

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN POWER

Religion and Politics from the Beginning to the Fall of Constantinople (1453)

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For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice henceforth even for ever.
Isaiah 9.6-7.

It is he that shall build the Temple of the Lord, and shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule upon his throne. And there shall be a priest by his throne, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both.
Zechariah 6.13.

*The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,
And giveth it to whomsoever He will,
And setteth up over it the basest of men.*
Daniel 4.17.

I would advise those who seek liberty and shun the yoke of servitude as evil, not to fall into the plague of despotic rule, to which an insatiable passion of unseasonable freedom brought their fathers. In excess, servitude and liberty are each wholly bad; in due measure, each are wholly good. The due measure of servitude is to serve God; its excess is to serve man. Law is the god of the right-minded man; pleasure is the god of the fool.
Plato, Letters, viii, 354.

My Kingdom is not of this world.
John 18.36.

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.
Matthew 22.21.

The Lord's Resurrection has indeed remained to this day the most proven fact in human history. What other fact from the distant past stands so comprehensively and carefully proven as this?
St. Nikolai Velimirovich.

The Lord showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days.
Acts 1.3.

Thine, O Roman, be the care to rule the peoples with authority; be thy arts these, to teach men the way of peace, to show mercy to the subject, and overcome the proud.
Anchises, in Virgil, *Aeneid*, book VI.

From Him and through Him the king who is dear to God receives an image of the Kingdom that is above and so in imitation of that greater King himself guides and directs the course of everything on earth... He looks up to see the archetypal pattern and guides those whom he rules in accordance with that pattern... Monarchy is superior to every other constitution and form of government. For polyarchy, where everyone competes on equal terms, is really anarchy and discord.

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, Oration in Honour of Constantine, 1, 3.

Equality is known to produce strife. Therefore God allowed the human race to be a monarchy, not a democracy. But the family is constructed in a similar way to an army, with the husband holding the rank of monarch, the wife as general and the children also given stations of command.

St. John Chrysostom, Homily 34 on I Corinthians, 7.

The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained... Those who say, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God,' are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness.

Deacon Alcuin of York to Charlemagne.

The Lord commands us not to keep silent when the faith is in danger. Nobody can say: "But who am I to speak" A priest or a ruler? No. A soldier, or a peasant? No, I am a poor man who worries only about his daily bread. It is not my affair to speak, or to worry about this." Alas! Will the stones cry out, while you keep silent?

St. Theodore the Studite.

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'.

Emperor Constantine VII, On the Government of the Empire.

The judgement of God is higher than that of Rome...

Pope Sylvester II (997).

The Pope is truly the vicar of Jesus Christ, anointed of the Lord, set between God and man, lower than God but higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no-one.

Pope Innocent III.

Every law framed by man bears the character of a law exactly to that extent to which it is derived from the law of nature. But if on any point it is in conflict with the law of nature, it at once ceases to be a law; it is a mere perversion of the law.

Thomas Aquinas.

Let Caesar honor Peter as a first-born son should honor his father, so that, refulgent with the light of paternal grace, he may illumine with greater radiance the earthly sphere over which he has been set by Him who alone is Ruler of all things spiritual and temporal...

Dante, De Monarchia.

There can be no compromise between truth and falsehood.

St. Mark of Ephesus.

Of the three forms of state power: monarchy, democracy and despotism, strictly speaking, only the first, monarchy, is based on a religious-ethical principle, the second, democracy, is based on an a-religious ethical principle, and the third, despotism, is based on an anti-religious, satanic principle!

Confessor-Professor I.M. Andreyev (+1976)

The Tsar was the embodiment of the Russian people's... readiness to submit the life of the state to the righteousness of God: therefore do the people submit themselves to the Tsar, because he submits to God.

St. John Maximovich.

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FOREWORD

*The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies
the footstool of Thy feet.
Psalm 109.1.*

A famous British politician once remarked that it was impossible to be both a true Christian and a good politician. If this were true, then we should have to conclude that there is one extremely important sphere of life, politics, that is irredeemable by the grace of Christ and therefore inevitably the domain of the evil one. Such a conclusion might well be justified in the context of modern democratic politics, whose end is almost by definition secular and anti-Christian, and the means to that end almost inevitably repulsive to the Christian conscience. But it would have been emphatically rejected by the Christians of the Early Church and the more-than-1100-year period from the coming to power of St. Constantine in 306 to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the period of the Christian Empire of New Rome, when Christians of both East and West believed that the best, most Christian form of government was Autocracy under a truly Christian emperor or king whose aim was not personal glory or wealth, but the salvation of his people for eternity. It is this period that is the historical heart of this book, which aims to explicate the ideal of Christian statehood, its origins, triumph and decline, in the context of the period when most Christians in both East and West fervently believed in the possibility of a universal Christian empire subject in reality, and not merely theoretically, to Christ the King.

The ideal of the Christian Autocracy was opposed from the beginning by two rival forms of government having their roots in paganism: Despotism and Democracy. The origins and nature of these two rival ideologies, together with their heretical Christian expressions, will also be discussed. My thesis is that the whole of history can be seen as a struggle to the death between God-pleasing Autocracy, on the one hand, and God-hated Despotism and Democracy, - more precisely, Despotism-Democracy, as two poles of an essentially unitary phenomenon - on the other.

In the writing of this book I am indebted above all to the writings of the Holy Fathers. Among more recent Fathers and Church writers, I have especially drawn on the work of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, L.A. Tikhomirov, M.V. Zyzykin, Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Lubny, St. John Maximovich, Archbishop of San Francisco, and Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Jordanville and Syracuse. But I have also drawn extensively on contemporary writers and historians, from both East and West, whose names are mentioned in the footnotes. Although I have tried to preserve theological and historical accuracy to the best of my ability, it goes without saying that I, and I alone, am responsible for any errors that may have crept into this book, for which I ask forgiveness of all my readers.

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

May 15/28, 2018.

Monday of the Holy Spirit.

East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey, England.

I. PREHISTORY

1. THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE: FROM CAIN TO NOAH

In Paradise there was no such thing as political authority, no domination of man over man. There was the mild and loving headship of Adam over Eve, but this was hardly comparable to political power. And even if, in the words of the Lord to Eve after the fall: "He [Adam] will rule over you" (Genesis 3.16), we hear the first note of authority of man over man¹, this was only an embryonic form of power relationship. It was infused by love and involved no compulsion. Moreover, if the man was the master, the woman was the mistress, sharing in his dominion over the rest of creation, insofar as both man and woman were made in the image of God the Master.²

Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: "From the beginning He made one sovereignty only, setting the man over the woman. But after that our race ran headlong into extreme disorder, He appointed other sovereignties also, those of Masters, and those of Governors, and this too for love's sake."³ Again, political inequality, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, is the result of the fall. All men were initially created equal, but the fall fragmented mankind into self-serving individuals who needed political authority to stop them destroying each other. In response to the question why God allows kings to rule over men, St. Maximus writes that kingship is a response to evil. It is the king's responsibility to maintain order and justice so that men would not devour each other as large fish do small fish.⁴

Again, Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes: "Political power appeared on earth only after the fall of the first people. In Paradise the overseer's shout was not heard. Man can never forget that he was once royally free, and that political power appeared as the quit-rent of sin."⁵

The State is a product of the fall, and would not have been necessary if Adam had not sinned. It is necessary to fallen, sinful man because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6.23), and the political order can, if not conquer death in man, at any rate slow down its spread, enabling man to *survive*, both as an individual and as a species. For to survive he needs to unite in communities with other men, forming families, tribes and, eventually, states.

¹ As S.V. Troitsky writes, "according to the Bible the basis of every authority of man over man is to be found in the words of God about the power of the husband over the wife: 'he will rule over you'" (*Filosofia khristianskago braka* (The Philosophy of Christian Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, p. 178).

² Compare the ancient Russian custom of calling bridegroom and bride "prince" and "princess", and the ancient Roman custom of calling married couples - *only* married couples - "dominus" and "domina", which is reflected in the modern Greek "kyrios" and "kyria". See V. Moss, *The Theology of Eros*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2010, pp. 9-16.

³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 34 on I Corinthians*.

⁴ St. Maximus, *Epistle 10.449D, 452B*. Cf. John Booramra, "Original Sin According to St. Maximus the Confessor", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 20 (1976), p. 26.

⁵ Metropolitan Anastasy, *Besedy s sobstvennym serdtsem* (Conversations with My Own Heart), Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1998, p. 159.

The process of politicization is aided by the fact that man is social by nature, and comes into the world already as a member of a family. So, contrary to the teaching of some, it is not only out of fear that men unite into large groups, but out of the natural bonds of family life. In this sense the state is simply the family writ large; for, as Aristotle says, “the king is in the same relationship with his subjects as the head of a family with his children”; just as the family has a father as its head, so the state has a king as its head.

The family, writes St. Augustine, is a part of the State. For it is “the beginning, or rather a small component part of the city, and every beginning is directed to some end of its own kind, and every component part contributes to the completeness of the whole of which it forms a part. The implication is that domestic peace contributes to the peace of the city, for an ordered harmony of those who live together in a house contributes to the ordered harmony concerning authority and obedience obtaining among citizens.”⁶

Again, St. Philaret of Moscow says: “The family is older than the State. Man, husband, wife, father, son, mother, daughter and the obligations and virtues inherent in these names existed before the family grew into the nation and the State was formed. That is why family life in relation to State life can be figuratively depicted as the root of the tree. In order that the tree should bear leaves and flowers and fruit, it is necessary that the root should be strong and bring pure juice to the tree. In order that State life should develop strongly and correctly, flourish with education, and bring forth the fruit of public prosperity, it is necessary that family life should be strong with the blessed love of the spouses, the sacred authority of the parents, and the reverence and obedience of the children, and that as a consequence of this, from the pure elements of family there should arise similarly pure principles of State life, so that with veneration for one’s father veneration for the tsar should be born and grow, and that the love of children for their mother should be a preparation of love for the fatherland, and the simple-hearted obedience of domestics should prepare and direct the way to self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness in obedience to the laws and sacred authority of the autocrat...”⁷

Again, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: “In blessed Russia, in accordance with the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, just as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole.”⁸

Again, Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes: “Both the familial and the monarchical systems are established by God for the earthly existence of sinful, fallen man. The first-formed man, abiding in living communion with God, was not subject to anyone except God, and was lord over the irrational

⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX, 16.

⁷ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1848 edition, volume 2, p. 169.

⁸ Bishop Ignaty, *Sobranie Pisem* (Collected Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781.

creatures. But when man sinned and destroyed the Divine hierarchy of submission, having fallen away from God, he became the slave of sin and the devil, and as a result of this became subject to a man like himself. The sinful will of man demands submission for the limitation of his own destructive activity. This Divine establishment has in mind only the good of man – the limitation of the spread of sin. And history itself confirms that whatever may be the defects of monarchy, they cannot compare with the evil brought upon men by revolution and anarchy.”⁹

So the king’s rule in the State is a reflection of the father’s rule in the family, which in turn reflects the rule of God “the Father, from Whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3.15).

According to St. Philaret, “The State is a union of free moral beings, united amongst themselves with the sacrifice of part of their freedom for the preservation and confirmation by the common forces of the law of morality, which constitutes the necessity of their existence. The civil laws are nothing other than interpretations of this law in application to particular cases and guards placed against its violation.”¹⁰ To the extent that the laws are good, that is, in accord with “the law of morality”, and executed firmly and impartially, the people can live in peace and pursue the aim for which God placed them on the earth – the salvation of their souls for eternity. To the extent that they are bad, and/or badly executed, not only is it much more difficult for men to pursue the supreme aim of their existence: the very existence of future generations is put in jeopardy.

*

The difference between sin and crime is that sin is transgression of the Law of God only, whereas crime is transgression both of God’s Law and of the law of the State. Adam and Eve’s original transgression of the Law of God was a sin that was punished by their expulsion from Paradise – that is, from intimate communion with God. The second sin, Abel’s murder of his brother Cain, was, according to the legal code of every civilized State, a crime as well as a sin. But since there was as yet no State in the proper sense of the word, it was God Himself Who imposed the punishment. Man had already been punished by expulsion from Paradise and communion with God, so now the punishment was different: expulsion from the society of men: “a fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth” (Genesis 4.12).

Let us look more closely at the story of Cain and Abel and what it tells us about the nature and origins of the State.

⁹ Hieromonk Dionysius, Priest Timothy Alferov, *O Tserkvi, Pravoslavnom Tsarstve i Poslednem Vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow, 1998, p. 15).

¹⁰ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Lev Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945* (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 24-25.

Although none of the Patriarchs, and no man before Christ, was able to receive again Divine grace and innocence in the measure that Adam had enjoyed it, they were able to reverse the Fall to this extent, that where Adam had shown unbelief they showed faith. Faith in the Providence of God, and hope in His promises, was characteristic of all the Patriarchs. The very first words of Eve after the expulsion from Eden express this faith: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4.1). Thus Eve saw the hand of God in the birth of Cain. According to one interpretation of the Hebrew text, what she actually said was: "I have gotten the God-man", by which she expressed her belief that Cain was that Redeemer, "the seed of the woman (Genesis 3.15), whom the Lord had promised while she was still in the Garden - a mistake, but one based on faith. And in his murder of Abel she no doubt saw the fulfilment of His word that she would bring forth in sorrow (Genesis 3.16).

The same faith was manifest in her immediate descendants, as the Apostle Paul witnessed: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witnesses that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." (Hebrews 11.4-7)

The faith of the Patriarchs expressed itself in other ways which show their spiritual kinship and prototypical relationship with the New Testament Church - for example, in the offering of sacrifices well-pleasing to God. In this respect, the relationship between Abel and Cain is typical of the relationship between the True Church and the false; for while the sacrifice of the True Church, like Abel's, is accepted by God, the sacrifice of the heretics and schismatics, like Cain's, is rejected. Indeed, according to the Theodotion text of this Scripture, "the Lord kindled a fire over Abel and his sacrifice, but did not kindle a fire over Cain and his sacrifice". On which the Venerable Bede comments: "By fire sent down from heaven He accepted Abel's victim, which we read is very often done when holy men offer. But he held back from consuming Cain's sacrifice by fire. For the Apostle also seems to signify this when he says, 'By faith Abel offered a greater sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying over his gifts' (Hebrews 11.4). Therefore God 'testified to the gifts' of Abel through fire, receiving them

from the heavens, by which testimony of the Apostle we are also taught that the victim of Abel was made acceptable to God through the devotion of his faith, and on the contrary we should understand that Cain was condemned because he did not serve his Creator with integral faith."¹¹

In his famous work *The City of God*, St. Augustine traced the beginning of The City of God, that is, the Church, to Abel and the brother who replaced him, Seth, whereas the city of man takes its origin from Cain and his descendants, who are separated "from the Church in which God reveals His grace-filled presence". Thus Abel, according to Augustine, means 'Sorrow' and Seth - 'Resurrection', prefiguring the Death and Resurrection of Christ. And in the time of Seth's son Enos it is said that "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4.26) because the sons of the resurrection live in hope, calling upon the name of the Lord. The name Cain, on the other hand, means 'Possession', and that of his son Enoch, the first city-builder - 'Dedication', indicating that the sons of perdition aim to possess the cities of this earth, being completely dedicated to their pleasures. That is why, moreover, the later descendants of Cain, such as Jabal and Tubal-Cain were inventors of metal instruments - technology is necessary for the enjoyment of this life's pleasures.

If the Church began with Abel and Seth, then the State began with Cain. For since the first form of state is the city, polis in Greek, we may say that Cain was the first city-builder (Genesis 4.17), and so the first politician.¹² He was also the first murderer, for he murdered his brother Abel...

The fact that the first State was founded by the first murderer has cast a shadow over Statehood ever since... On the one hand, the State exists in order to curb sin in its crudest and most destructive aspects. To that extent state power is *in principle* of God (Romans 13.1), that is, established by Him "Who rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will" (Daniel 4.17). For, as St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "God imposed upon mankind the fear of man as some do not fear God. It was necessary that they be subject to the authority of men, and kept under restraint by their laws whereby they might attain to some degree of justice and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword..."¹³ Again, St. John Chrysostom says: "Since equality of honour often leads to fighting, He has made many governments and forms of

¹¹ Bede, *Homilies on Genesis*.

¹² What was this city? David Rohl (*Legend: The Genesis of Civilization*, London: Random House, 1998, pp. 198-200) suggests three alternatives from three neighbouring Mesopotamian cities: 1. Erech, known as Uruk, Unuk or Unug in Sumerian. The latter may be the same name as Enoch, Cain's son, after whom the city was named according to the usual reading of Genesis 4.17. A later ruler of Erech-Uruk-Enoch was Nimrod, the builder of the Tower of Babel. 2. Eridu, which may be the same name as Jared, Cain's grandson, after whom the city was named according to another reading of Genesis 4.17. 3. Ur, whose original name may have been Uru-Unuki or 'City of Enoch'. This was, of course, the "Ur of the Chaldees" that Abraham was ordered to leave.

¹³ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 24; quoted in Fr. Michael Azkoul, *Once Delivered to the Saints*, Seattle: Saint Nectarios Press, 2000, p. 219.

subjection.”¹⁴ Again, St. Gregory the Great writes that, although men are created by nature equal, God has ordained that “insofar as every man does not have the same manner of life, one should be governed by another.”¹⁵

On the other hand, the greatest crimes known to man have been committed precisely by the State, and to that extent it is an instrument of evil, permitted but not blessed by God – for God sometimes “sets over it the lowest of men” (Daniel 4.17). Moreover, since Cain and at least until Saul and the kings of Israel, all states known to man were not only the main agents both of mass murder and of slavery, but were also worshippers of demons who compelled their citizens to worship demons, too. And if Blessed Augustine, in his famous book, *The City of God*, could see the Providence and Justice of God working even in the most antichristian states and institutions, this could not prevent him from taking a most pessimistic view of the origin and nature of most states (even Rome).¹⁶

St. Augustine traced the history of two lines of men descending from Seth and Cain respectively - the City of God, or the community of those who are saved, and the City of Man, or the community of those who are damned. The City of God is not to be identified with the Church (because the Church contains both good and bad), nor is the City of Man to be identified with the State (because the State contains both good and bad). Nevertheless, the Church is clearly closer to the first pole as the State is to the second....

This is why the history of Church-State relations until Constantine is a history of almost perpetual conflict. Until David and the foundation of the state of Israel, the people of God – that is, the Church – was not associated with any state, but was constantly being persecuted by contemporary rulers, as Moses and the Israelites were by Pharaoh. And this symbolises a deeper truth: that the people of God, spiritually speaking, have *never* lived in states, but have always been stateless wanderers, desert people, as it were; “for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13.14). We seek, that is, the City of God, the new Jerusalem, which is to be fully revealed only in the age to come (Revelation 21-22).

On the other hand, the people who reject God are spiritually speaking citizens of the kingdoms of this earth, rooted in the earth of worldly cares and desires. That is why they like to build huge urban states and civilisations that enable them to satisfy these desires to the maximum extent. It is not by accident, therefore, that Cain and his immediate descendants were the creators not only of cities, but also of all the cultural and technological inventions that make city life so alluring to fallen man. For, as New Hieroconfessor Barnabas, Bishop of Pechersk, writes: “In its original source culture is the fruit, not of the fallen human spirit in general, but a consequence of its exceptional darkening

¹⁴ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 23 on Romans*, 1.

¹⁵ St. Gregory, *Morals on the Book of Job*, XXI, 15, 22, 23; cf. Azkoul, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX, 15.

in one of the primordial branches of the race of Adam... The Cainites had only one aim - the construction of a secure, carnal, material life, whatever the cost. They understood, of course, that the Seed of the Woman, the Promised Deliverer from evil that was coming at the end of the ages, would never appear in their descendants, so, instead of humbling themselves and repenting, the Cainites did the opposite: in blasphemous despair and hatred towards God, they gave themselves over irrevocably to bestial passions and the construction on earth of their kingdom, which is continually fighting against the Kingdom of God."¹⁷

The Cainites eventually became the overwhelming majority of mankind, corrupting even most of the Sethites. Thus Josephus writes: "This posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe, and to have an entire regard to virtue, for seven generations; but in process of time they were perverted..."

"But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their disposition, and their actions for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; so he departed out of the land."¹⁸

Since cities were built soon after the fall of man, we must presume that there was some kind of political organization in the antediluvian world. But it clearly was not effective; for the earth was filled with sin and criminality, and the Holy Spirit departed from men (Genesis 6.3).

So God decided to wipe out human civilization, the civilization of Cain, and even the whole of the animal kingdom, and start again. Hence the Flood of Noah, a universal flood that destroyed all life except Noah and his family and the animals that were with him in the Ark, who represent the Church that survives the destruction of the world. So Statehood in its first historical examples was antichristian and was destroyed by the just judgement of God.

The historicity of the Flood was witnessed by the Lord Himself and the Apostle Peter (Matthew 28.38-39; II Peter 3.5-6), as well as by the folklore of almost all human races. Recent archaeological research has discovered the Ark itself in the mountains of eastern Turkey. After many false findings, this seems to be the genuine Ark, and is now recognized as such officially by the Turkish government.¹⁹

¹⁷ Bishop Barnabas, *Pravoslavie* (Orthodoxy), Kolomna: New Golutvin monastery, 1995, pp. 128, 129.

¹⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 3.

¹⁹ See the film at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL_RXCEeWjo&feature=share.

According to the Holy Fathers, the world was created in about 5500 BC²⁰, and the Flood took place about one and a half thousand years later. It covered all the mountains of the earth; only one part of the globe remained untouched – Paradise. For as St. Ephraim the Syrian wrote:

*With the eye of my mind
I gazed upon Paradise.
The summit of every mountain
Is lower than its summit;
The crest of the flood
Reached only its foothills,
These it kissed with reverence
Before turning back
To rise above and subdue the peak
Of every hill and mountain.
The foothills of Paradise it kisses,
While every summit it buffets.²¹*

The Flood permanently altered the climate and living conditions of the earth, and marked a new beginning for the human race. From Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives came all the nations of man. Spreading south from the mountains in the Ararat region, where the ark came to rest, Noah's descendants came to Sumeria (Iraq), and built the world's first postdiluvial civilization.

Immediately after the flood, Noah offered a sacrifice to God of all the clean beasts that entered with him into the ark. For God accepts as sacrifices in the Church only those whose lives have been cleansed by repentance. Only "then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings" (Psalm 50.19). And in return God blessed Noah and his sons, and established a covenant with him whereby He promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth..." (Genesis 9.12-13)

This is the first of many Old Testament covenants between God and the people of God, but the last that relates to the *whole* of mankind, irrespective of their faith or lack of it. And this is in accordance with the universal nature of the judgement that had just been inflicted on mankind, and the fact that mankind was not yet divided into races speaking different languages.

²⁰ Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, p. 236.

²¹ St. Ephraim, *Hymns on Paradise*, 1.4; in Andrew Louth (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture I. Genesis 1-11*, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, p. 141.

God then commanded Noah to establish a system of justice that is the embryo of statehood as it should be: "The blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man" (Genesis 9.5-6).

Commenting on these words, Protopriest Basil Boshchansky writes, that they "give the blessing of God to that institution which appeared in defence of human life" - that is, the State.²²

As Henry Morris explains: "The word 'require' is a judicial term, God appearing as a judge who exacts a strict and severe penalty for infraction of a sacred law. If a beast kills a man, the beast must be put to death (note also Exodus 21.28). If a man kills another man (wilfully and culpably, it is assumed), then he also must be put to death by 'every man's brother'. This latter phrase is not intended to initiate family revenge slayings, of course, but rather to stress that all men are responsible to see that this justice is executed. At the time these words were first spoken, all men indeed were blood brothers; for only the three sons of Noah were living at the time, other than Noah himself. Since all future people would be descended from these three men and their wives, in a very real sense all men *are* brothers, because all were once in the loins of these three brothers. This is in essence a command to establish a formal system of human government, in order to assure that justice is carried out, especially in the case of murder. The authority to execute this judgement of God on a murderer was thus delegated to man."²³

But not to every man. The authority to pronounce the judgement of God can only be given to one whom God has appointed to judge - that is, to rulers. We see this in the story of Moses, who went out and saw two Hebrews quarrelling. He said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?", who replied: "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" (Exodus 2.13-14). And indeed, Moses had not at that time received the power to judge Israel. Only when he had fled into the wilderness and been given power by true King of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was he accepted as having true authority. Only then was he able to deliver his people from Pharaoh, who had usurped power over God's own people...²⁴

As the revolutionary-turned-monarchist Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov writes, the idea that "the state is 'the monopoly of violence' completely coincides with the Christian attitude to the state. The complete removal of violence from private right and its exclusive concentration in the hands of the state means that violence in personal interests is unconditionally removed and

²² Boshchansky, "Zhizn' vo Khriste" ("Life in Christ"), in *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'* (Church Life), NN 3-4, May-August, 1998, p. 41.

²³ Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976, p. 224.

²⁴ E. Kholmogorov, "O Khristianskom tsarstve i 'vooruzhennom narode'" ("On the Christian Kingdom and 'the Armed People'"), *Tserkovnost'* (Churchness), N 1, 2000, pp. 35-38.

forbidden. But it is allowed only in those hands in which there is in principle no personal interest, but only the interest of justice. With the monopolization of violence in the hands of the state violence is released only to support justice.”²⁵

That is why political authority is *in principle* good and established by God: “there is no authority that is not from God” (Romans 13.1). This is true especially of the political leaders of the people of God, for whom the Lord established a special sacrament, the anointing to the kingdom: “I have found David My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him” (Psalms 88.19). Even certain pagan kings were given an invisible anointing to rule justly and help the people of God, such as Cyrus of Persia (Isaiah 45.1).

²⁵ Tikhomirov, *Religioznie-philosophskie osnovy istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 268.

2. NIMROD'S BABYLON

In the postdiluvial world one-man rule, or monarchy, was the norm for millenia. The major exceptions - Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and Rome before Julius Caesar - were fleeting and did not become deeply rooted, although their historical example was to become important in modern times. Greece returned under one-man rule in the time of Alexander the Great, while by the late first century BC the whole of the Roman Empire was firmly under the heel of the first of the Roman Emperors, Augustus Caesar.

One-man rule in antiquity was of two kinds: *Despotism* and *Autocracy*. From a chronological point of view, despotism appeared first - in Nimrod's Babylon, the mystical fount and root of all antichristian despotic power down the ages. Despotism was characteristic of all developed pagan States throughout the world - in Babylon, Egypt, the Indus valley, Greece and Rome, China, Central and South America - before the rise of Athenian democracy. Despotic rulers recognize their power as absolute, unlimited by any other power in heaven or on earth. Autocracy, on the other hand, is not absolute, but recognizes itself to be limited by the Law of God and the interpreters of that Law on earth - God's faithful priesthood. Autocracy first appeared in embryonic form in the pilgrim Israelite State led by Moses and the Judges, and then in the Israelite State founded by Saul and David.²⁶

Sometimes pagan rulers allowed themselves to be led by the True God. Such was the Pharaoh who venerated Jacob and Joseph, and Nebuchadnezzar when he witnessed that God had saved the three children from the furnace and ordered that enemies of that God should be punished, and Cyrus the Persian when he ordered the Temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and Darius the Mede when he rejoiced in the salvation of Daniel and ordered his slanderers to be cast into the lions' den instead. In those moments, we can say that despotism was transformed fleetingly into autocracy.

The modern world recognizes neither despotism nor autocracy, but only *democracy*. It will be useful, therefore, at the outset to consider a comparative definition of these three major types of State by the Russian nineteenth-century philosopher, Vladimir Soloviev. The first, *Absolutism*, he defined as "the striving to subject humanity in all its spheres and at every level of its life to one supreme principle which in its exclusive unity strives to mix and confuse the whole variety of private forms, to suppress the independence of the person and the freedom of private life." The second, *Democracy*, he defined as "the striving to destroy the stronghold of dead unity, to give freedom everywhere to private forms of life, freedom to the person and his activity;... the extreme expression of this force is general egoism and anarchy,

²⁶ Some monarchist authors - for example, Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), - identify the term "autocracy" (*samoderzhavie*) with all forms of one-man, monarchical government (*edinoderzhavie*). However, I have found it useful to make a distinction between monarchy and autocracy for reasons explained in the introduction.

and a multitude of separate individuals without an inner bond." The third force, *Autocracy*, he defined as "giving positive content to the other two forces, freeing them from their exclusivity, and reconciling the unity of the higher principle with the free multiplicity of private forms and elements."²⁷

Turning now to the first absolutist State, Nimrod's Babylon, it appears that the State religion was a mixture of nature-worship and ancestor-worship. Thus, on the one hand, the Babylonians worshipped the stars and planets, and practised astrology as a means of discovering the will of the gods. "They believed," writes Smart, "that they could predict not merely by earthly methods of divination, but also by a study of the stars and of planets and the moon".²⁸ One of the purposes of the temples or towers or ziggurats, whose remains can still be seen in the Iraqi desert, may have been as platforms from which to observe the signs of the zodiac. According to Herodotus, at the top of the Tower was a 23.5-ton statue to Marduk and representations of the signs of the Zodiac.

On the other hand, the chief god, Marduk or Merodach, "brightness of the day", seems to have been identified with Nimrod himself. We know, moreover, that the later kings of Babylon were also identified with the god Marduk.²⁹ It was probably Nimrod who invented nature- and ancestor-worship. First he rose to power as a hunter or leader in war; he is described in the Holy Scriptures as "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10.9). Then he consolidated his power by giving himself divine honours. The Chaldean paraphrase of I Chronicles 1.10 reads: "Cush begat Nimrod, who began to prevail in wickedness, for he shed innocent blood, and rebelled against Jehovah."³⁰

²⁷ Soloviev, "Tri Sily" ("Three Forces"), 1878, *Novij Mir* (New World), N 1, 1989, pp. 198-199.

²⁸ N. Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, London: Fontana, 1971, p. 299.

²⁹ I.R. Shafarevich, *Sotzializm kak Iavlenie Mirovoj Istorii* (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977; Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 299. "If you drop the first consonant of Nimrod's name and take the others M, R, D you will have the basic root of the god of Babylon, whose name was Marduk, and whom most scholars identify with Nimrod. In the Babylonian religion, Nimrod (or Marduk) held a unique place. His wife was Semiramis. (In Cairo, Egypt, the Semiramis Hotel is named after this woman.) Marduk and Semiramis were the ancient god and goddess of Babylon. They had a son whom Semiramis claimed was virgin-born, and they founded the mother and child cult. This was the central character of the religion of ancient Babylon, the worship of a mother and child, supposedly virgin-born. You can see in this a clever attempt on the part of Satan to anticipate the genuine virgin birth and thus to cast disrepute upon the story when the Lord Jesus would later be born into history. This ancient Babylonian cult of the mother and child spread to other parts of the earth. You will find it in the Egyptian religion as Isis and Osiris. In Greece it is Venus and Adonis, and in the Hindu religion it is Ushas and Vishnu. The same cult prevails in various other localities. It appears in the Old Testament in Jeremiah where the Israelites are warned against offering sacrifices to 'the Queen of Heaven.' This Queen of Heaven is Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod."

³⁰ These and other relevant quotations are cited from "*Babylon the Great has fallen!*", New York: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1963, p. 21-22. See also Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976, p. 252.

The Jerusalem Targum explains: "He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, 'Depart from the judgement of the Lord, and adhere to the judgement of Nimrod!' Therefore it is said: 'As Nimrod is the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord.'" The Targum of Jonathan tells us: "From the foundation of the world none was ever found like Nimrod, powerful in hunting, and in rebellions against the Lord."

According to Blessed Jerome, "Nimrod was the first to seize despotic rule over the people, which men were not yet accustomed to".³¹ For, as the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus writes, "it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God; he was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means that they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage that procured their happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other method of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his own power."³²

The great spring festival of Marduk took place at Babylon, at the splendid temple with ascending steps called in the Bible the Tower of Babel, and which was vaingloriously built by Nimrod himself in order to reach the heavens (Genesis 11). According to St. John the Romanian, "After the flood, people again turned away from God's ways; and having turned away, they again began to expect a flood. Therefore they decided to build the Tower of Babel, that is, the Babylonian fortress. They wanted to build it up higher than the clouds, so that water would no longer be a threat to them. For this madness God confused their tongues, and they weren't able to do any of this."³³

Having destroyed this Tower and divided the languages of its builders, God scattered them in different directions across the face of the earth. This explains both the existence of different nations speaking different languages and the fact that, at least in the earliest phase of their existence, all nations known to anthropologists have been pagan, worshipping a multiplicity of gods that often displayed a marked kinship with the gods of other nations and the original Babylonian religion.

According to Hebrew tradition, the word "Babylon" comes from the Hebrew word "meaning confusion, or mixing up (and from which the English word 'babble' is derived)." 'Ironically,' continues Juan Luis Montero Fenollos, "this interpretation was itself a confusing of languages. In Akkadian, the root of the words Babylon and Babel does not mean to mix: it means 'gateway of

³¹ St. Jerome, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, 10.9.

³² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, chapter 4, paragraph 2.

³³ St. John of Neamts, the new Chozebite, "Today's Tower of Babel", *Orthodox Christianity*, October 3, 2017, <http://orthochristian.com/106787.html>.

the gods'."³⁴ In either case, the name is appropriate; for the Tower of Babel was begun as a gateway of the gods, an ascent to heaven, but ended up as the cause of the confusion of languages and the dispersal of the nations around the world...

The Biblical genealogies date this event to approximately 3500 BC, which is also, not coincidentally, the approximate date of the origins and dispersal of the Indo-European languages according to the latest linguistic research...³⁵

"If, before the flood," write two Catacomb Church nuns, "the impious apostates were the Cainites, the descendants of the brother-murderer, then after the flood they became the sons of the lawless Ham. The Hamites founded Babylon, one of the five cities of the powerful hunter Nimrod (Genesis 10.8). 'Nimrod, imitating his forefather, chose another form of slavery...' (St. John Chrysostom, *Word 29 on Genesis*). Nimrod invented a form of slavery at which 'those who boast of freedom in fact cringe' (*ibid.*). He rebelled against God, against the Divine patriarchal order of governing families and governing peoples. The times of Nimrod were characterized by the appearance of the beginnings of godless monarchism [i.e. absolutism] and future imperialism. Having rejected God, this eastern usurper created a kingdom based on his own power."³⁶

"Now the multitude," writes Josephus, "were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners [in the Flood]; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them diverse languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, confusion..."³⁷

³⁴ Fenollos, "Envy of the World: Babylon", *National Geographic History*, January/February, 2017, p. 43.

