and does it not exist for emperors? If I don't find it from you, I will turn to other Churches and receive healing from them. You decide.'"³⁵⁰

Finally Arsenius was deposed for failing to appear at his trial, and the more malleable Germanus was made patriarch in his place. In justification of his deposition of Arsenius, the emperor invoked his right as epistemonarch – the same defence as was used by the absolutist emperors of the twelfth century. Then he "invoked yet again his title of epistemonarch of the Church to force Patriarch Joseph I to give Deacon Theodore Skoutariotes, on whom he had conferred the imperial title of dikaiophylax, a rank corresponding in the hierarchy to the archontes of the Church. In order to settle this trivial affair, the emperor, completely impregnated with the spirit of the Comneni and the teachings of Balsamon, did not hesitate to affirm that the [Church's] choices of patriarch had to be aligned with those of the emperor and that the ecclesiastical offices were nothing other than transfers of the imperial offices, as was demonstrated in the *Donation of Constantine*."³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Uspensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 510, 511.

³⁵¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

Meanwhile, the Emperor was trying to achieve an ecclesiastical union with the Roman Church. His purpose was political – the reunification of the Greek lands under his authority. And for that he needed the help of the Pope against his western enemies, especially Charles of Anjou – which help could be bought only at the price of a union. Both the people and the Church were against the idea. They were not prepared to place the nation above the faith, and began to turn against the Emperor.

Even “the emperor’s spiritual father Joseph went over to the opposition, counting on ascending the patriarchal throne. He began to advise the emperor that Germanus was not able to absolve him from the curse placed on him by Arsenius, and the emperor sent Joseph to Germanus to persuade him to leave voluntarily. When Germanus was convinced that this advice came from the emperor, he departed for the Mangana monastery...

“Joseph achieved his aim and occupied the patriarchal throne for seven years (1267-74)... The removal of the curses from the emperor – his first task – was carried out with exceptional triumphalism. In the presence of the Synod and the court the emperor crawled on his knees, confessing his sin, the blinding of Lascaris. The patriarch and hierarchs one by one read out an act of absolution of the emperor from the excommunication laid upon him...”³⁵²

“But the Emperor’s humiliation did not satisfy Arsenius’s adherents. The ascetic element in the Church, based mainly the monasteries, always suspicious of the court and the upper hierarchy, believing them to be sinfully luxurious and over-interested in secular learning, saw in Arsenius a saintly martyr who had dared to oppose the Emperor on a basic moral issue; and their party was joined by many even in the hierarchy who maintained the old Studite tradition that opposed Imperial control of the Church. The Arsenites, as they began to be called, would not accept Joseph’s compromise. They continued to regard the Emperor as excommunicate, his hierarchy as illegitimate and his officials as the servants of a usurper. They were never very numerous; but their monkish connections gave them influence over the people. The hierarchy tried to rid the monasteries of such dissidents, but only drove them underground. Dismissed monks, poorly clad, and often called the saccophoroi, the wearers of sackcloth, would go about the people preaching resistance...”³⁵³

The Arsenites remained in schism from the official Church for several more decades. They insisted that “all elections to the see of Constantinople after the patriarch’s deposition (1265) were uncanonical and invalid. No less irregular in their opinion was the status of those elevated to the episcopal dignity by Arsenius’ ‘illegitimate’ successors.”³⁵⁴

³⁵² Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

³⁵³ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

³⁵⁴ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

In 1310 most of them were reconciled to the official Church. Some, however, such as St. Theoliptus, metropolitan of Philadelphia, considered that the Church had been reconciled too easily with the Arsenites and broke communion with the official Church for a period.³⁵⁵

Restored to communion with the Church, and with the anti-uniatic Arsenites excommunicated, the Emperor now had greater freedom in planning the unia.

However, the reaction of the Church against the unia was growing stronger. Patriarch Joseph was now determined to limit the Emperor's use of the 'epistemonarchy' "to the most modest temporal dimensions. Job Iasites, in the name of Patriarch Joseph, restated the issue a little after 1273: 'It is true that he who wears the crown has received in person the responsibility and the title of epistemonarch of the holy Churches. However, that does not consist in electing, or deposing, or excommunicating, or carrying out any other action or function of the bishop, but, in accordance with the meaning of the term 'epistemonarch', it consists [for the emperor] in wisely keeping the leaders of the Churches in order and rank, and in giving the force of law to the canonical decrees which they issue. If these decrees are truly canonical, it is not in his power, as epistemonarch, to oppose them...'"³⁵⁶

The unia was signed at Lyons in 1274 by a delegation led by the ex-Patriarch Germanus. The emperor conceded all the dogmatic points (the Filioque, unleavened bread, the pope's supreme authority) without argument and promised to help the pope in his next crusade. In exchange the pope promised to stop his enemies, especially Charles of Anjou, from invading the Greek lands.

However, the compromise proved to be unnecessary. In 1282 a successful rebellion by the Sicilians against Charles (without the help of the new pope, who backed Charles) removed the threat of invasion.

Many of the opponents of the unia were now imprisoned. One of these was the future patriarch John Beccus, who was released after being persuaded of the rightness of the uniatic cause by the emperor. But the Church as a whole offered strong resistance.

"Two parties were formed," writes Fr. Ambroise Frontier: "the Politicals or Opportunists, who strangely resemble the Ecumenists of today, and the Zealots, who were especially strong in Thessaloniki."³⁵⁷ The center of Orthodoxy, however, was

³⁵⁵ A.I Sidorov, "Sv. Feolipt Filadel'fijskij i ego uchenie o Tserkvi" ("St. Theoliptus of Philadelphia and his Teaching on the Church", *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), 1997, p. 16

³⁵⁶ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

³⁵⁷ The Zealots preached asceticism and contemplation and disliked the Imperial court and the intellectuals, lay and clerical, who frequented it. Their opponents, known as the Politicals,

Mount Athos. The persecutions of Michael VIII and of Beccus, his Patriarch, equalled those of the first centuries of Christianity. The intruder Patriarch went himself to the Holy Mountain to impose the decree of Lyons but he failed miserably. Only a few poor weak-minded monks followed him. In the *Menaion* of September 22, we read the following rubric: 'Memory of the Holy Martyrs of the Monastery of Zographou, who chastized the Emperor Michael Palaeologus, the latinizer and his Patriarch Beccus, and died, through burning in the tower of their monastery.' Yes, 26 monks died, burned in the tower of their monastery, others were drowned in the sea in front of Vatopedi and Iviron. At Karyes, the capital of Mount Athos, both laity and monks were beheaded. These Martyrs assured the victory of Orthodoxy by their sacrifice and with their blood washed away the shame of the treason of Lyons.

"To please the new Pope, Nicholas III, the servile Emperor ordered Isaac of Ephesus to accompany the papal legates through the prisons of Constantinople to show him the imprisoned Orthodox. Some had been tortured, others had their hands and feet cut off, others their eyes punctured and others their tongues ripped out. It is a fact: Christ is not discussed, He is confessed..."³⁵⁸

An anti-uniatic council was in Thessaly, which anathematized the pope, the emperor and his uniatic patriarch, John Beccus. The Fathers of Holy Mount Athos joined in the condemnation, writing to the emperor: "It is written in the explanation of the Divine Liturgy that the liturgizer commemorates the name of his hierarch, showing his exceeding obedience to him, and that he is in communion with him both in faith and as a steward of the Divine Mysteries... [But] he who receives a heretic is subject to the curses laid on him, and he who gives communion to an excommunicate is himself excommunicate."³⁵⁹

"On December 11, 1282, Michael died, hated by his people. His wife, Empress Theodora and his son and successor Andronicus II Palaeologus refused to give him burial and Church honors. Andronicus II officially denounced the union and restored Orthodoxy. He sent edicts to all parts of the Empire proclaiming an amnesty for all those who had been exiled or imprisoned because of their zeal for the Church.

believed in co-operation with the State and the use, if need be, of Economy" (Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 70). (V.M.)

³⁵⁸ Frontier, "The Council of Lyons and the False Union of 1274", *The True Vine*, vol. 2, № 4, Winter, 1975. Outside Athos, the resistance to the unia was led by the holy King Milutin of Serbia, whose body remains incorrupt and wonderworking to this day. In Constantinople, the unia was denounced by the great ascetic, St. Meletius of Mount Gelesion. The emperor ordered his tongue to be cut out, but by a miracle the saint continued to speak clearly and distinctly (see his *Life in Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XII, № 4, July-August, 1990, p. 15).

³⁵⁹ Monk Kallistos Vlastos, *Dokimion istorikon peri tou skhismatos tis dutikis ekklesias apo tis Orthodoxou Anatolikis* (Historical Treatise on the schism of the western church from the Orthodox East), Mount Athos, 1991, p. 109 (in Greek).

“Ten years after the council of Lyons, in 1285, an Orthodox Council was held in the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople. Gregory of Cyprus was the Orthodox Patriarch and Andronicus II the Emperor. The false union of Lyons was rejected and the heresy of the *Filioque* was condemned. Later on, Gennadius Scholarius, Patriarch of Constantinople, after the fall of the Empire in the XVth century, declared this Council to be Ecumenical. To those who considered it local because of the absence of the heretics and schismatics, Gennadius answered that: ‘... the absence of heretics does not diminish in any way the character of Ecumenicity.’”³⁶⁰

So, after one apostate reign, Byzantium returned, temporarily, to the symphony of powers...

In the 1330s another, more original attempt to attain the unia with Rome was made: the Italian Greek monk Barlaam was sent by the emperor to Avignon, where he argued for the unia on the basis of agnosticism: the truths of the Faith cannot be proved, he said, so we might as well take both positions, the Greek and the Latin, as private opinions! Pope Benedict was no more inclined than the Byzantine Church to accept such agnosticism, so the attempt failed.

But the more important effect of Barlaam’s philosophizing, in this as in other areas of theology and asceticism, was to elicit a series of Councils between 1341 and 1351, in which the Byzantine Church, led by St. Gregory Palamas, the future Archbishop of Thessalonica, was able to define her teaching in relation to the new currents of thought emanating from the West. In particular, they anathematized the teaching that the grace of God is created.

Apart from their dogmatic significance, these Palamite Councils presented an image that was infinitely precious: that of Orthodox bishops convened by a right-believing emperor to define essential truths of the faith and thereby preserve the heritage of Orthodoxy for future generations and other nations...

The Sultan’s Turban and the Pope’s Tiara

But from now on Byzantium declined inexorably. The loss of its economic power to the Genoans was a serious blow, and an outbreak of the Black Death, which, according to one source, killed most of the inhabitants of Constantinople, further undermined the strength of the State. Still more serious, the Emperor who eventually emerged victorious from the civil wars of the middle of the century, John V Palaeologus, went to Italy and submitted to Rome in 1369.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ Frontier, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

³⁶¹ “He formally signed a document declaring his submission to the Holy Roman Church and its father the Pope, sealing it with his imperial golden seal; and the following Sunday, in the presence of the entire Curia, he did obeisance to the Supreme Pontiff on the steps of St. Peter’s,

However, writes Runciman, “he was careful not to involve the Church in his conversion. His tact was rewarded. Towards the end of his reign, probably in 1380 or soon afterwards, in circumstances that are unknown to us, he was able to make a concordat with the Patriarchate which clarified and restored much of the Imperial control over the Church. It contained nine points. The Emperor was to nominate metropolitans from three candidates whose names were submitted to him. He alone could transfer and promote bishops. He had to sanction appointments to high Church offices. He alone could redistribute sees. Neither he nor his senior officials nor members of the Senate, which was his advisory council, could be excommunicated except with his permission, ‘because the Emperor is defender of the Church and the canons’. Bishops were to come to Constantinople and to leave it whenever he ordered. Every bishop must take an oath of allegiance to him on appointment. Every bishop must put his signature to acts passed by a Synod or Council. Every bishop must implement such acts and refuse support to any cleric or candidate for ecclesiastical office who opposed Imperial policy.

“As an Emperor John V was incompetent and almost impotent. The Turks were overrunning all his territory and exacting tribute from him. [In 1396 the Byzantine armies suffered a crushing defeat at Nicopolis, and Sultan Bayezid began a siege of Constantinople. The City was saved at this time by the intervention of the Mongols under Tamerlane in the Turkish rear.] He himself in a reign of fifty years was three times driven into exile, by his father-in-law, by his son and by his grandson. Yet, as the concordat shows, he still retained prestige enough to reaffirm his theoretical control over a Church, many of whose dioceses lay far outside of his political control...”³⁶²

The concordat was a shameful document, which subordinated the Church to the State in a truly caesaropapist manner. And we can see just how far the spirit of the concordat had been accepted by the Byzantine Church in a clash with Great-Prince Basil I of Russia. The reason was the decision, by the Emperor and Patriarch of Constantinople in 1393, to appoint their own candidate as metropolitan in Lithuania. Great-Prince Basil I reacted by removing the name of the emperor from the diptychs and during the celebration of the Liturgy. “We have a Church,” he said, “but we do not have an emperor”.

This produced a significant riposte from the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthony IV. While not demeaning his own position as Patriarch - “the Patriarch occupies the place of Christ and he sits on the throne of the Lord Himself” - he hastened to the defence of the rights of the Emperor: “The holy Emperor occupies a lofty position in the Church. He is not what other, local princes and sovereigns are. In the beginning

kneeling before him and kissing him on the feet, hands and finally on the lips” (John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 333).

³⁶² Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

the Emperors strengthened and confirmed piety throughout the oikoumene. The Emperors convened the Ecumenical Councils; they confirmed by their own laws the observance of that which the divine and sacred canons say about the right dogmas and the good order of the Christian life, and they struggled greatly against heresies. Finally, the Emperors, together with the Councils, defined by their own decrees the hierarchical sees and established the boundaries of the hierarchical territories and episcopal dioceses. For all this they have great honour and occupy a lofty place in the Church. And if, by God's permission, the pagans have encircled the possessions and lands of the Emperor, nevertheless up to the present day the Emperor receives the same position from the Church, is anointed with the great chrism according to the same rite and with the same prayers, and is established as Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans, that is, of all Christians. In every place where Christians are named, the name of the Emperor is commemorated by all the Patriarchs, Metropolitans and Bishops, and this advantage is possessed by none of the other princes or local rulers. His power, by comparison with all the others, is such that even the Latins, who have no communion with our Church, do not refuse him such obedience as they showed in former times, when they were in unity with us. All the more are Orthodox Christians obliged to do this. And if the pagans have surrounded the Emperor's land, then Christians must not despise him for this; on the contrary, let this serve for them as a lesson in humility and force them to think: if the Great Emperor, Lord and Master of the oikoumene, who is clothed with such power, has been placed in such a restricting position, what may other local rulers and little princes suffer?... And so, my son, it is not good if you say: 'We have a Church, but we do not have an Emperor'. It is impossible for Christians to have a Church without having an Emperor. For the Empire and the Church are in close union and communion with each other, and it is impossible to separate the one from the other. Only those emperors were rejected by Christians who were heretics, who raged against the Church and introduced corrupt dogmas. But my supreme and holy Autocrat is a most Orthodox and faithful [sovereign], a fighter, defender and avenger of the Church. That is why it is impossible to be a hierarch and not commemorate his [name]. Listen to the Apostle Peter speaking in his first Catholic epistle: 'Fear God, honour the emperor'. He did not say 'emperors', so that nobody should think that he had begun to mean those who are called emperors in various peoples, but 'emperor', pointing to the fact that there is only one Emperor in the oikoumene. And who was this [Emperor whom the apostle commands to be honoured]? At that time he was still impious and a persecutor of Christians! But since he was holy and an apostle, he looked into the future and saw that Christians would have one Emperor, and taught that the impious Emperor should be honoured, so that we should understand from that how a pious and Orthodox Emperor should be honoured. For if some other Christians have appropriated to themselves the name of emperor, all these examples are something unnatural and contrary to the law, rather a matter of tyranny and violence [than of law]. In actual fact, what Fathers, what Councils and what canons have spoken about these [emperors]? But everything both from above and below speaks about a born Emperor whose laws and commands are fulfilled throughout

the oikoumene, and whose name, excluding all others, is the only one commemorated everywhere by Christians."³⁶³

This is a remarkable statement that shows how far the conception of the emperor has changed from the one who rules by might, if not always by right, to the one who rules by right, even if he has no might. His right, according to the patriarch, derives exclusively from his Orthodox faith and his unique anointing. This makes him the one and only true king on earth, and the one whom all Christians must acknowledge. All other kings, however outwardly powerful they may be, must concede his superiority in honour and grace. Indeed, so inseparable is the grace of the emperor from the grace of the Church as a whole that "it is impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor"... It seems that the Great-Prince accepted this lesson in political theology, and there were no further attempts to question the emperor's unique position in the Orthodox world. This was remarkable considering that the Great Prince was in fact a much more powerful ruler...

However, Patriarch Anthony did not expatiate on what would follow if the empire were to fall - an obvious possibility in view of the Turks' encirclement of Constantinople. If it was truly "impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor", then, in the event of the fall of New Rome, there were only two possible scenarios: either the reign of the Antichrist had arrived, or the empire was to be transferred to another people and state... Moreover, if the empire itself did not fall, but the emperor became a heretic, was not the Russian Grand-Prince then bound to reject his authority?

"The Patriarch's loyalty," writes Runciman, "was greater than his realism. But the Emperor still had some power. About twenty years later, in 1414 or 1415, Manuel II, who was generally liked by his ecclesiastics, when in Thessalonica appointed a Macedonian bishop to the see of Moldavia and sent him to Constantinople for consecration by the Patriarch, Euthymius II. Euthymius refused to perform the service, on the out-of-date ground that a bishop could not be transferred. The case undoubtedly had deeper implications, of which we can only guess. It must be remembered the Emperor was actually nominating a bishop for a Christian country over which he had no control; and the Patriarch must have feared that his own good relations with the sovereign Prince of Moldavia might be endangered. He insisted that the transference be approved by the Holy Synod. But the Emperor referred him to the concordat. He had to yield..."³⁶⁴

This submission of the patriarch to the emperor was reflected in liturgical practice, as the fifteenth-century archbishop of Thessalonica, St. Symeon, bitterly admitted: "Now... the Bishop is not counted worthy of any kind of honour for the

³⁶³ Patriarch Anthony, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 188.

³⁶⁴ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

sake of Christ, but rather his lot is dishonour; he is counted immeasurably inferior to the emperor, who receives a blessing from the Hierarch. At the present time the Bishop falls down at the feet of the emperor and kisses his right hand. With the sanctified lips with which he recently touched the Sacred Sacrifice, he servilely kisses a secular hand, whose function is to hold the sword. And, O shame!, the Bishop stands while the emperor sits. For the Bishop, as the delegate of the Church, all this reflects in an indecent and shameful manner on Christ Himself. These absurd customs were introduced, however, not by the emperors themselves, but by flatterers, who in an undiscerning manner suggested to them that they should use the Divine for evil, that they should ascribe to themselves power and install and remove the Bishop. Alas, what madness! If the deposition of a Bishop is necessary, this should be done through the Holy Spirit, by Whom the Bishop has been consecrated, and not through the secular power. Hence come all our woes and misfortunes; hence we have become an object of mockery for all peoples. If we give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, then the blessing of God will rest on everything: the Church will receive peace, and the State will become more prosperous."³⁶⁵

In spite of the acceptance of the concordat by the hierarchy, the old Zealot tradition was not dead, and there were still many in Byzantium who rejected the subordination of the Church to the State, preferring the dominion of the infidel Turks to that of the heretical Latins. For in religious matters the Turks were more tolerant than the Latins. Moreover, submission to the Turks would at least have the advantage of making the administration of the Church easier – in the present situation, the bishops under Turkish rule were separated from their head in Constantinople and were distrusted because that head lived in a different state...

Igumen Gregory Lourié writes: "It was precisely in the 14th century, when immemorial Greek territories passed over to the Turks, and some others – to the Latins, that there was formed in Byzantine society those two positions whose struggle would clearly appear in the following, 15th century. It was precisely in the 14th century that the holy Fathers established a preference for the Turks over the Latins, while with the humanists it was the reverse. Neither in the 15th, nor in the 14th century was there any talk of *union* with the Turks – their invasion was thought to be only an evil. But already in the 14th century it became clear that the Empire would not be preserved, that they would have to choose the lesser of two evils. In the capacity of such a lesser evil, although a very great one, the holy Fathers were forced to make an irrevocable decision in favour of the Turks, under whose yoke it was possible to preserve the Church organization and avoid the politics of forced conversions to Latinism. The danger of conversions to Islam was significantly smaller: first, because the inner administration of the Ottoman empire was based on 'millets', in accordance with which the civil administration of the Orthodox

³⁶⁵ St. Symeon, in Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 122-123.

population was realized through the structure of the Orthodox Church and the patriarch, and this created for the Turks an interest in preserving the Church, and secondly, because the cases of conversion to Islam, however destructive they were for those who had been converted, did not threaten the purity of the confession of the Christians who remained faithful, while Latin power always strove to exert influence on the inner life and teaching of the faith of the Orthodox Church. The Church history of the 16th to 19th centuries showed that, in spite of all the oppressions inflicted on the Christians in the Ottoman Empire, it protected the Christian peoples living within its frontiers from the influence of European religious ideas and *Weltanschauungen*, whereby it unwittingly helped the preservation of the purity of Orthodoxy..."³⁶⁶

Of course, the victory of the Turks would be a terrible disaster.³⁶⁷ But the victory of the Latins would be an even greater disaster, since it might well signify the end of Greek Orthodoxy. Nor, said the Zealots, would buying the support of the Latins help. For, as the Studite Monk and head of the Imperial Academy, Joseph Vryennios, said early in the fifteenth century: "Let no one be deceived by delusive hopes that the Italian allied troops will sooner or later come to us. But if they do pretend to rise to defend us, they will take arms in order to destroy our city, race and name..."³⁶⁸

The Last Act

As the political and military position of the Empire grew weaker, the pressure on both emperors and patriarchs to compromise with the faith became stronger. Negotiations with Rome dragged on, "held up partly", as Runciman writes, "by the Pope's difficulties with the leaders of the Conciliar movement [in the West] and partly by the uneasy situation in the East. At one moment it seemed that a Council might take place at Constantinople; but the Turkish siege of the city in 1422 made it clear that it was no place for an international congress. Manuel II [whose advice to his son had been: not to break off negotiations with Rome, but not to commit himself to them] retired from active politics in 1423 and died two years later. His son, John VIII, was convinced that the salvation of the Empire depended upon union and tried to press for a Council; but he was unwilling at first to allow it to take place in Italy; while the Papacy still had problems to settle in the West. Delays continued. It was

³⁶⁶ Lourié, commentary on J. Meyendorff, *Zhizn' i Trudy Sviatitelia Grigoria Palamy* (The Life and Works of the Holy Hierarch Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 396-397

³⁶⁷ St. Gregory Palamas was for a time a captive of the Turks and said of them: "This impious people [the Turks] boasts of its victory over the Romans, attributing it to their love of God. For they do not know that this world below dwells in sin, and that evil men possess the greater part of it... That is why, down to the time of Constantine, ... the idolaters have almost always held power over the world." (John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, London: Faith Press, 1964, p. 104)

³⁶⁸ Vryennios, in A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, vol. II, p. 672.

not until the beginning of 1438 that plans were completed and the Emperor arrived with his delegation at a Council recently opened in Ferrara and transferred to Florence in January 1439."³⁶⁹

The leader of the bishops was Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople. He had previously told the Emperor: "The Church must go in front of the power of the Emperor, or next to it, but in no way behind it."³⁷⁰ And yet he meekly followed the same Emperor to Florence and submitted to his instructions. Moreover, he was prepared to make critical concessions on the issue of the Filioque, agreeing with the Latins that the prepositions "through" and "from" meant the same. In any case, he died before the Council had ended.

The need for western military help was not the only factor that propelled the Byzantines to Florence. Another was the idea, dear to the humanists whose influence was increasing in Byzantium, that Greek culture was so precious that it had to be preserved at all costs. But "Greek culture" for the humanists meant the pagan culture of Classical Greece more than Romanity, the Orthodox Christian civilization of the Holy Fathers; and by the fifteenth century, by contrast with the eleventh or even the thirteenth century, the Latins had become almost as enthusiastic fans of pagan Greek culture as the Greeks themselves. So it was much more likely that the Latins would preserve that culture than the Turks. So better for the humanists the pope's tiara than the sultan's turban...

However, it was not only humanists or Greek nationalists that looked with hope towards the council in Florence. Paradoxically, even some of those who remained true Romans – that is, who valued the *universalist* heritage of Christian Rome more than any specifically Hellenistic elements, and for whom the true glory of the empire was its Orthodoxy – were attracted by the prospect. In the minds of some, this was because the idea of *imperial unity* between East and West was inextricably linked with that of *ecclesiastical unity*. Thus Fr. John Meyendorff writes that an essential element of the Byzantine world-view "was an immovable vision of the empire's traditional borders. At no time – not even in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries – did the Byzantines abandon the idea that the empire included both East and West, that ideally its territories comprised Spain as well as Syria, and that the 'Old Rome' somehow remained its historical source and symbolic center in spite of the transfer of the capital to Constantinople. There were theological polemics against the 'Latins'; there was popular hatred against the 'Franks', especially after the Crusades; there was resentment against the commercial colonization of Byzantine lands by the Venetians and the Genoese, but the ideal vision of the universal empire remained, expressed particularly in the exclusive 'Roman' legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor. As late as 1393, patriarch Anthony of Constantinople, in his

³⁶⁹ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

³⁷⁰ A.P. Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

often-quoted letter to the grand-prince Basil I of Moscow urging him not to oppose the liturgical commemoration of the emperor in Russian churches, expresses the utterly unrealistic but firm conviction that the emperor is 'emperor and autokrator of the Romans, that is, of *all Christians*'; that 'in every place and by every patriarch, metropolitan and bishop the name of the emperor is commemorated wherever there are Christians...' and that 'even the Latins, who have no communion whatsoever with our Church, give to him the same subordination, as they did in past times, when they were united with us.' Characteristically, the patriarch maintains the existence of an imperial unity *in spite of the schism dividing the churches*.³⁷¹

Another anachronistic idea from the sixth-century past that played a part here in the fifteenth century was that of the *pentarchy* - that is, the idea that the Church was composed of five patriarchal sees, like the five senses, of which Old Rome was one. Several completely Orthodox Byzantines even in the fourteenth century, such as Emperor John VI Cantacuzene and Patriarch Philotheus Kokkinos, had been in favour of an ecumenical council with Rome. Of course, the Latins were power-loving heretics. But this was not new. Even during the "Acacian schism" of the early sixth century Pope Hormisdas had presented overweening demands relating to the supremacy of the papacy, which Patriarch John the Cappadocian had accepted, adding only the significant phrase: "I proclaim that the see of the Apostle Peter and the see of this imperial city are one". Could not the two sees be reunited again, this time under the leadership of the new Justinian, Emperor John VIII? And in this context Justinian's idea of the pentarchy also became relevant again, for, as Meyendorff points out, it was "an important factor in the Byzantine understanding of an 'ecumenical' council, which required the presence of the five patriarchs, or their representatives, even as the Eastern sees of Alexandria and Antioch had, in fact, ceased to be influential. In any case, in the Middle Ages, these two interconnected elements - the theoretical legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor over the West and a lingering respect for the pentarchy, of which the Roman bishop was the leading member - made it into a requirement that a properly *ecumenical* council include the bishop of Rome (in spite of the schism), and the four Eastern patriarchs (although three of them were now heading churches which were barely in existence at all)."³⁷²

And so many factors - obedience to the emperor, fear for the fate of Hellenism, genuine hopes of a reunion of Christendom - combined to undermine the resistance of most of the Greeks to the unia with Rome... "In the end, weary of it all, longing to get home and, it was said, deliberately kept short of food and comforts, the whole Greek delegation, under orders from the Emperor and in obedience to the concordat of their Church with John V, signed the decree of union, with the exception of Mark Evgenicus [Metropolitan of Ephesus], and, it seems, of [the pagan philosopher] Plethon, who disliked the Latin Church rather more than the Greek. Mark was

³⁷¹ Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?" in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, p. 89.