³⁵ Will Chang, Chundra Cathcart, David Hall and Andrew Garrett, "Ancestry-constrained Phylogenetical Analysis Supports the Indo-European Steppe Hypothesis", *Language*, vol. 91, no. 1, 2015.

³⁶ "Taina Apokalipticheskogo Vavilona" (The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Babylon), *Pravoslavnaiia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 47, N 5 (545), May, 1995, pp. 14-16.

³⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 4. Rohl (*op. cit.*, p. 216) has argued that Nimrod is to be identified with the Sumerian Enmerkar, whose name means "Enmeru the hunter". "Look at what we have here. Nimrod was closely associated with Erech - the biblical name for Uruk - where Enmerkar ruled. Enmerkar built a great sacred precinct at Uruk and constructed a

The Catacomb Church nuns continue: "Nimrod's very idea of founding a universal monarchy was a protest against Noah's curse of Canaan... A sign of protest and at the same time of power was the huge tower which the Hamites attempted to raise. God punished them, confusing the language of the proud builders, so that they no longer understood each other... Herodotus writes in his *History* that they built small ziggurats in Babylon (evidently in memory of the first failure) consisting of towers placed on top of each other. On the top of the small ziggurat E-temen-anki was raised a statue of the idol Marduk weighing 23.5 tons. Many centuries later the notable tyrant Nebuchadnezzar said: 'I laid my hand to finishing the construction of the top of E-temen-anki, so that it might quarrel with heaven.'" ³⁸

Nimrod's Babylon, like all the early urban civilisations, was characterised by, on the one hand, a totalitarian state structure, and, on the other hand, a pagan system of religion. Statehood and religion were very closely linked; for

temple at Eridu - that much we know from the epic poem 'Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta'. The Sumerian King List adds that Enmerkar was 'the one who built Uruk'. Nimrod was also a great builder, constructing the cities of Uruk, Akkad and Babel. Both Nimrod and Enmerkar were renowned for their huntsmanship. Nimrod, as the grandson of Ham, belongs to the second 'generation' after the flood (Noah-Ham-Flood-Cush-Nimrod) and this is also true of Enmerkar who is recorded in the Sumerian King List as the second ruler of Uruk after the flood (Ubartutu-(Utnapishtim)-Flood-Meskiagkasher-Enmerkar). Both ruled over their empires in the land of Shinar/Sumer."

³⁸ "Taina", *op. cit.* Grant Jeffrey writes: "[In the nineteenth century] the French government sent Professor Oppert to report on the cuneiform inscriptions discovered in the ruins of Babylon. Oppert translated a long inscription by King Nebuchadnezzar in which the king referred to the tower in the Chaldean language as *Borzippa*, which means *Tongue-tower*. The Greeks used the word *Borsippa*, with the same meaning of *tongue-tower*, to describe the ruins of the Tower of Babel. This inscription of Nebuchadnezzar clearly identified the original tower of Borsippa with the Tower of Babel described by Moses in Genesis. King Nebuchadnezzar decided to rebuild the base of the ancient Tower of Babel, built over sixteen centuries earlier by Nimrod, the first King of Babylon. He also called it the Temple of the Spheres. During the millenium since God destroyed it, the tower was reduced from its original height and magnificence until only the huge base of the tower (four hundred and sixty feet by six hundred and ninety feet) standing some two hundred and seventy-five feet high remained within the outskirts of the city of Babylon. Today the ruins have been reduced to about one hundred and fifty feet above the plain with a circumference of 2,300 feet. Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the city of Babylon in great magnificence with gold and silver, and then decided to rebuild the lowest platform of the Tower of Babel in honor of the Chaldean gods. King Nebuchadnezzar resurfaced the base of the Tower of Babel with gold, silver, cedar, and fir, at great cost on top of a hard surface of baked clay bricks. These bricks were engraved with the seal of Nebuchadnezzar... In this inscription found on the base of the ruins of the Tower of Babel, King Nebuchadnezzar speaks in his own words from thousands of years ago confirming one of the most interesting events of the ancient past.... 'The tower, the eternal house, which I founded and built. I have completed its magnificence with silver, gold, other metals, stone, enamelled bricks, fir and pine. The first which is the house of the earth's base, the most ancient monument of Babylon; I built it. I have highly exalted its head with bricks covered with copper. We say for the other, that is, this edifice, the house of the seven lights of the earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa. A former king built it, (they reckon 42 ages) but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order express)ing their words...'" (*The Signature of God*, Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale Publishers, pp. 40-41)

both the governmental and the priestly hierarchies culminated in one man, the king-priest-god. Thus N.N. Alexeyev writes: "The cult of the god-king was confessed by nations of completely different cultures. Nevertheless, at its base there lies a specific religious-philosophical world-view that is the same despite the differences of epochs, nations and cultural conditions of existence. The presupposition of this world-view is an axiom that received perhaps its most distinct formulation in the religion of the Assyro-Babylonians. The Assyro-Babylonians believed that the whole of earthly existence corresponds to heavenly existence and that every phenomenon of this world, beginning from the smallest and ending with the greatest, must be considered to be a reflection of heavenly processes. The whole Babylonian world-view, all their philosophy, astrology and magic rested on the recognition of this axiom. In application to politics it meant that ...the earthly king was as it were a copy of the heavenly king, an incarnation of divinity, an earthly god."³⁹

³⁹ Alexeyev, "Khristianstvo i Idea Monarkhii" ("Christianity and the Idea of Monarchy), *Put'* (The Way), N 6, January, 1927, p. 660.

II. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

3. FROM THEOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY: (1) ABRAHAM

The earliest period of man's history saw three terrible moral falls with global consequences: that of Adam and Eve, that of Cain and his descendants, and that of Nimrod and the tower-builders. Each crime was followed by a fitting and catastrophic punishment: that of Adam to the death of him and all his descendants, the death of Cain and his descendants of Cain to the universal Flood, and that of Nimrod to the scattering of the tower-builders around the world. And yet a tiny but holy remnant was preserved in each case: that of Seth and his descendants, that of Noah and his descendants, and that of Abraham and his descendants...

The deification of the ruler of the City of Man in the person of Nimrod, and the building of the tower of Babel at his command, was, of course, a direct challenge to the truly Divine Ruler of the City of God. "However," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "not all of humanity agreed to take part in the building of the tower. Our Russian *Tale of Burning Years* (The Chronicle of Nestor), relying on the chronicle of George Armatoll, says that righteous Heber ('from him came the Hebrews') refused to take part in the undertaking. And the Armenian and some other chronicles add that certain Japhethites also refused, because of which a war took place between them and Nimrod."⁴⁰

It is from this tiny remnant, descendants of Shem and Japheth, that a new beginning was made according to a new principle that was racial as well as religious - although, as we shall see, this racial principle admitted of many exceptions and was always intended to be only a preparation for the readmittance of all nations into the Church. This new beginning was made with Abraham, a descendant of Noah's first son Shem and Shem's great-grandson Eber, from which we derive the word 'Hebrew'. Abraham was therefore the father of the Hebrews. And yet he was not the father of the Hebrews only, even in a purely genetic sense. His first son Ishmael is traditionally considered to be the father of the Arabs. And his grandson through Isaac, Esau, was the father of the Edomites. In the Apostle Paul's allegorical interpretation, Isaac represents the Church, and Ishmael - the unbelieving Jews enslaved to the Law (Galatians 3.16).

God commanded Abraham to depart from Babylonia and go to an unknown country, where he would live "in tents, while he looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God" (Hebrews 11.10). For the worshippers of God, who wish to be at peace with heaven, cannot co-exist in peace with the worshippers of man, who seek to "quarrel with heaven"; better to be stateless than citizens of such a state. They must build their own state that is not founded on the worship of man, but of God. Abraham did not build that state - that was the work of Moses and David. But he did build the nation, and receive the faith, that animated that state, the kingdom of Israel.

⁴⁰ Lebedev, "The Universal Babylon", *Pravoslavnaiia Zhizn'*, 53, N 5 (640), May, 2003, p. 16.

Abraham's story, recounted in chapters 12 to 22 of Genesis, is that of a man who obeys no man or state or institution; his only king was God. Like every true son of God, he was free of men, and obeyed them "only lest we offend them" (Matthew 17.27). So truly independent was he that we read of no priest or king to whom he deferred.

The only exception to this was Melchizedek, the mysterious king-priest of Shalem, who blessed him on his return from the slaughter of the Babylonian kings. However, Melchizedek was the exception that proved the rule; for he was more like God than man, being both the first and the last man in the history of the People of God lawfully to combine the roles of king and priest⁴¹. Indeed, he was the first recorded true king and "priest of the Most High God", who was called "Possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14.18). This title shows, according to St. Paul (Hebrews 7.3), that he was the type, not of any merely human king, but of Christ God, the Supreme King and Chief High Priest.⁴² Like Christ in His Divine generation, he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remaining a priest continually" (Hebrews 7.3). Again like Christ at the Last Supper, Melchizedek offers Abraham bread and wine, which is why Christ is called "a priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7.17). His offering is a figure of Christ's offering of His Body and Blood under the appearance of bread and wine.⁴³ So in being blessed by Melchizedek, the "king of peace" Abraham is blessed by Christ Himself, the true King of Peace.

The proverbial faith of Abraham, which merited for him the title "father of the faithful", was manifested, first, in his leaving Ur and setting out unquestioningly for the Promised Land. Nor was this simply a physical departure from the land of his fathers: it also involved breaking with their pagan beliefs. Even his father "served other gods" (Joshua 24.2).

Secondly, it was manifested in his believing God's promise that he would be a father of nations, in spite of the fact that he was very old and his wife was barren.

⁴¹ Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, *Zapiski rukovodstviushchaia k osnovatel'nomu razumeniu Knigi Bytia* (Notes Leading to a Fundamental Understanding of the Book of Genesis), Moscow, 1817, p. 78. Exceptions may be found in the history of the tiny kingdom of Montenegro in the Ottoman period.

⁴² Melchizedek's combining the roles of king and priest may also signify the Divine origin of both offices. See Protopriest Valentine Asmus, "O monarkhii i nashem k nej otnoshenii" ("On Monarchy and our Relationship to It"), *Radonezh*, N 2 (46), January, 1997, p. 4.

⁴³ In fact, Mar Jacob considered it to be no figure of the Eucharist but the Eucharist itself: "None, before the Cross, entered this order of spiritual ministration, except this man alone. Beholding the just Abraham worthy of communion with him, he separated part of his oblation and took it out to him to mingle him therewith. He bore forward bread and wine, but Body and Blood went forth, to make the Father of the nations a partaker of the Lord's Mysteries." ("A Homily on Melchizedek", *The True Vine*, Summer, 1989, no. 2, p. 44)

And thirdly and most strikingly, it was manifested in his continuing to believe in this promise even after God ordered him to kill Isaac.

Metropolitan Philaret writes: "The journey of Abram from the land of his birth to the promised land is an image of the journey of *self-abnegation*, by which man must pass from the condition of damaged nature to the condition of Grace.

"Every believer has the same commandment from God as the father of the faithful - to leave all and renounce himself. 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,' says the Lord (Matthew 10.37).

"Every believer is also promised 'the blessing of Abraham in Jesus Christ' (Galatians 3.14). 'There is no one who would leave home, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's, who would not receive now, in this time and with persecutions, one hundred times more houses and brothers and sisters (and fathers) and mothers and children, and in the age to come eternal life' (Mark 10.29,30).

"The believer who leaves his own will does God's with the same unlimited obedience with which Abram 'went, as the Lord told him'. God speaks to us in nature, in the Holy Scriptures, in the conscience, in the adventures of life ruled by His Providence. 'To go, as the Lord tells' is the rule in which is included the whole path of those seeking the coming heavenly city.

"Like Abram, the believer comes closer to God to the extent that he leaves himself behind; and like Abram, he thanks Him for His gifts of Grace. He will receive them only so as to return them to their origin with faithfulness: and wherever and whenever he receives them, he offers them as a sacrifice to God."⁴⁴

Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is cited by the Apostle James as the paragon "work of faith", whereby "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made manifest" (James 2.22). Moreover, it is the clearest Old Testament prefiguring of the central act of the New, in which "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3.16). And it merited for Abraham the first clear foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity - the visitation of the three angels speaking as one God at the oak of Mamre (Genesis 18).

St. Gregory Palamas takes Abraham's heroic work of faith as his main illustration of the difference between philosophical or scientific knowledge and the super-rational knowledge of faith: "I believe that our holy faith is, in a certain manner, a vision of our heart which goes beyond all sensation and all thought, for it transcends the mental powers of our soul. I mean by 'faith', not the Orthodox confession, but being unshakably established upon it and upon the promises of God. For how through faith do we see those things which are promised for that unending age which is to come? By the senses? But faith is 'the basis of things

⁴⁴ St. Philaret, *Zapiski*.

hoped for' (Hebrews 11.1); and there is no way in which that which is to come and is hoped for may be seen by the senses; which is why the Apostle added: 'the proof of things not seen'. Is there, then, some mental power which will see the things hoped for? But how could there be if they 'have not gone up into the heart of man' (I Corinthians 2.9)? What, then? Do we not see through faith the things that have been promised by God, since they transcend all sensual and mental activity? But all those who from the beginning of time sought the heavenly fatherland through works died, according to the Apostle, 'without having obtained the promises' (Hebrews 11.39), but saw and greeted them from afar. There is, then, both a vision and an understanding of the heart beyond all mental activity... Faith is this supra-mental vision, while the enjoyment of that which is believed in is a vision surpassing that vision...

"But let us dwell a little longer on faith and on the Divine and joyous contemplation which it procures for Christians: faith, the vehicle of the power of the Gospel, the life of the Apostles, the justification of Abraham, from which all righteousness begins, in which it ends, and by which 'every righteous man shall live' (Romans 1.7), while he who withdraws from it falls away from the Divine goodwill, for 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11.6); faith, which ever frees our race from every deception and establishes us in the truth and the truth in us, from which no-one will separate us, even if he takes us for madmen, we who through the true faith have gone out into an ecstasy beyond reasoning, witnessing both by word and deed that we are not 'being carried away by every wind of doctrine' (Ephesians 4.14), but possess that unique knowledge of the truth of the Christians and profess the most simple, most Divine and truly unerring contemplation. Let us then leave the future for the time being, let us consider the supra-mental contemplation which faith gives of those things which have happened from the beginning: 'It is by faith that we recognize that the ages were formed by the word of God, so that those things which are seen did not come to be from those which appear' (Hebrews 11.3). What mind could take in that all this which has come to be has come from that which is absolutely non-existent, and that by a word alone? For that which is accessible to the mental powers does not at all transcend them. Thus the wise men of the Greeks, understanding that no corruptible thing passes into non-existence, and no existent thing comes out of non-existence, believed that the world was without beginning or end. But the faith, surpassing the conceptions which come from a contemplation of created things, united us to the Word Who is above all and to the simple, unfabricated truth; and we have understood better than by a proof that all things were created, not only out of non-existence, but also by the word of God alone. What is this faith? Is it a natural or supernatural power? Supernatural, certainly. For 'no-one can come unto the Father except through the Son' (Matthew 11.27; John 10.9), Who has placed us above ourselves and turned us to unity with the Father Who gathers us together. Thus Paul 'received grace for obedience to the Faith' (Romans 1.5). Thus 'if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10.9). Thus those who have not seen and believed are more blessed than those who have seen and believed in Him Who lives after death and is the Leader of eternal life (John 20.29; Acts 3.15). For through the supercosmic

eyes of faith they have seen and venerated those things which the eye has not believed it can see and which reason cannot conceive.

"This is the victory which has conquered the world, even our faith' (I John 5.4). Paradoxical though it may be to say so, this faith is that which, in different ways and at different times, re-established the world which had previously fallen. Then it transformed it into a more Divine state, placing it above the heavens, and making a heaven out of the earth. What preserved the seeds of the second world? Was it not the faith of Noah? What made Abram Abraham and the father of many nations, like the sand and the stars in number? Was it not faith in the promises which at that time were incomprehensible? For he held his only-begotten heir ready for slaughter and, O wonder!, never ceased to believe that through him he would have many children. What, then? Did not the old man appear to be a fool to those who see things by reason? But the final issue showed, through the grace of God, that his faith was not folly but a knowledge surpassing all reasoning."⁴⁵

Thus the new beginning for the Church which God created in Abraham He created in the faith of Abraham, which is the faith in Christ. That Abraham's faith was precisely faith in *Christ* was witnessed by the Lord Himself when He said: "Abraham rejoiced to see My Day: he saw it, and was glad" (John 8.56). Indeed, Abraham's whole life is a model of the Christian life of faith demonstrated by works performed for God's sake. Purified and strengthened through a series of trials, in each of which he is called to obey God by performing a work of faith, in Abraham we see "faith working together with his works, and by works faith being made perfect" (James 2.22). These works of faith include: *exile from his native land* (Chaldea), *separation from his relatives* (Lot), *struggle against the enemies of the faith* (the four kings headed by the king of Babylon), *struggle against his fallen desires* (Pharaoh, Hagar), *reception of the sacraments* (circumcision as a figure of baptism, and bread and wine as a figure of the Eucharist), *charity* (rescuing his brother Lot and his household, the hospitality given to the Angels at the Oak of Mamre) and, finally, *the complete sacrifice of the heart to God* (the sacrifice of Isaac). The supreme demonstration of Abraham's faith was his belief that "God was able to raise [Isaac] from the dead" (Hebrews 11.19), which was a type of the Resurrection of Christ.

Since the foundation of the Church is the faith of Abraham, for Isaac Her God is "the God of Abraham", while for Jacob He was "the God of Abraham and Isaac", and for all succeeding generations He is "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob", or, more simply, "the God of our fathers". Thus our faith is a historical faith; we distinguish it from other faiths as being the faith of our fathers, and our God is distinguished from other gods as being the God of our fathers, and in particular the God of our father Abraham. And that is why we preserve the faith of our fathers in all its details; for as the Scripture says: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22.28).

⁴⁵ St. Gregory, *Triads*.

As we have seen, Abraham believed in God's promise that from his seed would come *the Seed*, in Whom all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 12.3). St. Paul explains that this Seed is Christ the Messiah and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3.16). In other words, as St. Theophan the Recluse writes, "the blessing given to him for his faith would be spread to all peoples, but not because of Abraham himself or all of his descendants, but because of One of his descendants – *his Seed*, Who is Christ; through Him all the tribes of the earth would receive the blessing."⁴⁶ Thus while Abraham is the father of the Jewish race, the chosen people of the Old Testament, the new beginning that God made in Abraham related not only to the Jews but to all peoples of all ages. In fact, the nation which Abraham founded was not defined genetically, but by faith; it was a nation of believers, of those who believe in Christ; for, as St. Paul says, "they which are of the faith, they are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3.7) - which faith the majority of the Jews of Christ's time did not share (John 8.33-58).

God's promises to Abraham and his descendants, known as *the Abrahamic Covenant*, prefigure the whole future history of the relationship between the City of God and the City of Man. They are so important that they are proclaimed in at least eight different versions, or "drafts" (Genesis 12.1-3, 12.7, 12.13,14-17, 14.18-20, 15.1-19, 16.10-12, 17.1-22, 22.17-18), not to speak of their repetition to his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. Each successive draft makes the Covenant a little more precise and far-reaching, in response to Abraham's gradual increase in spiritual stature.

The promises relate to the two peoples who descend from the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac is the true heir of Abraham, the freeborn son of Sarah, who inherits the promises and blessings given to Abraham in full measure, being also a man of faith of whom it is also said that in his Seed, Christ, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 26.3-4). Ishmael is the son of a slave, Hagar, and does not inherit those blessings, although he does receive the promise that his heirs will be strong and numerous.

Now according to the popular conception, Isaac is the ancestor of the Jews, and Ishmael – of the Arab peoples. Certainly, the description of Ishmael's race as "wild" and warlike that is given by the Angel to Hagar (Genesis 16.10-12) appears to correspond closely, as St. Philaret of Moscow points out, to the character and life-style of the Arabs until Mohammed, who were constantly fighting and lived "in the presence of their brethren" – that is, near, or to the east of, the descendants of Abraham from his other concubine, Hetturah – the Ammonites, Moabites and Idumeans.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie na Poslanie k Galatam* (Interpretation of the Epistle to the Galatians), 3.16.

⁴⁷ St. Philaret, *Zapiski*, part 2, p. 98.

A similar interpretation appears to stand true for the next generation, to Isaac's sons Jacob and Esau, who are said to correspond to the Jews (Jacob), on the one hand, and the Idumeans (Esau), on the other. This fits very well with the Lord's words to Isaac's wife Rebecca, that "two nations are in thy womb..., and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder [Esau] shall serve the younger [Jacob]" (Genesis 25.23); for the Jews, from Jacob to David to the Hasmonean kings, almost always showed themselves to be stronger than the Idumeans and often held them in bondage. It was only towards the Coming of Christ that an Idumean, Herod the Great, reversed the relationship by killing the Hasmoneans and becoming the first non-Jewish king of Israel - the event which, according to the prophecy of Jacob, would usher in the reign of the Messiah (Genesis 49.10).

But to return to the spiritual interpretation of the Apostle Paul: the two peoples - or two covenants, as he calls them - represent, not racial, but *spiritual* categories: "Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4.22-26).

In other words, Isaac stands for *the Christians*, both Jewish and Gentile, while Ishmael stands for *the Jews who reject Christ*. For the Christians, - and this includes the Jews before Christ who believed in His Coming, - become through faith in Christ the freeborn heirs of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, whereas the Jews, by remaining slaves to the Law of Moses and refusing to believe in Christ, show themselves to be the children of the bondwoman, and therefore cannot inherit the promises together with the Christians. Moreover, it can be said of the Jews, as of the men of Ishmael's race, that ever since they rejected Christ they have become "wild", with their hands against all, and the hands of all against them, always striving for "freedom" but remaining voluntarily in slavery to the Law (and to their own kahal).⁴⁸ It may therefore be that the age-old phenomenon of mutual enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles, of anti-semitism and anti-Gentilism, is prophesied in these verses.

That Isaac is the ancestor of Christ and the Christians is indicated also by his choice of wife, Rebecca, who signifies the Bride of Christ, the Church. Rebecca is freeborn, being of the family of Abraham, and is an even closer image of the Church than Sarah; for she is Isaac's only wife as the Church is Christ's only Bride. Moreover, the Holy Fathers see in the story of the wooing of Rebecca a parable of Christ's wooing of the Church, in which Eleazar, signifying the Holy Spirit, conveyed Isaac's proposal to her at the well, which

⁴⁸ St. Philaret, *Zapiski*, p. 100.

signifies Baptism, and gave her gifts of precious jewels, signifying the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed at Chrismation.⁴⁹

Ishmael, on the other hand, receives a wife from outside the holy family – from Egypt. And she is chosen for him, not by a trusted member of the family, but by his rejected mother, the slave-woman Hagar.

The relationship between Isaac and Ishmael is almost exactly mirrored in the relationship between Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau. Thus St. Philaret comments on the verse: "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, Israel for His own possession" (Psalm 134.4), as follows: "This election refers in the first place to the person of Jacob, and then to his descendants, and finally and most of all to his spirit of faith: for 'not all [coming from Israel] are of Israel' (Romans 9.6). The two latter elections, that is, the election of the race of Israel, and the election of the spiritual Israel, are included in the first, that is, in the personal election of Jacob: the one prophetically, and the other figuratively.

"The reality of this prefigurement in Holy Scripture is revealed from the fact that the Apostle Paul, while reasoning about the rejection of the carnal, and the election of the spiritual Israel, produces in explanation the example of Jacob and Esau (Romans 9), and also from the fact that the same Apostle, in warning the believing Jews against the works of the flesh, threatens them with the rejection of Esau (Hebrews 12.16, 17).

"And so Jacob is an image, in the first place, of the spiritual Israel, or the Christian Church in general, and consequently Esau, on the contrary, is an image of the carnal Israel.

"Esau and Jacob are twins, of whom the smaller overcomes the larger: in the same day the spiritual Israel was born together with the carnal, but, growing up in secret, is finally revealed and acquires ascendancy over him.

"Isaac destines his blessing first of all to Esau, but then gives it to Jacob: in the same way the carnal Israel is given the promises from the Heavenly Father, but they are fulfilled in the spiritual [Israel].

"While Esau looks for a hunting catch in order to merit his father's blessing, Jacob, on the instructions of his mother, to whom God has revealed his destinies, puts on the garments of the first-born and seizes it before him. While the carnal Israel supposes that by the external works of the law it will acquire the earthly blessing of God, the spiritual Israel, with Grace leading it, having put on the garments of the merits and righteousness of the First-Born of all creation, 'is blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (Ephesians 1.3).

⁴⁹ St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Isaac, or the Soul*.

“The sword of battle and continuing slavery is given to the rejected Esau as his inheritance. And for the carnal Israel, from the time of its rejection, there remained only the sword of rebellion, inner enslavement and external humiliation.

“The rejected Esau seeks the death of Jacob; but he withdraws and is saved. The rejected old Israel rises up to destroy the new; but God hides it in the secret of His habitation, and then exalts it in strength and glory...”⁵⁰

As for the wives of Jacob, they also, like Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau, signify the spiritual Israel of the Church and the carnal Israel of the non-believing Jews. Thus Leah, whom Jacob married first, signifies with her weak eyes and fertile womb the weak faith of the carnal Israel and its abundant offspring. (It is precisely blindness that “shall befall Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in” (Romans 11.25)). But Rachel, whom he married later but loved first and most strongly, signifies the New Testament Church, which the Lord loved first but married later. For the Church of the Gentiles, that of Enoch and Noah and Abraham before his circumcision, existed before that of Moses and David and the Old Testament Prophets. Moreover, Rachel brought forth her children in pain because the New Testament Church brought forth her first children in the blood of martyrdom, and is destined to inherit spiritual blessedness only through suffering – “we must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14.22).

Christ recognized that the unbelieving Jews were from a genetic, physical point of view, the children of Abraham, saying: “I know that you are Abraham’s seed” (John 8.37). And yet only a few moments later He denied them this honour, saying: “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. This did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father... Ye are of your father, the devil” (John 8.39-41, 44). Ultimately, therefore, it is not physical, genetic descent that constitutes sonship from Abraham, but faith, the faith of Christ, and the good works that demonstrate that faith.

Thus only Christians belong to the chosen people. As St. Justin the Martyr writes in the second century A.D.: “The seed is divided after Jacob and comes down through Judah and Phares and Jesse to David. Now this is surely a sign that some of you Jews are surely the children of Abraham, and that you will share in the inheritance of Christ; but... a greater part of your people... drink of bitter and godless doctrine while you spurn the word of God.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ St. Philaret, *Zapiski*, part 3, pp. 27-28.

⁵¹ St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 34.

4. FROM THEOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY: (2) JOSEPH

The distinguishing mark of the Hebrew nation and state was its claim, quite contrary to the claims of the Babylonian and Egyptian despotisms, that its origin and end lay outside itself, in the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It took its origin, as we have seen, from a direct call by God to Abraham to leave his homeland, the Sumerian city of Ur, and go into a land which God had promised him. The God of Abraham was different from the false gods of polytheism in several ways.

First, He revealed Himself as completely transcendent to the material world, being worshipped neither in idols nor in men nor in the material world as a whole, but rather as the spiritual, immaterial Creator of all things, visible and invisible. Secondly, He did not reveal Himself to all, nor could anyone acquire faith in Him by his own efforts, but He revealed Himself only to those with whom He chose to enter into communion - Abraham, first of all. Thirdly, He was a jealous God Who required that His followers worship Him alone, as being the only true God. This was contrary to the custom in the pagan world, where ecumenism was the vogue - that is, all the gods, whoever they were and wherever they were worshipped, were considered true.

The nation of the Hebrews, therefore, was founded on an exclusively religious - and religiously exclusive - principle. In Ur, on the other hand, and in the other proto-communist states of the ancient world, the governing principle of life was not religion, still less the nation, but the state. Or rather, its governing principle was a *religion of the state* as incarnate in its ruler; for everything, including religious worship, was subordinated to the needs of the state, and to the will of the leader of the state, the god-king.

But Israel was founded upon a rejection of this idolatry of the state and its leader, and an exclusive subordination to the will of the God of Abraham, Who could in no way be identified with any man or state or material thing whatsoever. It followed that the criterion for membership of the nation of the Hebrews was neither race (for the Hebrews were not clearly distinguished racially from the other Semitic tribes of the Fertile Crescent, at any rate at the beginning, and God promised not only to multiply Abraham's seed, but also that "in thy seed shall *all* the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22.18)), nor citizenship of a certain state (for they had no such citizenship at the beginning), nor residence in a particular geographical region (for it was not until 500 years after Abraham that the Hebrews conquered Palestine). The foundation of the nation, and criterion of its membership, was *faith*, faith in the God Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - and acceptance of the rite of circumcision. At the same time, the very exclusivity of this faith meant that Israel was chosen above all other nations to be the Lord's: "in the division of the nations of the whole earth, He set a ruler over every people; but Israel is the Lord's portion." (Wisdom of Sirach 17.17).

Some half a millenium later, in the time of Moses, the Hebrews were again living under another absolutist regime - this time, Pharaonic Egypt. And God again called them out of the despotism - this time, through Moses. He called them to leave Egypt and return to the promised land.

Now the Early Kingdom of Egypt was founded in about 3000 BC, with the earliest of the pyramids being built between 2700 and 2400 BC. This is consistent with the date of the Flood according to the Septuagint text of the Bible that is accepted by the Orthodox Church: 3289 BC. Egypt therefore represents, with Babylon, the oldest urban civilization in world history since the Flood.

We have seen that all the major States of antiquity were absolutist monarchies, or despotisms. The defining characteristic of such a State is the concentration of all power, secular and religious, in the hands of one man. In pagan societies this is combined with worship of the ruler as a god. Insofar as the worship of a created being is a blasphemous lie and places the state under the control of "the father of lies", Satan, such a state can be called a *satanocracy*. Israel was the opposite of this State system insofar as it worshipped no man as God, and had no ruler but God; and as such it can be called a *theocracy*.

However, pure theocracy is an extreme rarity and cannot in practice be sustained for long: the only true theocracy in history has been the Church of Christ - which is not, and cannot be, a State like other States, since its essence and heart is not of this world, being in essence the kingdom that is not of this world. If, therefore, the people of God are to have a State organization, a system of government that comes as close as possible to rule by God must be devised. The form of government that is closest to theocracy is what Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov called "delegated theocracy" - that is, *autocracy*, whose essence consists in a division of powers between a king and a high priest, with both recognizing the supreme lordship of the One True God.

The very first, embryonic example of autocracy is to be found, paradoxically, in Egypt - the Egypt of the time of Joseph. For the formal ruler of Egypt, Pharaoh, had placed virtually all power in the hands of Joseph, a servant of the True God. As Joseph himself said: "God has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45.8). The Egyptians also, following Joseph's example, showed great honour to his father, Jacob. This honour was particularly manifest at the burial of Jacob, when "all Pharaoh's servants and the palace dignitaries, joined by all the dignitaries of the land of Egypt" (Genesis 50.7), went up with Joseph and his family to bury the patriarch in Canaan.

The relationship between father and son in Egypt was similar to that of the "symphony of powers" in Byzantium; for just as Joseph recognized the spiritual leadership of his father Jacob, so Jacob recognized the royal dignity of his son in his bowing down to his cross-like staff. As the Church says: "Israel, foreseeing the future, did reverence to the top of Joseph's staff

[Genesis 47.31], revealing how in times to come the most glorious Cross should be the safeguard of royal power.”⁵²

It follows, according to St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, that it was the Hebrew Joseph, and not any of the pagan Pharaohs, who was “the founder of autocratic (or monarchical) rule in Egypt”⁵³, transforming it from patriarchal simplicity to a fully organized state with permanent citizenship and a land tax, which Joseph instituted to prepare for the years of famine, and which lasted, essentially, for hundreds of years. Records show that there were dramatic fluctuations in the level of Nile flooding, and therefore of the harvest yield, during the reigns of the 19th- and early 18th-century BC Pharaohs. One of those Pharaohs was Senwosret III, in whose time, as Ian Wilson writes, “uniquely in all Egyptian history, the great estates formerly owned by Egypt’s nobles passed to the monarchy. They did so in circumstances that are far from clear, unless the Biblical Joseph story might just happen to hold the key: ‘So Joseph gained possession of all the farmland in Egypt for Pharaoh, every Egyptian having sold his field because the famine was too much for them; thus the land passed over to Pharaoh’ (Genesis 47.20). So could Senwosret III or Amenemhet III, or both, have had an Asiatic chancellor called Joseph, who manipulated the circumstances of a prolonged national famine to centralise power in the monarchy’s favour?”⁵⁴

Of course, Egypt remained a pagan country, and on Jacob’s and Joseph’s deaths the embryonic “symphony of powers” that existed between them and Pharaoh disappeared, being replaced by the absolutist despotism of the Pharaoh “who knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1.8) and hated Israel. It was in the fire of conflict with this absolutist ruler that the first real autocracy based on a symphony with the One True God, Israel, came into being.

⁵² *Menaion*, September 14, Exaltation of the Cross, Mattins, Canon, Canticle 7, troparion.

⁵³ St. Ignaty, “Iosif. Sviaschennaia povest’ iz knigi Bytia” (Joseph. A Holy Tale from the Book of Genesis), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), volume II, Moscow, 2001, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *The Bible is History*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 37.

5. FROM THEOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY: (3) MOSES

The new, God-pleasing kind of kingdom, which we have called *autocracy*, would emerge after a long process lasting hundreds of years. Its embryonic beginning was created under the leadership of Moses, of whom the Church sings: "Thou, O Moses, didst preserve the order of sacrifice precious to God, and the kingdom and the priesthood."⁵⁵ This embryonic state finally acquired a territorial base and stability under Kings Saul and David...

The first battle between Church and State in history was Abraham's battle with the Babylonian kings. The second took place between the people of God led by Moses, on the one hand, and the Egyptian Pharaoh, on the other. For Egypt was another totalitarian society that rose up against the True God; its apex was the cult of the Pharaoh, the god-king who was identified with one or another of the gods associated with the sun. The book of *Exodus* tells us how he was defeated in the first "war of national liberation" in history. (However, the Egyptians did not record the fact of his defeat, since gods, according to the Egyptian conception, could not fail.)⁵⁶

Egyptian religion was a very complicated mixture of creature-worship and ancestor-worship. Thus Diodorus Siculus writes: "The gods, they say, had been originally mortal men, but gained their immortality on account of wisdom and public benefits to mankind, some of them having also become kings; and some have the same names, when interpreted, with the heavenly deities... Helios [Re], they say, was the first king of the Egyptians, having the same name with the celestial luminary [the sun]..."⁵⁷

"Although Egypt had a pantheon of gods," writes Phillips, "the principal deity was the sun god Re (also called Ra), for whose worship a massive religious centre had grown up at Heliopolis, some fifty kilometres to the north of Memphis. It was believed that Re had once ruled over Egypt personally but, wearied by the affairs of mankind, had retired to the heavens, leaving the pharaohs to rule in his stead. Called 'the son of Re', the pharaoh was considered a half-human, half-divine being, through whose body Re himself could manifest.⁵⁸ However, as the falcon god Horus was the protector of Egypt, the king was also seen as his personification. By the Third Dynasty, therefore, Re and Horus had been assimilated as one god: Re-Herakhte.

⁵⁵ *Menaion*, September 4, Mattins, canon, Ode 7, troparion.

⁵⁶ Graham Phillips has recently claimed to have discovered traces of this defeat in Egyptian archaeology. According to his theory, the Pharaoh of Moses' time was Smenkhkare, whose tomb was plundered and desecrated by his brother and successor, the famous Tutankhamun, in punishment for his failure to avert the catastrophe of the ten plagues of Egypt (*Act of God*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1998). However, in favour of the traditional ascription to Rameses II is the fact that Rameses' body was found filled with seawater – which is consistent with his having been drowned in the Red Sea while pursuing the Israelites.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, II, 1.

⁵⁸ Thus a typical letter to a pharaoh began: "To my king, my lord, my sun-god" (Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London: Longman, 1967, p. 45, note).

Depicted as a human male with a falcon's head, this composite deity was considered both the god of the sun and the god of Egypt, and his incarnation on earth was the pharaoh himself. Only the king could expect an individual eternity with the gods, everyone else could only hope to participate in this vicariously, through their contribution to his well-being."⁵⁹

The Egyptian Pharaoh was, according to John Bright, "no viceroy ruling by divine election, nor was he a man who had been deified: he was god – Horus visible among his people. In theory, all Egypt was his property, all her resources at the disposal of his projects"⁶⁰ – and these, of course, were on the most massive scale. "The system was an absolutism under which no Egyptian was in theory free,... the lot of the peasant must have been unbelievably hard."⁶¹ Thus according to Herodotus, the largest of the pyramids, that of Pharaoh Khufu, was built on the labour of 100,000 slaves. It is far larger than any of the cathedrals or temples built by any other religion in any other country, and it has recently been discovered to contain the largest boat found anywhere in the world.⁶²

Pharaoh was the mediator between heaven and earth. Without him, it was believed, the world would descend into chaos; he guaranteed that the sun shone, the Nile inundated the land and the crops grew. As Silverman writes: "The king's identification with the supreme earthly and solar deities of the Egyptian pantheon suggests that the king in death embodied the duality that characterized the ancient Egyptian cosmos. The deified ruler represented both continuous regeneration (Osiris) and the daily cycle of rebirth (as Re). In their understanding of the cosmos, the ancient Egyptians were accustomed to each of their deities possessing a multiplicity of associations and roles. It was a natural extension of this concept for them to view the deified Pharaoh in a similar way".⁶³

All the dead Pharaohs (with the exception of the "disgraced" Hatshepsut and the "heretic" Akhenaton) were worshipped in rites involving food offerings and prayers. Even some non-royal ancestors were worshipped; they were called "able spirits of Re" because it was thought that they interceded for the living with the sun god. The pyramids and the tombs in the Valley of the Kings were all built, at colossal cost and effort, with only one religious aim: to ensure the Pharaoh's happiness in the life after death.

Now for four hundred years after Joseph, the Hebrews lived as slaves of the Egyptian pharaohs. But they were rescued from slavery by a Hebrew who had been brought up in Pharaoh's family, having acquired an Egyptian education – Moses. The story of the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt under Moses' leadership is the foundation story of the Hebrew people.

⁵⁹ Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁰ Bright, *A History of Israel*, London: SCM Press, 1980, p. 39.

⁶¹ Bright, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 40.

⁶² Barbara Watterson, *Ancient Egypt*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing Company, 1998, pp. 18-19.

⁶³ David P. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, London: Piatkus, 1998, pp. 18-19.

During the life of Moses, a fourth element besides faith, sacrifices and circumcision was added to the life of Israel: the law. The law was necessary for several reasons. First, by the time of Moses, the Israelites were no longer an extended family of a few hundred people, as in the time of Abraham and the Patriarchs, which could be governed by the father of the family without the need of any written instructions or governmental bureaucracy. Since their migration to Egypt in the time of Joseph, they had multiplied and become a nation of four hundred thousand people, which no one man could rule unaided. Secondly, the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt had introduced them again to the lures of the pagan world, and a law was required to protect them from these lures. And thirdly, in order to escape from Egypt, pass through the desert and conquer the Promised Land in the face of many enemies, a quasi-military organization and discipline was required.

And so the law was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Its God-giveness was vital. It meant, as Paul Johnson points out, that “the Israelites were creating a new kind of society. Josephus later used the word ‘theocracy’. This he defined as ‘placing all sovereignty in the hands of God’... The Israelites might have magistrates of one kind or another but their rule was vicarious since God made the law and constantly intervened to ensure it was obeyed. The fact that God ruled meant that in practice his law ruled. And since all were equally subject to the law, the system was the first to embody the double merits of the rule of law and equality before the law. Philo called it ‘democracy’, which he described as ‘the most law-abiding and best of constitutions’. But by democracy he did not mean rule by all the people; he defined it as a form of government which ‘honours equality and has law and justice for its rulers’. He might have called the Jewish system, more accurately, ‘democratic theocracy’, because in essence that is what it was.”⁶⁴

But there was no democracy in the modern sense. Although every man in Israel was equal under the law of God, which was also the law of Israel, there were no elections, every attempt to rebel against Moses’ leadership was fiercely punished (Numbers 16), and there was no way in which the people could alter the law to suit themselves, which is surely the essence of democracy in the modern sense. Even when, at Jethro’s suggestion, lower-level magistrates and leaders were appointed, they were appointed by Moses, not by any kind of popular vote (Deuteronomy 1).

One of the major characteristics of the Mosaic law, notes Johnson, is that “there is no distinction between the religious and the secular – all are one – or between civil, criminal and moral law. This indivisibility had important practical consequences. In Mosaic legal theory, all breaches of the law offend God. All crimes are sins, just as all sins are crimes. Offences are absolute wrongs, beyond the power of man unaided to pardon or expunge. Making restitution to the offended mortal is not enough; God requires expiation, too,

⁶⁴ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1995, 1998, pp. 40-41.

and this may involve drastic punishment. Most law-codes of the ancient Near East are property-orientated, people themselves being forms of property whose value can be assessed. The Mosaic code is God-oriented. For instance, in other codes, a husband may pardon an adulterous wife and her lover. The Mosaic code, by contrast, insists both must be put to death...

“In Mosaic theology, man is made in God’s image, and so his life is not just valuable, it is sacred. To kill a man is an offence against God so grievous that the ultimate punishment, the forfeiture of life, must follow; money is not enough. The horrific fact of execution thus underscores the sanctity of human life. Under Mosaic law, then, many men and women met their deaths whom the secular codes of surrounding societies would have simply permitted to compensate their victims or their victims’ families.

“But the converse is also true, as a result of the same axiom. Whereas other codes provided the death penalty for offences against property, such as looting during a fire, breaking into a house, serious trespass by night, or theft of a wife, in the Mosaic law no property offence is capital. Human life is too sacred where the rights of property alone are violated. It also repudiates vicarious punishment: the offences of parents must not be punished by the execution of sons or daughters, or the husband’s crime by the surrender of the wife to prostitution... Moreover, not only is human life sacred, the human person (being in God’s image) is precious... Physical cruelty [in punishment] is kept to the minimum.”⁶⁵

A major part of the Mosaic law concerned a priesthood and what we would now call the Church with its rites and festivals. The priesthood was entrusted to Moses' brother Aaron and one of the twelve tribes of Israel, that of the Levites. As St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: “Moses and Aaron... were for the ancients a fine forefigure of Christ... Emmanuel, Who, by a most wise dispensation, is in one and the same Person both Law-Giver and First Priest... In Moses we should see Christ as Law-Giver, and in Aaron - as First Priest.”⁶⁶

Thus already in the time of Moses we have the beginnings of a separation between Church and State, and of what the Byzantines called the "symphony" between the two powers, as represented by Moses and Aaron.

That the Levites constituted the beginnings of what we would now call the clergy of the Church was indicated by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow in his polemic against the attempts of the tsar to confiscate church lands: “Have you not heard that God said that any outsider who comes close to the sacred things will be given up to death? By outsider here is understood not only he who is a stranger to Israel from the pagans, but everyone who is not of the tribe of Levi, like Kore, Dathan and Abiram, whom God did not choose, and

⁶⁵ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 34.

⁶⁶ St. Cyril, in Vyacheslav Manyagin, *Apologia Groznogo Tsaria* (Apology for the Awesome Tsar), Moscow, 2004, p. 167.

whom, the impious ones, a flame devoured; and King Uzziah laid his hand on the ark to support it, and God struck him and he died (II Kings 6.6,7)."⁶⁷

However, it is important to realize that there was no radical separation of powers in the modern sense. Israel was a theocratic state ruled directly by God, Who revealed His will through His chosen servants Moses and Aaron. The Church, the State and the People were not three different entities or organizations, but three different aspects of a single organism, the whole of which was subject to God alone. That is why it was so important that the leader should be chosen by God. In the time of the judges, this seems always to have been the case; for when an emergency arose God sent His Spirit upon a man chosen by Him (cf. Judges 6.34), and the people, recognizing this, then elected him as their judge (cf. Judges 11.11). And if there was no emergency, or if the people were not worthy of a God-chosen leader, then God did not send His Spirit and no judge was elected. In those circumstances "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21.25) - in other words, there was anarchy. The lesson was clear: if theocracy is removed, then sooner or later there will be anarchy - that is, no government at all.

The unity of Israel was therefore religious, not political - or rather, it was religio-political. It was created by the history of deliverance from the satanocracies of Babylon and Egypt and maintained by a continuing allegiance and obedience to God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God Who appeared to Moses and Joshua, - as their only King. Neither Abraham nor Moses was a king. Rather it was said to Abraham by God: "Kings will come *from* you" (Genesis 17.6; cf. 17.16, 35.2). And Moses was a lawgiver, a priest and prophet rather than a king. Early Israel was therefore not a kingdom - or rather, it was a kingdom whose king was God alone. As Tikhomirov writes: "According to the law of Moses, no State was established at that time, but the nation was just organized on tribal principles, with a common worship of God. The Lord was recognized as the Master of Israel in a moral sense, as of a spiritual union, that is, as a Church."⁶⁸

Ancient Israel, in other words, was a Theocracy, ruled not by a king or priest, but by God Himself. And strictly speaking the People of God remained a Theocracy, without a formal State structure, until the time of the Prophet Samuel, who anointed the first King of Israel, Saul. Early Israel before the kings had rulers, but these rulers were neither hereditary monarchs nor were they elected to serve the will of the people. They were charismatic leaders, called judges, who were elected because they served the will of God alone.

And they were elected by God, not the people, who simply had to follow the man God had elected, as when He said to Gideon: "Go in this thy might,

⁶⁷ Nikon, in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon* (Patriarch Nikon), Warsaw: Synodal Typography, 1931, part II, p. 36.

⁶⁸ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), Moscow, 1997, p. 126.

and thou shalt save Israel from the Midianites: have I not sent thee?" (Judges 6.14). That is why, when the people offered to make Gideon and his descendants kings in a kind of hereditary dynasty, he refused, saying: "I shall not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8.23).

6. FROM THEOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY: (4) SAUL AND DAVID

Nevertheless, it was God's plan that Israel should have a "delegated theocracy", a king who would be in all things obedient to Himself. But the fulfillment of that plan would have to wait until the Israelites had permanently settled a *land*. For "a king is an advantage to a *land with cultivated fields*" (Ecclesiastes 5.8).

However, to ensure that such a king would be a true autocrat, and not a pagan-style despot, the Lord laid down certain conditions to the people through Moses: "When thou shalt come unto the land which the Lord thy God shall choose, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, 'I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me', thou shalt surely set a king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother... And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deuteronomy 17.14-15,18-20).

Thus God blessed the institution of the monarchy, but stipulated three conditions if His blessing was to rest on it. First, the people must itself desire to have a king placed over it. Secondly, the king must be someone "whom the Lord thy God shall choose"; a true king is chosen by God, not by man. Such a man will always be a "brother", that is a member of the People of God, of the Church: if he is not, then God has not chosen him. Thirdly, he will govern in accordance with the Law of God, which he will strive to fulfil in all its parts.

In the period from Moses to Saul, the people were ruled by the Judges, many of whom, like Joshua, Jephtha and Gideon, were truly God-fearing, charismatic leaders. However, towards the end of the period, since "there was no king in Israel; everyone did what seemed right to him" (Judges 21.25), and barbaric acts, such as that which almost led to the extermination of the tribe of Benjamin, are recorded. In their desperation at the mounting anarchy, the people called on God through the Prophet Samuel to give them a king. God fulfilled their request, but since the people's motivation in seeking a king was not pure, He gave them at first a king who brought them more harm than good. For while Saul was a mighty man of war and temporarily expanded the frontiers of Israel, he persecuted true piety, as represented by the future King David and the prophet Gad, and he disobeyed the Church, as represented by the Judge and Prophet Samuel and the high priests Abiathar and Ahimelech.

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Some democrats have argued that the Holy Scriptures do not approve of kingship. This is not true: kingship as such is never condemned in Holy Scripture. Rather, it is considered the norm of political leadership, as we see in the following passages: "Blessed are thou, O land, when thou hast a king from a noble family" (Ecclesiastes 10.17); "The heart of the king is in the hand of God: He turns it wherever He wills (Proverbs 21.1); "He sends kings upon thrones, and girds their loins with a girdle" (Job 12.18); "He appoints kings and removes them" (Daniel 2.21); "Thou, O king, art a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given a powerful and honourable and strong kingdom in every place where the children of men dwell" (Daniel 2.37-38); "Listen, therefore, O kings, and understand...; for your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High" (Wisdom 6.1,3).

The tragedy of the story of the first Israelite king, Saul, did not consist in the fact that the Israelites sought a king for themselves - as we have seen, God did not condemn kingship as such. After all, the sacrament of kingly anointing, which was performed for the first time by the Prophet Samuel on Saul, gave the earthly king the grace to serve the Heavenly King as his true Sovereign. The tragedy consisted in the fact that the Israelites sought a king "like [those of] the other nations around" them (Deuteronomy 17.14), - in other words, a pagan-style king who would satisfy the people's notions of kingship rather than God's, - and that this desire amounted to apostasy in the eyes of the Lord, the only true King of Israel.

Thus the Lord said to Samuel: "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should rule over them... Now therefore listen to their voice. However, protest solemnly to them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them" (I Kings (I Samuel) 8.4-9). And then Samuel painted for them the image of a harsh, totalitarian ruler of the kind that was common in the Ancient World. These kings, as well as having total political control over their subjects, were often worshipped by them as gods; so that "kingship" as understood in the Ancient World meant both the loss of political freedom and alienation from the true and living God.

God allowed the introduction of this despotic kind of kingship into Israel because the religious principle had grown weak. For the history of the kings begins with the corruption of the priests, the sons of Eli, who were in possession of the ark at the time of its capture. Thus for the kings' subsequent oppression of the people both the priests and the people bore responsibility.

However, God in His mercy did not always send such totalitarian rulers upon His people, and the best of the kings, such as David, Josiah and Hezekiah, were in obedience to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Nevertheless, since kingship was introduced into Israel from a desire to imitate the pagans, it was a retrograde step. It represented the introduction of a second, worldly principle of allegiance into what had been a society bound

together by religious bonds alone, a schism in the soul of the nation which, although seemingly inevitable in the context of the times, meant the loss for ever of that pristine simplicity which had characterised Israel up to then.

And yet everything seemed to go well at first. Samuel anointed Saul, saying: "The Lord anoints thee as ruler of His inheritance of Israel, and you will rule over the people of the Lord and save them from out of the hand of their enemies" (I Kings 10.1). Filled with the Spirit of the Lord, Saul defeated the enemies of Israel, the Ammonites and the Philistines. But the schism which had been introduced into the life of the nation began to express itself also in the life of their king, with tragic consequences.

First, before a major battle with the Philistines, the king grew impatient when Samuel the priest delayed his coming to perform a sacrifice. So he performed the sacrifice himself without waiting for Samuel. For this sin, the sin of the invasion of the Church's sphere by the State, Samuel prophesied that the kingdom - a Kingdom that would last forever - would be taken away from Saul and given to a man after God's heart. "For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" (I Kings 13.13-14). That man, of course, was David, who, by becoming the ancestor of Christ, would become the founder of an eternal Kingdom.

The example of Saul was quoted by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow: "Listen to what happened to Saul, the first king of Israel. The Word of God said to Samuel: 'I have repented that I sent Saul to the kingdom, for he has ceased to follow Me.' What did Saul do that God should reject him? He, it is said, 'did not follow My counsels' (I Kings 15.10-28)... This is the Word of God, and not the word of man: 'I made you ruler over the tribes of Israel and anointed you to the kingdom of Israel, and not to offer sacrifices and whole-burnt offerings,' teaching for all future times that the priesthood is higher than the kingdom, and that he who wishes for more loses that which is his own."⁶⁹

Saul's second sin was to spare Agag, the king of the Amalekites, together with the best of his livestock, instead of killing them all, as God had commanded. His excuse was: "because I listened to the voice of the people" (I Kings 15.20). In other words, he abdicated his God-given authority and *became, spiritually speaking, a democrat*, listening to the people rather than to God. And so Samuel said: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord also shall reject thee from being king over Israel" (I Kings 15.23)... It was no accident therefore, that it was an Amalekite who killed Saul at Mount Gilboa and brought his crown to David...

To modern readers Saul's sin might seem small. However, it must be understood in the context of the previous history of Israel, in which neither Moses nor any of the judges (except, perhaps, Samson), had disobeyed the

⁶⁹ Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 17.

Lord. That is why Samuel said to Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry" (I Kings 15.22-23). For even a king can rebel, even a king is in obedience - to the King of kings. Only the absolutist despot feels that there is nobody above him, that there is no law that he, too, must obey. His power is absolute; whereas the power of the autocrat is limited, if not by man and the laws of men, at any rate by the law of God, whose independent guardian and teacher is the priesthood of the Church.

To emphasize the truth that disobedience to God "is as the sin of witchcraft", Saul then falls into the most serious sin of consulting a witch on the eve of his last battle against the Philistines. Thus he asked the witch of Endor to summon the soul of Samuel from Hades, although he himself had passed laws condemning necromancy. It did him no good: the next day, at Gilboa, he lost the battle and his life...⁷⁰ "So Saul died," according to the chronicler, "because of his transgression which he committed against the Lord... by seeking advice from a ghost... Therefore He slew him and gave the kingdom to David..." (I Chronicles 10.13, 14).

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The falling away of Saul led directly to the first major schism in the history of the State of Israel. For after Saul's death, the northern tribes (Ephraim, first of all) supported the claim of Saul's surviving son to the throne, while the southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) supported David. Although David suppressed this rebellion, and although, for David's sake, the Lord did not allow a schism during the reign of his son Solomon, it erupted again and became permanent after Solomon's death...

The greatness of David lay in the fact that he represented the true autocrat, who both closed the political schism that had opened between north and south, and closed the schism that was just beginning to open up between the sacred and the profane, the Church and the State. Indeed, according to the author of the two books of Chronicles, it was David's solicitude for the Church and her liturgical worship that was the most important fact about him. As Patrick Henry Reardon points out, nineteen chapters are devoted to David, and of these nineteen "the Chronicler allotted no fewer than 11 - over half - to describe the king's solicitude for Israel's proper worship (I Chronicles 13; 15-16 and 22-29). This material includes the transfer of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, the organization of the priestly and Levitical ministries, preparations for the sacred music, and David's lengthy instructions to Solomon with respect to the temple.

"According to the Chronicler, David not only made all the arrangements for the consecration of the temple and the organization of the worship (I

⁷⁰ See St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Witch of Endor: A Letter to Bishop Theodosius*, translated in *Living Orthodoxy*, #124, vol. XXI, N 4, July-August, 2000, pp. 24-26.

Chronicles 28.19), he did so by the Lord's own command (II Chronicles 29.15). Even the musical instruments used in the worship are credited to David (II Chronicles 29.17; cf. Nehemiah 12.36)."⁷¹

"Like Gideon," notes Paul Johnson, David "grasped that [Israel] was indeed a theocracy and not a normal state. Hence the king could never be an absolute ruler on the usual oriental pattern. Nor, indeed, could the state, however governed, be absolute either. It was inherent in Israelite law even at this stage that, although everyone had responsibilities and duties to society as a whole, society - or its representative, the king, or the state - could under no circumstances possess unlimited authority over the individual. Only God could do that. The Jews, unlike the Greeks and later the Romans, did not recognize such concepts as city, state, community as abstracts with legal personalities and rights and privileges. You could commit sins against man, and of course against God; and these sins were crimes; but there was no such thing as a crime/sin against the state.

"This raises a central dilemma about Israelite, later Judaic, religion and its relationship with temporal power. The dilemma can be stated quite simply: could the two institutions coexist, without one fatally weakening the other?"⁷²

The reign of David proved that State and Church could not only coexist, but also strengthen each other. In a certain sense, the anointed king in the Israelite kingdom could be said to have had the primacy over the priesthood. Thus David appears to have ordered the building of the temple without any prompting from a priest, and Solomon removed the High Priest Abiathar for political rebellion (I Kings 2.26-27).

Thus there were two spheres, "the king's matters" and "the Lord's matters". If the king ventured to enter "the Lord's matters", that is, the sphere of Divine worship in the temple, he would be punished. We see this clearly in the case of King Uzziah, who was punished with leprosy for presuming to burn incense before the Lord...

The central act of David's reign was his conquest of Jerusalem and establishment of the city of David on Zion as the capital and heart of the Israelite kingdom. This was, on the one hand, an important political act, strengthening the centralizing power of the State; for as the last part of the Holy Land to be conquered, Jerusalem did not belong to any of the twelve tribes, which meant that its ruler, David, was elevated above all the tribes, and above all earthly and factional interests. But, on the other hand, it was also an important religious act; for by establishing his capital in Jerusalem, David linked his kingship with the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, both priest and king, who had blessed Abraham at Salem, that is, Jerusalem. Thus

⁷¹ Reardon, *Chronicles of History and Worship*, Ben Lomond, Ca.: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 12.

⁷² Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1995, 1998, p. 57.

David could be seen as following in the footsteps of Abraham in receiving the blessing of the priest-king in his own city.

Moreover, by bringing the Ark of the Covenant, the chief sanctum of the priesthood, to a permanent resting-place in Zion, David showed that the Church and the priesthood would find rest and protection on earth only under the aegis of the Jewish autocracy. As John Bright writes: "The significance of this action cannot be overestimated. It was David's aim to make Jerusalem the religious as well as the political capital of the realm. Through the Ark he sought to link the newly created state to Israel's ancient order as its legitimate successor, and to advertise the state as the patron and protector of the sacral institutions of the past. David showed himself far wiser than Saul. Where Saul had neglected the Ark and driven its priesthood from him, David established both Ark and priesthood in the official national shrine."

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The Ark was a symbol of the Church; and it is significant that the birth of the Church, at Pentecost, took place on Zion, beside David's tomb (Acts 2). For David prefigured Christ not only in His role as anointed King of the Jews, Who inherited "the throne of His father David" and made it eternal (Luke 1.32-33), but also as Sender of the Spirit and establisher of the New Testament Church. For just as David brought the wanderings of the Ark to an end by giving it a permanent resting-place in Zion, so Christ sent the Spirit into the upper room in Zion, giving the Church a firm, visible beginning on earth.

Only it was not given to David to complete the third act that was to complete this symbolism, the building of the Temple to house the Ark. That was reserved for his son Solomon, who consecrated the Temple on the feast of Tabernacles, the feast signifying the end of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the desert and the ingathering of the harvest fruits. Such was the splendour of Solomon's reign that he also became a type of Christ, and of Christ in His relationship to the Church.

⁷³ Bright, *A History of Israel*, London: SCM Press, 1980, pp. 200-201.

7. FROM THEOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY: (5) SOLOMON

The reigns of David and Solomon are especially important for the history of the people of God for three main reasons.

First, in them the Israelite kingdom attained its greatest strength, subduing its enemies and reaching its geographical integrity as that had been promised to Abraham: "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15.18). Secondly, the covenant which the Lord had sworn to the Family Church in the persons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to the Pilgrim Church in the persons of Moses and Joshua, He now renewed with the State Church in the persons of David and Solomon. The unconditional element of this covenant - the part which the Lord promised to fulfil whatever happened - was the promise of the Coming of Christ: the Seed seen by Abraham, the Prophet seen by Moses, and now the King seen by David; for "thine house and thy kingdom," He said to David, "shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever" (II Samuel 7.16; cf. Luke 1.32-33). And thirdly, the worship of the Old Testament Church reached its maturity and most magnificent development in the building of the Temple and the establishment of all the Temple services.

The importance of Solomon's Temple as a figure of the New Testament Church can be seen in the many resemblances between the two, from the details of the priests' vestments and the use of the Psalter to the offering of incense and the frescoes on the walls. Even the structure of the Temple building, with its sanctuary, nave and narthex and two aisles, recalls the structure of the Christian basilica. But there is this very important difference, that whereas the nave of the Temple was entered only by the priests, and the sanctuary only by the high-priest once a year, while all the services were conducted in the courtyard, the New Testament Church allows all Christians to enter the Church, inasmuch as they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Peter 2.9), for whom Christ the Great High-Priest has made "a new and living way" into the holy of holies (Hebrews 10.19-22).

The consecration of the Temple by Solomon may be seen the high point of the Old Testament, from which the rest of the Old Testament is a long and uneven, but inexorable fall until the Coming of Christ at its lowest point. The union of the kingship with the priesthood in the only major city of Israel not belonging to any of the tribes - for Jerusalem had been a Jebusite city until David and his men conquered it, - represented that ideal symphony of Church and State which was not to be recovered in its full glory until the Emperor Justinian consecrated the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople over 1500 years later. And when the Jews looked forward to the Messiah-King who was to restore their fortunes and usher in the Kingdom of God on earth, the image they conceived was compounded of the warlike prowess of David and the peaceful splendour of Solomon.

But in Solomon himself lay the seeds of that corruption which was to bring everything down in ruins. For this lover of wisdom whom God loved was not wise enough to heed the words inscribed in the Mosaic law: "When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt set him as king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not they brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." (Deuteronomy 17.14-17).

Now Solomon was, of course, a legitimate king, a "brother" and not a "stranger" - that is, a member of the household of the faith. He was a king, moreover, whom God had chosen, giving him the great gift of wisdom. However, he "multiplied horses to himself", many of whom came from Egypt. (Archaeologists have discovered the remains of his huge stables.) And he "multiplied wives to himself", many of whom again came from Egypt and "turned his heart away" from the living God to idolatry. Finally, he "multiplied to himself silver and gold" on a vast scale. Thus with uncanny precision did the prophecy pinpoint the weaknesses of Solomon.

It may be objected that David had many of these faults. He, too, had many wives - some, like Solomon's mother Bathsheba, acquired by unlawful means. And by the end of his reign he had amassed fabulous wealth. But David's wives, unlike Solomon's, did not draw him away from the True Faith; and his wealth was not amassed to be spent on his own pleasures, but was handed over en masse near the end of his life towards the building of the Temple. And therefore for his sake - here we see the great intercessory power of the saints - God promised that the kingdom would not be divided in the reign of his son (I Kings 11.12).

Whereas David prefigures Christ as the Founder of the Church in Zion, Solomon, through his relationship with foreign rulers in Egypt, Tyre and Sheba, and his expansion of Israel to its greatest geographical extent and splendour, prefigures the Lord's sending out of the apostles into the Gentile world and the expansion of the Church throughout the oikoumene. Thus David sang of his son as the type of Him Whom "all the kings of the earth shall worship, and all the nations shall serve" (Psalms 71.11). Moreover, at the very moment of the consecration of the Temple, the wise Solomon looks forward to that time when the Jewish Temple-worship will be abrogated and the true worship of God will not be concentrated in Jerusalem or any single place, but the true worshippers will worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4. 21-23): "for will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee: how much less this house that I have built?" (I Kings 8.27).

The anointing of Saul, David and Solomon raises the important question: are only those kings anointed with a visible anointing recognized by God? The answer to this is: no. There is also an invisible anointing. Thus St. Philaret of Moscow writes: "The name 'anointed' is often given by the word of God to kings in relation to the sacred and triumphant anointing which they receive, in accordance with the Divine establishment, on their entering into possession of their kingdom... But it is worthy of especial note that the word of God also calls *anointed* some earthly masters who were never sanctified with a *visible* anointing. Thus Isaiah, announcing the will of God concerning the king of the Persians, says: 'Thus says the Lord to His anointed one, Cyrus' (Isaiah 45.1); whereas this pagan king had not yet been born, and, on being born, did not know the God of Israel, for which he was previously rebuked by God: 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me' (Isaiah 45.5). But how then could this same Cyrus at the same time be called *the anointed of God*? God Himself explains this, when He prophesies about him through the same prophet: 'I have raised him up...: he shall build My city, and He shall let go My captives' (Isaiah 45.13). Penetrate, O Christian, into the deep mystery of the powers that be! Cyrus is a pagan king; Cyrus does not know the true God; however Cyrus is the *anointed* of the true God. Why? Because God, Who 'creates the future' (Isaiah 45.11), has appointed him to carry out His destiny concerning the re-establishment of the chosen people of Israel; *by this Divine thought*, so to speak, *the Spirit anointed him before bringing him into the world*: and Cyrus, although he does not know by whom and for what he has been anointed, is moved by *a hidden anointing*, and carries out the work of the Kingdom of God in a pagan kingdom. How powerful is the anointing of God! How majestic is the anointed one of God!"⁷⁴

As St. Philaret demonstrates, the superiority of the Israelite Autocracy makes of it a model for all nations in all times: "It is in the family that we must seek the beginnings and first model of authority and submission, which are later opened out in the large family which is the State. The father is... the first master... but since the authority of the father was not created by the father himself and was not given to him by the son, but came into being with man from Him Who created man, it is revealed that the deepest source and the highest principle of the first power, and consequently of every later power among men, is in God – the Creator of man. From Him 'every family in heaven and on earth is named' (Ephesians 3.15). Later, when sons of sons became a people and peoples, and from the family there grew the State, which was too vast for the natural authority of a father, God gave this authority a

⁷⁴ St. Philaret, *Iz Slova v den' koronatsia Imperatora Aleksandra Pavlovicha. Sbornik propovednicheskikh obraztsov* (From the Sermon on the Day of the Coronation of the Emperor Alexander Pavlovich. A Collection of Model Sermons). Quoted in "O Meste i Znachenii Tainstva Pomazania na Tsarstvo" ("On the Place and Significance of the Mystery of Anointing to the Kingdom"), *Svecha Pokaiania* (Candle of Repentance) (Tsaritsyn), N 4, February, 2000, p. 15.

new artificial image and a new name in the person of the King, and thus by His wisdom kings rule (Proverbs 8.15). In the times of ignorance, when people had forgotten their Creator... God, together with His other mysteries, also presented the mystery of the origin of the powers that be before the eyes of the world, even in a sensory image, in the form of the Hebrew people whom He had chosen for Himself; that is: in the Patriarch Abraham He miraculously renewed the ability to be a father and gradually produced from him a tribe, a people and a kingdom; He Himself guided the patriarchs of this tribe; He Himself raised judges and leaders for this people; He Himself ruled over this kingdom (I Kings 8.7). Finally, He Himself enthroned kings over them, continuing to work miraculous signs over the kings, too. The Highest rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He wills. 'The Kingdom is the Lord's and He Himself is sovereign of the nations' (Psalms 21.29). 'The power of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and in due time He will set over it one that is profitable' (Sirach 10.4).'

"A non-Russian would perhaps ask me now: why do I look on that which was established by God for one people (the Hebrews) and promised to one King (David) as on a general law for Kings and peoples? I would have no difficulty in replying: because the law proceeding from the goodness and wisdom of God is without doubt the perfect law; and why not suggest the perfect law for all? Or are you thinking of inventing a law which would be more perfect than the law proceeding from the goodness and wisdom of God?"