³⁷² Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

threatened with deposition; and, after retiring for a while to his see of Ephesus, in Turkish territory, he submitted to pressure and abdicated."³⁷³

St. Mark's motto was: "There can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith." And again: "Let no one lord it over our faith, neither emperor, nor false council, not anyone else, but only the One God, Who Himself handed it down to us through His disciples."³⁷⁴ "He was treated as a martyr by almost the whole body of the Greek Church. The Emperor soon found that it was easier to sign the union than to implement it. He remained personally loyal to it, but, influenced by his aged mother, he refrained from trying to force it on his people. He found it hard to persuade anyone to take the empty Patriarchal chair. Metrophanes II, whom he appointed in May 1440, died soon afterwards. His successor, Gregory Mammias, who was a sincere advocate of union, found it prudent to retire to Italy in 1451. Bessarion [of Trebizond], liked and admired though he was personally, had already moved to Italy, shocked at the hostility that his actions had aroused at Constantinople and believing that he could best serve the Greek cause by remaining among the Italians. Isidore of Kiev's adherence to the union was angrily repudiated by the Russian Prince, Church and people, who deprived him of his see. He too went to Italy. The Eastern Patriarchs announced that they were not bound by anything that their representatives had signed and rejected the union. George Scholarius, though he had accepted the union and was devoted to the works of Thomas Aquinas, was soon convinced by Mark Eugenikos that he had been wrong. He retired into a monastery; and on Mark's death in 1444 he emerged as leader of the anti-unionist party. The lesser clergy and the monks followed him almost to a man.

"The Emperor John VIII died weary and disillusioned in 1448. His brother and heir Constantine XI considered himself bound by the union; but he did not try to press it on his people till the very end of the final Turkish siege. In the autumn of 1452 Isidore of Kiev, now a Roman cardinal, arrived at Constantinople with the union decree, which was solemnly read out in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia on 12 December. Isidore, who was anxious that everything should go smoothly, reported that it was well received. But his Italian assistant, Leonard of Chios, Archbishop of Mitylene, wrote angrily that few people were present and many officials boycotted the ceremony. Certainly, though during the last few months of the Empire's existence Saint Sophia was served by Latin and by a handful of unionist clergy, its altars were almost deserted. The vast majority of the clergy and the congregations of

³⁷³ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 109. Bishop Isaiah of Stavropol, the Bishop of Tver and Bishop Gregory of Georgia secretly left the city to avoid signing. George Scholarius, the future patriarch, together with John Evgenicos, St. Mark's brother and the Despot Demetrius also left earlier without signing. And the signature of Methodius of Lacedaemon is nowhere to be found... (*The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, p. 466)

³⁷⁴ Constantine Tsipanlis writes: "In the eyes of Mark even the complete political extinction of the Byzantine State was not as important as the preservation of the integrity of Orthodoxy" (*Mark Eugenikos and the Council of Florence*, New York, 1986, p. 60).

the city would have nothing to do with them...

The last emperor, Constantine XI, was a uniate, and was not even crowned in Constantinople, but in Mystra, because of the opposition of the zealots of Orthodoxy.³⁷⁵ Even after he returned to Constantinople in 1449 he was never officially crowned.³⁷⁶ The last step in the apostasy came in December, 1452: a uniate liturgy in which the Pope was commemorated was celebrated by Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev in Hagia Sophia. With both emperor and patriarch heretics, and the holiest shrine in Orthodoxy defiled by the communion of heresy, the protection of the Mother of God deserted the Empire, which had ceased to be the instrument of God's purpose in the world...

In the months that followed, the uniate churches were only sparsely attended as the anti-unionists boycotted them. However, on the very eve of the Fall, May 28, 1453, almost the whole of the able-bodied population crowded into Hagia Sophia for a final Great Vespers. "The Patriarchal Chair," writes John Julius Norwich, "was still vacant [the uniate Patriarch Gregory had fled the unwelcoming city]; but Orthodox bishops and priests, monks and nuns – many of whom had sworn never to cross the threshold of the building until it had been formally cleansed of the last traces of Roman pollution – were present in their hundreds. Present too was Isidore, formerly Metropolitan of Kiev, long execrated as a renegade and traitor to his former faith, but now heard with a new respect as he dispensed the Holy Sacrament and intoned once again the old liturgies.

"The service was still in progress when the Emperor arrived with his commanders. He first asked forgiveness of his sins from every bishop present, Catholic and Orthodox alike; then he took communion with the rest..."³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Pope Nicholas V wrote to him: "From this man [the imperial legate, Andronicus Vryennios] and from your own letters, we have learned that you desire union and accept the synodal decree" (P.G. 160, 1201B). See "The Long-Awaited King", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, May 7/20, 1979. And Bishop Leonard of Chios wrote: "Through the diligence and honesty of the said Cardinal, Isidore of Kiev, and with the assent (if it was not insincere) of the emperor and the senate, the holy union was sanctioned and solemnly decreed on December 12th, the feast of Saint Spiridon, the bishop" (quoted in Judith Herrin, "The Fall of Constantinople", *History Today*, vol. 53, № 6, June, 2003, p. 15). St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite believed that Constantine was not a uniate and therefore inscribed him in some calendars. But there appears to be no doubt that he was a uniate, having received communion from Cardinal Isidore a few hours before his death, and therefore cannot be counted as an Orthodox saint. Lebedev writes: "Whatever might be said in his defence, nevertheless the last Orthodox Byzantine Emperor was a traitor to Orthodoxy. His betrayal is the more shameful the less it was sincere. Here are the words by which the Emperor and those who thought like him tried to pacify the crowd which did not want the unia; they said: 'Be patient a little, wait until God has delivered the capital for the great dragon [the Turks], who wants to devour it. Then you will see whether our reconciliation with the azymites [the Latins] was sincere.'" (*op. cit.*, p. 392).

³⁷⁶ Tsipanlis, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

³⁷⁷ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 452.

Now, with both emperor and patriarch heretics, and the holiest shrine in Orthodoxy defiled by the communion of heresy, the protection of the Mother of God deserted the Empire, which had ceased to be the instrument of God's purpose in the world, and allowed it to be conquered by the Turkish Sultan Mehmet II...

And so on the morning of May 29, 1453, writes Andrew Wheatcroft, "after fifty-three days of desperate resistance, the Ottoman janissaries broke through the walls into the city. By custom they were entitled to three days of looting in any city they had taken by storm. At first they killed everyone they found alive. From the Church of St. Mary of the Mongols high above the Golden Horn, a torrent of blood rained down the hill towards the harbour. The soldiers broke into the churches, ripping out the precious objects, raping or killing anyone who caught their fancy. In the afternoon the sultan made his formal entry, and went directly to the Church of the Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia. There he ordered an end to the pillage and destruction and directed that the great church should become the chief mosque of the city. Ducas, in his *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, records the day:

"He [Mehmed] summoned one of his vile priests who ascended the pulpit to call out his foul prayer. The son of iniquity, the forerunner of Antichrist, ascending the holy altar, offered the prayer. Alas, the calamity! Alack, the horrendous deed! Woe is me! What has befallen us? Oh! Oh! What have we witnessed? An infidel Turk, standing on the holy altar in whose foundation the relics of Apostles and Martyrs have been deposited! Shudder, O sun! Where is the Lamb of God, and where is the Son and Logos of the Father Who is sacrificed thereon, and eaten, and never consumed?

"Truly we have been reckoned as frauds! Our worship has been reckoned as nothing by the nations. Because of our sins the temple [Hagia Sophia] which was rebuilt in the name of the Wisdom of the Logos of God, and is called the Temple of the Holy Trinity, and Great Church and New Sion, today has become an altar of barbarians, and has been named and has become the House of Muhammad. Just is Thy judgement, O Lord."³⁷⁸

However, we must not forget those Byzantines, like St. Mark of Ephesus and Gennadius Scholarius, who remained true Romans to the end, who placed the universalist content of the Orthodox Faith above the preservation of the empire, or Greek classical culture, or of any earthly value whatsoever, thereby preserving the true glory of Greece, her Orthodox faith, into the post-conquest period.

Nor should we forget those who repented, the metropolitans who signed the unia but later renounced their signatures. On returning from Florence, records Michael

³⁷⁸ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 207.

Ducas, “as the metropolitans disembarked from the ships, the citizens greeted them as was customary, asking ‘What of our business? What of the Council? Did we prevail?’ And they answered: ‘We have sold our faith; we have exchanged true piety for impiety; we have betrayed the pure Sacrifice and become upholders of unleavened bread...’”³⁷⁹

Conclusion: The Causes of the Catastrophe

So the City fell because it betrayed the Faith... After the Fall, the recovery was swift: the new patriarch, St. Gennadius Scholarius, was a zealot, and his Synod quickly renounced the unia. Nevertheless, we return to the conundrum posed at the beginning of this article: why should the punishment for this betrayal have been so final in 1453, when earlier betrayals of the Faith, no less serious and much more long lasting, had not resulted in final defeat?

The clue lies in the fact that, while renouncing the unia, which was only a means to an end (the survival of the State), the Byzantines did not repent of having placed State before Church, of having followed their uncrowned and unanointed, uniate and apostate emperor to the final, bitter end... They betrayed Orthodoxy for the sake of the Empire – and were deprived of both...

This is ironic indeed. As noted above, the Byzantines were extraordinarily free in disposing of their sovereigns: in 74 out of 109 Byzantine reigns, the throne was seized by a coup. But they were not overthrown because they had betrayed the Faith. They were killed or mutilated simply because, in the opinion of some army commander, they were bad rulers. And the Church and the people usually acquiesced in the deed...

K.N. Leontiev tried to defend the Byzantines: “They drove out the Caesars, changed them, killed them. But nobody touched the holiness of Caesarism itself. They changed *the people*, but nobody changed *its basic organization*.”³⁸⁰

But was he correct? Was Caesarism truly seen as holy? Is not the truth rather that the Byzantine attitude to the imperial power veered, for most of its history, from one unchristian extreme to the other, from the extreme of *idolatry* (the emperor as god) to the extreme of *sacrilege* (the emperor as a mere mortal, who could be removed by force if “the mandate of heaven” deserted him)? In neither case was the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed ones” (Psalm 104.15) seen as applying to emperors, and emperors continued to be slaughtered right until the first Fall of the City in 1204.

³⁷⁹ Quoted in Norwich, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

³⁸⁰ Leontiev, “Vyzantinizm i Slavianstvo” (“Byzantinism and Slavism”), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, p. 97.

But then, under the impact of that terrible tragedy, attitudes began to change. Emperor Theodore I Lascaris received the physical sacrament of anointing to the kingdom for the first time in Byzantine history – over six centuries since the sacrament had first been used in the barbarian lands of the British Isles, on the one hand, and Southern Arabia, on the other.

And the effects were felt immediately: the Lascarid dynasty was the most pious and effective in Byzantine history, even if – and perhaps partly *because* - their rule was exerted in the more modest conditions of Nicaean exile and not in the pomp and splendour of Constantinople.

In any case, emperors were no longer killed by their own people...

However, with the last Byzantine dynasty, that of the Palaeologi, this apparent improvement in morals was compromised by what amounted to a deviation from the faith. For the emperor was now the Anointed one – both physically and spiritually, - and as such he was untouchable... With the signing of the concordat between the Church and the uniate Emperor John V, the Emperor had a control over the Church that the iconoclast emperors could only have dreamed of. Moreover, nobody had twisted the Church's arm: the hierarchs had surrendered their power voluntarily and without compulsion...

From now on, even if the emperor betrayed the Faith he could not be removed – or, if some still thought he should be removed, nobody called on the people to do it. Thus Michael VIII died a uniate, and was cursed after his death – but he was not removed in his lifetime. John V submitted to Rome – and remained on the throne. John VIII signed the unia in 1439 – and kept his throne. Constantine XI remained faithful to the unia – and kept his throne until an unbeliever captured it...

And so the emperors were no longer seen as gods, as in pagan times. Nor did they have pretensions to be priests, as in the times of the iconoclasts. And yet for all practical purposes they were god-kings and king-priests. For they were untouchable. In fact, they were the lynch-pin upon which the whole Byzantine system of government, both political and ecclesiastical, rested; for as Patriarch Anthony said, "it is impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor".

And yet this was not true, as the patriarchs knew better than anybody else. For whereas, from the time of the concordat, the emperor's ever-decreasing rule extended over Constantinople, Thessalonica and the Peloponnese, and little else, the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch was truly universal in the Orthodox world, extending far beyond the bounds of the Empire – to Serbia in the West, to Russia in the north, and to the Turkish-occupied lands in the East. So why did the powerful patriarchs fawn on, and bow down to the almost powerless emperors?

The paradox is explained by the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was increasingly Greek in its orientation - and Greek hopes centred exclusively on the Empire, and specifically on Constantinople. In 1204 the patriarchs had been prepared to fight on even after the fall of the City - and had constructed a viable and prosperous realm outside it. But not now...

In a previous age, they might have blessed and supported a translatio imperii to some foreign land that was still devoted to the ideals of the Christian Empire - Romania, perhaps, where an important independent state was developing under St. Stephen the Great, or Moscow... But not now...

The fatal weakness of the Byzantines had been their placing the security of the Empire above that of the Church, the earthly kingdom above the Heavenly Kingdom. Like Judah in the time of Jeremiah, they tried to play off one despotic power against another - and lost to both. Unlike their great ancestors, who had often defied heretical emperors for the sake of the Faith, they tried to preserve their earthly kingdom at the price of the Kingdom of Heaven, forgetting that the whole glory of the Christian Empire lay in its readiness to live and die for its Heavenly King; "for here we have no lasting city, but seek the City which is to come" (Hebrews 13.14).

Unable to present a truly Catholic - in the sense of universal, non-nationalistic - vision of Christian society to the world, the Byzantines fell into a false union with, and submission to, the West with its heretical, but more explicitly universal vision. And so they lost the name of Rome, whose whole glory, even when her dominion was no longer universal, lay in her *universal vision*; for, as Solomon says, "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29.18). Thereafter, their successors no longer called themselves Romans, but Greeks (only their Turkish conquerors kept the memory in the phrase Millet Rum, where Rum means "Rome").

Great-Prince Basil had been right. "We have a Church," he said, "but we do not have an emperor". But the Byzantines could not and would not believe this, even when it was obvious that their heretical "emperor" was leading them to political and spiritual disaster. The universal vision of Christian Rome had been narrowed to a terribly debilitating concentration on one speck of mortal dust. And so, in order that this extreme narrowness of vision should not contract to complete blindness, the Lord in His great mercy removed even that speck from their sight...

V. THE GREEK REVOLUTION: RENOVATIO IMPERII?

The fall of the New Rome of Constantinople in 1453 was a great shock for the whole of the Orthodox world. It was not only the political outlook that was threatening: if the empire was no more, what would become of the Church? Did not the prophecies link the fall of Rome with the coming of the Antichrist? But perhaps the empire was not yet dead... There were two possibilities here. One was that the Ottoman empire could be construed as a continuation of Rome. After all, there had been pagans and heretics and persecutors of the Church on the throne, so why not a Muslim? Or Rome was to be translated elsewhere, as St. Constantine had once translated the capital of his empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople.