"As heaven is indisputably better than the earth, and the heavenly than the earthly, it is similarly indisputable that the best on earth must be recognized to be that which was built on it in the image of the heavenly, as was said to the God-seer Moses: 'Look thou that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount' (Exodus 25.40). Accordingly God established a King on earth in accordance with the image of His single rule in the heavens; He arranged for an autocratic King on earth in the image of His heavenly omnipotence; and ... He placed an hereditary King on earth in the image of His royal immutability. Let us not go into the sphere of the speculations and controversies in which certain people - who trust in their own wisdom more than others - work on the invention... of better, as they suppose, principles for the transfiguration of human societies... But so far they have not in any place or time created such a quiet and peaceful life... They can shake ancient States, but they cannot create anything firm... They languish under the fatherly and reasonable authority of the King and introduce the blind and cruel power of the mob and the interminable disputes of those who seek power. They deceive people in affirming that they will lead them to liberty; in actual fact they are drawing them from lawful freedom to self-will, so as later to subject them to oppression with full right. Rather than their self-made theorizing they should study the royal truth from the history of the peoples and kingdoms... which was written, not out of human passion, but by the holy prophets of God, that is - from the history of the people of God which was from of old chosen and ruled by God. This history shows that the best and most useful for human societies is done not by people, but by a

person, not by many, but by one. Thus: What government gave the Hebrew people statehood and the law? One man – Moses. What government dealt with the conquest of the promised land and the distribution of the tribes of the Hebrew people on it? One man – Joshua the son of Nun. During the time of the Judges one man saved the whole people from enemies and evils. But since the power was not uninterrupted, but was cut off with the death of each judge, with each cutting off of one-man rule the people descended into chaos, piety diminished, and idol-worship and immorality spread; then there followed woes and enslavement to other peoples. And in explanation of these disorders and woes in the people the sacred chronicler says that ‘in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was pleasing in his own eyes’ (Judges 21.25). Again there appeared one man, Samuel, who was fully empowered by the strength of prayer and the prophetic gift; and the people was protected from enemies, the disorders ceased, and piety triumphed. Then, to establish uninterrupted one-man rule, God established a King in His people. And such kings as David, Joshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah present images of how successfully an autocratic Majesty can and must serve for the glorification of the Heavenly King in the earthly kingdom of men, and together with that – for the strengthening and preservation of true prosperity in his people... And during the times of the new grace the All-seeing Providence of God deigned to call the one man Constantine, and in Russia the one man Vladimir, who in apostolic manner enlightened their pagan kingdoms with the light of the faith of Christ and thereby established unshakeable foundations for their might. Blessed is that people and State in which, in a single, universal, all-moving focus there stands, as the sun in the universe, a King, who freely limits his unlimited autocracy by the will of the Heavenly King, and by the wisdom that comes from God.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ St. Philaret, in S. Fomin & T. Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, pp. 320-321.

8. THE DECLINE OF THE ISRAELITE AUTOCRACY

After King Solomon's death, the schism between Church and State that had begun to open in Saul's reign, but had then been closed by David, began to reopen. The immediate cause was Rehoboam's arrogant refusal to lighten the burden of heavy labour imposed upon the tribes by his father: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastized you with whips, but I will chastize you with scorpions" (I Kings 12.14). Therefore the ten northern tribes broke away and chose as their king a renegade former servant of Solomon's who had taken refuge in Egypt - Jeroboam. Thus did Rehoboam reject the Lord's warning that the king's heart should "not be lifted up above his brethren" (Deuteronomy 17.20). And thus was fulfilled Samuel's warning about the despotic nature of ordinary - that is, non-theocratic - kingship.

The political schism immediately engendered a religious schism. For Jeroboam reasoned that if the people of his kingdom continued to go up to the Temple in Jerusalem to pray, as the Law commanded, they would soon kill him and go over to Rehoboam. So he set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and said: "behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12.28). "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (I Kings 12.30-31).

With astonishing speed, therefore, the glorious kingdom of Solomon, the forerunner of the Kingdom of Christ, became the apostate kingdom of Jeroboam, the forerunner of the kingdom of the Antichrist - even to the extent that Jeroboam set up his false god in Dan, which, according to tradition, will be the tribe of the Antichrist. Archaeology has revealed that the northern kingdom was powerful - perhaps more powerful than the southern kingdom. But in the eyes of the prophets it lacked legitimacy, for its origin was rebellion against God and the God-appointed kingship and priesthood in Jerusalem. And when King Ahab's wife Jezebel began to make Baalism the official religion of the State and to persecute those who resisted her, the holy Prophet Elijah rose up in defense of the true faith, slaughtering the priests of Baal and the soldiers whom Ahab sent against him.

There were faithful worshippers left in the northern kingdom; for as the Lord said to Elijah: "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (I Kings 19.18). However, the believers (like the Prophet Obadiah) lived in a catacomb situation; and the great miracles of Elijah, whereby he stopped the heavens from raining for three and a half years, and showed Baal to be powerless at the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and resurrected the son of the widow of Zarephath, and sent down fire on the messengers of King Ahaziah, did not bring about a lasting religious reformation.

For this reason, this period - and especially the three-and-a-half years of drought brought about by the prayers of Elijah - is regarded as an image of the period of the Antichrist's rule, when the Church will be in a similarly desperate situation, and the Prophet Elijah will again come to earth to rebuke the evil ruler and "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I [the Lord] come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4.5). This last verse is a simultaneous prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of the Christian Jews and of the conversion of the last generation of Jews to the faith of the Christians. For as St. Jerome writes, Elijah "'will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons', that is, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs, that their descendants should believe in the Lord and Saviour, in Whom they also believed: 'for Abraham saw My day, and was glad' (John 8.56): or the heart of the father to the son, that is, the heart of God to everyone who receives the Spirit of adoption. 'And the heart of the sons to the fathers', so that Jews and Christians, who now disagree amongst themselves, may agree by an equal faith in Christ. Whence it is said to the apostles, who passed on the teaching of the Gospel throughout the world: 'Instead of your fathers sons were born unto you' (Psalms 44.17)."

After Elijah's ascension his disciple Elisha continued the struggle. Although, like Elijah, he lived and worked mainly in the northern kingdom, he made clear his loyalty to the right-believing king of the southern kingdom of Judah over the usurping king of Israel. Thus when both kings, in a rare moment of alliance, approached the prophet for his advice, he said to the king of Israel: "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother... As the Lord of hosts lives, Whom I serve, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you, nor see you." (II Kings 3.13,14)...

Jehoshaphat was a good king, who, like David, ruled over the whole life of the nation, and yet carefully distinguished the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. Thus he said: "Take notice: Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord, and Zebediah the son of Ismael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters" (II Chronicles 19.11). Later, however, Elisha anointed a new king for Israel, Jehu, in the place of Ahab, who led the counter-revolution which killed Jezebel and restored the true faith to Israel. Here, then, we see the first application of a very important principle, namely, that *loyalty to the autocracy is conditional on its loyalty to the true faith*.

The sickness of the northern kingdom was never healed. In spite of the admonitions of the prophets, the people, led by kings of whom the Lord said: "They have made kings for themselves, but not by Me" (Hosea 8.4), went from bad to worse. Finally, in 722 BC, in the reign of King Hoshea, after a vain attempt to win Egyptian support, the kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian King Sargon II, its people were deported and it lost its religious and national identity for ever (II Kings 17).

While the northern kingdom of Israel perished, the southern kingdom of Judah continued to exist, though it was little better than the northern kingdom from a moral point of view.

Isaiah's words are typical of the exhortations of the prophets in these years: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should they be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1.2-9).

The idea of "the remnant", a faithful core in an age of apostasy, now becomes more and more important in the writings of the prophets. Just as the Lord in Abraham's time was prepared to spare Sodom and Gomorrah as long as righteous Lot remained in it, so he was prepared to spare Judah as long as a faithful remnant was preserved in it. Thus King Hezekiah, though a vassal of Assyria, reversed the syncretistic policies of Ahaz, and Josiah – those of Manasseh. This attracted God's protection, and in one famous incident the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 of the warriors of Sennacherib in one night. This showed what could be done if faith was placed, not in chariots and horses, but in the name of the Lord God (Psalms 19.7). Moreover, Judah even survived her tormentor Assyria, which, having been used to punish the sins of the Jews, was then cast away (Isaiah 10.15), being conquered by the Babylonians to the south.

In this period, as the people and priesthood became weaker in faith, the kingship became stronger. The strength and piety of the king might have compensated for the weakness of the Church, at least in part. But if the king worshipped idols, then, like Ahaz, he might reign during his lifetime, but after his death "they did not bring him into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel" (II Chronicles 28.27). And if he did not understand his role, and was not kept in his place by a good high priest, then the results could be catastrophic.

Thus in the reign of King Ozias (Uzziah) the kingship began to encroach on the altar. Blessed Jerome explains: "As long as Zacharias the priest, surnamed the Understanding, was alive, Ozias pleased God and entered His sanctuary with all reverence. But after Zacharias died, desiring to make the religious offerings himself, he infringed upon the priestly office, not so much piously as rashly. And when the Levites and the other priests exclaimed against him: 'Are you not Ozias, a king and not a priest?' he would not heed them, and straightway was smitten with leprosy in his forehead, in accordance with the word of the priest, who said, 'Lord, fill their faces with shame' (Psalm 82.17)... Now Ozias reigned fifty-two years... After his death the prophet Isaias saw the vision [Isaiah 6.1]... While the leprous king lived, and, so far as was in his power, was destroying the priesthood, Isaias could not see the vision. As long as he reigned in Judea, the prophet did not lift his eyes to heaven; celestial matters were not revealed to him."⁷⁶

The prominent role played by the kings in restoring religious purity foreshadowed the similarly prominent role that the Orthodox autocrats would play in defence of the faith in New Testament times. Thus when the Emperor Justinian pressed for the anathematization of the works of three dead heretics, his supporters pointed to the fact that King Josiah had repressed the living idolatrous priests, and burned the bones of the dead ones upon the altar (II Kings 23.16).⁷⁷

Josiah was a great king, who found a lost book of the Law in the Temple and instituted a thorough reformation of the people's religious life. He "removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the hosts of heaven" (II Kings 23.5) - that is, the angels.

However, Josiah made a fatal mistake in his relations with the contemporary super-power of Egypt. When Pharaoh Necho marched north to fight the Assyrians, Josiah went out to fight him. But Pharaoh sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God, Who is with me, lest He destroy you". However, continues the chronicler, "Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo." (II Chronicles 36.21-22) And there he was killed... The mourning over the death of King Josiah was unprecedented in its length and depth of feeling.

⁷⁶ St. Jerome, *Letter to Pope Damasus*, in Johanna Manley (ed.), *The Bible and the Holy Fathers*, Menlo Park, Ca.: Monastery Books, 1990, p. 412.

⁷⁷ A.A.Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, p. 152.

More commonly, however, the kings led the people in apostasy. Such was King Manasseh (698-650 BC), who ordered the execution of Isaiah and built many shrines to the false gods. He introduced the worship of the Phoenician gods Baal (also called Moloch), the god of the sun, to whom children younger than six were offered in whole burnt-sacrifice, and his consort Astarte, the goddess of love and war, whose cult was accompanied by temple prostitution. Their representations are very often accompanied by the six-pointed hexagram, now called the Star of David – although it has nothing to do with King David or the true Israel.⁷⁸ Manasseh repented before his end, but this did not prevent the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the exile of backsliding Judah to the land of Assyria, beyond Damascus, from where these idols probably came originally (Amos 5.26-27)...

Sometimes the remnant included diligent priests and truly inspired prophets. But more often "the priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit" (Jeremiah 2.8). Gradually the remnant of God's faithful was being squeezed out, and a Pharisaic establishment was taking its place. Soon that establishment would reject the very Messiah the preparation of Whose Coming was their own raison d'être...

In the days of Jeremiah, not only did the kings refuse to heed his warnings not to rebel against Babylon and enter into alliance with Egypt, but also the "priests" and "prophets" ganged up to cast him into the stocks (Jeremiah 20). The people continued to believe that, whatever their sins, the protection of God would never be taken away from them, saying: "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jeremiah 18.18). But all of these things happened: the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem with great slaughter, destroyed the Temple, and deported most of the remaining people with the Temple treasures.

Betrayal did not only come from the kings: it could also come from the high priesthood. Thus Jewish tradition relates that Somnas, the high priest and temple treasurer in the time of King Hezekiah, wished to betray the people of God and flee to the Assyrian King Sennacherib; and St. Cyril of Alexandria says of him: "On receiving the dignity of the high-priesthood, he abused it, going to the extent of imprisoning everybody who contradicted him."⁷⁹ Manasseh and Somnas represent what have come to be called in Christian times caesaropapism and papocaesarism, respectively – distortion to the right and to the left of the ideal of Church-State symphony.

⁷⁸ See Elena Samborskaya, "Otkrovenie o zvezde. Tajna gekstagrammy" (Revelation about the star. The mystery of hexagram), *Sviashchennoe Pisanie* (Holy Scripture), October 11, 2015, http://holyscripture.ru/creative/?t=helena_samborskaya&b=hexagram.

⁷⁹ St. Cyril, *P.G.* 70, 516B.

9. THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

As we have seen, God punished the northern kingdom of Israel for its impiety by sending the Assyrians to destroy it before destroying the instrument of His wrath (Isaiah 10.15) – a pattern that we find throughout history. In 586 He punished the southern kingdom of Judah for similar impiety by sending Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to destroy the Temple and exile the people to Babylon. For “the Lord, the God of their fathers, constantly sent to them by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against His people, until there was no remedy. Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged: He gave them all into his hand” (II Chronicles 36.15-16).

The Jews had hoped to rebel against the Babylonians by appealing to the other despotic kingdom of Egypt. But the Prophet Jeremiah rebuked them for their lack of faith. If God wills it, he said, He can deliver the people on His own, without any human helpers, as He delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah.

However, national independence had become a higher priority for the Jews than the true faith. The only remedy, therefore, was to humble their pride by removing even their last remaining vestige of independence. Therefore, said the Prophet, “bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and live! Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord has spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon... And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace...” (Jeremiah 27.12-13, 29.7).

Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem and carrying away of the Jews to Babylon, writes L.A. Tikhomirov, “was understood by the Jews as a punishment of God for their apostasy and corruption. In Babylonia, therefore, there began a process of repentance and regeneration. But on the other hand a powerful spiritual temptation awaited the Jews. Chaldea at that time had become an advanced country of pagan culture. In respect of religion it preserved all the charms of the magic of ancient Sumeria and Akkad, adding to it the astronomical and astrological science of Assyrian star-gazing, which, as we have seen, were already practiced in Judah in the reign of King Josiah. The three main branches of ‘Chaldean wisdom’ combined a considerable fund of real scientific knowledge with the higher philosophy worked out through the ages by the mind of the Assyrio-Babylonians, combined with the teaching of Zoroaster and offshoots of Hinduism. Paganism presented itself before the captives from Jerusalem as a huge intellectual power armed with everything that men could learn and assimilate at that time.

“To this we must add that Babylon had attained the highest level of political might and represented a remarkable system of state structure which was hardly excelled by all the ancient states. A profoundly worked out law guaranteed the inhabitants’ rights, and the Babylonian citizens of other tribes here came upon such perfect civil conditions as they could not even imagine in their native countries. The agriculture, industry and trade of Babylon were at a high level of development. As captives of another tribe, crushed materially and morally, recognizing that they had betrayed their Lord, the Jews came into a country that was striking by its might, glitter, wealth, knowledge, developed philosophical thought – everything by which one nation could influence another. If they ‘sat by the waters of Babylon and wept’, dreaming of revenge on the destroyers of their fatherland, they also could not help being subjected to the influences of Chaldean wisdom.

“They had grown up in the thousand-year conviction of the loftiness of their chosen people, of which there was no equal upon the earth. They remembered amazing examples of the help of the Lord in the past, when He had crushed the enemies of Israel, including the Assyrians themselves. They were filled with determination to raise themselves to the full height of their spirit and their providential mission. On the other hand, they did not have the strength not to submit to the intellectual influence of Babylon. In general, the age of the Babylonian captivity was the source of very complex changes in Israel. In the higher sphere of the spirit prophetic inspirations finally matured to the vision of the nearness of the Messiah. In the conservative layer of teachers of the law there arose a striving to realize that ‘piety of the law’, the falling away from which, as it seemed to all, had elicited the terrible punishments of God. There began the establishment of the text of the law and the collection of tradition; an embryonic form of Talmudic scholarship was born. Beside it, the masses of the people involuntarily imbibed the local pagan beliefs, and the teachings of ‘Chaldean wisdom’ was reflected in the minds of the intelligentsia; there was born the movement that later expressed itself in the form of the Cabbala, which under the shell of supposedly Mosaic tradition developed eastern mysticism of a pantheistic character...”⁸⁰

In the books of the Prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah we see how, even in exile, most of the Jews did not repent but stayed among the pagans and learned their ways. At the same time, the books of Daniel, Esther and Tobit show that piety was not completely extinguished even among those Jews who stayed in Persia. Eventually, a pious remnant, stirred up by the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah, returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple.

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⁸⁰ Tikhomirov, *Religio-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, pp. 135-136.

The Babylonian captivity,” writes Deacon Pavel Serzhantov, “was permitted as a means of punishing the people, as a penance. The time of destruction and punishment came to an end, and the time of creation and repentance began, the time of the mercy of God. The Lord leads His people through severe testing – such trials that it seems to some that God abandoned His people and forgot about them, not sympathizing with their suffering, not paying heed to the lawless invaders. Is this really how we should understand it? No. *For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye* (Zechariah 2:8).”⁸¹

Zechariah was not the only prophet sent by God to comfort the suffering Jews. In a sermon delivered in Shanghai in 1948, St. John Maximovich said: “There was no limit to the grief and despondency of the [ancient Jews](#) when Jerusalem was destroyed and they themselves were led away into the Babylonian captivity.. *Where are Thine ancient mercies, O Lord, which Thou swarest to David? (Psalm 88:50)*, they cried out. *But now Thou, hast cast off and put us to shame... They that hated us spoiled for themselves and Thou scatterest us among the nations (Psalm 43:10-12)*.

“But when it seemed that there was no hope for deliverance, the [Prophet Ezekiel](#), who was likewise in captivity, was made worthy of a wondrous vision. *And the hand of the Lord came upon me*, he says of this. The invisible right hand of the Lord placed him in the midst of a field full of human bones. And the Lord asked him: *Son of man, will these bones live?* And the Prophet replied: *O Lord God, Thou knowest this*. Then the voice of the Lord commanded the Prophet to say to the bones that the Lord will give to them the spirit of life, clothing them with sinews, flesh, and skin. The Prophet uttered the word of the Lord, a voice resounded, the earth shook, and the bones began to come together, bone to bone, each to its own joint; sinews appeared on them, the flesh grew and became covered with skin, so that the whole field became filled with the bodies of men; only there were no souls in them. And again the Prophet heard the Lord, and at His command he prophesied the word of the Lord, and from the four directions souls flew to them, the spirit of life entered into the bodies, they stood up, and the field was filled with an assembly of a multitude of people.

“And the Lord said, *Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; and they say, Our hope has been lost, we have perished... Behold, I will open your tombs and will bring you up out of your tombs, My people, and I will put My spirit within you and ye shall live, and I will place you upon your own land (Ezekiel 37:1-14)*.

“Thus the Lord God revealed to Ezekiel that His promises are steadfast, and that what seems impossible to the human mind is performed by the power of God.

⁸¹ Serzhantov, “The Apple of the Almighty’s Eye”, *Orthodox Christianity*, February 21, 2017, <http://orthochristian.com/101230.html>.

“This vision signified that Israel, after being delivered from captivity, would return to its own land; in a higher sense, it indicated the settlement of the spiritual Israel in the eternal heavenly Kingdom of Christ. At the same time there is prefigured also the future General Resurrection of all the dead.”⁸²

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The drama of the Jews’ return from exile began one night in 539 BC, when Belshazzar the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was feasting with his lords, wives and concubines, drinking in the very same holy cups that had been taken by his father from the Temple in Jerusalem. At that point a mysterious hand appeared writing on the wall. The Prophet Daniel was summoned and said: “This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom and finish it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting. PERES: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5.26-29)

That very night Babylon was conquered, and Belshazzar killed, by Cyrus the Great, King of the Medes and Persians, one of the greatest rulers of history, whom the Lord even called “My anointed” (Isaiah 45.1), although he was a pagan. Cyrus extended the Persian empire to the east and the west, and practiced a remarkable degree of national and religious toleration for his time.⁸³ He immediately freed the Jews and allowed them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple – the Lord had saved His people through His anointed king...

Moreover, according to Yuval Noah Harari, it was Cyrus who introduced one of the most important political ideas in history: the idea that an empire can exist for the benefit of *all* its subject peoples, not just the dominant nation. “For the kings of Assyria always remained the kings of Assyria. Even when they claimed to rule the entire world, it was obvious that they were doing it for the greater glory of Assyria, and they were not apologetic about it. Cyrus, on the other hand, claimed not merely to rule the whole world, but to do so for the sake of all people. ‘We are conquering you for your own benefit,’ said the Persians. Cyrus wanted the peoples he subjected to love him and to count themselves lucky to be Persian vassals. The most famous example of Cyrus’ innovative efforts to gain the approbation of a nation living under the thumb of his empire was his command that the Jewish exiles in Babylonia be allowed to return to their Judaeian homeland and rebuild their temple. He even offered them financial assistance. Cyrus did not see himself as a Persian king ruling over Jews – he was also the king of the Jews, and thus responsible for their welfare...

⁸² St. John, “Will these Human Bones Come to Life?” *The Orthodox Word*, No. 50, May-June, 1973.

⁸³ Jaime Alvar Ezquerro, “Dawn of Persia”, *National Geographic Magazine*, September/October, 2016, 34.

“In contrast with ethnic exclusiveness, imperial ideology from Cyrus onward has tended to be inclusive and all-encompassing. Even though it has often emphasized racial and cultural differences between rulers and ruled, it has still recognized the basic unity of the entire world, the existence of a single set of principles governing all places and times, and the mutual responsibilities of all human beings. Humankind is seen as a large family: the privileges of the parents go hand in hand with responsibility for the children.”⁸⁴

Of course, the word “empire” has become associated with evil institutions that were ethnically exclusive – Hitler’s empire is the most famous example. Nevertheless, multi-national empires have in general been more universalist in their ideology than smaller groupings centred on the power and glory of a single nation. And this remains the abiding glory of Cyrus the Great, the first non-Jewish “anointed of the Lord”. His imperial ideology was to be inherited by Rome. And from there it descended to the Second Rome of Constantinople and the Third Rome of Russia...

⁸⁴ Harari, *Sapiens. A Brief History of Mankind*, London: Vintage, 2011, pp. 218, 219.

10. THE ORIGINS OF GRECO-ROMAN CIVILIZATION

“The first millennium BC,” writes Harari, “witnessed the appearance of three potential universal orders, whose devotees could for the first time imagine the entire world and the entire human race as a single unit governed by a single set of laws. Everyone was ‘us’, at least potentially. There was no longer ‘them’. The first universal order to appear was economic: the monetary order. The second universal order to appear was political: the imperial order. The third universal order was religious: the order of universal religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

“Merchants, conquerors and prophets were the first people who managed to transcend the binary division, ‘us vs them’, and foresee the potential unity of mankind. For the merchants, the entire world was a single market and all humans were potential customers. They tried to establish an economic order that would apply to all, everywhere. For the conquerors, the entire world was a single empire and all humans were potential subjects, and for prophets, the entire world held a single truth and all humans were potential believers. They too tried to establish an order that would be applicable for everyone everywhere.

“During the last three millennia, people made more and more ambitious attempts to realize that global vision...”⁸⁵

The first state that realized this global vision – that is, provided a potentially *global* economic, political and religious order – was the Roman empire in the time of Augustus, but even more in the time of St. Constantine, when the vast empire was united economically by the Roman denarius, politically by the Roman emperor, culturally by Hellenism and religiously by Christianity. The fact that this empire did not in fact rule over the whole world is less important than the fact that it aspired to that in these three ways, thereby containing within itself the potential for a godly globalization, the *real* unity of mankind. Let us look at the origins of *Rome*, the most important politico-religious venture in human history...

According to Larry Siedentop, following Fustel de Coulanges, the origins of religious, social and political organization in Greece and Italy lay in the absolute power of the head of the family, the paterfamilias, in his own domain. Each family was centred around worship of the gods of the hearth, who were deceased males of the family. The head of the family was both the family’s king and priest; it was his duty to keep the hearth fire alight at all times and to carry out the prescribed rituals and prayers in honour of the family’s gods. Slaves and foreigners were not members of the family. The supreme value of the family was its own immortality – the worship of the past generations, the defence of the family’s members and property in the present, and the provision for future generations. For any son of the family not to take

⁸⁵ Harari, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

a bride was considered dereliction of duty and impiety, for it threatened that familial immortality. As for a bride who married into the family, she was expected to abandon the worship of her former family's gods and transfer all her loyalty and worship to her husband's family and his gods.

"Other domestic practices in Greece and Rome – the subordinate role of women, the nature of marriage, property rights and inheritance rules – were also direct consequences of religious belief. Let us take the role of women first. Women could participate in the worship of the dead only through their father or husband. For descent was traced exclusively through the male line. But even then religion governed the definition of relationships so entirely that an adopted son, once he was admitted to the family worship, shared its ancestors, while a son who abandoned the family worship ceased altogether to be a relation, becoming unknown...

"... The father exercised his authority on the basis of beliefs shared by the family. His was not an arbitrary power. The overwhelming imperative was to preserve family worship, and so to prevent his ancestors, untended, being cast into oblivion. This restriction of affection to the family circle gave it an extraordinary intensity. Charity, concern for humans as such, was not deemed a virtue, and would probably have been unintelligible. But fulfilling obligations attached to a role in the family was everything. 'The sense of duty, natural affection, the religious idea – all these were confounded, were considered as one, and were expressed by the same word.' That word was piety (*pietas*)."⁸⁶

As families came together into larger units, clans, tribes and cities, the exclusive, atomistic nature of each family's worship was not destroyed. However, every new association of families required the worship of a new common divinity that was superior to the domestic divinities. A gradual movement from the more particular to the less particular, if not yet the universal, took place as the unit of social organization grew larger.

"Religious ideas expanded with the increased scale of association. Fustel does not argue that religious progress brought about social progress in any simple way, but he does emphasize the intimate connection between the two. Thus, as the scale of association increased, the gods of nature or polytheism became more important – for these were gods who could more easily be shared, gods less exclusively domestic than ancestors, gods associated with the forces of nature rather than with divine ancestors. These were gods who represented the sea, the wind, fertility, light, love, hunting, with familiar names such as Apollo, Neptune, Venus, Diana and Jupiter. The building of civic temples to these gods offered physical evidence of the enlargement of religious ideas. Still, the gods of each city remained exclusive, so that while two cities might both adore 'Jupiter', he had different attributes in each city.

⁸⁶ Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, London: Penguin, 2010, pp. 12, 15.

“Particularism was the rule. Even after a city was founded, it was inconceivable for the city not to respect the divine ancestors, the sacred rites and magistrates of the different groups that had attended its foundation. For the souls of the dead were deemed to live under the ground of the cities they had helped to create. The statesman Solon, who in the sixth century BC endowed Athens with laws, was given the following advice by the oracle of Delphi: ‘Honour with worship the chiefs of the country, the dead who live under the earth.’ The city had to respect their authority in matters concerning their descendants. For the city’s authority was all of a piece with theirs. Gods and groups marched hand in hand.

“This corporate, sacramental character of the ancient city dominated its formal organization. Whether it was a question of procedures for voting, military organization or religious sacrifices, care was taken to represent tribes, *curiae* and families – and to conduct civic life through them. It was deemed important that men should be associated most closely with others who sacrificed at the same altars. Altars were the bonds of human association. That emerged in the Greek and Roman conception of warfare. In one of Euripides’ plays, a soldier asserts that ‘the gods who fight with us are more powerful than those who fight on the side of the enemy...

“Kingship was the highest priesthood, presiding over the cult established with the city itself. The king was hereditary high priest of that association of associations that was the ancient city. The king’s other functions, as magistrate and military leader, were simply the adjuncts of his religious authority. Who better to lead the city in war than the priest whose knowledge of the sacred formulas and prayers ‘saved’ the city every day? And, later, when kingship gave way to republican regimes, the chief magistrate of the city – the archon in Athens, the consul in Rome – remained a priest whose first duty was to offer sacrifices to the city’s gods. In fact, the circlet of leaves worn on the head of archons when conducting such sacrifices became a universal symbol of authority: the crown...”⁸⁷

Just as devotion to the family had been the supreme value in the original form of social organization, so devotion to the city – civic patriotism – now became the supreme value in the Greek and Italian city-states. Religion and politics were inextricably entangled. For “in devoting himself to the city before everything else, the citizen was serving his gods. No abstract principle of justice could give him pause. Piety and patriotism were one and the same thing. For the Greeks, to be without patriotism, to be anything less than an active citizen, was to be an ‘idiot’. That, indeed, is what the word originally meant, referring to anyone who retreated from the life of the city.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 21-22, 23.

⁸⁸ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 25. “Idiotis” in Greek literally means a man “belonging to himself”, what we would now call a *private* citizen – that is, one who plays no part in *public* life.

The Latin saying, Dulce est pro patria mori, "Sweet it is to die for one's country", illustrates how important the city, the homeland, was for the early Greeks and Romans. It encompassed much more than the modern concept of homeland. It included everything associated with the homeland, too.

Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) put it as follows: "The Latin word patria is associated with the idea of 'father' (pater). The native land (or fatherland) can in some ways be identified with patrimony, that is, the totality of goods bequeathed to us by our forefathers. ... Our native land is thus our heritage and it is also the whole patrimony derived from that heritage. It refers to the land, the territory, but more importantly, the concept of patria includes the values and the spiritual content that go to make up the culture of a given nation.

"... From this it can be seen that the very idea of 'native land' presupposes a deep bond between the spiritual and the material, between culture and territory. Territory seized by force from a nation somehow becomes a plea crying out to the 'spirit' of the nation itself. The spirit of the nation awakens, takes on fresh vitality and struggles to restore the rights of the land.

"... [T]he concept of patria and its link with paternity and with generation points towards the moral value of patriotism.... it is covered by the fourth commandment, which obliges us to honour our father and mother. ... Patriotism includes this sentiment inasmuch as the patria truly resembles a mother. ... Patriotism is a love for everything to do with our native land: its history, its traditions, its language, its natural features. ... Every danger that threatens the overall good of our native land becomes an occasion to demonstrate this love."

Nevertheless, both Greeks and Romans understood that piety - devotion to the gods - was not always the same as patriotism - devotion to homeland. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, we see a direct conflict between the two, in which patriotism had to yield ultimately to the higher claims of religious piety. And this contrast became much sharper when the Greco-Roman world became Christian...

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In spite of the absolute power of the paterfamilias, kingship in Greece and Rome had shallower roots than in Babylon or Egypt; it was less absolute, less divine. And from the sixth century BC not only kingship, but even the aristocratic power of the heads of families and clans began to decline. "The first major change took place within the patriarchal families. Primogeniture came under attack and gradually gave way, with the consequence not only that younger sons inherited and became full citizens, but also that junior branches of the ancient families or gentes became independent. These developments greatly increased the number of citizens, and reduced the power of the ancient family heads as priests.

“A second major change followed. The clients of the family were gradually liberated, becoming free men. At the outset the clients could not own property. They did not even have any security of tenure on land they worked for the paterfamilias. They were little better than slaves. ‘Possible the same series of social changes took place in antiquity which Europe saw in the middle ages, when the slaves in the country became serfs of the glebe, when the latter from serfs, taxable at will, were changed to serfs with a fixed rent, and when finally they were transformed... into peasant proprietors.’

“Fundamental to these changes was a rise in expectations. That rise was, in turn, due to the comparisons that became possible once the patriarchal family was merely part of a larger association, the polis or city-state. No longer was the paterfamilias, the magistrate and priest, the only representative of authority in sight, the only spokesman of the gods. The paterfamilias gradually lost his semi-sacred status through being immersed in civic life. His inferiors now ‘could see each other, could confer together, could make an exchange of their desires and griefs, compare their masters, and obtain a glimpse of a better fate.’

“Obtaining the right of property was their first and strongest desire, preceding any claim for the full privileges of citizenship. But the latter was bound to follow, for obtaining greater equality on one front only increased a sense of exclusion on the other. Citizenship, in turn, unleashed a process of abstraction which could and did threaten inherited inequalities.

“No one understood this better than a series of rulers called tyrants. Tyranny was acceptable to the previously underprivileged classes because it was a means of undermining the old aristocracy. Tyrants were so called because ‘kingship’ evoked a religious role, a role that recalled the subordinations based on the ancient family and its worship. The lower classes supported tyrants in order to combat their former superiors. Tyranny was an instrument that could be discarded when it had served its purpose, unlike the sacred authority claimed by the original kings. It was an instrument serving a sense of relative deprivation...”⁸⁹

Here we find the first manifestation of that distinction that was to become so important in later European history: the distinction between the sacred, God-established power of the true king, and the impious, unlawful power of the usurper, or tyrant. Of course, such a distinction was implicit in the schism between the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam and the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. But here it is associated, not so much with a schism within the higher leadership of the kingdom as with *revolution from below*, from the dispossessed plebs – that is, with *class war*.

⁸⁹ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

As Melissa Lane writes, “the transition from benevolent *turannos* to evil tyrant is encapsulated in the history of Athens, where Solon’s attempt to establish a moderate regime including rich and poor was succeeded by two generations of *turannoi*. The first, Peisistratus, is described as having been a supporter of the people... Peisistratus gained and lost power several times, using every trick in the book...

“... He is described... as ruling ‘constitutionally rather than tyrannically’... This later judgement shows that even the paradigmatic tyrant of Athenian history could no longer be described as such. This is because that tyrant had at the time been seen as ruling moderately and benevolently, establishing local magistrates and even advancing money to the bankrupt. More than a few Athenians seem to have tolerated and even enjoyed his rule at the time.

“In contrast, the excoriation of tyranny would, in the memory of later Athenians, attach indelibly to one of the sons of Peisistratus, Hippias. Hippias initially ruled jointly with his brother Hipparchus, who became embroiled in an unrequited love affair leading to a violent insult and quarrel. The erstwhile beloved, who had scorned Hipparchus’ advances, conspired with his lover and other citizens to overthrow the Peisistratids. In the midst of a civic procession they thought themselves betrayed, panicked and struck too soon, killing Hipparchus but being killed themselves (one immediately, one after torture) as a result. Hippias began to rule much more harshly, becoming a paradigm of tyranny in the modern pejorative sense, and the Spartans were induced by manipulated oracles to overthrow him and his family, allowing them safe conduct out of Athens once they had handed over the Acropolis, on which the meeting and sacred places of the city were concentrated. A further struggle between supporters of the tyrants and those of a previously powerful aristocratic family ensued, the Spartan force changing sides to expel the anti-tyrannical faction. But at that point, the people besieged the tyrannical forces on the Acropolis, recalled the exiles and gave power to one of them, Cleisthenes, who had ‘befriended the people’ (Hdt. 5.66).