Translatio Imperii

Unlikely as it may sound, some Greeks embraced the idea of Istanbul being Rome, and the Sultan – the Roman emperor. Thus in 1466 the Cretan historian George Trapezuntios said to the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmet II: "Nobody doubts that you are the Roman emperor. He who is the lawful ruler in the capital of the empire and in Constantinople is the emperor, while Constantinople is the capital of the Roman empire. And he who remains as emperor of the Romans is also the emperor of the whole world."³⁸¹

However, the Ottoman Sultans could not be compared even with the heretical Roman emperors, such as the iconoclasts Leo and Constantine Copronymus. The latter had at least *claimed* to be sons of the Church, they had *claimed* to confess the Orthodox faith and receive the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. But there could be no deception here: the Ottoman Sultans made no pretence at being Orthodox. Therefore at most they could be considered analogous in authority to the pagan emperors of Old Rome, legitimate authorities to whom obedience was due as long as, and to the degree that, they did not compel Christians to commit impiety - but no more.

As for the idea that Rome had been translated elsewhere, while the idea of the translatio imperii from Old Rome to New Rome in the fourth century had been accepted by the Byzantines, they did not accept the idea of a second translatio – and especially not beyond the confines of the Greco-Roman world to a “barbarian” nation like the Russians. As St. Photius the Great declared: “Just as the dominion of Israel lasted until the coming of Christ, so we believe that the Empire will not be taken from us Greeks until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...”³⁸² It took

³⁸¹ Trapezuntios, quoted in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin*, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 215.

³⁸² St. Photius, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem*, vol. 1, p. 123

the profound shock of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the fact that the Second Coming of Christ did not take place then, to make them think again...

But even then, few Greeks took to the idea of another nation, such as the Russians, occupying the position of Christian Rome. Many hopes were pinned on Russia, but not as "the Third Rome", not as the *successor and replacement* of the Second Rome of Constantinople. Rather, it was hoped that the Russians would defeat the Turks and give the Greeks back their City and their Empire. As a Pontic folk-song on the Fall of Constantinople put it:

*Romania has passed away, Romania is taken.
Even if Romania has passed away, it will flower and bear fruit again.*

Or, as St. Cosmas of Aitolia (+1779) put it, το ποθουμενο, the desired, was το ρωμαιο, the restoration of New Rome, which he prophesied would indeed take place. For him, the restoration of Greek independence would be a restoration of New Rome, the universalist state that existed before 1453. He emphatically did not have in mind a small nationalist state on the model of the other small nationalist states that would arise all over Europe in the course of the nineteenth century.

[The Sources of Greek Nationalism](#)

Greek nationalism under the Turkish yoke was nourished and sustained from three sources. One, the purest, was the Orthodox faith: since the Gospel and most of the patristic writings were written in Greek, a good knowledge of Orthodoxy required a good knowledge of Greek and Byzantine history in which Hellenism, the patriotic belief in the greatness of the Greek nation, was linked inseparably with its confession of the Orthodox faith. This Greek (or Roman) *Orthodox* nationalism (with the emphasis on "Orthodox") was to be found especially among the monks of Mount Athos, such as St. Cosmas.

Another source of Greek nationalism was a completely natural desire to be liberated from the Ottoman yoke. The situation of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire was very difficult. As time passed and Ottoman power weakened, persecution of the faith increased. "The rights of the patriarch," writes Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "were gradually reduced to nothing; all that was left to him was the 'right' of being responsible for the Christians. In the course of seventy-three years in the eighteenth century, the patriarch was replaced forty-eight times! Some were deposed and reinstated as many as five times; many were put to torture. The rebellions of the Janissaries were accompanied by terrible bloodshed. Churches were defiled, relics cut to pieces, and the Holy Gifts profaned. Christian pogroms became more and more frequent. In the nineteenth century Turkey was simply rotting away, but the 'sick man of Europe' was supported at all points by other nations in opposition to

Russia,"³⁸³ the only real protector of Orthodox Christianity.

The Patriarch was bound by his oath of allegiance to the Sultan not to encourage protest against the Turks. However, as Sir Steven Runciman writes, "the Greek in the provinces could not understand the subtle politics of the Patriarchate. He could not appreciate the delicacy that the Patriarch and his advisers had to show in their dealings with the Sublime Porte. He looked to his village priest or to the local abbot or the bishop to protect him against the Turkish governmental authorities, and he gave his support to anyone who would champion him against the government. In the great days of the Ottoman Empire, when the administration had been efficient and on the whole just, Greek nationalism could be kept underground. But by the eighteenth century the administrative machinery was beginning to run down. Provincial Turkish governors began to revolt against the Sultan and could usually count on the support of the local Greeks. A growing number of outlaws took to the mountains. In Slav districts they were known by the Turkish name of *haidouks*; in Greece they were called the *Klephts*. They lived by banditry, directed mainly against the Turkish landowners; but they were quite ready to rob Christian merchants or travellers of any nationality. They could count on the support of the local Christian villagers, to whom they were latter-day Robin Hoods; they could almost always find refuge from the Turkish police in some local monastery..."³⁸⁴

The first and second sources of Greek nationalism combined: it was because the faith was being trampled on that the Greek revolution of 1821 had widespread support in the Church and was understood as a struggle "for faith and fatherland" in response to the insults cast at both by the Turks.

A third, less pure source of Greek nationalism was the western teaching on freedom promulgated by the French revolution, and brought back to Greece by the sons of the wealthy Phanariot families of Constantinople. By the end of the eighteenth century most educated Greeks were deeply tainted by westernism. There were other, political and economic factors exciting the dreams of the Phanariots: the conquest of the Ionian islands by Napoleon and then by the British; the rebellion of the Mohammedan warlord Ali Pasha against the Sultan in 1820; the inexorable gradual southward expansion of the Russian Empire, which drew Greek minds to the prophecies about the liberation of Constantinople by "the yellow-haired race"; and the restrictions on the accumulation of capital in the Ottoman empire, which contrasted unfavourably with the more business-friendly regimes they had encountered in the West. However, the most important influences were undoubtedly ideological - the influence of western ideas made available by the explosion in the provision of educational opportunities for young Greeks that the Phanariots created in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter

³⁸³ Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977, p. 274.

³⁸⁴ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 391.

of the nineteenth. Such an emphasis on education had been made by St Cosmas, who built over two hundred schools. But he emphasized education in Orthodoxy in order to escape the snares of western culture.³⁸⁵ These merchants, however, sent young Greeks to the universities of Western Europe, especially Germany. Here they discovered how fascinated the Europeans were with Classical Greek culture.

The Europeans were originally interested only in the ancient monuments. Hence the removal of the Elgin marbles and the Venus of Milo to London and Paris respectively. However, attitudes were changed, as Adam Zamoyski points out, "by Lord Byron's visit to Greece in 1809, whose fruits were the second canto of *Childe Harold*, published in 1809, *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), and *The Siege of Corinth* (1816). More interested in people than in stones, Byron concentrated on depicting the craggy nobility of the natives. He was also much affected by the notion of a once great people under alien oppression. The negative picture of the Turks and their culture – rococo Ottomania had given way to priggish neoclassical contempt – made the oppression all the crueller to the European imagination, in which the Turk combined lustfulness with barbarity. The educated European of 1800 was as disgusted by the idea of the 'terrible' Turk defiling Greece as his twelfth-century forebear had been at the idea of Saracens profaning the Holy Land. And just as the Holy Land called out to Christendom for vengeance and crusade, so the oppressed Greek land called out for liberation."³⁸⁶

"During the centuries of the Tourkokratia," writes Richard Clogg, "knowledge of the ancient Greek world had all but died out, but, under the stimulus of western classical scholarship, the budding intelligentsia developed an awareness that they were the heirs to an heritage that was universally revered throughout the civilised world. By the eve of the war of independence this progonoplexia (ancestor obsession) and arkhaiolatrea (worship of antiquity), to use the expressive Greek terms, had reached almost obsessive proportions. It was precisely during the first decade of the nineteenth century that nationalists, much to the consternation of the Church authorities, began to baptise their children with the names of (and to call their ships after) the worthies of ancient Greece rather than the Christian saints."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ "It is better," he said, "my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, then he becomes a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries." And to the people of Parga he said: "Take care to establish without fail a Greek school in which your children will learn all that you are ignorant of [because] our faith wasn't established by ignorant saints, but by wise and educated saints who interpreted the Holy Scriptures accurately and who enlightened us sufficiently by inspired teachings" (Nomikos Michael Vaporis, *Witnesses for Christ: Orthodox Christian Neomartyrs of the Ottoman Period 1437-1860*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000, p. 202).

³⁸⁶ Zamoyski, *Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 233. There is a tradition in Greece that Byron died as an Orthodox Christian.

³⁸⁷ Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 27-28.

Such nationalistic worship of Greek pagan antiquity could be combined with contempt for the real glory of Greece – the Orthodox Church. A case in point was Adamantios Korais. Runciman writes: “He was born at Smyrna in 1748 and went as a young man to Paris, which he made his headquarters for the rest of his life. There he made contact with the French Encyclopédistes and their successors. From them he learnt a dislike for clericalism and for tradition. From reading Gibbon he came to believe that Christianity had ushered in a dark age for European civilization. His friend Karl Schlegel taught him to identify nationality with language. ‘Language is the nation.’ He wrote; ‘for where one says la langue de France one means the French nation.’ The Greeks of his time were therefore of the same race as the ancient Greeks. But to make the identification closer he sought to reform the language so that it would be nearer to the Classical form. He was, in fact, primarily responsible for the introduction of katharevousa... For the Byzantine past of Greece and for the Orthodox Church he had no use at all. His writings were eagerly read by the young intellectuals at the Phanar and by men of education all over Greece.”³⁸⁸

One of the few defences that the Church was able to muster against this rampant westernism was a work entitled *The Paternal Exhortation* and published in 1798. “The author’s name was given as Anthimus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Anthimus was a sick man at the time and not expected to survive; but when he surprised his doctors by making a recovery he indignantly repudiated the authorship. The true identity of the author is unknown, but there is reason to believe that it was the Patriarch Gregory V, then entering on his first spell at the Patriarchate. Gregory, or whoever the author was, clearly knew that the book would arouse angry criticism and hoped that the critics would be checked by the saintly reputation of the moribund Anthimus. *The Paternal Exhortation* opens by thanking God for the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, at a time when Byzantium had begun to slip into heresy. The victory of the Turks and the tolerance that they showed to their Christian subjects were the means for preserving Orthodoxy. Good Christians should therefore be content to remain under Turkish rule. Even the Ottoman restriction on the building of churches, which the author realized might be hard to explain as beneficial, is excused by the remark that Christians should not indulge in the vainglorious pastime of erecting fine buildings; for the true Church is not made by hands, and there will be splendour enough in Heaven. After denouncing the illusory attractions of political freedom, ‘an enticement of the Devil and a murderous poison destined to push the people into disorder and destruction’, the author ends with a poem bidding the faithful to pay respect to the Sultan, whom God had set in authority over them...

“It was a document that found little sympathy with its Greek readers. Korais hastened to reply in a tract called the *Fraternal Exhortation*, in which he declared that the *Paternal Exhortation* in no way represented the feeling of the Greek people but

³⁸⁸ Runciman, op. cit., pp. 392-393.

was the ridiculous raving of a hierarch 'who is either a fool or has been transformed from a shepherd into a wolf' ..."³⁸⁹

Another product of the West that was beginning to have a baleful influence on the Greeks was Freemasonry. The Greek Orthodox Church officially condemned Freemasonry in 1744, and the future hieromartyr Archbishop Cyprian of Cyprus anathematized it in 1815. However, Masonic writers, both Greek and Russian, have tended to see the Greek revolution as the work almost exclusively of Masons³⁹⁰; and one writer has called the *Philiki Hetairia*, which organized the revolution from Odessa in 1821, a Masonic Lodge.³⁹¹

This is almost certainly an exaggeration. Although the *Hetairia* recalled Masonry in its four grades, in its oaths of secrecy and absolute obedience to unknown leaders, and in the fact that two of its three founders were in fact Freemasons according to Runciman³⁹², it was Orthodox in its ideology. Thus its catechism for new members was purely patriotic in tone, the organization was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Orthodox Christian Faith, and its leader, Alexander Ypsilantis, proclaimed the revolution in Iasy in Romania with the title: "Fight for the Faith and for the Homeland".³⁹³ Nevertheless, the revolutionary ethos of French Masonry bears a close relationship to the thinking of many of the leaders of the Greek revolution.

Freemasonry was dangerous not only because it preached political revolution. It also preached religious *ecumenism* – that is, the idea that all religions have a part of the truth, that none of them is perfect, and that there is no one perfect revealed truth. Patriarch Gregory opposed ecumenism as part of westernism: "Let us neither say nor think that [they who teach erroneous doctrines] also believe in one Lord, have one Baptism, and confess the one Faith. If their opinions are correct, then by necessity our own must be incorrect. But if our own doctrines are upheld and believed and given credence and confessed by all as being good, true, correct, and unadulterated, manifestly then, the so-called sacraments of all heretics are evil, bereft of divine grace, abominable, and loathsome, and the grace of ordination and the priesthood by which these sacraments are performed has vanished and departed from them. And when there is no priesthood, all the rest are dead and bereft of spiritual grace. We say these things, beloved, lest anyone – either man or woman – be misled by the

³⁸⁹ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 394-395, 396. Cf. Gregory Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1852*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 8.

³⁹⁰ Ioannis Michaletos, "Freemasonry in Greece: Secret History Revealed", <http://www.balkananalysis.com/2006/09/28/freemasonry-in-greece-secret-history-revealed>; Vsevolod Sakharov, "Russkij Ministr, 'Kormchij' Gretsii, Vol'nij Kamenschik", <http://archives.narod.ru/gr-web.htm>.

³⁹¹ Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 1999, p. 216.

³⁹² Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

³⁹³ Archimandrite Ambrose, *Tektonismos kai Philiki Hetairia* (Masonry and the Society of Friends), Athens, 1972 (in Greek); Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication.

heterodox regarding their apparent sacraments and their so-called Christianity. Rather, let each one stand firmly in the blameless and true Faith of Christ, especially that we may draw to ourselves those who have been led astray and, as though they were own members, unite them to the one Head, Christ, to Whom be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.”³⁹⁴

Unfortunately, the Church’s reaction against westernism and Masonry was often combined, especially among the monks, with a less healthy reaction against education as such, which was thought to be the root cause of Phanariot impiety.