“It is with this assertion of popular power and the subsequent legal innovations promoted by Cleisthenes that ‘democracy’ proper in Athens is widely acknowledge to have begun. The democracy would immortalize the two tyrannicides who had killed Hipparchus – putting up statues of them in the agora and commissioning new ones after the first lot were stolen (ironically, by the Persian Xerxes, a tyrant par excellence in many Greek imaginations). This inscribed an opposition to tyranny at the heart of the democracy, even as the *demos* (the people) began to act abroad – and perhaps at home – as a tyrant itself, taking power to act unaccountably while demanding accountability of its officers and allies.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Lane, *Greek and Roman Political Ideas*, London: Pelican, 2014, pp. 77, 78-79.

11. RELIGION AND MORALITY IN FIFTH-CENTURY GREECE

The event that marked the transition from Archaic Greece to Classical Greece was the war with Persia (492-449). A Greek revolt against Persian rule in Asia Minor led to the Persian Emperor Darius invading Greece. He was defeated at Thermopylae and Marathon. Then his successor Xerxes was defeated on the sea at Salamis and on land at Plataea (479). This great victory gave the decisive impulse to the Greek city-states, led by Athens, to develop the great civilization of Classical Greece, which was to be of such importance in the development of both Eastern and Western European culture.

The victory over Persia could also be said to be the beginning of that obsession with freedom as against tyranny, democracy as against despotism, that is the leit-motif of what we now call western civilization, which had a decisive impact on Republican Rome and, many hundreds of years later, on the Renaissance, the Age of Reason and contemporary liberalism. Of course, there are major differences between Classical Greek liberalism and ours – notably, in that slaves, women and “barbarians” were given no part in Ancient Greek democracy. Nevertheless, the ancestry is unmistakable... In between, the Christian civilization of the New Rome of Byzantium, which begat all the medieval cultures of Europe, in both East and West, was also heavily influenced by Classical Greece. However, the foundational idea of the New Rome, Christianity, is quite different from liberalism, whether ancient or modern, and favoured another governmental form – Christian monarchism.

The achievements of Classical Greece were primarily secular – in art, architecture, literature and philosophy. Nevertheless, the fifth-century Greeks generally remained intensely religious; no serious steps in public life were taken without determining the will of the gods through religious rites and sacrifices. But the broadening of the membership of the citizen body, and the gradual democratization of public life had profound consequences, both religious and social. Thus “in Athens, the move from aristocratic to democratic government altered the nature of the tribes. They became, in a sense, offshoots of the public assembly, reflecting the claims of citizenship and voting rather than of the sacerdotal family. A similar symptom of social change in Rome appeared when the army was no longer organized simply according to family and gens. Instead, centuries – that is, numbers – became the basis of its organization. Former clients and plebeians had often become rich (the introduction of money facilitating the circulation of property) and they played an increasingly important military role. The original aristocratic means of making war, the cavalry, had declined as compared to expensive, heavily armoured infantry: Greek hoplites and Roman legionaries. Thus numbers and money – introducing a touch of abstraction – came to count for more within the privileged citizen class, supplementing its religious foundation...”⁹¹

⁹¹ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 34.

With regard to religion, it is hard to determine whether increased democratization brought a weakening of religious faith, or vice-versa. One thing is certain: in classical Greek democracy we see a particularly *human* view of God or the gods, suggesting that, for all their power, the gods were only relatively superior to human beings. The early word for “democracy”, *isonomia*, “equality under the law”, quite closely describes the relationship between gods and men: not equal in power, but equal – or at any rate, not radically unequal – under a higher law of cosmic justice.

Thus J.M. Roberts writes: “Greek gods and goddesses, for all their supernatural standing and power, are remarkably human. They express the man-centred quality of later Greek civilization. Much as it owed to Egypt and the East, Greek mythology and art usually presents its gods as (recognizably fallen) men and women, a world away from the monsters of Assyria and Babylonia, or from Shiva the many-armed. If the implication of this religious revolution was that the gods were no better than men, its converse was that men could be like the gods. This is already apparent in Homer; perhaps he did as much as anyone to order the Greek supernatural in this way and he does not give much space to popular cults. He presents gods taking sides in the Trojan war in postures all too human. They compete with one another; while Poseidon harries the hero of *The Odyssey*, Athena takes his part. A later Greek critic grumbled that Homer ‘attributed to the gods everything that is disgraceful and blameworthy among men: theft, adultery and deceit’. It was a world which operated much like the actual world.”⁹²

If the gods were such uninspiring figures, it was hardly surprising that the kings (whether god-kings or not) should cease to inspire awe. Hence the trend, apparent from Homeric times, to *desacralise* kingship. For if in religion the universe was seen as “one great City of gods and men”, differing from each other not in nature but in power, why should there be any greater differences in the city of man? Just as gods can be punished by other gods, and men like Heracles can become gods themselves, so in the politics of the city-state rulers can be removed from power. There is no “divine right” of kings because even the gods do not have such unambiguous rights over men.

As we pass from Homer to the fifth-century poets and dramatists, the same religious humanism, tending to place men on a par with the gods, is evident. Thus the conservative poet Pindar writes:

*Single is the race, single
Of men and gods:
From a single mother we both draw breath.
But a difference of power in everything
Keeps us apart.*

⁹² Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, p. 139.

Although cosmic justice must always be satisfied, and the men who defy the laws of the gods are always punished for their pride (*hubris*), nevertheless, in the plays of Aeschylus, for example, the men who rebel (e.g. Prometheus), are sometimes treated with greater sympathy than the gods against whom they rebel. Even the conservative Sophocles puts a man-centred view of the universe into the mouth of his characters, as in the chorus in *Antigone*:

*Many wonders there are, but none more wonderful
Than man, who rules the ocean...
He is master of the ageless earth, to his own will bending
The immortal mother of gods.*

We see the same humanizing tendency in the fifth-century “father of history”, Herodotus. As Simon Sebag Montefiore writes, “For Herodotus, pride always comes before a fall, but he emphasizes that such failures are not the punishment of the gods, but rather result from human mistakes. This rational approach, in which the gods did not intervene in the affairs of men, was a major innovation and formed the basis for the tradition of Western history.”⁹³

In about 415 BC the Sicilian writer Euhemerus developed the theory that the gods originated from the elaboration of actual historical persons.⁹⁴ This humanist tendency led, in Euripides, to open scepticism about the gods. Thus Queen Hecabe in *The Trojan Women* expresses scepticism about Zeus in very modern, almost Freudian tones: “You are past our finding out – whether you are the necessity of nature or the mind of human beings”. Euripides’ “gods and goddesses,” writes Michael Grant, “emerge as demonic psychological forces – which the application of human reason cannot possibly overcome – or as nasty seducers, or as figures of fun. Not surprisingly, the playwright was denounced as impious and atheistic, and it was true that under his scrutiny the plain man’s religion crumbled to pieces.”⁹⁵

If the dramatists could take such liberties, in spite of the fact that their dramas were staged in the context of a religious festival, it is not to be wondered at that the philosophers went still further. Thus Protagoras, the earliest of the so-called sophists, – travelling teachers or professional rhetors – wrote: “I know nothing about the gods, whether they are or are not, or what their shapes are. For many things make certain knowledge impossible – the obscurity of the theme and the shortness of human life.” And again: “*Man is the measure of all things, of things that are, that they are; and of things that are not, that they are not.*”

⁹³ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 33.

⁹⁴ C.S. Lewis, “Religion without Dogma?” in *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 1902, p. 165, footnote.

⁹⁵ Grant, *The Classical Greeks*, London: Phoenix, 1989, p. 130.

Protagoras did not question the moral foundations of society in a thorough-going way, preferring to think that men should obey the institutions of society, which had been given them by the gods.⁹⁶ Thus he did not cut the bond between human institutions (*νομος*), on the one hand, and the Divine order of things (*φύσις*), on the other – a step that was not taken unequivocally until the French revolution. Nevertheless, his thought shows that secular democratism went hand in hand with religious scepticism.

Other sophists went further. Central to their teaching, writes Lane, “was the drawing of a distinction between *nomos* and *physis*, between law and nature. In the context of that distinction, they used *nomoi* (plural of *nomos*) to refer not to divine laws, as had Antigone, but to the kinds of laws passed by humans, whether individual or in groups. Man-made *nomoi* were human conventions. ‘Law’ in that sense, born of the happenstance of human contrivance, whether a tyrant’s whim or an assembly’s close-run vote, was presented as contrasting with the real nature of things – a nature that might be governed by a justice or law that is altogether different from the laws passed by humans. To contrast *nomos* and *physis* was to call attention to the conventions of human contrivance, in comparison with the unalterable nature of reality – and, for the most part, *nomos* came off worse.

“The most controversial sophists interpreted the claim that *nomoi* were man-made as the claim that they were made by *some* men for imposition upon *others* – that they offered the dominators all the advantage, and their helpless victims only disadvantage. These thinkers presented ‘nature’ as something like the red-in-tooth-and-claw view that early social Darwinists would later propose: they contended that it was natural for the strong to pursue their ends with impunity, making prey of the weak to suit their own desires. The Athenian character Callicles of Plato’s dialogues is an example of someone who has imbibed these arguments and presents them in indelible form.

“Even then, if what was natural was the rule of the strong, that left open the question of how human conventions should respond, and how their merits should be evaluated. Should one respond by attacking the strong for exploiting the weak using natural justice as a critical tool to expose the exploitative dimension of human laws? The first recorded criticism of the injustice of slavery as an institution (rather than of particular abuses) is framed in these terms. It treats slavery as a merely human law that violates the divinely sponsored and natural condition of liberty. ‘The deity gave

⁹⁶ J.S. McClelland writes: “The Greeks did understand that one of the ways of getting round the problem of the vulnerability of a constitution on account of its age and its political bias was to pretend that it was very ancient indeed. That meant mystifying the origins of a constitution to the point where it had no origins at all. The way to do that was to make the constitution immortal by the simple expedient of making it the product of an immortal mind, and the only immortal minds were possessed by gods, or, as second-best, by supremely god-like men” (*A History of Western Political Thought*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 11).

liberty to all men, and nature created no one a slave' is a saying of Alkadamas...

"Using the *nomos/physis* distinction to advance that radical critique of slavery or any other particular law did not find many takers, however. More common was the argument that the bulk of laws do serve human interests in general - but they do so only as a kind of second-best, not serving them to the fullest possible extent. Individual humans would be best served by pursuing the justice of nature, which is a justice in which the strong rule the weak, but only if they are assuredly among the strong. The difficulty of being sure that one would win out leads to a second-best solution, of accepting human law as a way of ensuring that one gets something rather than nothing. The best thing for each individual would be to dominate others rather than being punished. But the worst thing for him would be to dominate, and get caught and punished. So justice was the middle of the road, the second-best option. Forgo the fruits of being a dominator, but thereby ensure that you don't suffer the pains of being dominated. Plato has the character Glaucon lay out this view - while distancing himself from endorsing it - in the *Republic*: justice is 'intermediate between the best and the worst; the worst is to suffer it without being able to take revenge. Justice is a mean between these two extremes. People value it not as a good but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity.' ...

"Such a relativizing of the value of justice - making it something we put up with when necessary, but not what is most beneficial or advantageous for our own happiness - marks an important challenge to the full-throated (if wistful) defences of justice in the poets... As new figures come on to the public stages of Greek society - from the older poets and philosophers, to the tragic playwrights and then the sophists - the consensus on the meaning of justice began to fray. Was justice central to the survival of civilization, or a swindle practised by the rich upon the poor?"⁹⁷

*

In spite of the humanism of Greek religion, and the very human frailties of the Greek gods, their power to make or break a man was still recognized by all except the most sceptical. Moreover, they insisted that there was some link, however difficult to discern at times, between the destiny of a man and a certain cosmic *justice*. As the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander put it: "All things pay retribution to each other for their injustice according to the judgement of Time".⁹⁸ Justice was a major theme of Greek philosophy from Anaximander to Plato. It was also the principal obsession of the great fifth-century Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. Most of their plots concern crime and punishment, *hubris* and *nemesis*. Tragedy was born as an inquiry into the nature of justice.

⁹⁷ Lane, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51, 52.

⁹⁸ Anaximander, in Simplicius, *Physics*, 24, 17.

Thus at the dawn of tragedy, we find Aeschylus' archetypal tragic hero, Prometheus, "bound in adamantine chains unbreakable" and defiantly challenging the power of Zeus, the king of the gods:

*Let him hurl at me the curlèd lightning's prongs;
Let him rouse the air with spasms of saddened winds
And thunder; let hurricane convulse the earth
To her very roots; let the seas' savage roar
Confound the courses of the heavenly stars;
Let him lift me high and hurl to Tartarus' gloom
On whirling floods of inescapable doom
He cannot kill me.⁹⁹*

Zeus cannot kill Prometheus, because Prometheus is a god and immortal. But he is also the son of Earth, so he feels a bond with the mortal race of man. He belongs, therefore, to both the kingdom of heaven and the society of men, which involves him in a conflict of obligations. In bringing fire from heaven to earth, Prometheus fulfilled his obligations to me but broke his obligations to heaven. Zeus therefore bound him in chains to a rock.

Prometheus protests that this is *unjust* –

*O sky divine, and swift-winged winds,
And river springs, and ocean waves'
Multitudinous laughter – see!
See, O Earth, mother of all!
And you, all-seeing circle
Of the sun, on you I call! See what
On me, a god, the gods let fall!¹⁰⁰*

For according to the justice of equality a god should not be coerced by another god. On the other hand, Zeus can invoke the justice of hierarchy – Prometheus has usurped a higher place than is his by right in the hierarchy of the gods.

In Aeschylus the conflict between different criteria of justice can only be resolved by the goddess Justice herself:

*Justice lights up smoke-dimmed
Halls of the righteous, and honours
Those who walk with God.
She passes by, with eyes
Averted, gilded splendours
Stained by filthy hands.*

⁹⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 1043.

¹⁰⁰ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 88.

*For she disdains the power
Of avarice falsely stamped
With praise. And all things are steered
To their appointed end.*¹⁰¹

For Justice is in league with Fate:

*Justice plants the anvil:
The sword is forged by Fate.*¹⁰²

Thus for Aeschylus the whole of history is shaped by a divine hand, leading from injustice to the final triumph of justice.

As for human justice, that has to be steered by the gods. Thus, as Lane writes, “the final play of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* trilogy, produced in 458 BCE, called the *Eumenides*, portrays how justice was established there in the form of the ‘Areopagus’, the aristocratic court that served religious as well as judicial functions. In the play, Athena sets up the court and serves in its first case as one of the twelve jurors, sitting alongside eleven Athenian mortals, to try the prince of Argos, Orestes, for the murder of his mother and her lover. Although Orestes had in fact committed this murder to avenge his father, Agamemnon, Athena casts the deciding vote to acquit him in order to break the cycle of vengeance and instead establish new terms of justice. The image of a goddess deliberating as one member of an otherwise human jury underscored the divine nimbus attached to the idea of justice, the awe with which it had to be surrounded if social ties were to withstand the many breakdowns and violations of justice that everyday life inevitably entailed.”¹⁰³

In Sophocles’ *Antigone* we find a similar conflict between different kinds or criteria of justice. The conflict here is between the justice of the state and the justice of the gods or popular piety; and the issue is whether a decent burial should be given to Polyneides, who has been killed leading an abortive rebellion against Creon, king of Thebes. Since Polyneides was a traitor to his country and state, Creon orders that he remain unburied; this is the justice of the state. However, Polyneices’ sister Antigone decides to defy the edict by performing this service for her brother’s unsettled ghost:

*I will bury him –
What glory to die for that! I will lie with him
Loving and beloved; for piety
Condemned. For I have more time to serve those below
Than those up here; there I shall lie forever.*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 773.

¹⁰² Aeschylus, *The Libation-Bearers*, 646.

¹⁰³ Lane, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰⁴ *Antigone*, 71.

Noble words; but there is a hint here of a certain Pharisaism, even sensuality, corrupting the purity of her undoubtedly correct championship of a higher justice and morality. We find something similar in Shakespeare's Isabella:

*Angelo. What would you do?
Isabella. As much for my poor brother as myself;
That is, were I under the terms of death,
Th' impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to bed as to a bed
That longing had been sick for ere I'd yield
By body up to pieces.¹⁰⁵*

Angelo will spare the life of Isabella's brother, Claudio, who has been condemned to death for promiscuity, if she agrees to sleep with him. But Isabella remains brutally chaste:

*Then, Isabel, live chaste, and, brother, die:
More than our brother is our chastity.¹⁰⁶*

Antigone dies for her brother; but death to her is what chastity is to Isabella.

Nothing can robe me of my honourable death,¹⁰⁷

She says to her sister Ismene; and

*Take heart – you live: my heart is long since dead
To serve the dead.¹⁰⁸*

Creon is clearly wrong in condemning Antigone to death and thereby upholding the justice of the state against the higher justice of the gods and popular piety. Nevertheless, Sophocles also sympathizes with his exasperation at her infatuation with death:

*There let her pray to Death – of all the gods
She worships him alone – to spare her death.
Then at length she will learn what pain unimag-
inable is it to worship Death when dead.¹⁰⁹*

There follows an ode to "unconquerable Eros". But what kind of Eros is meant? If it is Antigone's almost Isoldean passion for death, then it may be unconquerable, but it is also destructive. Her betrothed Haimon (*haima* is the

¹⁰⁵ *Measure for Measure*, II, 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Measure for Measure*, II, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Antigone*, 96.

¹⁰⁸ *Antigone*, 559.

¹⁰⁹ *Antigone*, 777.

Greek for “blood”) kills himself when he finds her dead – his eros has been crushed to death. The tragic irony is that she who said:

To join in love, not hatred, was I born,¹¹⁰

has left in her heroic wake only hatred and suffering. She championed the justice of the gods against the justice of the state, and in this the gods supported her – Creon loses not only his son Haimon, but also his wife Eurydice in punishment for his “self-will”. But the chorus describes Antigone, too, as self-willed. Self-will infects both Creon and Antigone – as it infected both Angelo and Isabella in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. To fight for justice is great and commendable; but the moral is that even the greatest feats of heroism can be corrupted by pride and therefore lead to the suffering of the innocent.

Sophocles’ last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, performed in 406 as Athens faced defeat by Sparta, takes the analysis of justice one step further. In this work, Time, as in Anaximander, is the ultimate judge of all things. But there is no joy in the triumph of this justice, which destroys even the best that is human:

*Only the gods escape old age and death:
The rest are victims all of ruinous Time.
Earth’s strength decays, and health departs; faith dies,
And falsehood blooms; the breath of friendship fails
‘Twixt man and man, and state and state. Whether soon
Or late, sweet turns to sour, and fair to foul.
If now ‘twixt you and Thebes the day is fine,
Time will bring forth a thousand days and nights
In which the most harmonious, close-bound friends
Will be parted at spear’s point for the merest nothing.¹¹¹*

Oedipus’ son Polyneices enters, and appeals to his father in the name of “Mercy, who sits beside the throne of God”, to help him against his brother Eteocles. This is a new note in tragedy – mercy also has its claims, for it, too, is divine. However, it is not given to Sophocles to develop this new theme. For Oedipus, in the name of “old, eternal Justice”, brings curses on both his sons. Then he is borne away through the midst of thunder and lightning to “unseen fields of night”. He could say, as did Shakespeare’s Timon of Athens,

*My long sickness
Of health and living now begins to mend,
And nothing brings me all things...¹¹²*

¹¹⁰ *Antigone*, 523.

¹¹¹ *Oedipus at Colonus*, 607.

¹¹² *Timon of Athens*, V, 1.

The third of the great Athenian dramatists, Euripides, did not share his older colleagues' faith in justice. It wasn't only that the justice of the state was often unjust, and the justice of the gods brought only suffering. The more fundamental question was: did justice really exist? Thus when Medea is betrayed by Jason and murders their children in revenge, the gods aid and abet her to the last. When Hippolytus ignores Aphrodite, he is destroyed together with Phaedra, the instrument of the goddess' revenge. And when Pentheus persecutes the followers of Dionysius, he is torn apart limb from limb. Euripides did not try to justify the ways of God to men; "justice strain'd with mercy" is to be found neither in heaven nor on earth. The puzzled mind can only echo Hecuba's cry in *The Trojan Women*:

*O Zeus, be thou Natural Necessity
Or Mind of Man, to thee I pray.*

For, whatever they are, the gods exist – and in terrible power...

*

The glorious age of fifth-century Athenian democracy comes to an end with what her greatest philosopher, Plato, considered to be the greatest of all acts of injustice: the condemnation and execution of Socrates. It is beyond the scope of this work to study how this event took place and how it influenced Plato – although we shall study his verdict on the democratic political system that carried it out. More to the point here is to contrast the great advance made by Greek philosophy and tragedy in probing the nature of justice, with the great prophets of Israel, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who were praising the justice of God and denouncing the injustices of men at about the same time.

"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom". This is, of course, a quotation from the Old Testament, but it could also serve as the motto of the great Greek tragedians. The Hebrew and the Greco-Roman worlds agreed that the world is governed in accordance with Divine justice. Wisdom therefore begins in acknowledging this ineluctable fact, and managing one's life in accordance with it. To do otherwise is foolish – and will bring down upon oneself the just wrath of the Divinity.

Beyond that acknowledgement, of course, the Jews and the Greeks diverged in their thinking. The Jewish prophets, having a direct knowledge of the One True God, and a deeper and more accurate knowledge of His laws, entertained no doubts about His justice. And, having a much higher estimate of the God of Abraham than the Greeks had of Zeus and his often wayward family, they were much less patient with the idea that God was in any way unjust. Thus "The house of Israel saith, 'The way of the Lord is not equal.' 'O house of Israel, are not My ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways'" (Ezekiel 18.29-30.). Again, the last of the Prophets, Malachi (fifth-

century BC), says: "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, 'Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them.' Or, 'Where is the God of judgement?'" (Malachi 2.17). But God, for the Jewish prophets, is never unequal - that is, unjust - in His ways; He is always the God of judgement.

The Jewish prophets are no less stern than the Greek tragedians in seeing an inexorable link between crime and punishment, *hubris* and *nemesis*. But they have none of the black pessimism of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*. The God of justice does not only punish: He also comes to save His people from their oppressors, "to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable years of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our Go; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be alled trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" (Isaiah 61.1-3).

Of course, this joyful outcome for the just and the justified would come only with the Saviour, Jesus Christ, of whom the Greeks had no conception and the Jews only a dim one as yet. However, in this obsession with justice in both the Jewish and the Greco-Roman world we may see a preparation for Christ, and an anticipation of the time when both Jews and Greeks would be one in Christ, worshipping the God both of justice and of mercy. If the Law and the Prophets were "a schoolmaster to Christ" for the Jews (Galatians 3.24), then the great works of the Greek tragedians and philosophers provided that cultural and intellectual earth in which the new Christian civilization could grow and prosper. For Greek philosophy, according to Clement of Alexandria, "was given to them for a time and in the first instance for the same reason as the Scriptures were given to the Jews. It was for the Greeks the same nurse towards Christ as the law was for the Jews".

12. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE ON THE STATE

Just as Athens was not the whole of Greece, so Democracy was not the only form of government to be observed among the Greek city-states. In Sicily and on the coast of Asia Minor Monarchy still flourished. And on mainland Europe mixed constitutions including elements of all three forms of government were also to be found, most notably in Sparta, which has been seen as one of the earliest models of socialism in the western world.¹¹³

This diversity of state forms naturally led to a debate on which was the best; and we find one debate on this subject comparing despotism, oligarchy and democracy recorded by the "Father of History", Herodotus. He placed it, surprisingly, in the court of the Persian King Darius. Was this merely a literary device (although Herodotus, who had already encountered this objection, insisted that he was telling the truth)? Or did this indicate that the Despotism of Persia tolerated a freer spirit of inquiry and debate than is generally supposed? We do not know.

In any case the debate - the first of its kind in western literature - is worth quoting at length:- "The first speaker was Otanes, and his theme was to recommend the establishment in Persia of popular government. 'I think,' he said, 'that the time has passed for any one man amongst us to have absolute power. Monarchy is neither pleasant nor good. You know to what lengths the pride of power carried Cambyses, and you have personal experience of the effect of the same thing in the conduct of the Magus [who had rebelled against Cambyses]. How can one fit monarchy into any sound system of ethics, when it allows a man to do whatever he likes without any responsibility or control? Even the best of men raised to such a position would be bound to change for the worse - he could not possibly see things as he used to do. The typical vices of a monarch are envy and pride; envy, because it is a natural human weakness, and pride, because excessive wealth and power lead to the delusion that he is something more than a man. These two vices are the root cause of all wickedness: both lead to acts of savage and unnatural violence. Absolute power ought, by rights, to preclude envy on the principle that the man who possesses it has also at command everything he could wish for; but in fact it is not so, as the behaviour of kings to their subjects proves: they are jealous of the best of them merely for continuing to live, and take pleasure in the worst; and no one is readier than a king to listen to tale-bearers. A king, again, is the most inconsistent of men; show him reasonably respect, and he is angry because you do not abase yourself before his majesty; abase yourself, and he hates you for being a toady. But the worst of all remains to be said - he breaks up the structure of ancient tradition and law, forces women to serve his pleasure, and puts men to death without trial.

¹¹³ See Lev Karpinsky, "S 'Sotsializmom' napereves'" ("In a horizontal position with socialism"), *Moskovskie Novosti* (Moscow News), N 21, May 27, 1990; Vladimir Rusak, *Svidetel'stvo obvinenia* (Witness for the Prosecution), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1989, part III, p. 102; Montefiore, *Titans*, pp. 27-31.

Contrast this with the rule of the people: first, it has the finest of all names to describe it – equality under the law; and, secondly, the people in power do none of the things that monarchs do. Under a government of the people a magistrate is appointed by lot and is held responsible for his conduct in office, and all questions are put up for open debate. For these reasons I propose that we do away with the monarchy, and raise the people to power; for the state and the people are synonymous terms.”

“Otanés was followed by Megabyzus, who recommended the principle of oligarchy in the following words: ‘Insofar as Otanés spoke in favour of abolishing monarchy, I agree with him; but he is wrong in asking us to transfer political power to the people. The masses are a feckless lot – nowhere will you find more ignorance or irresponsibility or violence. It would be an intolerable thing to escape the murderous caprice of a king, only to be caught by the equally wanton brutality of the rabble. A king does at least act consciously and deliberately; but the mob does not. Indeed how should it, when it has never been taught what is right and proper, and has no knowledge of its own about such things? The masses handle affairs without thought; all they can do is to rush blindly into politics like a river in flood. As for the people, then, let them govern Persia’s enemies; but let us ourselves choose a certain number of the best men in the country, and give *them* political power. We personally shall be amongst them, and it is only natural to suppose that the best men will produce the best policy.’

“Darius was the third to speak. ‘I support,’ he said, ‘all Megabyzus’ remarks about the masses but I do not agree with what he said of oligarchy. Take the three forms of government we are considering – democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy – and suppose each of them to be the best of its kind; I maintain that the third is greatly preferable to the other two. One ruler: it is impossible to improve upon that – provided he is the best. His judgement will be in keeping with his character; his control of the people will be beyond reproach; his measures against enemies and traitors will be kept secret more easily than under other forms of government. In an oligarchy, the fact that a number of men are competing for distinction in the public service cannot but lead to violent personal feuds; each of them wants to get to the top, and to see his own proposals carried; so they quarrel. Personal quarrels lead to civil wars, and then to bloodshed; and from that state of affairs the only way out is a return to monarchy – a clear proof that monarchy is best. Again, in a democracy, malpractices are bound to occur; in this case, however, corrupt dealings in government services lead not to private feuds, but to close personal associations, the men responsible for them putting their heads together and mutually supporting one another. And so it goes on, until somebody or other comes forward as the people’s champion and breaks up the cliques which are out for their own interests. This wins him the admiration of the mob, and as a result he soon finds himself entrusted with absolute power – all of which is another proof that the best form of government is monarchy. To sum up: where did we get our freedom from, and who gave it us? Is it the result of democracy, or of oligarchy, or of

monarchy? We were set free by one man, and therefore I propose that we should preserve that form of government, and, further, that we should refrain from changing ancient ways, which have served as well in the past. To do so would not profit us.”¹¹⁴

This to a western ear paradoxical argument that monarchy actually delivers freedom – freedom from civil war, especially, but freedom in other senses, too – actually has strong historical evidence in its favour. Several of the Greek kings were summoned to power by the people in order to deliver them from oppressive aristocratic rule. Darius himself freed the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. Augustus, the first Roman emperor, freed the Romans from civil war. So did St. Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, who also granted them religious freedom. Rurik, the first Russian king, was summoned from abroad to deliver the Russians from the misery and oppression that their “freedom” had subjected them to. Tsar Nicolas II died trying to save his people from the worst of all despotisms, Communism...

Of course, these men were exceptional: it is easier to find monarchs who enslaved their subjects rather than liberating them. So the problem of finding the *good* monarch – or, at any rate, of finding a monarchical type of government which is good for the people even if the monarch himself is bad – remains. As Darius puts it, one-man rule is the best “provided he *is* the best”. But the argument in favour of monarchy as put into the mouth of an oriental despot by a Greek democratic historian also remains valid in its essential point. It should remind us that Greek historical and philosophical thought was more often critical of democracy than in favour of it.

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This was so especially after the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian war, and the many negative phenomena that the war threw up, which led not only to a slackening in the creative impulse that had created Periclean Athens, but also, eventually, to a questioning of the superiority of democracy over other forms of government. The first and most obvious defect that the war revealed was that democracy tends to divide rather than unite men – at any rate so long as there are no stronger bonds uniting them than were to be found in Athens. The Greeks had united to defeat Persia early in the fifth century B.C., and this had provided the stimulus for the cultural efflorescence of Periclean Athens. But this was both the first and the last instance of such unity. For the next one hundred and fifty years, until Alexander the Great reimposed despotism on the city-states, the Greek city-states were almost continually at war with each other. Nor was this disunity manifest only *between* city-states: *within* them traitors were also frequent (e.g. the Athenian Alcibiades).

¹¹⁴ Herodotus, *History*, III, 80, 81, 82.

Evidently, attachment to democracy does not necessarily go together with attachment to the nation, with patriotism and loyalty. This fact elicited Aristotle's famous distinction between behaviour that is characteristic of democracy and behaviour that is conducive to the survival of democracy. The same dilemma was to confront democracy in its struggle with communism in the twentieth century, when large numbers of citizens of the western democracies were prepared to work secretly (and not so secretly) for the triumph of a foreign power and the most evil despotism yet seen in history.

This element of destructive individualism is described by Roberts: "Greek democracy... cheerfully paid a larger price in destructiveness than would be welcomed today. There was a blatant competitiveness in Greek life apparent from the Homeric poems onwards. Greeks admired men who won and thought men should strive to win. The consequent release of human power was colossal, but also dangerous. The ideal expressed in the much-used word [αρετη] which we inadequately translate as 'virtue' illustrates this. When Greeks used it, they meant that people were able, strong, quick-witted, just as much as just, principled, or virtuous in a modern sense. Homer's hero, Odysseus, frequently behaved like a rogue, but he is brave and clever and he succeeds; he is therefore admirable. To show such quality was good; it did not matter that the social cost might sometimes be high. The Greek was concerned with 'face'; his culture taught him to avoid shame rather than guilt and the fear of shame was never far from the fear of public evidence of guilt. Some of the explanation of the bitterness of faction in Greek politics lies here; it was a price willingly paid."¹¹⁵

Another defect of Athenian democracy was its tendency to identify the state with the assembly of free male citizens in separation from the family¹¹⁶, whereas Aristotle saw the state as an organic outgrowth from the family - the family writ large. This led to the emphasis on individualism and competitiveness we have already noted, and undermined the relations of hierarchy and obedience within society. Perhaps, therefore, it is not by chance that the first feminist work of literature was Aristophanes' comedy, *Lysistrata*.

"Those who most benefited from the 'empire' were, Aristotle said, the Athenian poor. Why? Because Athens was a direct democracy: the poor dominated the Assembly and made sure that it worked in their interest. So it was they who were granted the land that Athens confiscated from rebellious states or took over in their 'colonies' in the Aegean; they who were paid for public service, for example, on juries (a radical innovation); they who held down the jobs working in Athens' navy and dockyards, which kept the 'empire' going."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹¹⁶ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*, New York: Basic Books, 2008, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Peter Jones, *BBC World Histories*, N 3, April/May, 2017, p. 34.

Athenian democracy was not notably humane... The Athenians could be as cruel and imperialistic as any despot. Thus they slaughtered the inhabitants of the little island of Melos simply because they did not want to become part of the Athenian empire.¹¹⁸ All the Melian males of military age were slaughtered, and all the women and children were driven into slavery. Thus in the end the ideal of freedom that had given birth to Athenian Democracy proved weaker than Realpolitik and the concrete examples provided by the Olympian gods and the Dionysian frenzies. The Melian episode demonstrates that even the most just and democratic of constitutions are powerless to prevent their citizens from descending to the depths of barbarism unless the egoism of human nature itself is overcome, which in turn depends on the truth of the religion that the citizens profess...

And there was another event that famously illustrated this point: the execution of Socrates. According to Socrates' most famous pupil, Plato, democracy had destroyed justice and truth when it executed the finest flower of Greek civilization. Indeed, the words that Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates during his trial make it clear that, for him, the democracy that condemned him was not only unjust but also *impious*, that is, opposed to God and the search for the truth to which he devoted his life: "If you say to me, 'Socrates, we let you go on condition that you no longer spend your life in this search, and that you give up philosophy, but if you are caught at it again you must die' - my reply is: 'Men of Athens, I honour and love you, but I shall obey God rather than men, and while I breathe, and have the strength, I shall never turn from philosophy, nor from warning and admonishing any of you I come across not to disgrace your citizenship of a great city renowned for its wisdom and strength, by giving your thought to reaping the largest possible harvest of wealth and honour and glory, and giving neither thought nor care that you may reach the best in judgement, truth, and the soul...'"¹¹⁹

The nobility of Socrates' character, and his determination to put God and the truth above all things, was a clear premonition of the Christianity of the Apostles. It is no wonder that Church writers such as St. Justin the Philosopher saw in him a "seed" of the Divine Word. The tragedy of Socrates' death, combined with the fact of the defeat of democratic Athens at the hands of Sparta in the Peloponnesian war, decisively influenced Plato against democracy and in favour of that ideal state which would place the most just of its citizens, not in the place of execution and dishonour, but at the head of the corner of the whole state system.