Runciman writes: “Cyril V’s brave attempt to found an Athonite academy showed by its failure that the monks refused to accept the intellectualism of the Phanar. There was a growing lack of sympathy between the monasteries even on Athos and the Greeks of Constantinople. With the monastic atmosphere growing hostile to culture, Athos lost its appeal to men of education. The monasteries received cruder and less worthy recruits. By the end of the eighteenth century the rate of literacy on the Holy Mountain had seriously declined; and by the early nineteenth century the monks had sunk into the state of boorish ignorance so brilliantly and maliciously described by travellers such as Richard Curzon.

“These travellers were not guiltless of exaggeration. They remarked on the exploitation by the clergy, but seldom mentioned that there were also kindly and saintly priests. They noticed how narrow were the interests of the monks and how neglected were most of their libraries. But there were still houses on Athos, such as the Grand Lavra, where the treasures of the past were still tended with care, as they were, too, in monasteries such as Sumela or Saint John on Patmos. Moreover, this distressing anti-Western anti-intellectualism was in its way an expression of integrity. The Republic of the Holy Mountain was trying to avoid the infection of worldly pride and ambition which seemed to be pervading Greek society. It was trying to keep alive the true Orthodox tradition of concentration on the eternal verities unharmed by man-made philosophies and scientific theories. The monks had been made to listen to Vulgaris’s lectures on German philosophy in the days of the Athonite academy; and they were shocked. Yet this was what they were now offered when they sought for spiritual guidance from Constantinople...”³⁹⁵

The fall in intellectual standards in turn led to another kind of nationalism which was detrimental to Ecumenical Orthodoxy: the assumption that Greek Orthodoxy was necessarily superior to other national forms of Orthodoxy, and that in

³⁹⁴ St. Gregory, *An Explanation of the Apostolic Lections*. The movement to reject the sacraments of the Latin and Protestant heretics had been initiated by Patriarch Cyril V in his famous synodal decree of 1756, which ruled that all western heretics coming to Orthodoxy must be baptized. It was supported by the monk Auxentios and the Chian doctor Eustratios Argenti, and opposed by Patriarchs Paisios and Callinicus IV, who exiled Cyril V to Rhodes.

³⁹⁵ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

consequence the other nations had to be led by Greeks. "Even on Athos nationalism reared its head. The Greek monasteries began to show hostility to the Serbian and Bulgarian houses and soon, also, to the Roumanians and Russians; and the hostility was to grow in the nineteenth century."³⁹⁶

Now one of the hidden advantages of the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 had been the fact that the main cause of the conflicts between the Balkan Orthodox nations, - the imperialist nationalism of the Byzantine State, on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist nationalism of the Slavic States, on the other - were removed, or at any rate given no food to grow. No nation could now encroach on the sovereignty of any other nation, since they were all equally the miserable subjects of the Sultan. In theory, at any rate, this communion in suffering should have brought the Christians closer together.

But in one important respect the Sultan had preserved the status quo of Greek superiority, and in this way sown the seeds of future conflicts... "The Muslims," writes Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), "drew no distinction between religion and politics: from their point of view, if Christianity was to be recognized as an independent religious faith, it was necessary for Christians to be organized as an independent political unit, an Empire within the Empire. The ecclesiastical structure was taken over in toto as an instrument of secular administration. The bishops became government officials, the Patriarch was not only the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church, but the civil head of the Greek nation - the ethnarch or millet-bashi."³⁹⁷

An outward symbol of this change in the status of the Patriarch was his wearing a crown in the Divine services. Hieromonk Elia writes: "Until Ottoman times, that is until the 14th century, bishops did not wear crowns, or anything else upon their heads in church. When there was no longer an Emperor, the Patriarch began to wear a crown, and the 'sakkos', an imperial garment, indicating that he was now head of the millet or nation."³⁹⁸

So the Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians were again under a Greek ruler who wore a crown, even if he in turn was ruled by the Sultan! And they knew that if the Sultan were removed, then the Greek Patriarch-Ethnarch would again be in charge, like the Byzantine Autocrats of old. Now the fact that the Orthodox of all nations were now one nation in law could have been seen as a message from God: "You - Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians - are all one nation in My eyes. Cease your quarrelling, therefore, and love each other." But if that was the message, it was not heeded. After a pause the Greco-Slavic conflicts of the Byzantine period resumed...

³⁹⁶ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

³⁹⁷ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 89.

³⁹⁸ Fr. Elia, "[paradosis] Re: Bareheaded", orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, May 9, 2006.

The millet system had the consequence that “the Church’s higher administration became caught up in a degrading system of corruption and simony. Involved as they were in worldly affairs and matters political, the bishops fell a prey to ambition and financial greed. Each new Patriarch required a berat from the Sultan before he could assume office, and for this document he was obliged to pay heavily. The Patriarch recovered his expenses from the episcopate, by exacting a fee from each bishop before instituting him in his diocese; the bishops in turn taxed the parish clergy, and the clergy taxed their flocks. What was once said of the Papacy was certainly true of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Turks: everything was for sale. When there were several candidates for the Patriarchal throne, the Turks virtually sold it to the highest bidder; and they were quick to see that it was in their financial interests to change the Patriarch as frequently as possible, so as to multiply occasions for selling the berat. Patriarchs were removed and reinstated with kaleidoscopic rapidity.”³⁹⁹

The only Christians who could pay these bribes were the Phanariots, wealthy merchants from the Phanar district in Constantinople, who enjoyed considerable privileges throughout European Turkey, especially in Romania. According to Runciman, they “needed the support of the Church in the pursuit of their ultimate political aim. It was no mean aim. The Megali Idea, the Great Idea of the Greeks, can be traced back to days before the Turkish Conquest. It was the idea of the Imperial destiny of the Greek people. Michael VIII Palaeologus expressed it in the speech that he made when he heard that his troops had recaptured Constantinople from the Latins; though he called the Greeks the Romaioi. In later Paleologan times the word Hellene reappeared, but with the conscious intention of connecting Byzantine imperialism with the culture and traditions of ancient Greece. With the spread of the Renaissance a respect for the old Greek civilization had become general. It was natural that the Greeks, in the midst of their political disasters, should wish to benefit from it. They might be slaves now to the Turks, but they were of the great race that had civilized Europe. It must be their destiny to rise again. The Phanariots tried to combine the nationalistic force of Hellenism in a passionate if illogical alliance with the oecumenical traditions of Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. They worked for a restored Byzantium, a New Rome that should be Greek, a new centre of Greek civilization that should embrace the Orthodox world. The spirit behind the Great Idea was a mixture of neo-Byzantinism and an acute sense of race. But, with the trend of the modern world the nationalism began to dominate the oecumenicity. George Scholarius Gennadius had, perhaps unconsciously, foreseen the danger when he answered a question about his nationality by saying that he would not call himself a Hellene though he was a Hellene by race, nor a Byzantine though he had been born at Byzantium, but, rather, a Christian, that is, an Orthodox. For, if the Orthodox Church was to retain its spiritual force, it must remain oecumenical. It must not become a purely Greek Church.

³⁹⁹ Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

“The price paid by the Orthodox Church for its subjection to its Phanariot benefactors was heavy. First, it meant that the Church was run more and more in the interests of the Greek people and not of Orthodoxy as a whole. The arrangement made between the Conquering Sultan and the Patriarch Gennadius had put all the Orthodox within the Ottoman Empire under the authority of the Patriarchate, which was inevitably controlled by Greeks. But the earlier Patriarchs after the conquest had been aware of their oecumenical duties. The autonomous Patriarchates of Serbia and Bulgaria had been suppressed when the two kingdoms were annexed by the Turks; but the two Churches had continued to enjoy a certain amount of autonomy under the Metropolitans of Pec and of Tirnovo or Ochrid. They retained their Slavonic liturgy and their native clergy and bishops. This did not suit the Phanariots. It was easy to deal with the Churches of Wallachia and Moldavia because of the infiltration of Greeks into the Principalities, where anyhow the medieval dominance of the Serbian Church had been resented. The Phanariot Princes had not interfered with the vernacular liturgy and had, indeed, encouraged the Roumanian language at the expense of the Slavonic. The upper clergy was Graecized; so they felt secure. The Bulgarians and the Serbs were more intransigent. They had no intention of becoming Graecized. They protested to some effect against the appointment of Greek metropolitans. For a while the Serbian Patriarchate of Pec was reconstituted, from 1557 to 1755. The Phanariots demanded tighter control. In 1766 the autonomous Metropolitanate of Pec was suppressed and in 1767 the Metropolitanate of Ochrid. The Serbian and Bulgarian Churches were each put under an exarch appointed by the Patriarch. This was the work of the Patriarch Samuel Hantcherli, a member of an upstart Phanariot family, whose brother Constantine was for a while Prince of Wallachia until his financial extortions alarmed not only the tax-payers but also his ministers, and he was deposed and executed by the Sultan’s orders. The exarchs did their best to impose Greek bishops on the Balkan Churches, to the growing anger of both Serbs and Bulgarians. The Serbs recovered their religious autonomy early in the nineteenth century when they won political autonomy from the Turks. The Bulgarian Church had to wait till 1870 before it could throw off the Greek yoke. The policy defeated its own ends. It caused so much resentment that when the time came neither the Serbs nor the Bulgarians would cooperate in any Greek-directed move towards independence; and even the Roumanians held back. None of them had any wish to substitute Greek for Turkish political rule, having experienced Greek religious rule....”⁴⁰⁰

⁴⁰⁰ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 377-380. Thus, as J. Frazee writes, “the first Greek had been appointed to the patriarchate of Peč in 1737 at the insistence of the Dragoman Alexandros Mavrokordatos on the plea that the Serbs could not be trusted. The Phanariots began a policy which led to the exclusion of any Serbian nationals in the episcopacy” (*op. cit.*, p. 7, note 1). Again, Noel Malcolm writes: “By 1760, according to a Catholic report, the Patriarch in Peč was paying 10,000 scudi per annum to the Greek Patriarch. In 1766, pleading the burden of the payments they had to make under this system, the bishops of many Serbian sees, including Skopje, Niš and Belgrade, together with the Greek-born Patriarch of Peč himself, sent a petition asking the Sultan to close down the Serbian Patriarchate and place the whole Church directly under Constantinople... The primary cause of this event was not the attitude of the Ottoman state (harsh though that was at

“Everywhere,” writes Schmemmann, “former bishops who were native Bulgars and Serbs were deposed and replaced by Greeks. This canonical abuse of power was accompanied by forced ‘Grecizing’, particularly in Bulgaria, where it later served as the basis of the so-called Bulgarian question.

“This same sad picture prevailed in the East as well, in the patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, where Orthodox Arabs became the victims of this forced unification. All these offenses, stored up and concealed – all these unsettled accounts and intrigues – would have their effect when the Turkish hold began to slacken and the hour for the rebirth of the Slavic peoples drew near...”⁴⁰¹

Even in the eleventh century, when Emperor Basil II “the Bulgar-slayer” destroyed the First Bulgarian empire, and demoted the Bulgarian patriarchate to the status of a “holy archiepiscopate”, he did not destroy the autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church. Moreover, he appointed a Bulgarian as first archbishop of Ochrid in the new dispensation.⁴⁰²

In the eighteenth century, however, the Greeks achieved through “peaceful” means – and through the agency of the godless Turks – what they had refused to do in the eleventh century: the complete suppression of Slavic ecclesiastical independence.

times) but the financial oppression of the Greek hierarchy. In the Hapsburg domains, meanwhile, the Serbian Church based in Karlovci continued to operate, keeping up its de facto autonomy.” (*Kosovo*, London: Papermac, 1998, p. 171). Again, Stanoe Stanoevich writes: “The Patriarchate of Constantinople was aspiring to increase its power over all the Serbian lands in the hope that in this venture the Greek hierarchy and Greek priesthood would abundantly increase their parishes. The intrigues which were conducted for years because of this in Constantinople produced fruit. By a firman of the Sultan dated September 13, 1766, the Peč patriarchate was annulled, and all the Serbian lands in Turkey were subject to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Immediately after this the Greek hierarchy, which looked on the Serbian people only as an object for material exploitation, began a struggle against the Serbian priesthood and against the Serbian people” (*Istoria Sprskogo Naroda* (History of the Serbian People), Belgrade, 1910, p. 249 (in Serbian). Again, Mark Mazower writes: “A saying common among the Greek peasants,’ according to a British traveller, was that ‘the country labours under three curses, the priests, the cogia bashis [local Christian notables] and the Turks, always placing the plagues in this order.’ In nineteenth century Bosnia, ‘the Greek Patriarch takes good care that these eparchies shall be filled by none but Fanariots, and thus it happens that the... Orthodox Christians of Bosnia, who form the majority of the population, are subject to ecclesiastics alien in blood, in language, in sympathies, who oppress them hand in hand with the Turkish officials and set them, often, an even worse example of moral depravity.’ The reason was clear: ‘They have to send enormous bribes yearly to the fountainhead.’ This story of extortion and corruption spelled the end of the old Orthodox ecumenicism, created bitterness between the Church and its flock, and - where the peasants were not Greek speakers – provoked a sense of their exploitation by the ‘Greek’ Church which paved the way for Balkan nationalism.” (*The Balkans*, London: Phoenix, 2000, pp. 61-62)

⁴⁰¹ Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

⁴⁰² Alexander Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 678.

And so, mixed with the righteous Greek nationalism, “for faith and fatherland”, there arose an unrighteous, fallen nationalism influenced by the French revolution and ready to put the narrow interests of the Greek nation above those of the other oppressed Orthodox under the Turkish yoke. Such was the nationalist bombast of, for example, Benjamin of Lesbos, who wrote: “Nature has set limits to the aspirations of other men, but not to those of the Greeks. The Greeks were not in the past and are not now subject to the laws of nature...”⁴⁰³

This mixed character of the Greek revolution determined its mixed outcome, and the fact that, in the course of the nineteenth century, Orthodox Eastern Europe was liberated, not through a single, united Orthodox movement of liberation, but by separate nationalist movements – Greek, Bulgarian, Serb, Romanian – who ended up, in Macedonia and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, fighting each other as much as the common enemy...