¹¹⁸ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, II, 37, London: Penguin books, V, 89, 91-97. Paradoxically, the Spartans were more merciful to fallen enemies, as Thucydides writes: "[The Spartans] fought long and stubbornly until the rout of their enemy, but, that achieved, pursuing them only for a short time, and not far" (in Antonio Penades, "Sparta's Military Machine", *National Geographic History*, November/December, 2016, p. 37).

¹¹⁹ Brian Macarthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 9. See also Melissa Lane, "Was Socrates a Democrat?" *History Today*, vol. 52 (01), January, 2002, pp. 42-47.

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Plato undertook the construction of the first systematic theory of the relationship of politics to religion. In *The Republic* he asserts that the end of the state is happiness, which is achieved if it produces justice, since justice is the condition of happiness. Democracy was not only not the ideal form of government according to this criterion: it was a long way from the ideal, being the penultimate stage in the degeneration of the state from the ideal to a meritocracy to an oligarchy to a democracy, and finally to a tyranny.

The process of degradation is approximately as follows. A meritocracy – the highest form of government yet found in Greece, and located, if anywhere, in Sparta – tends to be corrupted, not so much by power, as by money (Spartan discipline collapsed when exposed to luxury).

This leads to a sharp division between the rich and the poor, as a result of which the poor rise up against the rich and bring in democracy, which is “feeble in every respect, and unable to do either any great good or any great evil.”¹²⁰ For democracy’s great weakness is its lack of discipline: “You are not obliged to be in authority, however competent you may be, or to submit to authority, if you do not like it; you need not fight when your fellow-citizens are at war, nor remain at peace when they do, unless you want peace... A wonderfully pleasant life, surely – for the moment.”¹²¹ “For the moment” only, because a State founded on such indiscipline is inherently unstable. Indiscipline leads to excess, which in turn leads to the need to reimpose discipline through despotism, the worst of all evils.

For Plato, in short, democracy is bad because it is unstable, and paves the way for the worst, which is despotism or tyranny. He compares the democratic it to a ship in which: “The captain is larger and stronger than any of the crew, but a bit deaf and short-sighted, and similarly limited in seamanship. The crew are all quarrelling with each other about how to navigate the ship, each thinking he ought to be at the helm; they have never learned the art of navigation and cannot say that anyone ever taught it them, or that they spent any time studying it; indeed they say it can’t be taught and are ready to murder anyone who says it can [i.e. Socrates, who recommended the study of wisdom]. They spend all their time milling round the captain and doing all they can to get him to give them the helm. If one faction is more successful than another, their rivals may kill them and throw them overboard, lay out the honest captain with drugs or drink or in some other way, take control of the ship, help themselves to what’s on board, and turn the voyage into the sort of drunken pleasure-cruise you would expect. Finally, they reserve their admiration for the man who knows how to lend a hand in controlling the captain by force or fraud; they praise his seamanship and navigation and knowledge of the sea and condemn everyone else as useless.

¹²⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, London: Penguin books, 1974, 488.

¹²¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 557.

They have no idea that the true navigator must study the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds and all the other subjects appropriate to his profession if he is to be really fit to control a ship; and they think that it's quite impossible to acquire the professional skill needed for such control (whether or not they want it exercised) and that there's no such thing as an art of navigation. With all this going on aboard aren't the sailors on any such ship bound to regard the true navigator as a word-spinner and a star-gazer, of no use to them at all?"¹²²

David Held comments on this metaphor, and summarises Plato's views on democracy, as follows: "The 'true navigator' denotes the minority who, equipped with the necessary skill and expertise, has the strongest claim to rule legitimately. For the people... conduct their affairs on impulse, sentiment and prejudice. They have neither the experience nor the knowledge for sound navigation, that is, political judgement. In addition, the only leaders they are capable of admiring are sycophants: 'politicians... are duly honoured.. [if] they profess themselves the people's friends' (*The Republic*, p. 376). All who 'mix with the crowd and want to be popular with it' can be directly 'compared... to the sailors' (p. 283). There can be no proper leadership in a democracy; leaders depend on popular favour and they will, accordingly, act to sustain their own popularity and their own positions. Political leadership is enfeebled by acquiescence to popular demands and by the basing of political strategy on what can be 'sold'. Careful judgements, difficult decisions, uncomfortable options, unpleasant truths will of necessity be generally avoided. Democracy marginalises the wise.

"The claims of liberty and political equality are, furthermore, inconsistent with the maintenance of authority, order and stability. When individuals are free to do as they like and demand equal rights irrespective of their capacities and contributions, the result in the short run will be the creation of an attractively diverse society. However, in the long run the effect is an indulgence of desire and a permissiveness that erodes respect for political and moral authority. The younger no longer fear and respect their teachers; they constantly challenge their elders and the latter 'ape the young' (*The Republic*, p. 383). In short, 'the minds of citizens become so sensitive that the least vestige of restraint is resented as intolerable, till finally... in their determination to have no master they disregard all laws...' (p. 384). 'Insolence' is called 'good breeding, licence liberty, extravagance generosity, and shamelessness courage' (p. 380). A false 'equality of pleasures' leads 'democratic man' to live from day to day. Accordingly, social cohesion is threatened, political life becomes more and more fragmented and politics becomes riddled with factional disputes. Intensive conflict between sectional interests inevitably follows as each faction presses for its own advantage rather than that of the state as a whole. A comprehensive commitment to the good of the community and social justice becomes impossible.

¹²² Plato, *The Republic*, p. 282.

“This state of affairs inevitably leads to endless intrigue, manoeuvring and political instability: a politics of unbridled desire and ambition. All involved claim to represent the interests of the community, but all in fact represent themselves and a selfish lust for power. Those with resources, whether from wealth or a position of authority, will, Plato thought, inevitably find themselves under attack; and the conflict between rich and poor will become particularly acute. In these circumstances, the disintegration of democracy is, he contended, likely. ‘Any extreme is likely to produce a violent reaction... so from an extreme of liberty one is likely to get an extreme of subjection’ (*The Republic*, p. 385). In the struggle between factions, leaders are put forward to advance particular causes, and it is relatively easy for these popular leaders to demand ‘a personal bodyguard’ to preserve themselves against attack. With such assistance the popular champion is a short step from grasping ‘the reins of state’. As democracy plunges into dissension and conflict, popular champions can be seen to offer clarity of vision, firm directions and the promise to quell all opposition. It becomes a tempting option to support the tyrant of one’s own choice. But, of course, once possessed of state power tyrants have a habit of attending solely to themselves.”¹²³

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Plato’s solution to the problem of statecraft was the elevation to leadership in the state of a philosopher-king, who would neither be dominated by personal ambitions, like the conventional tyrant, nor swayed by demagogues and short-term, factional interests, like the Athenian democracy. This king would have to be a philosopher, since he would frame the laws in accordance, not with passion or factional interest, but with the idea of the eternal Good. His “executive branch” would be highly educated and disciplined guardians, who would not make bad mistakes since they would carry out the supremely wise intentions of the king and would be carefully screened from many of the temptations of life.

Plato saw that society could be held together in justice only by aiming at a goal higher than itself, the contemplation of the Good. He saw, in other words, that the problem of *politics* is soluble only in the *religious* domain. And while he was realistic enough to understand that the majority of men could not be religious in this sense, he hoped that at any rate one man could be trained to reach that level, and, having attained a position of supreme power in the state, spread that religious ideal downwards. Thus he wrote: “Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils, - no, nor the human race, as I believe, - and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.”¹²⁴

¹²³ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1987, pp. 29-31

¹²⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, 473.

This represents a major advance on all previous pagan political systems or philosophies. For while all the states of pagan antiquity were religious, they located the object of their worship *within* the political system, deifying the state itself, or, more usually, its ruler. But Plato rejected every form of man-worship, since it inevitably led to despotism. Contrary to what many of his critics who see him as the godfather of totalitarianism imply¹²⁵, he was fully aware of the fact that, as Lord Acton put it much later, “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”.¹²⁶ But he was also enough of a “Platonist”, as it were, to know that the end of human society must *transcend* human society.

Plato’s system presupposed either that existing kings could be educated in the Good (which Plato tried, but failed to do in Syracuse) or that there was a rational method of detecting the true lovers of wisdom and then promoting them to the height of power. However, as Bertrand Russell noted, this is easier said than done: “Even if we supposed that there is such a thing as ‘wisdom,’ is there any form of constitution which will give the government to the wise? It is clear that majorities, like general councils, may err, and in fact have erred. Aristocracies are not always wise; kings are often foolish; Popes, in spite of infallibility, have committed grievous errors. Would anybody advocate entrusting the government to university graduates, or even to doctors of divinity? Or to men who, having been born poor, have made great fortunes?... It might be suggested that men could be given political wisdom by a suitable training. But the question would arise: what is a suitable training? And this would turn out to be a party question. The problem of finding a collection of ‘wise’ men and leaving the government to them is thus an insoluble one...”¹²⁷

As Metropolitan Anastasy writes: “Society is always more willing to run after the fanatic or decisive opportunist than after a great-souled dreamer who is unable to convert words into deeds. The philosophers to whom Plato wished to entrust the rule of his ideal state would more likely be very pitiful in this situation and would inexorably lead the ship of state to shipwreck. Political power that is firm, but at the same time enlightened, rational and conscious of its responsibility, must be the object of desire of every country, but such happiness rarely falls to the lot of peoples and states.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ See Sir Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, part I, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

¹²⁶ Thus he wrote in *The Laws* (691): “If one ignores the law of proportion and gives too great power to anything, too large a sail to a vessel, too much food to the body, too much authority to the mind, everything is shipwrecked. The excess breaks out in the one case in disease, and in the other in injustice, the child of pride. I mean to say, my dear friends, that no human soul, in its youth and irresponsibility, will be able to sustain the temptation of arbitrary power – there is no one who will not, under such circumstances, become filled with folly, that worst of diseases, and be hated by his nearest and dearest friends.”

¹²⁷ Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, pp. 127-128.

¹²⁸ Gribanovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

To be fair to Plato, he was quite aware of the difficulty of finding a man fit to be philosopher-king. He emphasised training in character as well as intellect, and acknowledged, as we have seen, that such a man, if found and elevated to power, could still be corrupted by his position. What his philosophy lacked was the idea that the Good Itself could come down to the human level and inspire Its chosen one with wisdom and justice. The problem here was that the scepticism engendered by the all-too-human antics of the Olympian gods revealed its corrosive effect on Plato, as on all subsequent Greek philosophers. Greek religion recognised that the gods could come down to men and inspire them, but the gods who did this, like Dionysius, were hardly the wise, sober and rational beings who alone could inspire wise and sober statecraft. As for the enthusiasms of the Orphic rites, these took place only in a condition that was the exact opposite of sobriety and rationality. So Wisdom could not come from the lechers and buffoons that the Greeks called gods.

But what if there was another divinity higher than they, a divinity that would incarnate the eternal ideas of the Good, the True and the Beautiful? Now Plato did indeed come to some such conception of the One God. But this was an impersonal God who did not interfere in the affairs of men. Man may attempt to reach the eternal ideas and God through a rigorous programme of intellectual training and ascetic endeavour. But that Divine Wisdom should Himself bow down the heavens and manifest Himself to men was an idea that had to await the coming of Christianity... So Plato turned to the most successful State known to him, Sparta, and constructed his utopia at least partly in its likeness. Thus society was to be divided into the common people, the soldiers and the guardians. All life, including personal and religious life, was to be subordinated to the needs of the State. In economics there was to be a thoroughgoing communism, with no private property, women and children were to be held in common, marriages arranged on eugenic lines with compulsory abortion and infanticide of the unfit. There was to be a rigorous censorship of the literature and the arts, and the equivalent of the modern inquisition and concentration camps. Lying was to be the prerogative of the government, which would invent a religious myth according to which, as J.S. McClelland writes, "all men are children of the same mother who has produced men of gold, silver and bronze corresponding to the three different classes into which Plato divides his ideal community."¹²⁹ This myth would reconcile each class to its place in society.

It is here that that the charge that Plato is an intellectual ancestor of the totalitarian philosophies of the twentieth century is seen to have some weight. For truly, in trying to avert the failings of democracy, he veered strongly towards the despotism that he feared above all. Plato's path to heaven - the ideal state of the philosopher-king - was paved with good intentions. Nor was this ideal just a pipedream - he tried to introduce it into Syracuse. But it led just as surely to hell in the form of the despotism that all Greeks despised.

¹²⁹ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Plato's political ideal was put forward for the sake of "justice" – that is, each man doing what he is best fitted to do, for the sake of the common good. But, being based on human reasoning and human efforts alone, it failed, like all such rationalist systems, fully to take into account the reality of *sin*, and therefore became the model for that supremely utopian and unjust system that we see in Soviet and Chinese communism. Moreover, it anticipated communism in its subordination of truth and religion to expediency, and in its approval of the lie for the sake of the survival of the State.

Justice is indeed the ideal of statecraft. But political justice must be understood in a religious context, as the nearest approximation on earth to *Divine Justice*. Thus St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: "God is named Justice because He satisfies the needs of all things, dispensing due proportion, beauty and order, and defines the bounds of all orders and places each thing under its appropriate laws and orders according to that rule which is most truly just, and because he is the Cause of the independent activity of each. For the Divine Justice orders and assigns limits to all things and keeps all things distinct from and unmixed with one another and give to all beings that which belongs to each according to the dignity of each. And, to speak truly, all who censure the Divine Justice unknowingly confess themselves to be manifestly unjust. For they say that immortality should be in mortal creatures and perfection in the imperfect and self-motivation in the alter-motivated and sameness in the changeable and perfect power in the weak, and that the temporal should be eternal, things which naturally move immutable, temporal pleasures eternal, and to sum up, they assign the properties of one thing to another. They should know, however, that the Divine justice is essentially true Justice in that it gives to all things that which befits the particular dignity of each and preserves the nature of each in its own proper order and power."¹³⁰

The religious flavour of Plato's political philosophy – as of his philosophy in general – reminds us that while, as we have seen, the introduction of democracy in Greece went together with a decline in religiosity, – a phenomenon that we see recurring in later periods of history, – Classical Greek democracy was still not as irreligious or individualistic as modern democracy, which, as Hugh Bowden writes, "is seen as a secular form of government and is an alternative to religious fundamentalism, taking its authority from the will of the human majority, not the word of god or gods. In Ancient Greece matters were very different... Within the city-state religious rituals entered into all areas of life... There was no emphasis in the Greek world on the freedom of the individual, if that conflicted with obligations to larger groups... Religion was bound up with the political process. High political offices carried religious as well as civic and military duties. Thus the two kings of Sparta were generals and also priests of Zeus..."

¹³⁰ St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, VIII.

“Plato was no supporter of democracy, because he thought it allowed the wrong sort of people to have access to office. However, in the *Laws* he advocates the use of the lot as a means of selecting candidates for some offices, specifically because it is a method that puts the decision in the hands of the gods. Furthermore, where there are issues which Plato considers beyond his powers to legislate for, he suggests that these should be referred to Delphi. For Plato, then, the use of apparently random selection, and the consultation of oracles was a preferable alternative to popular decision-making, because the gods were more to be trusted than the people. This view was not limited to anti-democratic philosophers...

“Greek city-states took oracles seriously, and saw them as the mouthpieces of the gods who supported order and civilisation. Although it was the citizen assemblies that made decisions, they accepted the authority of the gods, and saw the working of the divine hand where we might see the action of chance...”¹³¹

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Aristotle avoided the extremes of Plato, dismissing his communism on the grounds that it would lead to disputes and inefficiency. He agreed with him that the best constitution would be a monarchy ruled by the wisest of men. But since such men are rare at best, other alternatives had to be considered.

Aristotle divided political systems into three pairs of opposites: the three “good” forms of *monarchy*, *aristocracy* and *politeia*, and the three “bad” forms of *tyranny*, *oligarchy* and *democracy* (or what Polybius was later to call “ochlocracy”, “rule by the mob”).¹³²

Aristotle appears to have favoured aristocracy, but at the age of forty-two he returned from Athens to his Macedonian homeland to teach King Philip’s thirteen-year-old son, Alexander, who became the most powerful monarch of the ancient world. Observing Macedonian politics may have influenced him to believe that there could be a good kind of monarchy. For King Philip had taken advantage of the perennial disunity of the Greek city-states to assume a de facto dominion over them. So monarchy at least had the advantage of creating a certain unity out of chaos... “Monarchy, as the word implies,” wrote Aristotle, “is the constitution in which one man has authority over all. There are two forms of monarchy: kingship, which is limited by prescribed conditions, and tyranny, which is not limited by anything.”¹³³ This distinction is similar to the later Christian distinction between autocracy that submits to God and His laws and despotism that submits to nobody...

¹³¹ Bowden, “Greek Oracles and Greek Democracy”, *The Historian*, N 41, Spring, 1994, pp. 3,4,7,8.

¹³² McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹³³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1366a.

Like Plato, Aristotle was highly critical of democracy. He defined it in terms of two basic principles, the first of which was *liberty*. "People constantly make this statement, implying that only in this constitution do men share in liberty; for every democracy, they say, has liberty for its aim. 'Ruling and being ruled in turn,' is one element in liberty, and the democratic idea of justice is in fact numerical liberty, not equality based on merit; and when this idea of what is just prevails, the multitude must be sovereign, and whatever the majority decides is final and constitutes justice. For, they say, there must be equality for each of the citizens. The result is that in democracies the poor have more sovereign power than the rich; for they are more numerous, and the decisions of the majority are sovereign. So this is one mark of liberty, one which all democrats make a definitive principle of their constitution."

The second principle was *licence*, "to live as you like. For this, they say, is a function of being free, since its opposite, living not as you like, is the function of one enslaved."¹³⁴ The basic problem here, Aristotle argued, following Plato, was that the first principle conflicted with the second. *For licence must be restrained if liberty is to survive*. Once again, history was the teacher: licence had led to Athens' defeat at the hands of the more disciplined Spartans. Not only must restraints be placed upon individual citizens so that they do not restrict each other's liberty. The people as a whole must give up some of its "rights" to a higher authority if the state is to acquire a consistent, rational direction. Not only liberty, but equality, too, must be curtailed – for the greater benefit of all. Aristotle pointed out that "the revolutionary state of mind is largely brought about by one-sided notions of justice – democrats thinking that men who are equally free should be equal in everything, oligarchs thinking that because men are unequal in wealth they should be unequal in everything."¹³⁵

What is most valuable in Aristotle's politics is that "in his eyes the end of the State and the end of the individual coincide, not in the sense that the individual should be entirely absorbed in the State but in the sense that the State will prosper when the individual citizens are good, when they attain their own proper ideal. The only real guarantee of the stability and prosperity of the State is the moral goodness and integrity of the citizens, while conversely, unless the State is good, the citizens will not become good."¹³⁶

In this respect Aristotle was faithful to the thought of Plato, who wrote: "Governments vary as the dispositions of men vary. Or do you suppose that political constitutions are made out of rocks or trees, and not out of the dispositions of their citizens which turn the scale and draw everything in their own direction?"¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, London: Penguin books, 1981, p. 362.

¹³⁵ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, volume I, part II, p. 97.

¹³⁶ Copleston, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

¹³⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, 544.

This attitude was inherited by the Romans, who knew “that good laws make good men and good men make good laws. The good laws which were Rome’s internal security, and the good arms which made her neighbours fear her, were the Roman character writ large. The Greeks might be very good at talking about the connection between good character and good government, but the Romans did not have to bother much about talking about it because they were its living proof.”¹³⁸

However, the close link that Aristotle postulated to exist between the kinds of government and the character of people led him to some dubious conclusions. Thus politeia existed in Greece, according to him, because the Greeks were a superior breed of men, capable of reason. Barbarians were inferior – which is why they were ruled by despots. Similarly, women could not take part in democratic government because the directive faculty of reason, while existing in them, was “inoperative”. And slaves also could not participate because they did not have the faculty of reason.¹³⁹

A more fundamental criticism of Aristotle’s politics, voiced by later Christian theorists, was his view that “the state is teleologically autonomous: the polis has no ends outside itself. A polis ought to be self-sufficiently rule-bound for it to need no law except its own.”¹⁴⁰ For Aristotle it was only in political life that man achieved the fulfilment of his potentialities – the good life was inconceivable outside the Greek city-state. Thus “he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god; he is no part of a polis.”¹⁴¹ In a sense this is true: the hermit in the desert can hardly be called a citizen of the polis. But St. Anthony the Great *did* achieve the fulfilment of his potentialities, becoming a god by grace...

This highlights perhaps the fundamental difference between almost all pagan theorising on politics (with the partial exception of Plato’s) and the Christian attitude. For the pagans the life of the well-ordered state, together with the happiness of its citizens understood in a purely secular sense, was the ultimate aim; it did not exist for any higher purpose. For the Christian, on the other hand, political life is simply a means to an end that is other-worldly and transcends politics completely.

¹³⁸ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 84. Again, we find this characteristically Greek connection between good government and good character drawn by the French historian and Prime Minister, François Guizot, who wrote in his *History of France* (1822): “Instead of looking to the system or forms of government in order to understand the state of the people, it is the state of the people that must be examined first in order to know what must have been, what could have been its government... Society, its composition, the manner of life of individuals according to their social position, the relations of the different classes, the condition [*l’état*] of persons especially – that is the first question which demands attention from... the inquirer who seeks to understand how a people are governed.” (quoted in Siedentop’s introduction to Guizot’s *History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 1997).

¹³⁹ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁰ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, I.

This is not to say, however, that Aristotle's politics was irreligious in a general sense. As M.V. Zyzykin points out, when Aristotle wrote that "the first duty of the State is concern over the gods", he recognised that politics cannot be divorced from religion.¹⁴² Other ancient writers said the same, for example Lactantius in his work *On the Wrath of God*: "Only the fear of God keeps men together in society... With the removal of religion and justice we descend to the level of mute cattle deprived of reason, or to the savagery of wild beasts." But Greek religion, as we have seen, was a very this-worldly affair, in which the gods were seen as simply particularly powerful players in human affairs. The gods had to be placated, otherwise humans would suffer; but the accent was always on happiness, *eudaimonia*, in this life. Even Plato, for all his idealism, subordinated religion to the needs of the state and the happiness of people in this life. And Aristotle, for all his philosophical belief in an "unmoved Mover", was a less other-worldly thinker than Plato.

¹⁴² Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, part I, p. 7.

13. ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In 338 King Philip II of Macedon defeated the armies of the democratic city-states of Athens and Thebes at Kenchreae. The age of the democratic city-state was over. It was Philip's son Alexander the Great who even more than his father, was the instrument of that change. At the age of 18 he had fought at the battle of Kenchreae. On becoming king himself, he set out to conquer the world, transforming the Classical Greek world of the polis into the Hellenistic empire of the cosmopolis and becoming himself the first true cosmopolitan. "Polis had given way to cosmopolis," writes McClelland. Henceforward, men were going to have to stop asking themselves what it meant to be a citizen of a city, and begin to ask what it meant to be a citizen of the world..."¹⁴³ For Alexander, writes Paul Johnson, "had created his empire as an ideal: he wanted to fuse the races and he 'ordered all men to regard the world as their country... good men as their kin, bad men as foreigners'. Isocrates argued that 'the designation 'Hellene' is no longer a matter of descent but of attitude'; he thought Greeks by education had better titles to citizenship than 'Greek by birth'."¹⁴⁴

Alexander's career is full of ironies. Setting out, in his expedition against the Persians, to free the Greek democratic city-states on the Eastern Aegean seaboard from tyranny, and to take final revenge on the Persians for their failed invasion of Greece in the fifth century, Alexander not only replaced Persian despotism with another, hardly less cruel one, but depopulated his homeland of Macedonia and destroyed democracy in its European heartland. Moreover, according to Arrian, "he would not have remained content with any of his conquests, not even if he had added the British Isles to Europe; he would always have reached beyond for something unknown, and if there had been no other competition, he would have competed against himself."¹⁴⁵ His pursuit of personal glory was so obsessive that one modern biographer has speculated that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from extended exposure to violence and danger.¹⁴⁶

Though one of the greatest warriors in history, Alexander was a bisexual drunkard and a paranoid megalomaniac, declaring himself a divine Pharaoh (the son of Ammon-Zeus) in Egypt. "Only sex and sleep," he said, "make me conscious that I am mortal". He forced his own Greek soldiers to perform an eastern-style act of proskynesis to their fellow man¹⁴⁷, and when his personal historian Callisthenes criticised him for this he was tortured and killed.¹⁴⁸ He married the daughter of Darius, proclaimed himself heir to the Persian "King

¹⁴³ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁴ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London, p. 101.

¹⁴⁵ Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.1.

¹⁴⁶ Richard Gabriel, *The Madness of Alexander the Great*, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ E.E. Rice, *Alexander the Great*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997, pp. 63-65. At the same time, it must be remembered that Classical Greek religion's confusion of gods and men implicitly raised the possibility of men becoming godlike.

¹⁴⁸ Spencer Day, "Alexander the Great", *History Revealed*, 52, February, 2018, p. 38.

of kings” and caused the satraps of Bithynia, Cappadocia and Armenia to pay homage to him as to a typical eastern despot.¹⁴⁹

Thus Alexander, like the *deus ex machina* of a Greek tragedy, brought the curtain down on the Classical phase of ancient Greek civilisation, merging it with its great rivals, the despotic civilizations of the East, and spreading the mixture throughout the East through his conquests.

Alexander’s successor-kings, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria, went still further in an orientalising direction. Thus Roberts writes: “‘Soter’, as Ptolemy I was called, means ‘Saviour’. The Seleucids allowed themselves to be worshipped, but the Ptolemies outdid them; they took over the divine status and prestige of the Pharaohs (and practice, too, to the extent of marrying their sisters).”¹⁵⁰

Classical Greek civilisation began with the experience of liberation from Persian despotism; it ended with the admission that political liberation without *spiritual* liberation cannot last. It was born in the matrix of a religion whose gods were little more than super-powerful human beings, with all the vices and frailty of fallen humanity; it died as its philosophers sought to free themselves entirely from the bonds of the flesh and enter a heaven of eternal, incorruptible ideas, stoically doing their duty in the world of men but knowing that their true nature lay in the world of ideas. It was born in the conviction that despotism is *hubris* which is bound to be struck down by fate; it died as the result of its own *hubris*, swallowed up in the kind of despotism it had itself despised and in opposition to which it had defined itself.

And yet this death only went to demonstrate the truth of the scripture that unless a seed falls into the earth and dies it cannot bring forth good fruit (John 12.24). For, in the new political circumstances of empire, and through the new religious prism, first of Stoicism and then of Christianity, Greek political thought *did* bring forth fruit.

As McClelland perceptively argues: “The case for Alexander is that he made certain political ideas possible which had never had a chance within the morally confining walls of the *polis* classically conceived. Prominent among these is the idea of a multi-racial state. The idea comes down to us not from any self-conscious ‘theory’ but from a story about a mutiny in Alexander’s army at Opis on the Tigris, and it is a story worth the re-telling. Discontent among the Macedonian veterans had come to a head for reasons we do not know, but their grievances were clear enough: non-Macedonians, that is Persians, had been let into the crack cavalry regiment, the Companions of Alexander, had been given commands which involved ordering Macedonians about, and had been granted the (Persian) favour of greeting Alexander ‘with a kiss’. The Macedonians formed up and stated their grievances, whereupon

¹⁴⁹ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹⁵⁰ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

Alexander lost his temper, threatened to pension them off back to Macedonia, and distributed the vacant commands among the Persians. When both sides had simmered down, the soldiers came back to their allegiance, Alexander granted the Macedonians the favour of the kiss, and he promised to forget about the mutiny. But not quite. Alexander ordered up a feast to celebrate the reconciliation, and the religious honours were done by the priests of the Macedonians and the magi of the Persians. Alexander himself prayed for omonoia [unanimity] and concord, and persuaded 10,000 of his Macedonian veterans to marry their Asiatic concubines...

“The plea for omonoia has come to be recognised as a kind of turning point in the history of the way men thought about politics in the Greek world, and, by extension, in the western world in general. The ancient Greeks were racist in theory and practice in something like the modern sense. They divided the world, as Aristotle did, between Greeks and the rest, and their fundamental category of social explanation was race. Race determined at bottom how civilised a life a man was capable of living. The civilised life was, of course, only liveable in a properly organised city-state. Only barbarians could live in a nation (ethnos) or in something as inchoate and meaningless as an empire. The Greeks also seem to have had the modern racist’s habit of stereotyping, which simply means going from the general to the particular: barbarians are uncivilised, therefore *this* barbarian is uncivilised. The race question was inevitably tied up with slavery, though it is by no means clear that the ancient Greeks had a ‘bad conscience’ about slavery, as some have claimed. From time to time, they may have felt badly about enslaving fellow Greeks, and that was probably the reason why thinkers like Aristotle troubled themselves with questions about who was most suitable for slavery and who the least. Low-born barbarians born into slavery were always at the top of the list of good slave material. Most Greeks probably believed that without ever thinking about it much.

“The Macedonians may have lacked the subtlety of the Hellenes, but Alexander was no fool. Whatever the Macedonians may have thought to themselves about the races of the East, Alexander would have been asking for trouble if he had arrogantly proclaimed Macedonian racial superiority over conquered peoples, and it would have caused a snigger or two back in Hellas. What better way for the conqueror of a multi-racial empire to conduct himself than in the name of human brotherhood? Imperialism then becomes a gathering-in of the nations rather than the imposition of one nation’s will upon another and this thought follows from the empire-builder’s real desire: secretly, he expects to be obeyed for love. This was Alexander’s way of showing that he was not a tyrant...”¹⁵¹

In Alexander’s empire, therefore, something like a creative fusion of the despotic and democratic principles took place. It was an empire in form like the pagan empires of old, with a god-king possessing in principle unlimited

¹⁵¹ McClelland, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

power. But the Greek idea of the godlike possibilities of ordinary men able to direct their own lives in rationality and freedom passed like a new leaven through the old despotic lump, bringing *rulers* to a more humble estimate of themselves, while exalting the idea that *the ruled* had of themselves.

Conversely, the experience gained by the Eastern despotisms of many nations living in something like equality with each other under one rule - we remember the honour granted to the Jewish Prophet Daniel by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, and the Persian King Cyrus' command that the Jews be allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple - expanded the consciousness of the Greeks beyond the narrow horizons of the individual city-state or the one civilization of the Greeks to the universal community of all mankind (or, at any rate, of the *oikoumene*, the civilized world as they knew it), and from the worship of Athene of Athens or Diana of the Ephesians to the One God Who created *all* men, gave them *all* reason and freewill and brought them *all* together under one single dominion.

Indeed, as Rolf Strootman writes, the empires of Alexander and his successors were the channel through which Cyrus the Great's idea of *universal empire* entered the Mediterranean world. "The conception of the whole (civilized) world as a single empire was continually propagated by Middle Eastern monarchies from the third millennium BCE. Undoubtedly it appealed to some common belief. People living in the Achaemenid, Seleucid, or Sasanian Middle East adhered to a certain kind of belief in a legitimate Great King whose existence was in some way connected with the divinely ordained order of the world. The presence of a world ruler at the center of civilization was believed to be an essential condition for peace, order, and prosperity.

"Essentially a religious concept already in pagan times, the ideal of world unity became extremely forceful when imperialism and monotheism joined hands. After Constantine, the Roman *imperator*, Byzantine *basileus*, or Arab *caliph* could claim to be the exclusive earthly representative of a sole universal deity. Thus, what had formerly been a somewhat indefinite distinction between a civilized, ordered world and a chaotic, barbaric periphery now became a clear-cut dualism of believers and unbelievers.

"Universalistic pretensions are a defining aspect of premodern tributary empires from China to the Americas... The significance of the Hellenistic empires lies in their intermediate position, in both time and space, between the ancient Near East and the Roman Mediterranean. The Macedonian rulers of the Hellenistic Age adopted and transformed the age-old traditions of empire of the Ancient Near East to create their own ideologies of empire. Alexander the Great and his principal successors, the Seleucids and Ptolemies, 'Hellenized' Eastern universalistic pretensions; they did so for the sake of their Greek subjects, on whose loyalty and cooperation their power for a large part rested. By converting Near Eastern royal ideology into Greek forms, adding Greek notions of belonging and unity, and actively encouraging current universalistic tendencies among the Greeks - Panhellenism, Stoic

philosophy, religious syncretism - what was previously looked upon by the Greeks as oriental despotism became an intrinsic part of Hellenic polis culture. Macedonian imperialism thus shaped the ways in which the Greek and Hellenized poleis of the eastern Mediterranean later conceptualized and formalized their relationships with imperial authority under the Roman Empire. Conversely, the Hellenized variant of an empire characterized by an ideal of universal dominion provided the Roman Empire with an acceptable model for imperial unification in a world characterized by a multitude of city-states."¹⁵²

¹⁵² Strootman, "Hellenistic Imperialism and the Ideal of World Unity", in Claudia Rapp and H.A. Drake (eds.), *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World Changing Contexts of Power and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 38-39.

14. FROM ZERUBBABEL TO THE HASMONAEANS

Zerubbabel, the leader of the Jews whom Cyrus allowed to go back to Jerusalem, was called “governor of Judah” rather than king, because he was still under the suzerainty of Persia. However, he was of the line of David, so it was through his line that the promises of God concerning the continuance of the autocracy were passed. Moreover, he carried out the functions of an autocrat on a small scale; that is, he saw as his primary task the restoration of the Temple, the true worship of God. And in his relationship with the chief priest, Joshua, he mirrored the “symphony” between Church and State that we find in all true autocracies. Thus in the prophetic vision of Zechariah chapter 4, Joshua and Zerubbabel are seen as two olive trees, the two anointed ones through whom God’s grace is given to the people.

Chapter 6 provides a striking messianic prophecy. For as crowns are placed on the head of Joshua, the Lord says: “Behold the Man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place; and He shall build the Temple of Jehovah; even He shall build the Temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” That this refers to Jesus the Messiah rather than Joshua the high priest is evident from several facts. First, the phrase “Behold the man” was later to be used by Pilate of Christ, and the name “Jesus” is in fact the same as “Joshua”. Secondly, the “Branch” is a name for the Messiah in several Old Testament prophecies (cf. Isaiah 4.2, 11.1; Jeremiah 23.5, 33.15). Earlier, the Lord had said to Joshua that He would bring forth His servant, the Branch (3.8), so Joshua and the Branch are not in fact the same person. It is the Branch, not Joshua, Who will build the Temple, meaning the New Testament Church, the Body of Christ. He will “sit upon His throne”, which is not a normal thing for a priest to do, because He is not only a priest but also a king. In fact, He is both the King of the Jews, and the High Priest of the Temple of His Body, offering the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He is the only Person (except for Melchizedek) ever rightfully to combine the two roles in one Person. Normally, the attempt to combine the two roles leads to war between God and man; but Christ, being the rightful King and Priest, brings “the counsel of peace” between them...

The rebuilding of the Second Temple under Zerubbabel was a very small-scale, inglorious affair by comparison with the building of the First Temple under Solomon (Haggai 2.3). David Baron writes that “Rabbi Samuel Bar Juni, in the Talmud (Yoma, f.21, c.2), and Rabbis Solomon and Kinchi, in their comment on Haggai 1.8, all agree that five things that were in the first Temple were wanting in the second – *i.e.*, the *ark*, wherein were the tables of the Covenant, and the cherubim that covered it; *the fire* used to come down from heaven to devour the sacrifices; the *Shekinah Glory*; the *gift of prophecy*, or the Holy Ghost; and the miraculous *Urim and Thummim*.”¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Baron, *Zechariah*, Grand Rapids: Kriegel, 1918, 1988, p. 197.

But in fact its glory would be greater than that of Solomon's Temple (Haggai 2.8) because the great King and High Priest, of whom all kings and high priests were only forerunners and types, would Himself enter into it, sanctifying it by His presence. That is perhaps why, from the time of the building of the Second Temple to the Coming of Christ over five hundred years later, there was no real restoration of the Autocracy. All eyes were now to be trained not on the shadow of the True Autocracy, but on its substance, not on the forerunners of the true Autocrat and King of the Jews, but on the Man Himself...

Probably the most important Jewish leader in this transitional period was the priest Ezra. "His main task," writes Tikhomirov, "was the re-establishment of the Law of Israel. Under him there began a collecting of the Sacred Scriptures and traditions, and the people's getting to know them, and a multiplication of copies of Scripture. Around him there gathered the so-called soferim - the first 'scribes', the forerunners of the Pharisees. Under their leadership the regeneration of Israel progressed, but this regeneration was placed in the soil of the most narrow exclusiveness. The inhabitants of Palestine in the time of the captivity, the Samaritans and others, wanted to join the Jews and serve Jehovah together with them, but they were severely rejected. Since a very large number of mixed marriages had been entered into, and a significant number of children had been born from them, a triumphant repentance of the people was appointed, the marriages were broken, and the foreign wives and their children were sent back to their parents.

"The task of the religious conservatives, who were first of all national patriots, consisted in strongly organizing the Jewish people and concentrating it under the leadership of the intelligentsia of that time - the Pharisees. This was not a priestly party and was even hostile to the 'Sadducees', the priestly party. The Pharisees constituted the *intelligentsia*, who, inflating the cult of the law, received in it the means for holding the whole people in their hands. The interpretation of the law given by the Pharisees was in general rational and humane, being adapted to the conditions and way of life of the time. But the endless details of the law thus interpreted required a special class of scholars, since the mass of the people had no opportunity to study these details and subtleties and had to seek enlightenment and guidance from the specialists.

"It was these nationalists who at that decisive moment of history determined the destinies of Israel..."¹⁵⁴

In spite of the attempt to revive observance of the law under Ezra and Nehemiah, piety declined. And little is recorded about Israel until 332, when the Persian empire was conquered by Alexander the Great.

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¹⁵⁴ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 141-142.

Alexander was good to Judah. After conquering Syria, Tyre and Sidon and all the lands around Judah, and in spite of the fact that Judah refused to surrender to him, he did not destroy Jerusalem. For God had intervened...

As Simon Schama writes, "Josephus describes the Jews of Jerusalem, gratefully faithful to the end to the collapsing Persian Empire, trembling before what they imagine will be a terrible Macedonian retribution. But their high priest Jaddua is visited by a dream in which he is told 'to take courage, adorn the city and open the gates'. The people were to assemble before the Greek conqueror clad in the white of humility, while he and his Temple priests should dress themselves magnificently as befitted their sacred station. A combination of purity and majesty: how could the Greeks not be won over as Alexander's triumphal progress halts before 'a place called Sapha, meaning "prospect"? So it is with that view of the towers and walls and the Temple on its hill that the victorious general encounters the white-garbed multitude, at their head the high priest attired in 'scarlet and purple and his tiara sewn with a gold panel on which was inscribed the tetragrammaton name of God'. Greetings are exchanged..."

Then comes one of the most striking encounters between the God of Israel, His people and the rulers of the pagan world. It is the more remarkable if we remember that Alexander considered himself to be a god, the son of Zeus... Alexander says that he "'adores' this God, for, as he explains to a surprised aide, he too had a vision in which the high priest, dressed exactly in this manner, would bestow divine blessing on his conquest of the Persians. Alexander then 'gives the high priest his right hand' and makes sacrifice to YHWH in the Temple 'according to the high priest's direction'. The next day, after being shown the Book of Daniel prophesying his triumph,... he repays the confidence by guaranteeing, as all good Greek rulers did, 'the laws of their forefathers'. Alexander waives Jewish tribute in the sabbatical year and promises (since the Jews were such accomplished soldiers) that those who joined his army would be undisturbed according to their traditions'."¹⁵⁵

Alexander even gave equal citizenship to the Jews of Alexandria. The trouble began only after Alexander's death, when "his servants [the Ptolemys and Seleucids] bore rule every one in his place. And... they all put crowns upon themselves. So did their sons after them many years: and evils were multiplied in the earth..." (I Maccabees 1.7-9).

The image of "putting crowns upon themselves" reminds us of the difference between the true, autocratic king, whose crown is given him by God, and the false, despotic king, who takes the crown for himself in a self-willed manner.

However, not all the Greek kings were evil despots or enemies of the Jews.

¹⁵⁵ Schama, *The Story of the Jews*, London: Vintage, 2014, pp. 94-95; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xi, 8, 3.

Thus in about 270 King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt invited the great high priest of Jerusalem, Eleazar, to send 72 scholars to Egypt to translate the Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek for the benefit of the Hellenized Jews (or Judaized Greeks?) of Alexandria. The resultant Septuagint (meaning "70") translation became the basis both for the transmission of the Old Testament to the Greek-speaking world; it was this translation of the Scriptures that the Evangelists and Apostles used.

But a later king of Egypt, Ptolemy IV Philopater, who came to the Temple towards the end of the third century, was less benevolent. He, like Alexander, offered a sacrifice and made thank offerings for his victory over the Seleucid king. However, he then conceived a desire to enter the Temple, which was forbidden to pagans.

The high priest Simon prayed that he would be prevented, and his prayer was fulfilled: "Then God, Who watches over all... heard this lawful supplication and scourged the man who raised himself up in arrogance and audacity. He shook him on one side and the other, as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay powerless on the ground. Besides being paralyzed in his limbs, he was unable to cry out, since he was struck by a righteous judgement. Therefore his friends and bodyguards, seeing the severe punishment that overtook him, fearing that they would die, quickly dragged him away. Later, when he recovered, he still did not repent after being chastised, but went his way making bitter threats..." (III Maccabees 2.21-24).

Later, it was the Seleucid kings of Syria who became the persecutors of the Jews. In 175 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes came to the throne. As Senator Joseph Lieberman points out, "The ruler's name hinted at imminent struggle; Antiochus added the title to his name because it meant, 'A Divine Manifestation'. That underscored the primary difference between the ancient Greeks and Jews: The Greeks glorified the magnificence of man, while the Jews measured man's greatness through his partnership with the Creator. For the children of Israel, man was created in the image of God; for the ancient Greeks, the gods were created in the likeness of man."¹⁵⁶

Johnson has developed this distinction, one of the most important in the history of ideas: "The Jews drew an absolute distinction between human and divine. The Greeks constantly elevated the human - they were Promethean - and lowered the divine. To them gods were not much more than revered and successful ancestors; most men sprang from gods. Hence it was not for them a great step to deify a monarch, and they began to do so as soon as they embraced the orient [where, as we have seen, kings were commonly deified]. Why should not a man of destiny undergo apotheosis? Aristotle, Alexander's tutor, argued in his *Politics*: 'If there exists in a state an individual so pre-eminent in virtue that neither the virtue nor the political capacity of all the

¹⁵⁶ Lieberman, "Hanukkah", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, vol. XXXIII, N 10 (1483), January 17/30, 2000, p. 5.

other citizens is comparable with his... such a man should be rated as a god among men.' Needless to say, such notions were totally unacceptable to Jews of any kind. Indeed, there was never any possibility of a conflation between Judaism and Greek religion as such; what the reformers [the Hellenizing Jews] wanted was for Judaism to universalize itself by pervading Greek culture; and that meant embracing the polis."¹⁵⁷

With the agreement of King Antiochus, the Hellenizing Jews removed the lawful high priest Onias, replacing him with his brother Jason, a Hellenist. Jason then built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, at which athletes competed in the nude contrary to Jewish law. Many Jews then underwent a painful operation to hide their circumcision. In this way, as the chronicler writes, "they made themselves as the uncircumcision. So they fell away from the holy covenant..." (I Maccabees 1.15).

Antiochus was soon acting, not as "Epiphanes", "divine manifestation", but as his enemies called him, "Epimanes", "raving madman". After conquering Egypt, he returned to Jerusalem in 168 and pillaged the Temple. "Then the king wrote to all his kingdom, that they all were to be as one people, and that each one was to forsake his customs. So all the nations accepted the word of the king. Many from Israel also thought it good to serve him, so they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath" (I Maccabees 1.41-43). Antiochus led many of the people away into slavery, banned circumcision, Sabbath observance and the reading of the law, declared that the Temple should be dedicated to the worship of Zeus, that pigs should be sacrificed on the altar, and that non-Jews should be permitted to worship there with Jews. Those who resisted him were killed.

However, a liberation movement led by Matityahu (Mattathias) and his sons, known to history as the Maccabees, succeeded in inflicting a series of crushing defeats on the better-equipped and far more numerous Greeks. "Within three years," writes Montefiore, "the Maccabees had taken Jerusalem, and in 164 BC the now more accommodating Antiochus died and his successor sued for peace (albeit a temporary one). Vivaly, Jewish freedom of worship was restored. The Temple was cleansed and rededicated in December 164 BC. Even though the oil for the Temple lamp had run out, the lamp remained alight for eight days, a miracle that inspired the joyful Hanukkah Festival of Lights, in which Jews still celebrate religious freedom from tyranny.

"Having won the right to practice their religion, the Maccabees fought on for the political freedom that would protect it. The result was the creation of an independent Jewish state, with Mattathias' descendants at its head. Fighting to drive the Syrian empire out of Judaea, Judah was killed in battle. His successor, Jonathan 'the cunning', secured his brother's military achievements with diplomacy. As dynastic struggle and civil war consumed the Seleucid empire, Jonathan's astute appraisal of the political balance, and

¹⁵⁷ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

judicious offers of support, secured him substantial territorial gains. But the Seleucids tried to re-conquer Judaea: Jonathan was tricked, captured and killed. In 142 BC Simon the Great, the youngest and by now the only surviving son of Mattathias, negotiated the political independence of Judaea..."¹⁵⁸

The Hasmonean dynasty probably reached its peak under the second Maccabee brother, Simon. "The other brothers," writes Simon Schama, "especially Judas," had invoked the ancient patriarchs and nation-fathers from Moses through David. Simon becomes the heir of these ancestors as priest, prince, judge and general. It is he who finally succeeds in cleaning out the Jerusalem Akra citadel of foreign troops, ending its occupation and turning the subject status of the Jewish state into a true, independent kingdom. The moment (in the year 142 BCE) becomes a jubilant climax of the epic, celebrated with thanksgiving and branches of palm trees and with harps and cymbals, viols and hymns and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel!

"A golden age of peace and prosperity then comes to pass under Simon's rule. The wars between Jews and Greeks – and indeed between Jews and Jews – are brought to an end. Hellenised cities like Scythopolis, which had refrained from harbouring enemy soldiers, are spared and, renamed as Beit She'an, became home to Jews and Greeks alike. The borders of the state expand. A grand new harbor is built at Jaffa; trade opens 'to the isles of the sea'. Romans and Spartans are impressed, but not as much as the writer of I Maccabees who paints a scene of multi-generational harmony and benevolent quasi-despotism. The last books of the biblical canon, and some of the Apocrypha were imagined to be authored by Solomon, and Simon appears in I Maccabees as his reincarnation, presiding over a Judaic paradise on earth..."¹⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Simon Maccabeus was no Solomon; for in his person the Maccabees (or Hasmoneans, as they were called after Matityahu's surname, Hasmon) unlawfully combined the roles of king and high priest (I Maccabees 13.42). And so a true autocracy on the Davidic model was not re-established in Judah, for their dynasty, which continued from 168 to 37 B.C., was composed exclusively of representatives of the tribe of Levi, who could only be priests, not kings. This may be why five of the great signs of God's presence and favour that were in Solomon's temple, but not in Zerubbabel's. For God's covenant with David had been with him and his son; the promises were only to the descendants of the tribe of the Davidic tribe of Judah. Therefore the crisis of the restoration of the true Jewish autocracy was not resolved. It could only be resolved by the Coming of the Son of David and Lion of Judah, Christ Himself.

¹⁵⁸ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵⁹ Schama, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.

15. JEWISH PROSELYTISM AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

It was in the Hasmonean period that we see the beginning of a remarkable phenomenon that was to lay a solid foundation for the preaching of Christianity throughout the Roman empire: Jewish proselytism. As Alfred M. Lilienthal writes: "Judaism became a tremendous proselytizing force in the pagan world. Those who carried the religion of Yahweh to other parts of the globe were hardly more than a drop in the ocean of foreign peoples who had never possessed any racial, lingual, or cultural affinity with Israel and nevertheless became members of the Judaic monotheistic faith. These converts included such diverse peoples as Yemenites and Greeks, the Queen of Sheba, the people of Adiabene, the Hellenistic state on the Tigris. Judean traders carried their faith eastward as far as India and China. Conversions to Yahweh in Rome carried Judaism through Italy into France, the Rhone Valley, and the Rhine Basin. Mass conversions of Germanic tribes spread Judaism into Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and western Russia. Frederick Hertz in *Race and Civilization* noted, 'in the Middle Ages and in modern times, notwithstanding all obstacles,' there have been occasional conversions in Slavic countries, which accounts for unmistakable Slavic facial characteristics of Polish and Russian Jews. There were even conversions in Hungary as late as 1229. Whole peoples of varying ethnic strains became proselyte Judaists, especially during the two centuries before the birth of Christ. Judeans migrated to the Arabian desert and converted Semitic peoples in Yemen. Pagans as distant as those of the Kerch Strait and the Crimea accepted Yahweh, the Hebrew God.

"The Hebrews were indeed a light unto the other nations and were spreading monotheism, the task given to them by God. Many Romans, including members of the nobility, embraced the simple teachings of Judaism, won by the appeal of what Jewish historians have referred to as a 'system of morals, anchored in the veneration of the One and Holy God,' and the 'purity of Judean home life'. For the most part the proselytes accepted the idea of monotheism and the moral law without the ceremonial precepts.

"With the advent of Christianity, the parent faith ceased proselyting. Monotheism was now carried to the pagan world by the disciples of Jesus..."¹⁶⁰

Now several of the prophets, as well as David in the Psalms, had hinted that the true faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was not destined for the Jews alone. But until the second century BC the emphasis had been on preserving the faith untainted from foreign elements rather than on spreading it to the rest of the world. Hence, for example, Ezra's insistence that the Jews divorce their foreign wives in case they be infected by their paganism.

¹⁶⁰ Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978, p. 734.

However, elements of Hellenistic and pagan culture began to creep into Judah quite soon after the Maccabees' triumph over the Greek King Antiochus. One of these was the typically pagan combination of kingship and priesthood in one person. This, writes Tikhomirov, "was only one of the aspects of pagan culture that now began to penetrate Jewry, leading to conflicts between conservative, law-based and reformist, Hellenist-influenced factions among the people. Those who were occupied with this and guided the people, that is, the Pharisees and Scribes, produced interpretations by their joint efforts and composed the ruling class. They were undoubtedly deeply convinced people who faithfully served the idea of the Jewish fatherland and were able to achieve popularity. According to their interpretation, the Messiah who was to come had to appear as the political leader of Israel and accomplish the domination of the Jews in the pagan world. The Kingdom of God was understood as the earthly kingdom of Israel. Their passionate conviction that these dreams would be fulfilled showed itself in successive rebellions of the Jews, in those 'zealots' whose first representative was Judah of Galilee, who died in a rebellion in the time of Christ."¹⁶¹

Another pagan innovation was the adoption of Greek names. Thus the grandson of Mattathias, as Shlomo Sand writes, "added to his Hebrew name Yohanan the typical Greek name Hyrcanus. The great grandson of the rebel priest was called Judas Aristobulus, and his successor would be known as Alexander Jannaeus. The process of Greek acculturation did not stop in Judea. In fact, as the Hasmonean dynasty consolidated, it accelerated and triumphed. By the time of Aristobulus, the priestly ruler - though not of the House of David - had become a Hellenistic monarchy..."¹⁶²

There was a positive aspect to this Hellenizing process: the universalist elements in Judaism came more to the fore, competing with the cosmopolitanism of the Greek stoic philosophers. Thus the Eastern Mediterranean became the arena for a contest for hearts and minds between Greek paganism and philosophy, on the one hand, and Jewish monotheism, on the other. In the environs of Judaea, the contest was settled by force. Thus in 125 BC Yohanan Hyrcanus conquered Edom as far as Beersheba and forced the Edomites to accept circumcision and the law. He also destroyed the Samaritans' capital of Shechem with their temple on Mount Gerizim. In 104-103 Hyrcanus' son Judas Aristobulus annexed Galilee, and similarly forced its Iturean inhabitants to convert. His brother and successor, Alexander Jannaeus, was less successful in getting the Hellenistic coastal cities to convert. And "according to Josephus, Alexander destroyed the city of Pella in Transjordan 'because the inhabitants would not bear to change their religious rites for those peculiar to the Jews'. We know that he totally destroyed other Hellenistic cities: Samaria, Gaza, Gederah and many others..."¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*

¹⁶² Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, London: Verso, 2009, p. 156.

¹⁶³ Sand, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

More peaceful, and ultimately much more fruitful, was the conversion of a large part of the population of the great Hellenistic city of Alexandria. We have seen that the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek at the initiative of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and “we can be certain that this translation, in its numerous copies, even in the absence of printing, was an essential vehicle for the dissemination of the Jewish religion among the cultural elites all around the Mediterranean. The impact of the translation is best attested by Philo Judaeus, the philosopher who was probably the first to merge skillfully the Stoic-Platonic logos with Judaism... The Alexandrian philosopher viewed conversion to Judaism as a reasonable and positive phenomenon that demographically enlarged his ethnos.

“This was a historical phase in which the distinctive nature of the spreading monotheism began, under the influence of Hellenism, to undermine earlier identities. In the traditional identities, the pagan cults corresponded more or less to the cultural linguistic communities – the ‘peoples’, the ‘commonalities’, the cities or tribes. From this time on, the ancient association between religious boundaries and everyday cultural and language characteristics began to fail. For example, Philo himself, for all his extensive knowledge, knew neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, yet this did not diminish his devout attachment to the Mosaic religion, which he, like many of his fellow believers, knew in its famous translation. Some of his writing was probably also intended to persuade gentiles to change their ways and abandon ‘their own individual customs’.

“The Septuagint was the hesitant start of Jewish religious missionizing also realized in the form of the works known as the books of the Apocrypha. *The Letter of Aristeas* that mentions the translation was written in Greek before 200BCE by a Jewish believer in Alexandria. Aristeas may have been the author’s real name, though perhaps he took the typical Greek name – that of a bodyguard of Ptolemy II Philadelphus – to appeal to Hellenistic readers. As well as relating the legendary history of the translation, the letter attacks idolatry and praises the Jewish faith, though it does so in an allegorical manner. For example, it says nothing about circumcision, to avoid discouraging the gentiles, but launches into an idyllic, even utopian, description of Jerusalem and its temple. It describes Jewish scholars as wiser than the pagan Greek philosophers, though paradoxically their superiority is demonstrated via the principles of Greek philosophy, giving the impression that the anonymous author was more familiar with the latter than with the Torah.

“Similar rhetoric is found in the third book of an ancient collection known as the *Sibylline Oracles*, a book that most scholars date to the second century BCE, namely the Hasmonean period. It too was translated in Alexandria and, like the *Letter of Aristeas*, denounces the Egyptian animal cults. Jewish sermonizing in the form of verses supposedly uttered by a Greek-style female

prophet addresses all the children of men who were created in God's image, and prophecies that in future the people of the great God will again serve all mortals as brave teachers. Idolatry was low and debauched, it is declared, whereas the Jewish faith was a religion of justice, fraternity and charity. The idolatrous were infected with homosexuality, whereas the Jews were far from committing any abomination. Therefore the worshippers of wood and stone should convert to the true faith or be chastised by a wrathful God.

"The obvious Jewish confidence of this work paralleled the success and rising power of the Hasmonean kingdom. The *Wisdom of Solomon*, written probably in the first century BCE, also links the proselytizing impulse in the Jewish communities in Egypt with the Judean rulers' drive for converts. The first, visionary part of this work is in Hebrew and comes from Judea; the second, more philosophical part is in Greek and is Alexandrian in character. This work also derides the cult of animals and revolves around the disdain for the worship of images. Like the third Sibylline oracle, the *Wisdom of Solomon* associates the worship of many gods with licentiousness and immorality, dooming one to punishment. Here, too, the objects of persuasion are gentiles, chiefly rulers and kings, and the rhetoric is entirely derived from Greek heritage. The Stoic logos is put into the mouth of King Solomon, who utters well known Platonic statements...¹⁶⁴

"Damascus was a flourishing Hellenistic center second only to Alexandria, and conversion to Judaism there was even greater than in Egypt...

"The popularity of Judaism before and after the Common Era spread beyond the Mediterranean region. In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus tells the fabulous story of the conversion to Judaism in the first century CE of the rulers of Adiabene (Hadyab) [in today's Kurdistan]. As this conversion is described in other sources, there is no reason to doubt its broad outline..."¹⁶⁵

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"If Alexander's conquests created an open Hellenistic sphere," writes Sand, "Rome's expansion and her enormous empire completed the process.

¹⁶⁴ For example, he says of Wisdom: "In her there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle. For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail." (*Wisdom of Solomon* 7:22-30) (V.M.)

¹⁶⁵ Sand, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-163, 165.

Henceforth, all the cultural centers around the Mediterranean basin would undergo the dynamism of blending and the forging of new phenomena. The littorals grew closer, and the passage from the eastern to the western end became easier and faster. This emerging world opened a fresh perspective for the spread of Judaism; at its high point there, Judaism was professed by 7 to 8 percent of all the empire's inhabitants. The word 'Jew' ceased to denote the people of Judea, and now included the masses of proselytes and their descendants."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Sand, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

16. HEROD THE GREAT

In the first century BC the shadow of Roman power, with which Judas Maccabaeus had maintained friendly relations, and Simon Maccabeus sought an alliance¹⁶⁷, began to fall across the Middle East, taking the place of the weakened Greek Kings of Syria and Egypt, the Seleucids and Ptolemys. In 64 the Roman general Pompey arrived in Antioch and deposed the last of the Seleucid kings. At this time the two sons of the Jewish King Alexander Jannaeus, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, were fighting each other for the kingship and high priesthood, and they both appealed to Pompey for help. The Pharisees also sent a delegation to him; but they asked him to abolish the monarchy in Judaea, since they said it was contrary to their traditions. In 63 Pompey took the side of Hyrcanus, appointing him ethnarch; he captured Jerusalem and, to the horror of the Jews, entered the Holy of Holies.

Hyrcanus proved to be a weak ruler, and his power was effectively usurped by Antipater, an Idumean (Edomite) from the other side of the Jordan, who made himself indispensable to Pompey and Rome. As a reward, he was placed in charge of Judaea, with special responsibility for controlling disturbances and collecting taxes. In 47, after Julius Caesar had killed Pompey in Egypt, Antipater hastened to ingratiate himself with Caesar. As a reward, he was given Roman citizenship and was later appointed the first Roman Procurator of Judaea. Having secured friendship with Rome and peace within Judaea, Antipater appointed his son Phasael as governor of Judaea and his other son, Herod, as governor of Galilee.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44, Antipater sided with Cassius in the civil war with Mark Antony. This gave an opportunity to the anti-Roman Pharisees, who were always on the guard against contamination of the faith by Greek paganism and deeply resented Roman domination of the homeland. In 43 BC, Antipater was poisoned by this party, and his son Herod was forced by the Sanhedrin to flee to Rome.

Meanwhile, Mark Antony had won his war against Cassius, and in 41 he confirmed Antipater's sons Herod and Phasael in their positions. Civil war then broke out in Judaea. The nominal Hasmonaean king of the country, Hyrcanus, was overthrown by his nephew Antigonus with the help of the Parthians. Herod promptly fled to Rome. Thus when the Parthians were conquering Jerusalem in 37, Herod was in Rome being fêted by Antony and Octavian. In a triumphant procession they led him to the Capitol. "And there," as A. Paryaeu writes, "amid sacrifices to Jupiter of the Capitol that were impermissible for a Jew, and which caused deep consternation among the Jews, he was formally raised onto the Jewish throne."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ See I Maccabees 8, which contains a largely approbatory portrait of the Roman republic.

¹⁶⁸ Paryaeu, "Tsar Irod i ego Soobschiki: Istorija i Sovremennost'" ("King Herod and his Associates: History and Modernity"), *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti* (Suzdal Diocesan News), N 3, January-February, 1998, pp. 31-32.

Three years later, after a bloody civil war in which the Jews supported Antigonus, Herod was installed in Jerusalem with the aid of the Roman legions.

Now Herod was not only not of the line of David, but was not even a Jew by race. Tom Mueller writes: "His mother was an ethnic Arab [from Nabataea], and his father was an Edomite, and though Herod was raised as a Jew, he lacked the social status of the powerful old families in Jerusalem who were eligible to serve as high priest, as the Hasmonaean kings had traditionally done. Many of his subjects considered Herod an outsider – a 'half Jew', as his early biographer, the Jewish soldier and aristocrat Flavius Josephus later wrote – and continued to fight for a Hasmonaean theocracy."¹⁶⁹

Pious Jews inevitably wondered how the promises made by God to David about the eternity of his dynasty (Psalm 131.11-15) could be fulfilled now that the Davidic line appeared to have died out. Perhaps the time had come for the appearance of the Messiah, whose kingdom would be eternal... After all, the "seventy times seven" prophecy of Daniel (9.24-27) indicated that his coming would be in the first half of the first century AD.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, had not the Patriarch Jacob, declared: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49.10)? Now that the sceptre, in the form of the Jewish kingship, appeared to have departed from Judah, was it not time for the appearance of Shiloh?¹⁷¹

Herod tried to remedy the fault of his non-Jewish blood by marrying the Hasmonaean princess Mariamne, the grand-daughter of King Aristobulus and Hyrcanus II on her mother's side. But his Jewish faith was superficial at best, if not completely feigned.

Pinero writes that "Herod carefully cultivated his image as a sophisticate steeped in Greco-Roman culture. If the writers of the New Testament saw him as a tyrant, Herod saw himself as the paragon of refinement. He befriended leading Roman figures, showering them with invitations to his palaces in Jerusalem and Jericho. The succession of gentile nobles, philosophers, historians, poets, and playwrights flowing through the royal court rankled

¹⁶⁹ Mueller, "Herod: The Holy Land's Visionary Builder", *National Geographic Magazine*, December, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁷⁰ Bishop Alexander (Mileant) of Argentina ("On the Threshold", *Orthodox America*, vol. XVIII, N 5 (161), January, 2000, p. 12) writes: "Daniel's prophecy so explicitly and synonymously points to Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, that the Gemaric rabbi forbids his compatriots to calculate the dates of the Daniel septenaries, saying, 'Those who calculate the times will hear their bones rattle' (Sanhedrin 97)."

¹⁷¹ Bishop Alexander recounts a tradition from the Midrash "that when the members of the Sanhedrin learned that they had been deprived of the right to try criminal cases (in AD 30), they put on sackcloth and, tearing their hair, gathered and began to cry out: 'Woe to us, woe to us: it has been a great while since we had a king from Judah, and the promised Messiah is not yet come!' This occurred at the very beginning of Jesus Christ's ministry" (*ibid.*).

with the Pharisees and the Essenes, the principal Jewish sects concentrated in and around Jerusalem. In some ways, both groups were very different: The Pharisees represented the establishment, holding high religious office in the Temple, while the Essenes were an apocalyptic sect who wanted to see Judaism purified and reformed. Even so, both believed that the king was intentionally corrupting Jewish customs within his court.

“According to the historian Nicholas of Damascus, one of Herod’s closest friends, the king neglected affairs of state and the study of Jewish law to spend his time studying philosophy, rhetoric, and the history of Greece and Rome. State affairs were delegated to those officials with a Greek education. When the king did carry out religious acts, his pious critics remained unconvinced. Herod knew that ruling Judaea was impossible without the consent of the influential Pharisees, whom he carefully courted with various concessions. He was able to keep them just about on side, but he would never win their total trust or loyalty.

“According to the historian Josephus, Herod’s new cities irked the Jewish priestly class because their pagan monuments were insultingly close to Jerusalem. Built between 22 and 10 BC, Herod named Caesarea Maritima for his patron, Caesar Augustus. It was... the base of the Herodian fleet, which he placed entirely at the disposal of Rome.

“Caesarea’s temples were dedicated to the goddess Roma, and to Augustus himself.¹⁷² Every five years, Herod organized gladiatorial fights, dedicated to Augustus and his wife Livia, and where foreign dancers almost outnumbered the guests. Magnificent prizes were awarded to the winners, and rumors of wild, orgiastic parties circulated. The Jewish authorities looked on the excess with deep disapproval. They saw gladiatorial fighting as fundamentally immoral, believing that all human life belonged to the Most High.

“If Caesarea – officially the Judaeian capital from 6 BC – could be written off as a city for pagans, the holy city of Jerusalem was also threatened by the Romanizing instincts of their ruler. Tension focused on the Second Temple there, a building that symbolizes Herod’s complex relationship with his faith.

“Begun in 20 BC, Herod’s restoration program refaced the structure in white stone, and doubled the courtyard around it. Herod sought to exalt the Jewish faith, yet did so using Hellenic architects. The grandiose court was soon filled with moneylenders – an affront to pious Jews, who, according to Josephus and other Jewish writers of the time, were angered at the corrupt management of the Temple, an anger felt later by one Jesus of Nazareth: ‘My house shall be called the house of prayer,’ Jesus cries in the Gospel of Matthew, ‘but ye have made it a den of thieves’.

¹⁷² He also built a temple to Augustus at Sebaste, which is a Greek translation of “Augustus”. (V.M.)

“Perhaps the most spectacular religious scandal Herod the Great unleashed was the breaching of King David’s tomb in Bethlehem. Rumors had long circulated that the tomb believed to be David’s resting place held treasure. Having spent large sums of money on the building of Caesarea, and perhaps seeing himself as the descendant of King David, Herod, it was said, secretly accompanied workmen to rob the tomb. The historian Joseph recounts how, on entering, they found that nothing remained of the riches. According to his account, Herod’s two guards were killed by ‘a flame that burst out upon those that went in’, and Herod fled the scene.”¹⁷³

Nevertheless, Palestine under Herod (Augustus made him procurator of Syria, too) became the most powerful Jewish kingdom since Solomon and the wonder of the East. Under Herod, the Jews, though under Roman dominion, reached the peak of their influence in the ancient world. Johnson writes: “The number of Jews, both born and converts, expanded everywhere, so that, according to one medieval tradition, there were at the time of the Claudian recensus in 48 AD some 6,944,000 Jews within the confines of the empire, plus what Josephus calls the ‘myriads and myriads’ in Babylonia and elsewhere beyond it. One calculation is that during the Herodian period there were about eight million Jews in the world, of whom 2,350,000 to 2,500,000 lived in Palestine, the Jews thus constituting about 10 per cent of the Roman empire.”¹⁷⁴

But of course the essence of the kingdom was quite different from that of David and Solomon. Apart from the fact that the real earthly ruler was Rome, and that outside Jerusalem itself Herod showed himself to be a thorough-going pagan (for example, he rebuilt the temple of Apollo in Rhodes), the whole direction of Herod’s rule was to destroy the last remnants of the Jewish Church and monarchy. Thus he killed most of the Sanhedrin and all of the Hasmonaean family, not excluding his own wife Mariamne and their sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

Herod introduced confusion into the line of the high-priesthood. Eusebius writes: "Hyrcanus, who was the last of the regular line of high priests, was very soon afterward taken prisoner by the Parthians, and Herod, the first foreigner, as I have already said, was made King of the Jewish nation by the Roman senate and by Augustus. Under him Christ appeared in bodily shape, and the expected Salvation of the nations and their calling followed in accordance with prophecy. From this time the princes and rulers of Judah, I mean of the Jewish nation, came to an end, and as a natural consequence the order of the high priesthood, which from ancient times had proceeded regularly in closest succession from generation to generation, was immediately thrown into confusion. Of these things Josephus is also a witness,

¹⁷³ Pinero, “Herod the Great”, *National Geographic History*, November/December, 2016, pp. 44-46.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

who shows that when Herod was made King by the Romans he no longer appointed the high priests from the ancient line, but gave the honor to certain obscure persons. A course similar to that of Herod in the appointment of the priests was pursued by his son Archelaus, and after him by the Romans, who took the government into their own hands."¹⁷⁵

Metropolitan Moses of Toronto writes: "Without Roman rule, Herod would not have [had] a place in the Jewish kingdom. At a time when it seemed his rule was threatened he killed his father-in-law Hyrcanus. Later he arranged that his brother-in-law Aristobulus be made High Priest. Aristobulus was from the Hasmonean dynasty and a legitimate choice for high priest. For this reason he was extremely popular with the Jews and fearing his popularity, the tyrant Herod had him drowned in an 'accident.' From this point on, the high priests were not of the legitimate lineage and were put in place by the tyrant Herod, i.e., not according to the proper order.