The Revolution of 1821

“One of the first to develop plans for a co-ordinated revolt,” writes Clogg, “was Rigas Velestinlis, a Hellenised Vlach from Thessaly. After acquiring his early political experience in the service of the Phanariot hospodars of the Danubian principalities, he had been powerfully influenced by the French Revolution during a sojourn in Vienna in the 1790s. The political tracts, and in particular his *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, which he had printed in Vienna and with which he aspired to revolutionise the Balkans, are redolent of the French example. Potentially the most significant was the *New Political Constitution of the Inhabitants of Rumeli, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Aegean and the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia*. This envisaged the establishment of a revived Byzantine Empire but with the substitution of republican institutions on the French model for the autocracy of Byzantium. Although it was intended to embrace all the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, Greeks, whether by birth or by culture, were to predominate. Rigas’ carefully articulated schemes were without result for he was betrayed (by a fellow Greek) in Trieste as he was about to leave the Hapsburg territory to preach the gospel of revolution in the Balkans. With a handful of fellow conspirators he was put to death by the Ottomans in Belgrade in May 1798.”⁴⁰⁴

However, the revolution was opposed also by the Patriarchate. Runciman writes: “A test came early in the nineteenth century when Sultan Selim made a serious effort to suppress brigandage. The Klephts in Greece, thanks to the spirit of revolt and to the hymns of Rhigas, had become popular heroes. It was a patriotic duty for a Greek to give them shelter against the police; and the village priest and the monks of the

⁴⁰³ Benjamin, *Stoikheia tis Metaphysikis* (The Elements of Metaphysics), 1820; quoted in Clogg, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁰⁴ Clogg, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 31.

country monasteries were eager to help them. But they were a menace to orderly rule; and when the Sultan demanded of the Patriarch that he should issue a stern decree threatening with excommunication any priest or monk who would not aid the authorities in their suppression, the Patriarch could not well refuse. The decree was published in the Peloponnese; and though most of the higher clergy sullenly obeyed it, the villages and the poorer monasteries were outraged; and even at the Phanar there was open disapproval. It became clear that when the moment for revolt arrived the Patriarch would not be at its head.

“In spite of the Patriarch the plots continued. At the end of the eighteenth century there were even several secret societies in existence, with names such as the *Athena*, which hoped to liberate Greece with French help and which counted Korais among its members, or the *Phoenix*, which pinned its hopes on Russia. In 1814 three Greek merchants at Odessa in Russia, Nicholas Skouphas, Emmanuel Xanthos and Athanasius Tsakalof, the first a member of the *Phoenix* and the latter two freemasons⁴⁰⁵, founded a society which they called the *Hetaireia ton Philikon*, the Society of Friends. Thanks chiefly to the energy of Skouphas, who unfortunately died in 1817, it soon superseded all the previous societies and became the rallying point of the rebellion. Skouphas was determined to include in the society patriots of every description; and soon it had amongst its members Phanariots such as Prince Constantine Ypsilanti and his hot-headed sons, Alexander and Nicholas, all now living in exile in Russia, and members of the Mavrocordato and Caradja families, or high ecclesiastics such as Ignatius, Metropolitan of Arta and later of Wallachia, and Germanus, Metropolitan of Patras⁴⁰⁶, intellectuals such as Anthimus Ghazis, and brigand leaders such as the armatolos George Olympios and Kolokotronis. It was organized partly on Masonic lines and partly on what the founders believed to have been the early Christian organization. It had four grades. The lowest was that of Blood-brothers, which was confined to illiterates. Next were the Recommended, who swore an oath to obey their superiors but were not permitted to know more than the general patriotic aims of the society⁴⁰⁷ and were kept in ignorance of the names of their superiors and were supposed not even to know of the existence of the Blood-brothers. Above them were the Priests, who could initiate Blood-brothers and Recommended and who, after solemn oaths, were allowed to know the detailed aims

⁴⁰⁵ Michaletos (op. cit.) writes: “Ksanthos was a member of the Lodge of Lefkada, while Skoufas’ associate Konstantinos Rados was a devotee of the Italian “Charcoal-burners” Carbonarism movement, an equivalent to the Greek group which sought the unification of Italy. For his part, the much younger Tsakalov had been a founding member of *Ellinoglosso Xenodoxeio* (the “Greek-speaking Hotel”), an unsuccessful precursor to the *Hetairia* that was devoted to the same goal of an independent Greece.” (V.M.)

⁴⁰⁶ He came from the same village of Dhimitsana in the Peloponnese as Patriarch Gregory V. The attitudes of these two hierarchs came to symbolise a fundamental division in Greek society that was to continue for decades... (V.M.)

⁴⁰⁷ Adam Zamoyski writes that “its ultimate aim was the liberation of Greece and the restoration of a Greek Empire. More immediately it was concerned with the ‘purification’ of the Greek nation.... By 1821 the Hetairia had a total of 911 members.” (*Holy Madness*, p. 234) (V.M.)

of the society. Above them again were the Pastors, who supervised the Pastors, who supervised the Priests and saw that they only initiated suitable candidates; a suitable Recommended could become a Pastor without passing through the grade of Priest. From the Pastors were chosen the supreme authorities of the society, the Arche. The names of the Arche were unknown except to each other, and their meetings were held in absolute secrecy. This was thought necessary not only security against external powers but also for the prestige of the society. Had the names of its directors been known, there might have been opposition to several of them, particularly among such a faction-loving people as the Greeks; whereas the mystery surrounding the Arche enabled hints to be dropped that it included such weighty figures as the Tsar himself. All grades had to swear unconditional obedience to the Arche, which itself operated through twelve Apostles, whose business it was to win recruits and to organize branches in different provinces and countries. They were appointed just before the death of Skouphas; and their names are known. It was first decided to fix the headquarters of the society on Mount Pelion, but later, after the initiation of the Maniot chieftain, Peter Mavromichalis, it was moved to the Mani, in the south-east of the Peloponnese, a district into which the Turks had never ventured to penetrate.

“There were however two distinguished Greeks who refused to join the Society. One was the ex-Patriarch Gregory V. He had been deposed for the second time in 1808, and was living on Mount Athos, where the Apostle John Pharmakis visited him. Gregory pointed out that it was impossible for him to swear an oath of unconditional obedience to the unknown leaders of a secret society⁴⁰⁸ and that anyhow he was bound by oath to respect the authority of the Sultan. The reigning Patriarch, Cyril VI, was not approached. Still more disappointing was the refusal of the Tsar’s foreign minister, John Capodistrias, to countenance the Hetairia.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Moreover, these “highest authorities” (*anotati arkhi*) were called “Great Priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries” (Clogg, *op. cit.*, p. 35). Almost certainly, no real connection with the pagan mysteries was meant. Nevertheless, it is understandable that the first priest in Orthodoxy could not be involved in such things! (V.M.)

⁴⁰⁹ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-400. According to the Grand Lodge of Greece, Capodistrias was both a member of the Hetairia and a member of the “Rosia” lodge (http://www.grandlodge.gr/Famous_gr_home.html). However, in 2002 Vsevolod Sakharov consulted the author of the newest Russian Masonic dictionary, A.I. Serkov, who was not able to find any documentary proof that he had joined a Russian lodge (Sakharov, *op. cit.*, p. 4). It is just possible that Capodistrias, like his mentor, Tsar Alexander I, meddled with Masonry in his youth, but repented of it later. Certainly, during his last years as Governor of Greece he was strongly opposed to it and all secret societies – including, it must be supposed, the Hetairia. Thus in an encyclical issued on June 8, 1828 (Ref. No 2953) “To the Commissioners of the Aegean Sea and Peloponnese and Leaders of all forces in land and sea”, he ordered them to speak to all the civil servants and military officers against all the secret societies, and to say that they could not serve the nation and any secret association. In another encyclical (Ref. no 4286) issued on August 22, 1931 to the superiors of the civil authorities, he ordered that all the civil servants sign a declaration that were not members of any secret society. That was a few weeks before he was murdered...” (Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication) (V.M.)

In fact, he was appalled, and advised them that “if they [the conspirators] do not want to perish themselves and destroy together with themselves their innocent and unfortunate Race, they should abandon their revolutionary plots and live as before under the Governments they find themselves, until Providence decides otherwise.”⁴¹⁰ Again, when the revolution broke out, he said: “So, a premature revolution for Greece that is going to destroy all my efforts for a happy future.”⁴¹¹ However, he did not betray the plan of the plotters, and when the revolution began he resigned his post as minister and went to Geneva, where he worked quietly to help the insurgents.

“John Antony, Count Capodistrias, had been born in Corfu in 1770, and as a young man had worked for the Ionian government there, before going to Russia at the time of the second French occupation of the Ionian islands in 1807. He was given a post in the Russian diplomatic service and was attached to the Russian Embassy at Vienna in 1811, and next year was one of the Russian delegates at the treaty negotiations at Bucharest. His remarkable abilities impressed Tsar Alexander, who in 1815 nominated him Secretary of State and Assistant Foreign Minister. In his youth Capodistrias had made contacts with many of the Greek revolutionary thinkers, and he was well known to be a Greek patriot. In the past many Greeks had looked to France to deliver them from the Turks; but after Napoleon’s collapse the whole Greek world turned to Russia, and Capodistrias’s accession to power gave them confidence. The Russian sovereign was the great patron of Orthodoxy. The Greeks forgot how little they had gained from Catherine the Great, the imperialistic German free-thinker, who had incited them to revolt in 1770 and then had abandoned them.⁴¹² But at the Treaty of Kučuk Kainarci in 1774 Russia had acquired the right to intervene in Turkish internal affairs in the interests of the Orthodox. Catherine’s son, ... Paul, was clearly unwilling to help the Greek cause; but when Alexander I succeeded his murdered father in 1801 hopes rose. Alexander was known to have liberal views and mystical Orthodox sympathies. Belief in his aid had encouraged the Princes of Moldavia and Wallachia to plot against the Sultan in 1806; and, when they were deposed by the Sultan, the Tsar cited his rights under the Treaty of Kučuk Kainarci and declared war on Turkey. The only outcome of the war had been the annexation by Russia of the Moldavian province of Bessarabia. But the Greeks were not discouraged. Now, with a Greek as the Tsar’s Secretary of State, the time had surely come for the War of Liberation. The plotters refused to realize that

⁴¹⁰ Archimandrite Ambrose, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴¹¹ Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴¹² In 1770 “the ill-fated Orlov expedition to the Peloponnesos, launched by Catherine the Great, and the combined Russian-Greek attempt to free the Peloponnesos from the tyranny of the Ottoman Mohammedans, ended in disaster. In addition to destroying the Greek military forces and many of the Russians, the Albanian Mohammedan mercenaries, who were called in by the Ottoman Mohammedans, wreaked havoc on the local population...” (Vaporis, *op. cit.*, p. 337) (V.M.)

Capodistrias was the Tsar's servant and a practical man of the world; and they did not know that the Tsar himself was becoming more reactionary and less willing to countenance rebellion against established authority.

"The planners of Greek independence could not count on the open support of the Patriarchate. They should have realized that they also could not count on the support of Russia. And the nationalist ecclesiastical policy of the Church during the last century deprived them of the friendship of the other peoples of the Balkans. The leaders of the Hetairia were aware of this. They made earnest attempts to enrol Serbian, Bulgarian and Roumanian members. When Karageorge revolted against the Turks in Serbia Greek armatoles and klephts came to join him. Even the Phanariot princes had offered support; but they were rebuffed. 'The Greek Princes of the Phanar,' Karageorge wrote, 'can never make common cause with people who do not wish to be treated like animals.' Karageorge's revolt was put down by the Turks in 1813. Two years later the Serbs revolted again, under Miloš Obrenović, a far subtler diplomat, who secured Austrian support and eventually induced the Sultan to accept him as a reliable vassal-prince. Miloš had no contact with the Greeks. The Hetairia therefore pinned its faith on Karageorge, who was persuaded to become a member in 1817. As Karageorge was greatly admired by the Bulgarians it was hoped that numbers of them would now join the movement. Karageorge was then sent back to Serbia. But the Serbs, who were satisfied with Miloš's achievements, offered him no support; and Miloš regarded him as a rival to be eliminated. He was assassinated in June 1817. With his death any hope of interesting the Serbs in the coming Greek rebellion faded out; and there was no one capable of rallying the Bulgars to the cause. Karageorge alone could have given the Hetairia the air of not being exclusively Greek.

"The Hetairia had higher hopes of the Roumanians. There a peasant leader, Tudor Vladimirescu, who had led a band to help the Serbs, was defying the Turkish police in the Carpathian mountains and had gathered together a considerable company. He was in close touch with two leading hetaerists, George Olympius and Phokianos Savvas, and he himself joined the society, promising to co-ordinate his movements with the Greeks'. But he was an unreliable ally; for he was bitterly opposed to the Phanariot princes, who, he considered, had brought ruin to his country..."⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Runciman, op. cit., pp. 398-402.

That the Romanians should have placed their hopes of freedom from the Turks on the Russian tsar rather than on a Greek phanariot was hardly surprising. Moldavia had been closely linked to Russia for many centuries, and in November, 1806, when the Russo-Turkish war began, Metropolitan Benjamin (Kostake) in his pastoral epistle wrote: "The true happiness of these lands lies in their union with Russia". And when Bessarabia, that is, the part of Moldavia east of the Prut, was united to Russia in 1812, there was great rejoicing among the people, and in five years the population of Bessarabia almost doubled through an influx from the lands west of the Prut. (Vladimir Bukarsky, "Moskovskij Patriarkhat pod udarom: na ocheredi - Moldavia", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 23 (1836), December 1/14, 2007, p. 4)

“By the end of 1820,” continues Runciman, “everything seemed to be ready. Ali Pasha of Janina was in open revolt against the Sultan; and had promised help to the Greeks; and though Osman Pasvanoglu was dead, his pashalik of Vidin was in disorder, tying up Turkish troops south of the Danube. The Arche of the *Hetairia* had a few months previously elected a Captain-General, choosing a young Phanariot Alexander Ypsilanti, son of the ex-Prince Constantine of Moldavia. It is interesting to note that the plotters considered that only a Phanariot had sufficient experience and prestige for the post. Alexander Ypsilanti was born in 1792 and spent his youth in Russia. He had won a reputation for gallantry and military skill when serving in the Russian army and had lost an arm at the battle of Kulm, fighting against the French. He was known to be an intimate friend of the Tsar and the Tsaritsa and of Capodistrias. He made it his first task to improve the efficiency of the Society and summoned the one and only plenary meeting of the Arche, which was held at Ismail in southern Russia in October 1820. The original plan had been to start the revolt in the Peloponnese, where there would be a secure base in the Mani and where the sympathy of the inhabitants was assured. Alexander now changed his mind. It would be better to start the main campaign in Moldavia. By the Treaty of Bucharest the Turks had undertaken not to send troops into the Principalities without Russian consent. Vladimirescu would distract what Turkish militia was there already; and a successful army sweeping through Wallachia and across the Danube was the only thing that might induce the Bulgarians and the Serbians to join in. Meanwhile a subsidiary rising in the Peloponnese, which Alexander’s brother Demetrius was sent to organize, would further embarrass the Turks.

“The invasion of Moldavia was timed to begin on 24 November (O.S.) 1820. Alexander had already gathered together a small army of Greeks and Christian Albanians on the Russian side of the frontier. Almost at the last moment Capodistrias counselled delay. The Austrian secret police had discovered the plans and had sent to warn the Sultan; and the Tsar was nervous of international reactions. But, in January 1821, Vladimirescu, encouraged by George Olympus, against the advice of Phokianos Savvas, began to attack Turkish police posts and was scornful of Ypsilanti’s hesitation. About the same time the Prince of Wallachia, Alexander Soutzo, died, poisoned it was rumoured by the *Hetairia*, of which he was known to disapprove. Demetrius Ypsilanti reported from the Peloponnese that everyone there was impatient of further delays. Alexander Ypsilanti decided that the time had come to act. He sought an audience of the Tsar before leaving St. Petersburg, but it was refused.⁴¹⁴ The Tsaritsa, however, sent him her blessing; and he was assured that the

⁴¹⁴ Michael Binyon writes: “A letter from Alexander I, signed by Capo d’Istrias, ... denounced Ypsilanti’s actions as ‘shameful and criminal’, upbraided him for misusing the tsar’s name, struck him from the Russian army list, and called him to lay down his arms immediately” (*Pushkin*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, p. 133). Ironically, the officer sent by the Russian government to report on the insurrection was Pestel, the future leader of the Decembrist rebellion (op. cit., p. 134). (V.M.)

Alexis Troubetskoy writes: “Under normal circumstances there would have been no doubt about the tsar’s reaction: as champion of the Orthodox world, he could hardly have rejected such

Tsar would personally protect his wife. On 22 February (O.S.) Alexander and his little band crossed over the Pruth into Moldavia.

“In his desire to prevent a leakage of news Alexander had not warned his fellow-plotters. When news of his advance reached the Peloponnese, his brother Demetrius hesitated, fearing that it might be a false rumour. But the people would not wait. They found a leader in Germanus, Metropolitan of Patras, who, in defiance of the Patriarchate and of Orthodox tradition, raised the standard of revolt at the monastery of Agia Lavra, near Kalavryta, on 25 March.⁴¹⁵ The Mani had already risen. The islands of Spetsai and Psara and a little later Hydra rose in early April. By the end of April all central and southern Greece was up in arms.

“But it was now too late for Alexander Ypsilanti. He had marched unopposed on Bucharest. But there was no news of any rising among the Bulgarians or the Serbs; and when he reached Bucharest he found that Tudor Vladimirescu and his troops were there before him; and they refused to let him into the city. ‘I am not prepared to shed Roumanian blood for Greeks,’ said Vladimirescu. There were skirmishes between the two forces. Then came news that the Tsar had repudiated the whole rebellion at the Congress of Laibach, and with his permission a huge Turkish army was approaching the Danube, ready to invade the Principalities. Ypsilanti retired north-east, towards the Russian frontier. Vladimirescu, after lingering for a few days in Bucharest trying to make terms with the Turkish commander, moved back on 15 May into the Carpathians. But he had lost control over his own followers. They allowed George Olympus to take him prisoner and to put him to death, on the evening of 26 May, for his treason to the cause. Phokianos Savvas and a garrison of Albanians held Bucharest for a week, then also retired into the mountains. The Turks entered Bucharest before the end of May, then moved in pursuit of Ypsilanti. On 7 June (O.S.) they routed his army at a battle at Dragasani. His best troops perished. He himself fled over the Austrian border into Bukovina, where by Metternich’s orders he was arrested. He spent the remainder of his life in an Austrian prison. The remnant of his army was rallied by George Cantacuzenus, who led them back towards the Russian frontier. But the frontier was closed to them. The Turks caught

a plea. The circumstances at the time, however, were anything but normal. Central Europe was captive to the views of Austrian chancellor Metternich, to whom any hint of insidious liberalism – revolutionary movements in particular – was anathema. The Holy Alliance, of which Russia was an enthusiastic signatory and driving force, was to assure this. Despite his personal sympathy for the Greeks and antipathy to the Turks, there was no way the tsar could let down the established new order. It was a conundrum that he painfully resolved by disavowing and censuring Ypsilantis.” (*Imperial Legend*, Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003, pp. 112-113)

⁴¹⁵ Germanus wrote to the ambassadors of the foreign powers: “We, the Greek race of Christians, seeing that the Ottoman people despises us and is intending destruction against us, sometimes in one way and at other times in another, have decided firmly: either we shall all die or we shall be liberated.” (*Boanerges*, 24, March-April, 2006, p. 32 (Esphigmenou, Mount Athos, in Greek)). Germanus was supported by eight other bishops, five of whom died in prison. (V.M.)

up with them at Sculeni on the Pruth and massacred them there, on 17 June, in sight of Russian territory. Savvas surrendered to the Turks in August and was put to death by them. George Olympus held out till September in the monastery of Secu. When all hope was lost he fired his powder stores and blew up the monastery with himself and all his garrison within it.”⁴¹⁶

However, while the Phanariot rebellion in the north failed, the rebellion of the bishops in the south succeeded. But the cost was high. A characteristic of the Greek War of Independence was the extreme cruelty on both sides. Within a few months, shouting “Kill all the Turks in the Morea”, the Greeks had killed 20,000 men, women and children. At Tripolitsa, the Scottish Philhellene Thomas Gordon watched as the Greeks, “mad with vindictive rage, spared neither age nor sex – the streets and houses were inundated with blood, and obstructed with heaps of dead bodies. Some Mohammedans fought bravely and sold their lives dearly, but the majority were slaughtered without resistance...” 2000 women and children were massacred in a defile of Mount Maenalion. The Turks responded in kind. The most famous massacre took place in May, 1822 in Chios, where, in response to the arrival of a small party of Greek revolutionaries from Samos, 30,000 Muslims invaded from Asia Minor, killed 25,000 Greeks and took 45,000 into slavery.

The war placed Patriarch Gregory V in Constantinople in an impossible position. The Sultan was convinced that he was at least in part to blame for the insurrection. So Gregory, writes Frazee, “called a meeting of the Greek leaders and people to discuss their common peril that same day after he had met with the sultan. Mahmud had demanded that the patriarch and Synod excommunicate those responsible for the uprising and those who had killed innocent Turks. At the patriarchate, therefore, the patriarch of Jerusalem, Polykarpos, four synodal archbishops, Karolos Kallimachi, Hospodar of Wallachia, the Dragoman of the Porte, Konstantinos Mourousi, and the Grand Logothete, Stephanos Mavroyeni, gathered to decide on their next step. A number of other Greeks were also in attendance ‘of every class and condition’. Gregorios and Mourousi presided. The assembled Greeks were all exhorted ‘to carefully guard against any move or action contrary to their allegiance and fidelity to their Sovereign’. A letter was drafted which incorporated the sultan’s suggestion and was sent off to be printed at the patriarchal press. The patriarch then urged that the Greeks prepare to leave the city quickly, promising that he would stay: ‘As for me, I believe that my end is approaching, but I must stay at my post to die, and if I remain, then the Turks will not be given a plausible pretext to massacre the Christians of the capital.’

“The letter of excommunication against the revolutionaries appeared on Palm Sunday, 4 April, in all the Greek churches of the capital signed by the patriarch, Polykarpos of Jerusalem, and twenty-one other prelates. In part, the document

⁴¹⁶ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 403-405.

stated: 'Gratitude to our benefactors is the first of virtues and ingratitude is severely condemned by the Holy Scriptures and declared unpardonable by Jesus Christ; Judas the ungrateful traitor offers a terrible example of it; but it is most strongly evidenced by those who rise against their common protector and lawful sovereign, and against Christ, who has said that there is no rule or power but comes from God. It was against this principle that Michael Soutzos and Alexandros Ypsilantis, son of a fugitive, sinned with an audacity beyond example, and have sent emissaries to seduce others, and to conduct them to the abyss of perdition; many have been so tempted to join an unlawful *hetairia* and thought themselves bound by their oath to continue [as] members, but an oath to commit a sin was itself a sin, and not binding - like that of Herod, who, that he might not break a wicked obligation committed a great wickedness by the death of John the Baptist.' The text ended by solemnly condemning and excommunicating Soutzos and Ypsilantis, having been signed on the altar itself. The patriarchal letter was the final blow to strike Ypsilantis' fading expedition in the Principalities."⁴¹⁷

Some have argued that the patriarch secretly repudiated this anathema; which is why the Turks, suspecting him of treachery, hanged him on the Sunday of Pascha. Gregory's biographer, Kandiloros writes: "As the representative of Christ it cannot be believed that the patriarch signed such a letter. But as the head of a threatened people, he had to take measures, as well as he could, to save his powerless and hard-pressed population from being massacred."⁴¹⁸ "In any case," writes Fr. Anthony Gavalas, "the anathema was ignored, as were all the other letters unfavourable to the plans of the revolutionaries, as having been issued under duress. There is an opinion that the patriarch knew that the anathema would be so considered and issued it, hoping to placate the Turks on the one hand, and on the other, to gain time for the revolution to gain strength."⁴¹⁹

However, the righteousness of the patriarch's character precludes the possibility that he could have been plotting against a government to which he had sworn allegiance and for which he prayed in the Divine Liturgy, or that he could have been hypocritical in such an important church act. After all, as we have seen, he had always refused to join the *Philiki Hetairia*. In this connection it is significant that the his body was picked up by a Russian ship and taken to Odessa, mutely pointing to the place where the organization that had indirectly caused his death was centred...

The Tsar, writes John Julius Norwich, "did not mince his words" when condemning the Turks for killing the Patriarch. "In an ultimatum drafted by Capodistrias, he declared that: 'the Ottoman government has placed itself in a state

⁴¹⁷ Frazee, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

⁴¹⁸ Kandiloros, in Frazee, *op. cit.* p. 29.

⁴¹⁹ Gavalas, "St. Gregory V, Patriarch of Constantinople", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 28, № 2, March-April, 1978, p. 22.

of open hostility against the Christian world. It has legitimised the defence of the Greeks, who will henceforth be fighting solely to save themselves from inevitable destruction. In view of the nature of that struggle, Russia will find herself strictly obliged to offer them help, because they are persecuted; protection, because they need it; and assistance, jointly with the whole of Christendom, because she cannot surrender her brothers in religion to the mercy of blind fanaticism.' This was presented to the Turkish government on 18 July. On the 25th, having received no reply, the Russian ambassador, Count Stroganoff, broke off diplomatic relations with the Porte and closed the embassy..."⁴²⁰

Nevertheless, the Tsar did not intervene in the Greek struggle, inhibited as he was by the Congress System established with the other Great Powers, whereby unilateral action by any one of the Great Powers was forbidden. It was left for his successor, Nicholas I, to translate words into action. In 1829 he invaded across the Danube and was soon close to the walls of Constantinople - but decided to keep "the sick man of Europe" alive for a little longer...

The Consequences of 1821

The Greeks paid a heavy price for political freedom.

After the martyrdom of Patriarch Gregory, the Turks ran amok in Constantinople; and there were further pogroms in Smyrna, Adrianople, Crete and Chios. Although many Greeks undoubtedly fought for the sake of Orthodoxy against Islam, the essentially western ideology of several of their leaders explains why so many young westerners, among whom the most famous was the poet Byron, decided to join the Greek freedom-fighters. But the westerners were fighting, not for Orthodox Greece, but for their romantic vision of ancient, pagan Greece.⁴²¹ Significantly, there were no volunteers from Orthodox Russia, whose tsars correctly saw in the revolutionary spirit a greater threat to the well-being of the Orthodox peoples than Turkish rule.

The Greeks after the revolution were desperately poor and even more desperately divided. The new patriarch, Eugenius, again anathematized the insurgents. In response, twenty-eight bishops and almost a thousand priests in free Greece anathematized the patriarch, calling him a Judas and a wolf in sheep's clothing.⁴²² The Free Greeks now commemorated "all Orthodox bishops" at the Liturgy.

⁴²⁰ Norwich, *The Middle Sea*, London: Vintage, 2007, p. 469.

⁴²¹ Cf. Ypsilantis' words. "Let us recollect, brave and generous Greeks, the liberty of the classic land of Greece; the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, let us combat upon the tombs of our ancestors who, to leave us free, fought and died,' Ypsilantis wrote in his declaration of 24 February 1821. 'The blood of our tyrants is dear to the shades of the Theban Epaminondas, and of the Athenian Thrasybulus who conquered and destroyed the thirty tyrants' - and so on." (Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, p. 235).

⁴²² Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Meanwhile, in 1822 they appealed to the Pope for help against the Turks. President Mavrokordatos wrote to the Papal Secretary of State: "The cries of a Christian nation threatened by complete extermination have the right to receive the compassion of the head of Christendom."⁴²³ Greek delegates to the meeting of the Great Powers in Verona wrote to Pope Pius VII that the Greek revolution was not like the revolutions of other nations raised against altar and throne. Instead, it was being fought in the name of religion and "... asks to be placed under the protection of a Christian dynasty with wise and permanent laws". In another letter the delegates addressed the pope as "the common father of the faithful and head of the Christian religion", and said that the Greeks were worthy of the pope's "protection and apostolic blessing". Metropolitan Germanus was even empowered to speak concerning the possibility of a reunion of the Churches. However, it was the Pope who drew back at this point, pressurized by the other western leaders, who considered the sultan to be a legitimate monarch.⁴²⁴ And so the faith was betrayed – although, fortunately, things did not go as far as they had done at the council of Florence. How soon had a struggle fought "for faith and fatherland" betrayed the faith while only partially winning the fatherland!

Nor had real political independence been achieved: if the Turks had been driven out, then the British and the French and later the Germans came to take their place. The election of Capodistrias as "governor of Greece" in 1827 brought a limited degree of order under a truly Orthodox ruler. In an encyclical to the clergy he wrote: "Speak to the hearts of the people the law of God, rightly dividing the word of truth. Announce peace. Evangelize unanimity. Teach philanthropy, love for each other, that all may be one in Christ."⁴²⁵ But he made many enemies by his contempt for the élites of Greek society. "He dismissed the primates as 'Christian Turks', the military chieftains as 'robbers', the intelligentsia as 'fools' and the Phanariots as 'children of Satan'".⁴²⁶ On October 9, 1831 he was assassinated as he entered a church in Nauplion...

On May 7, 1832 Britain, France, Russia and Bavaria signed the treaty of London guaranteeing Greece's independence and naming Otto of Bavaria as king. And yet this independence was purely nominal. When Byron was dying, the Duc d'Orléans had commented "that he was dying so that one day people would be able to eat sauerkraut at the foot of the Acropolis". He was not far from the truth; for Greece was now ruled by a German Catholic king with the aid of German ministers and German troops.

As Zamoyski commented sardonically: "Sauerkraut indeed..."⁴²⁷

⁴²³ Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴²⁴ Frazee, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-57.

⁴²⁵ *Boanerges*, 24, March-April, 2006, p. 32 (in Greek).

⁴²⁶ Clogg, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴²⁷ Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, pp. 243, 245.

Nevertheless, the Bavarian dynasty was important in an unexpected way: because of the extreme philhellenism of the father first Bavarian king, Otto, who had made his capital into a kind of imitation of classical Athens, a conscious attempt was made to unify the country around a myth, the myth that in its culture, language, architecture, even blood, the Greeks of 1832 were the same as the Greeks of Classical Athens. This created a conflict with the other dominant tradition of Greek history, that of Orthodoxy and Ρωμαιοσυνη; and the conflict remains alive to this day. A similar conflict had existed between the Orthodox and the humanist traditions in the last days of Byzantium. But now it was still sharper. And now the balance of power was with not with the Orthodox, but with the neo-classicists...

Until King Otto came of age, three regents were appointed by the Great Powers to rule Greece in his name: Colonel Heideck, a Philhellene and the only choice of the Tsar but a liberal Protestant, Count Joseph von Armansperg, a Catholic but also a Freemason, and George von Maurer, a liberal Protestant. Pressed by the British and French envoys, von Armansperg and von Maurer worked to make Greece as independent of Russia and the patriarchate in Constantinople as possible. Russian demands that the king (or at any rate his children) become Orthodox, and that the link with the patriarchate be preserved, were ignored...

It was Maurer who was entrusted with working out a new constitution for the Church. He "found an illustrious collaborator, in the person of a Greek priest, Theocletus Pharmacides. This Pharmacides had received his education in Europe and his thought was exceedingly Protestant in nature; he was the obstinate enemy of the Ecumenical Patriarch and of Russia."⁴²⁸

Helped by Pharmacides, Maurer proceeded to work out a constitution that proposed autocephaly for the Church under a Synod of Bishops (more precisely: five bishops, four priests and one layman, the representative of the king)⁴²⁹, and the subordination of the Synod to the State on the model of the Bavarian and Russian constitutions, to the extent that "no decision of the Synod could be published or carried into execution without the permission of the government having been obtained". As Frazee comments: "If ever a church was legally stripped of authority and reduced to complete dependence on the state, Maurer's constitution did it to the church of Greece."⁴³⁰

In spite of the protests of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Tsar, and the walk-out of the archbishops of Rethymnon and Adrianople, this constitution was ratified by thirty-six bishops at a council in Nauplion on July 26, 1833.

⁴²⁸ Fr. Basile Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1973, p. 61.

⁴²⁹ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 877.

⁴³⁰ Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

Pharmacides was opposed in the government by Protopresbyter Constantine Oikonomos, who said that the constitution was “from an ecclesiastical point of view invalid and non-existent and deposed by the holy Canons. For this reason, during the seventeen years of its existence it was unacceptable to all the Churches of the Orthodox, and no Synod was in communion with it.”⁴³¹ Not only did the Patriarchate condemn the new Church: many Greeks in Greece were also very unhappy with their situation.

The Greek Church therefore exchanged the uncanonical position of the patriarchate of Constantinople under Turkish rule for the even less canonical position of a Synod unauthorized by the patriarch and under the control of a Catholic king and a Protestant constitution! In addition to this, all monasteries with fewer than six monks were dissolved (425 out of 500), and heavy taxes imposed on the remaining monasteries. And very little money was given to a Church which had lost six to seven thousand clergy in the war, and whose remaining clergy had an abysmally low standard of education.

Among the westernizing reforms envisaged at this time was the introduction of the new, Gregorian calendar. Thus Cosmas Flammiatos wrote: “First of all they were trying in many ways to introduce into the Orthodox States the so-called new calendar of the West, according to which they will jump ahead 12 days [now 13], so that when we have the first of the month they will be counting 13 [now 14]. Through this innovation they hope to confuse and overthrow the feastdays and introduce other innovations.”⁴³²

And again: “The purpose of this seminary in Halki of Constantinople which has recently been established with cunning effort, is, among other things, to taint all the future Patriarchs and, in general, all the hierarchy of the East in accordance with the spirit of corruption and error, through the proselytism of the English, so that one day, by a resolution of an ‘ecumenical council’ the abolition of Orthodoxy and the introduction of the Luthero-Calvinist heresy may be decreed; at the same time all the other schools train thousands and myriads of likeminded individuals and confederates among the clergy, the teachers and lay people from among the Orthodox youth.”

For his defense of Orthodoxy, Cosmas was imprisoned together with 150 monks of the Mega Spilaion monastery. The monks were released, but Cosmas died in prison through poisoning.⁴³³

⁴³¹ Oikonomos, quoted by Bishop Macarius of Petra, 1973-2003: *Thirty Years of Ecclesiastical Developments: Trials-Captivity-Deliverance* (MS, in Greek).

⁴³² Flammiatos, cited in Monk Augustine, “To imerologiakon skhisma apo istorikis kai kanonikis apopseos exetazomenou” (The calendar schism from an historical and canonical point of view), *Agios Agathangelos Esphigmenitis*, 129, January-February, 1992, p. 12 (in Greek).

⁴³³ “A Biographical Note concerning Cosmas Flamiatos”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, vol. XVIII, №

And so, like all revolutions motivated as much by political or nationalist dreams as by purely spiritual desires, the fruits of the Greek revolution were distinctly mixed... And yet, by a miracle of God, many of the bad fruits were reversed in time. Thus more lasting than the move towards the West that we have just described was the *Kollyvades* movement, which revived spirituality in Greece and beyond. *The Philokalia*, a huge collection of ascetic-mystical texts of the Holy Fathers was published by two of the *Kollyvades* Fathers. It was translated into Slavonic by the Russian Athonite monk St. Paisius Velichkovsky, who thereby brought the neo-hesychast movement to Romania and Russia. Here it was destined to bring forth much fruit, notably among the famous Elders of Optina monastery...

Gradually Divine grace worked to strengthen the Orthodox Church in Greece, in spite of its uncanonical position. The bishops gradually acquired more freedom from the state. And in 1839 the Synod forbade marriages between Orthodox and heterodox. Gradually, within the Synod and outside, support for reunion with the patriarchate grew stronger. Then, in 1843, a bloodless coup forced the king to dismiss his Bavarian aides and summon a National Assembly to draw up a constitution in which the indissoluble unity of the Greek Church with Constantinople was declared. In 1844 the Synod declared: "The Orthodox Church of Greece acknowledges our Lord Jesus Christ as her Head. She is inseparably united in faith with the Church of Constantinople and with every other Christian Church of the same profession, but is autocephalous, exercises her sovereign rights independently of every other Church and is governed by the members of the Holy Synod."

In 1849 the Greek government sent the Patriarch the Order of St. Saviour; but he was still not mollified. However, under Russian pressure, he and his Synod finally, on June 29, 1851, issued a *Tomos* which recognized the autocephaly of the Greek Church, but with conditions: that the State should not interfere in the affairs of the Church (as if it never interfered in the affairs of the Patriarchate!), that the name of the Patriarch should be commemorated at every Liturgy in Greece, that the Holy Chrism should be sent from Constantinople, and that the Greek Holy Synod should submit all important questions to the Patriarch. After vigorous debate for a year, a compromise (the so-called "Law 201") was worked out, the anathema on the Greek Church was lifted, and full communion restored...⁴³⁴

30 (833), March 18/31, 1985.

⁴³⁴ Frazee, *op. cit.*, ch. 8. On this period of Greek Church history, see the series of articles published in the early 1990s in *Agios Agathangelos Esfigmenites* (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou) under the title "To atheon dogma tou oikoumenismou, Prodromos tou Antikhristou" ("The Atheist Dogma of Ecumenism, Forerunner of the Antichrist") (in Greek).

EPILOGUE

The first Greek revolution of 1821 laid the foundations for the liberation of the whole of European Greece from the Turkish yoke. A hundred years later, only Constantinople remained in Turkish hands. But what is Greece without the City, Constantinople? Or without Anatolia, the heartland of Greek Orthodox civilization? "The Great Idea" of the Greek nationalists – the restoration of the Byzantine empire – required a further revolution to complement the first one by finally overthrowing the Turkish yoke and liberating *all* the Greeks, both those in Europe and those in Asia.

The second Greek revolution began in 1917, the same year as the Russian revolution. In that year, the Greek Kerensky, Cretan nationalist and Freemason Eleutherius Venizelos, came to power in Athens through a military coup d'état, forcing King Constantine to resign in favour of his son Alexander and turning the allegiance of the Greek government away from the Central Powers and towards the Allied Powers of France, Britain and Russia. Venizelos' destructive work in the State was complemented in the Church by his fellow Cretan and nephew Emmanuel Metaxakis, later Patriarch Meletius IV. The two Freemasons worked hand in glove in order to bring the Greek State and Church closer to the West. For without the support of the West their common dream, the overthrow of the Ottoman empire through the conquest, first, of Smyrna, and then of the rest of Anatolia, could not be realized...

Not all Greeks supported Venizelos' ambitious scheme. His great rival General Metaxas, later dictator of Greece, warned: "The Greek state is not today ready for the government and exploitation of so extensive a territory." Moreover, the Italians and the Americans were against the Greek claims on Smyrna.

However, the British and the French were sympathetic. And the deadlock was resolved when, in May, 1919, the Italians walked out of the Peace Conference in Versailles and landed troops on the coast of Western Asia Minor. This gave Lloyd George his chance to intervene on behalf of Venizelos. The Americans were won over, and the Greeks were told that they could land in Smyrna and "wherever there is a threat of trouble or massacre". "The whole thing," wrote Henry Wilson, the British military expert, "is mad and bad".⁴³⁵

In March, 1921, having conquered Smyrna, the Greek army in Asia Minor began its advance on Ankara. Very soon they had won control of the whole of the western escarpment of the Anatolian plateau. However, on March 31 the Turks conducted a successful counter-attack.

⁴³⁵ Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers*, London: John Murray, 2003, pp. 441-443.

The Greeks would have been well-advised to seek peace at this point, but they did not. Massacres were taking place of Turks in the Greek-controlled region, and of Greeks in the Turk-controlled region. Passions were too high for either side to contemplate peace. In the summer King Constantine, who had unexpectedly won back power from Venizelos, arrived in Smyrna, and it was agreed to resume the advance. In August the Greeks arrived at the summit of Mount Tchal, overlooking Ankara. However, they were in a poor state, hungry, diseased and in danger of having their lines of communication cut by Turkish irregulars. The Turks counter-attacked, and on September 11 the Greeks retreated to the west bank of the Sakarya River. "For approximately nine months," wrote Sir Winston Churchill, "the Turks waited comfortably in the warmth while the Greeks suffered throughout the icy-cold of the severe winter."⁴³⁶

Finally, on August 26, 1922, the Turks began a general offensive. The Greek army was routed. Early in September the Turkish army entered Smyrna, the Greek Metropolitan Chrysostom was murdered and the city deliberately set on fire.

Then the Greek government fell, the king resigned, Prime Minister Gounaris was executed together with six army leaders⁴³⁷, and Colonels Nicholas Plastiras and Stylianus Gonatas took control. An evacuation from Anatolia began, and hundreds of thousands were rescued from certain death either through fire or at the hands of the Turks. Nevertheless, Fr. Raphael Moore calculates that the following numbers of Greeks were killed in Asia Minor: in 1914 - 400,000 in forced labour brigades; 1922 - 100,000 in Smyrna; 1916-22 - 350,000 Pontians during forced deportations; 1914-22 - 900,000 from maltreatment, starvation in all other areas.⁴³⁸

The "Great Idea" of Greek nationalism was seemingly dead, drowned in a sea of blood...

Meanwhile, Patriarch Meletius Metaxakis attempted a political coup against the Sultan in Constantinople, thereby reversing the position adopted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate towards the Ottomans since 1453. But after the defeat of the army, the mood turned against him, and in July, 1923, harassed by both Venizelos and the Turkish government, and challenged for his see by the newly formed "Turkish Orthodox Church" of Papa Euthymius, he withdrew to Mount Athos. In September, he resigned officially.

The two Cretans had lied to the Greek people, and had been punished accordingly - together with the people whom they had deceived.

⁴³⁶ Churchill, *Memoirs*; in Jean de Murat, *The Great Extirpation of Hellenism & Christianity in Asia Minor*, Miami, 1999, p. 108.

⁴³⁷ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, volume 2, pp. 131-132, 173-174; "1922-1982", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October 4/17, 1982.

⁴³⁸ Moore, ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU, January 17, 1999.

The “second Greek revolution” was strikingly similar to the first in its aims, but worse than the first in its results. Instigated, as in 1821, by both lay nationalists and leading hierarchs, it ended in the gaining of no territory, in the loss of hundreds of thousands of Greek lives, in the loss and destruction of the heartland of Greek Orthodox civilization in Anatolia, and, worst of all – in the introduction of the heresy of ecumenism into the Greek-speaking Churches. It was a classic example of the destructive consequences of the invasion of nationalist political passions into the life of an Orthodox nation.

So did Romanity die with “the Great Idea”, with the failure of Greek nationalism in the second Greek revolution? By no means! For Romanity is not in its essence a political or a national idea, but a spiritual one – and as such, eternal. It embodies the sacred hope that burns in the breast of every truly Orthodox Christian that the kingdoms of this world can become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 11.15), that Orthodox Christians of all nations can be united, not only mystically, in the Body and Blood of Christ, but also visibly, in the single Christian commonwealth that we know historically as *Christian Rome*. That hope, which was partially realized in the Byzantine Empire, and again in the Russian Empire, may never be destined to be realized wholly on this earth. But the hope remains holy, and supremely creative. Indeed, there is no greater vision for us *on earth* than the vision of Christian Rome; and “where there is no vision”, as the holy King Solomon said, “the people will perish” (Proverbs 29.18)...