"Shapiro, a modern Rabbi comments, 'As a result of Herod's interference and the ever-spreading Hellenistic influences among the Jewish upper classes, the Temple hierarchy became very corrupt. The Sadducees, a religious group of the wealthy, who collaborated with the Romans in order to keep their power base, now controlled the Temple, much to the chagrin of the mainstream Jewish majority, the Pharisees, and of the extreme religious minority, the Zealots.'

"This was the state of things 'in the fullness of time' when our Creator fulfilled His promises. These events were prophesied to take place when 'a ruler failed from the house and lineage of Judah.'"¹⁷⁶

The Pharisees, who had led the movement against Hellenism in the first century BC, and were zealots of the purity of the law, supported Herod, and degenerated sharply under his rule. They even once sent a delegation to Rome asking for the establishment of a *republic* in Judaea under the sovereignty of Rome - a clear betrayal of the Israeli autocratic tradition.¹⁷⁷ Like Herod, they persecuted Christ, the True King of the Jews, leading to the abandonment of the Jewish people by God.

"The last years of the life of Herod," writes Paryaeu, "were simply nightmarish. Feeling that his subjects profoundly hated him, haunted at night by visions of his slaughtered wife, sons and all the Hasmonaeans, and conscious that his life, in spite of all its external successes and superficial splendour, was just a series of horrors. Herod finally lost his mental stability and was seized by some kind of furious madness."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Eusebius, *History of the Church*, Bk. I, Chapter 6, 7-9.

¹⁷⁶ Metropolitan Moses, *Sermon on the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple*, 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Paryaeu, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁸ Paryaeu, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

The final, most notorious product of his madness was his attempt to kill the Lord Jesus Christ and his slaughter of the 14,000 innocents of Bethlehem (it was his son, Herod Antipas, who killed John the Baptist).¹⁷⁹

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The history of Israel culminating in the Coming of her true King and God, the Lord Jesus Christ, provides us with the answer to a question which neither the despots of the east nor the democrats of the west could answer - the question, namely: what is the end of the State?

This question can be divided into two further questions. First, what is the end, that is, *purpose* of the State? And second, what is the end, that is, *destroyer* of the State, that which brings the State to an end? The two questions are logically related. For that which brings the State to an end is its failure to carry out the end or purpose for which it was created by God.

Now it will be recalled that the origin of the State lies in its ability to save men from death - in other words, its *survival value*. Man as an individual, and even in small groups or families, cannot survive for long; he has to combine into larger groups that are self-sufficient in order to provide for his basic needs and protect himself against external enemies. That is why Aristotle defined the State as a large community that is "nearly or completely self-sufficient".¹⁸⁰

However, for Aristotle, the State had a positive as well as a negative purpose. It was not distinguished from the smaller units of the family or the village simply because it was better able to guarantee survival: it was *qualitatively* as well as *quantitatively* distinct from them insofar as *it enabled man to fulfill his potential as a human being*. Hence his famous definition of man as "a political animal", that is, an animal who reaches his full potential only by living in "polities", "cities" (for city states were the dominant form of political organization in the Greece of Aristotle's time).

For it is only in city-states that man is able to develop that free spirit of rational inquiry that enables him to know the True, the Beautiful and the Good. It is only in such states that he has the leisure and the education to pursue such uniquely human activities as art, science, organized religion and philosophy, which constitute his true happiness, eudaemonia.

The problem was that Greek democracy did not attain its positive end, that is, eudaemonia, and even failed to attain its negative end, survival. First, Athenian democracy was defeated by the Spartan dual kingship and aristocracy, a kind of political organization that theoretically should have been

¹⁷⁹ "The Cave with the Relics of the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem", *Mystagogy Resources Center*, December 30, 2017, <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2017/12/the-cave-with-relics-of-holy-innocents.html>

¹⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252 b 28.

much inferior to democracy. And then the Greek city-states as a whole were defeated by, and absorbed into, Alexander the Great's despotic empire, a kind of political organization which the Greek philosophers agreed was the worst and most irrational of all - although the multi-racialism of the empire, and the spread of Greek philosophical ideas, prepared the way for something new and better.

Israel was a completely different kind of state: the first and only autocracy of the ancient world. The distinguishing mark of this state was that its origin was not the need to survive *physically*, but *spiritually*, in union with God, in accordance with the meaning of the word "Israel", "he who sees God". It achieved this in the first place by obeying the call of God to leave the existing states and their settled way of life and enter the desert on the way to the Promised Land. Here *physical* survival was actually more difficult than before, but the prize was far greater - *spiritual* survival, life with God. Thus we may say that the negative end of Israelite autocracy was the avoidance of spiritual death (Babylon, Egypt, the kingdom of sin and death), and its positive end was the attainment of spiritual life (the Promised Land, Israel, the Kingdom of righteousness and life).

It follows that since neither spiritual life nor spiritual death are political categories attainable by purely political means, the end of the Israelite autocracy was not in fact political at all as the word "political" is usually understood, but religious. Its aim was not happiness in this life, the peace and prosperity of its citizens in this world, but the blessedness of its citizens in the world to come, in which there will be no politics and no states, but only *Christ and the Church*, the Kingdom of God. Thus the end of the state lies beyond itself, in serving the Church, which alone can lead the people into the Promised Land.

The Israelite state survived so long as it placed spiritual ends above purely political ones and was faithful to the Lord God of Israel. When it faltered in this it was punished with exile and suffering. When it faltered to such a degree that it killed its true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, it was finally destroyed...

However, since, as the Archangel Gabriel said to the Holy Virgin Mary, Christ "will reign over the house of Jacob *forever*, and of His Kingdom *there will be no end*" (Luke 1.33), and since the purpose of God remains unchanging, the salvation of all men for eternity, the Israelite autocracy was re-established on a still firmer and wider base, the Church of Christ, "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16), while in its political aspect it was re-established in the very state that had destroyed the old Israel - *Rome*...

**III. CHRIST, THE JEWS AND THE ROMAN
EMPIRE**

17. THE COMING OF THE KING

In the fullness of time, in accordance with the plan that He had indicated to Adam and Eve immediately after the Fall, and to the Old Testament righteous in the millennia that followed, the Creator became a man in the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary. The faith which justified the Old Testament righteous (Hebrews 11) was exemplified to the highest degree by the Holy Virgin. For by her words of faith, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1.38), she brought God Himself into the world. "Thus let us stand in awe," writes Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "at the immeasurably lofty faith of the All-holy Virgin, before which the faith of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who believed in the prophecy of the birth of Isaac despite the barrenness of old age, is less than a mustard seed before the cedar of Lebanon..."

Having lived a life of perfect virtue, Christ offered a perfect Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind on the Cross. He died, and descended into hades, destroying the power of the devil and leading all the dead who believed in Him into Paradise. Then, on the third day, He rose from the dead, appeared to His disciples in His resurrected Body, and on the fortieth day ascended in glory into heaven. Ten days later, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples, creating the New Testament Church.

The Resurrection of Christ is described in great detail in the Gospel, leaving no doubt of its veracity to any seriously thinking person. For "the Lord showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days" (Acts 1.3.). Thus, as St. Nikolai Velimirovich, one of the most learned and intellectually powerful bishops in Christian history, writes, "The Lord's Resurrection has indeed remained to this day the most proven fact in human history. What other fact from the distant past stands so comprehensively and carefully proven as this?"¹⁸¹

The events recounted in the Gospel constitute the most important series of events in the history of the world, the turning-point in the whole history of mankind. By His Resurrection from the dead, the central and completely decisive event in the history of the world, Christ proved the truth of all His claims and thereby gave hope to all men who believed in Him of receiving remission of sins and eternal life. For He was truly "The Word of God and God" (John 1.1), "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1.29) and "the Son of God, the King of Israel" (John 1.49). He was truly the pre-eternal God, Who had created the heavens and the earth and Who had "all authority in heaven and on earth", over all creatures, both angelic and human (Matthew 28.18). Through His Incarnation as a man, His blameless life and Sacrificial Death on the Cross and Resurrection from the dead, He had truly given all men who believe in Him the possibility of remission of their sins, deliverance from hell after death, and eternal life with God in the age to

¹⁸¹ Velimirovich, *Homilies*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, vol. I, 1996, Homily on Thomas Sunday, p. 224.

come. The rest of history to this day has consisted in the self-determination of every nation and every individual in relation to this central, supremely important fact...

The eternal destiny of every man in every age depends on his sincerely believing this good news and fulfilling the commandments of Christ.

Now Christ was also "the Son of David", that is, a descendant of the old royal dynasty of Israel; He came to restore that line and make it eternal. For, as the Archangel Gabriel said to the Holy Virgin at the Annunciation: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1.32-33).

What kind of Kingdom was meant here, and what kind of kingdom did the Jews have in mind for themselves?

William Barclay writes: "Throughout all their existence, the Jews never forgot that they were in a very special sense God's chosen people. Because of that, they naturally looked to a very special place in the world. In the early days, they looked forward to achieving that position by what we might call natural means. They always regarded the greatest days in their history as the days of David; and they dreamed of a day when there would arise another king of David's line, a king who would make them great in righteousness and in power (Isaiah 9:7, 11:1; Jeremiah 22:4, 23:5, 30:9).

"But as time went on, it came to be pitilessly clear that this dreamed-of greatness would never be achieved by natural means. The ten tribes had been carried off to Assyria and lost forever. The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and carried the Jews away captive. Then came the Persians as their masters; then the Greeks; then the Romans. So far from knowing anything like dominion, for centuries the Jews never even knew what it was to be completely free and independent.

"So another line of thought grew up. It is true that the idea of a great king of David's line never entirely vanished and was always intertwined in some way with their thought; but more and more they began to dream of a day when God would intervene in history and achieve by supernatural means that which natural means could never achieve. They looked for divine power to do what human power was helpless to do.

"In between the Testaments were written a whole flood of books which were dreams and forecasts of this new age and the intervention of God. As a class, they are called *Apocalypses*. The word literally means *unveilings*. These books were meant to be unveilings of the future. It is to them that we must turn to find out what the Jews believed in the time of Jesus about the Messiah and the work of the Messiah and the new age. It is against their dreams that we must set the dream of Jesus.

“In these books, certain basic ideas occur. We follow here the classification of these ideas given by Emil Schuerer, who wrote *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*.

“(1) Before the Messiah came, there would be a time of terrible tribulation. There would be a messianic travail. It would be the birth-pangs of a new world. Every conceivable terror would burst upon the world; every standard of honour and decency would be torn down; the world would become a physical and moral chaos.... The time which preceded the coming of the Messiah was to be a time when the world was torn in pieces and every bond relaxed. The physical and the moral order would collapse.

“(2) Into this chaos there would come Elijah as the forerunner and herald of the Messiah. He was to heal the breaches and bring order into the chaos to prepare the way for the Messiah. In particular he was to mend disputes....

“(3) Then there would enter the Messiah.... Sometimes the Messiah was thought of as a king of David's line, but more often he was thought of as a great, superhuman figure crashing into history to remake the world and in the end to vindicate God's people.

“(4) The nations would ally themselves and gather themselves together against the champion of God....

“(5) The result would be the total destruction of these hostile powers. The Jewish philosopher Philo said that the Messiah would 'take the field and make war and destroy great and populous nations'.... The Messiah will be the most destructive conqueror in history, smashing his enemies into utter extinction.

“(6) There would follow the renovation of Jerusalem. Sometimes this was thought of as the purification of the existing city. More often it was thought of as the coming down of the new Jerusalem from heaven....

“(7) The Jews who were dispersed all over the world would be gathered into the city of the new Jerusalem.... It is easy to see how Jewish this new world was to be. The nationalistic element is dominant all the time.

“(8) Palestine would be the centre of the world and the rest of the world subject to it. All the nations would be subdued. Sometimes it was thought of as a peaceful subjugation.... More often, the fate of the Gentiles was utter destruction at which Israel would exult and rejoice.... It was a grim picture. Israel would rejoice to see her enemies broken and in hell. Even the dead Israelites were to be raised up to share in the new world.

“(9) Finally, there would come the new age of peace and goodness which would last forever.

“These are the messianic ideas which were in people's minds when Jesus came...”¹⁸²

Christ did not reject all of these apocalyptic ideas. After all, several of them were grounded in the Holy Scriptures. He rejected their cruelty, their national, worldly ambition, and their anti-Gentilism. Though He is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16.18), He came as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, not the ferocious war-lord of the apocalypses. And He came to restore Israel, not as a State ruling over all the nations by the power of the sword, but as the kernel of the Universal Church ruling by the power of the Spirit. His Kingdom was not of this world; it was the inner Kingdom of Grace.

The main recounters of the Gospel story were the holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, together with the holy Apostle Paul. However, there were other witnesses from among those who are not known to have been Christians. Foremost among them was the Jew Flavius Josephus the eye-witness and historian of the Siege of Jerusalem. (On seeing the futility of his countrymen's struggle against the Romans, he joined the camp of the latter). In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, written in about 93 AD, Josephus said: “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.”

¹⁸² Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 223-230.

18. CHRIST, ISRAEL AND THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

The question was: would the Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah, as “the Son of God, the King of Israel” (John 1.49)? On this would depend the salvation of both the people and their State... Tragically, in their great majority the Jews failed this test; they both crucified their True King and God, and said to Pilate: “We have no other king but Caesar” (John 19.15).

At that moment they became no different spiritually from the other pagan peoples; for, like the pagans, they had come to recognize a mere man, the Roman emperor, as higher than God Himself. As St. John Chrysostom writes: “Here they declined the Kingdom of Christ and called to themselves that of Caesar.”¹⁸³ What made this apostasy worse was the fact that they were not compelled to it by any despotic decree. Pilate not only did not demand this recognition of Caesar from them, but had said of *Christ* - “Behold your king” (John 19.14), and had then ordered the sign, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”, to be nailed above the cross. The Jews had in effect, without the slightest external coercion, carried out both a *democratic revolution* against their True King, and, at the same time, a *despotic obeisance* to a false god-king.

Thus did the City of God on earth become the City of Man - and the stronghold of Satan: “How has the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of justice, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers” (Isaiah 1.21). Thus did the original sin committed under Saul, when the people of God sought a king who would rule them “like all the nations”, reap its final wages in their submission to “the god of this world”.

But the positive result was that the Kingdom, with all its ineffable and inestimable benefits, was passed to other peoples. As the Lord Himself had prophesied: “The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21.43). Or as St. Paul put it: “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect [from the Gentiles] have obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11.7). Thus all the other peoples of the world were now given the opportunity of joining God’s Kingdom in the Church, “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6.16).

But for the Jews who rejected Him it was another matter. After their killing of Christ - which was not only regicide, but also *Deicide*, an act unparalleled in evil in the history of the world - there came upon them the punishment prophesied by Christ: “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24.21). “That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly I say to you, all

¹⁸³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 85 on John*, P.G. 59:505, col. 461. See also Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), “Christ the Savior and the Jewish Revolution”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, N 4, July-August, 1988, pp. 11-31.

these things will come upon this generation..." (Matthew 23.35-36). This prophecy was fulfilled in 66-70 AD, when the Jews, incited by the Zealots, rose up in armed rebellion against Rome. The Roman Emperors Titus and Vespasian crushed the rebellion, destroyed the Temple and killed very many of the Jews. The extent of the slaughter is a matter of controversy¹⁸⁴, but the depth of the horror and suffering is beyond dispute.

The message of the revolutionaries was strikingly similar to that of another Jewish-inspired revolution – Russia in 1917. As Neil Faulkner writes, it was a message "of sectarian radicals and messiahs... addressed, above all, to the poor. Josephus was explicit about the class basis of the conflict: it was, for him, a struggle between dunatoi – men of rank and power, the property-owning upper classes – and stasiastai – subversives, revolutionaries, popular leaders whose appeal was to 'the scum of the districts'. The Dead Sea Scrolls were equally explicit, though from the other side of the barricades: whereas 'the princes of Judah... wallowed in the ways of whoredom and wicked wealth' and 'acted arrogantly for the sake of riches and gain', the Lord would in due time deliver them 'into the hands of the poor', so as to 'humble the mighty of the peoples by the hand of those bent to the dust', and bring them 'the reward of the wicked'...

"The popular movement of 66 CE amounted to a fusion of Apocalypse and Jubilee, the radical minority's vision of a revolutionary war to destroy corruption having become inextricably linked with the peasant majority's traditional aspiration for land redistribution and the removal of burdens..."¹⁸⁵

But these earthly motives were secondary to the primary cause and crime: the rejection and murder by God's people of their only King and God. "In this striking way," writes St. John of Kronstadt, "did the people chosen in accordance with the merits of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob stumble against the inheritance of these merits, which were being received as their own impersonal virtue; they stumbled on their preference for the earthly kingdom over the Kingdom of Heaven, on their preference for a political messiah over the Messiah Whose Kingdom is not of this world.

¹⁸⁴ The revisionist case has been presented by the Israeli historian Shlomo Sand. Josephus, our only source for these events, writes Sand "estimated that 1.1 million people died in the siege of Jerusalem and the great massacre that followed, that 97,000 were taken captive, and that a few thousand more were killed in other cities". (This is confirmed by St. Caesarius of Arles who says: "The Jews as if driven by the hand of God assembled in Jerusalem according to their custom to celebrate the Passover. We read in history that three million Jews were gathered in Jerusalem; eleven hundred thousand of them are read to have been destroyed by the sword of hunger, and one hundred thousand young men were led to Rome in triumph. For two years that city was besieged, and so great was the number of the dead who were cast out of the city that their bodies equalled the height of the walls." (Sermon 127)). However, Sand argues that these figures were grossly exaggerated, and that "a cautious estimate suggests that Jerusalem at that time could have had a population of sixty thousand or seventy thousand inhabitants" (*The Invention of the Jewish People*, London: Verso, 2009, p. 131).

¹⁸⁵ Faulkner, "The great Jewish revolt against Rome, 66-73 CE", *History Today*, vol. 52 (10), October, 2002, pp. 50, 51.

“Let us look at the consequences to which this mistake led. First of all, this bitter error of the chosen people was bewailed by the Messiah Himself. In His triumphant procession into Jerusalem, when Christ came close to the city, then, looking at it, He wept over it and said: ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground, because you did not know the time of your visitation’ (Luke 19.42-44). As He ascended onto Golgotha, Christ the Saviour sorrowed, not over the torments that were facing Him, but about the torments that awaited Jerusalem. He expressed this to the women who were sympathetic to His sufferings, who wept and sobbed over Him: ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for your selves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin to say to the mountains: “Fall on us!”’ (Luke 23.28-30).

“Already in ancient times the prophets were pointing to the woes that would strike the Jewish people for its betrayal of God – the people that was nevertheless chosen for the salvation of the world, for the foreseen fall of Israel had to bring salvation to the Gentiles (Romans 11.11).

“1500 years before, the Prophet and God-Seer Moses foretold the siege, the scattering of the Jews across the whole face of the earth and the terrible trials that followed: ‘The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favour to the young. And they shall eat the increase of your livestock, and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, or the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land, and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the Lord your God has given you. You shall eat of the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you... Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other... And among those nations you will find no rest... Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life’ (Deuteronomy 28.49-53, 64-65, 66)...

“The holy Prophet Ezekiel points to the siege of Jerusalem as the consequence of the multiplication of lawlessnesses which attained a greater development than among the neighbouring people.

“Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgements, nor even done according to the judgements of the nations that are all around you. Therefore thus says the Lord God, Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgements in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers, and I will execute judgements among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds. Therefore as I live, says the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations therefore I will also diminish you. My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. One third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst, and one third shall fall by the sword all around you, and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them’ (5.7-12).

“In this way the prophets of God clearly announce the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem and what had once been *the chosen people*, as they were called in antiquity, according to the merits of their forefathers. What became of them with their dreams of an earthly kingdom of Israel? Their destinies serve as a vivid example for the Christian peoples, of what awaits them, too, for abandoning the ways of the commandments of God and for accepting principles that contradict the truth.”¹⁸⁶

In 135 there was another rebellion of the Jews under Bar Kokhba. It was crushed by the Emperor Hadrian with the deaths, according to Dio Cassius, of 580,000 Jewish soldiers.¹⁸⁷ The city was renamed Aelia Capitolina, Judaea was renamed Syria Palaestina and Jews were barred from entering it. Finally, the city and ruins were ploughed over and a completely Hellenic city built in its place; a temple to Jupiter was planned for the site of the Temple, while Golgotha was covered by a temple to Venus...

The ploughing up of the Temple site took place on August 9, the day on which all the major catastrophes of Jewish history took place. Thus David Baron writes: “The fast of the fifth month, which is the month of Ab, answering to August, is still observed by the Jews on the ninth day, in celebration of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; but, according to the Talmud and Jewish historians, the following list of calamities all happened on the same day, namely: (1) On that day the decree went forth

¹⁸⁶ St. John, *Nachalo i Konets Nashego Zemnogo Mira* (The Beginning and End of our Earthly Life), Moscow, 1901, 2004, pp. 49-50, 51-52.

¹⁸⁷ Again, Sand disputes these figures. He claims that the population of Palestine “in the second century DE remained predominantly Judeans and Samaritans, and it started to flourish again for one or two generations after the end of the revolt” (*op. cit.*, p. 133). He also denies that there was any significant exile from the land after the destruction of the Second Temple, arguing that it was only the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs early in the seventh century that “put an end to the presence of the Jewish people in its land” (p. 141).

from God in the wilderness that the people should not enter the land because of their unbelief; (2) on the very same day of the destruction of the First Temple by the Chaldeans, the Second Temple also was destroyed by the Romans; (4) on that day, after the rising under Bar Kochba, the city of Bethar was taken, 'in which were thousands and myriads of Israel, and they had a great king whom all Israel and the greatest of the wise men thought was King Messiah'; but (4) he fell into the hands of the Gentiles, and they were all put to death, and the affliction was great, like as it was in the desolation of the Sanctuary; (5) and lastly, on that day 'the wicked Turnus Rufus, who is devoted to punishment, ploughed up the (hill of the) Sanctuary, and the parts round about it, to fulfill that which was said by Micah, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field"'." ¹⁸⁸

Paradoxically, the Jews' last stand in both their rebellions took place in the hilltop fortresses built at Herodium and Masada by that arch-Hellenist and Romanist, Herod the Great.¹⁸⁹ Equally paradoxically, their submission to pagan rulers was the result of their rejection of their mission to the pagans. Instead of serving as God's priests to the pagan world, enlightening them with the knowledge of the One True God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they were puffed up with dreams of national glory and dominion over the nations. And so God subjected them to those same nations whom they despised, entrusting the mission to the New Israel, the Church.

"On coming into the world," writes Tikhomirov, "the Saviour Jesus Christ as a man loved his fatherland, Judaea, no less than the Pharisees. He was thinking of the great role of his fatherland in the destinies of the world and mankind no less than the Pharisees, the zealots and the other nationalists. On approaching Jerusalem (during His triumphal entry) He wept and said: 'Oh, if only thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!' ..., and recalling the coming destruction of the city, He added: 'because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation' (Luke 19.41, 44). 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... which killest... them that are sent to thee!' He said a little earlier, 'how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and yet would not!' (Luke 13.34). What would have happened if the Jews at that decisive moment had accepted the true Messiah? Israel would have become the spiritual head of the whole world, the beloved guide of mankind. At that very time Philo of Alexandria wrote that 'the Israelites have received the mission to serve as priests and prophets for the whole world, to instruct it in the truth, and in particular the pure knowledge of God'. If they had recognized this truth in full measure, then the coming of the Saviour would have confirmed forever that great mission. But 'the spirit of the prophets' turned out to be by no means so strong in Jewry, and its leaders repeated the role of Esau: they gave away the right of the firstborn for a mess of pottage.

¹⁸⁸ Baron, *Zechariah*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1918, 1988, pp. 213-214.

¹⁸⁹ Mueller, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

“Nevertheless we must not forget that if the nationalist hatred for the Kingdom of God, manifested outside tribal conditions, was expressed in the murder of the Saviour of the world, all His disciples who brought the good news of the Kingdom, all His first followers and a multitude of the first members of the Church to all the ends of the Roman empire were Jews by nationality. The greatest interpreter of the spiritual meaning of the idea of ‘the children of Abraham’ was the pure-blooded Jew and Pharisee, the Apostle Paul. He was a Jew by blood, but through the prophetic spirit turned out to be the ideological director of the world to that place where ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii*, p. 142.

19. CHRIST AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In chapter 2 of Daniel the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had a vision: he saw a metal statue in four parts: gold, silver, bronze and iron, which was crushed to pieces by a great stone. The Prophet Daniel interpreted the vision to be a summary of world history: the four parts of the statue refer to four world-empires, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's own, which are crushed by the Kingdom of God, which fills the whole earth and lasts forever.

The Holy Fathers completed the prophet's interpretation by identifying the four world-empires as those of pagan Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The iron part of the statue is said to crush all the other parts - which is precisely what Rome did in the centuries before the Coming of Christ. The statue is said to have ten toes made of a mixture of iron and clay. This refers to the flawed nature of ten successors of Roman power, which are divided, forming a mixture of strength and weakness - firm one-man rule and anarchic democracy. "The diminishing value of metals from gold to iron represent the decreasing grandeur of the rulers of the successive empire [for their kingdoms were *inferior to yours*, said the Prophet to Nebuchadnezzar], from the absolute despotism of Nebuchadnezzar to the democratic system of checks and balances that characterized the Roman senates and assemblies."¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, it was the iron power of one-man rule that gained the upper hand over democratic elements in Roman history from the time of Julius Caesar.¹⁹² Rome had originally been ruled by kings, beginning with Romulus. However, the kings were expelled and replaced by a system in which tribunes and consuls were elected by the people to administer the state in their name. However, this was not real democracy: real power remained with a small number of aristocratic families who sat in the Senate. As Rome expanded into an empire - the decisive date was 146 BC, when Carthage was destroyed, and Corinth conquered, giving Rome control of the whole of the Mediterranean - the military leaders who won the empire became increasingly important. This led to civil wars between these leaders, who vied for domination of the Senate and the adoration of the people. The first such war was between Pompey, conqueror of the East, and Julius Caesar, conqueror of the West. When Caesar defeated Pompey he proclaimed himself "dictator for life", and what remained of democracy was destroyed. Nor did the murder of Caesar in 44 BC change matters. After another bout of civil war, Caesar's nephew, Augustus, emerged as the first Roman emperor...

¹⁹¹ *The Lives of the Holy Prophets*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1998, p. 387. Charles T. Cook put it as follows: "Babylon, the Head of Gold, was governed by an Absolute Autocracy. Medo-Persia, the Breast and Arms of Silver, favoured an Aristocratic Oligarchy. This form gave place to Alexander the Great's Military Oligarchy. And in turn Rome, the Legs of Iron, represented Democratic Imperialism." ("Is the Book of Daniel Fact or Fiction?" *Watching and Waiting*, 2, May 1919, republished in vol. 28, no. 15, July-September, 2015, p. 238)

¹⁹² Wiseman, "The Slow Death of Democracy", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 6, N 12, December, 2005, p. 15.

When, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven, was born as a man on earth, He was immediately enrolled as a citizen of a regnum in all but name, ruled by a single man, the Emperor Augustus. Augustus was the adopted son of Julius Caesar, whom the Senate deified at Augustus' request. So Augustus was able to mint coins calling himself "son of a god". His earthly rule as the son of a god was truly an image of the Heavenly Ruler, the true Son of God, Jesus Christ...

As Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "In those days, Caesar Augustus was ruling the land. His supreme rule over the whole earth is an image of God's supreme rule over both worlds: the spiritual and the material. The many-headed dragon of power, that had, from the beginning of sin, brought decay to the peoples of the earth, was left with only one head. All known nations and tribes on earth were subject to Augustus' power, directly or indirectly, whether only by sending him their tribute or by acknowledging Roman gods and Roman officials. The struggle for power had died down for a time, and the sole power over the whole world was entirely in the hands of Caesar Augustus. There was neither man nor god over him; he himself was proclaimed a god, and men made sacrifices to his image: slaughtered animals and unclean things. From the foundation of the world, no mortal man had risen to greater power than Caesar Augustus, who ruled without rival over the whole world; and indeed, from the foundation of the world, man, created by the living God, had never fallen to such a depth of nothingness and despair as then, when the Roman Emperor began to be deified - and he a man with all man's frailties and weaknesses, with the life-span of a willow tree, with a stomach, intestines, liver and kidneys that were, after a few decades, to turn into a worm-infested stench and lifeless dust; a man, the statues of whom, raised during his reign, were to outlast his life, his power and his reign.

"In this time of external peace and internal despair, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race and Renewer of all creation, was born..."¹⁹³

This coincidence of the birth of the King of kings with the birth of the Roman empire pointed, for many of the Holy Fathers and Church writers, to a certain special mission of the Roman empire, as if the Empire, being born at the same time as Christ, was Divinely established to be a vehicle for the spreading of the Gospel to all nations, coming into existence precisely for the sake of the Christian Church, and creating a political unity that would help and protect the spiritual unity created by the Church.

Thus Melitus, Bishop of Sardis wrote to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius: "Our philosophy flourished first among barbarians; but after it had appeared among your peoples during the mighty principate of your ancestor Augustus, it became an auspicious benefit, especially to your empire. From that time on

¹⁹³ Bishop Nikolai, "The Nativity of Christ. 2", *Homilies*, volume 1, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1996, pp. 25-26.

the power of the Romans increased in a great and splendid way: you became the successor to this whom the people desired and will continue to do so, along with your son, if you protect the philosophy which was nursed in the cradle of the empire and saw the light along with Augustus, which also your ancestors honoured, as they did other religions. And this is the greatest proof of its excellence, that our doctrine has flourished at the same time as the happy beginnings of the empire and that from the time of the principate of Augustus no evil has befallen it, but, on the contrary, all things have been splendid and glorious in accordance with the prayers of all..."¹⁹⁴

Again, in the third century Origen wrote: "Jesus was born during the reign of Augustus, the one who reduced to uniformity, so to speak, the many kingdoms on earth so that He had a single empire. It would have hindered Jesus' teaching from being spread throughout the world if there had been many kingdoms... Everyone would have been forced to fight in defence of their own country."¹⁹⁵ Origen considered that the peace of Augustus was prophesied in the scriptural verse: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers even unto the ends of the inhabited earth" (Psalm 71.7), and that it prefigured the spiritual peace of Christ. Moreover, under the reigns of Augustus' successors, the differences between the peoples had been reduced, so that by the time of Christ's Second Coming they would all call on the name of the Lord with one voice and serve Him under one yoke.¹⁹⁶

Again, in the fourth century St. Gregory the Theologian said: "The state of the Christians and that of the Romans grew up simultaneously and Roman supremacy arose with Christ's sojourn upon earth, previous to which it had not reached monarchical perfection."¹⁹⁷ And in the fifth century the Spanish priest Orosius, claimed that the Emperor Augustus had paid a kind of compliment to Christ by refusing to call himself Lord at a time when the true Lord of all was becoming man. Christ returned the compliment by having himself enrolled in Augustus' census. In this way He foreshadowed Rome's historical mission.¹⁹⁸ Also in the fifth century, St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, wrote: "Divine Providence fashioned the Roman Empire, the growth of which was extended to boundaries so wide that all races everywhere became next-door neighbours. For it was particularly germane to the Divine scheme that many kingdoms should be bound together under a single government, and that the world-wide preaching should have a swift means of access to all people, over whom the rule of a single state held sway."¹⁹⁹ As Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus wrote, "through the pax Romana" God "facilitated the work of the preachers of truth. You see, once a single empire was formed, the uprisings of the nations against one another ceased and peace took hold

¹⁹⁴ St. Melito, in Eusebius, *Church History*, IV, 26, 7-8.

¹⁹⁵ Origen, *Against Celsus* II, 30.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 67.

¹⁹⁷ St. Gregory, *Sermon* 4, P.G. 47, col. 564B.

¹⁹⁸ Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*; in Jenkyns, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-74.

¹⁹⁹ St. Leo, *Sermon* 32, P.L. 54, col. 423.

throughout the whole world; the apostles, entrusted with the preaching of true religion, travelled about safely, and by traversing the world they snared humankind and brought them to life”²⁰⁰

The Church sums up this teaching thus: "When Augustus reigned alone upon earth, the many kingdoms of men came to an end: and when Thou wast made man of the pure Virgin, the many gods of idolatry were destroyed. The cities of the world passed under one single rule; and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Godhead. The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar; and we, the faithful, were enrolled in the Name of the Godhead, when Thou, our God, wast made man. Great is Thy mercy: glory to Thee."²⁰¹

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That the Roman Empire came into existence for the sake of the Church was, on the face of it, a very bold and paradoxical teaching. After all, the people of God at the beginning of the Christian era were the Jews, not the Romans. The Romans were pagans; they worshipped demons, not the True God Who had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In 63 BC they had actually conquered the people of God, and their rule was bitterly resented. In 70 AD they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in a campaign of appalling cruelty and scattered the Jews over the face of the earth. How could pagan Rome, the Rome of such fearsome tyrants as Nero and Titus and Caligula and Domitian and Diocletian, possibly be construed as working with God rather than against Him?

The solution to this paradox is to be found in an examination of two encounters recounted in the Gospel between Christ and two "rulers of this world" - Satan and Pontius Pilate. In the first, Satan takes Christ onto a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of this world in a moment of time. "And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before Me, all will be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him: 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only will you serve.'" (Luke 4.6-8). Here we see that Satan up to that time had control over all the kingdoms of the world - but by might, the might given him by the sins of men, - not by right. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria exclaims: "How dost thou promise that which is not thine? Who made thee heir of God's kingdom? Who made thee lord of all under heaven? Thou hast seized these things by fraud. Restore them, therefore, to the incarnate Son, the Lord of all..."²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Blessed Theodoret, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 9. Again, E. Kholmogorov writes: "Rome set herself an unprecedentedly bold task - to establish peace throughout the inhabited world and root out barbarism" ("Vybor Imperii" (The Choice of Empire), *Epokha*, N 11, 2001, pp. 15-16).

²⁰¹ *Festal Menaion*, Vespers, the Nativity of Christ, "Lord, I have cried", Glory... Both now...

²⁰² St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Homily 12, New York: Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 89.

And indeed, the Lord accepted neither Satan's lordship over the world, nor the satanism so closely associated with the pagan states of the ancient world. He came to restore true Statehood, which recognises the ultimate supremacy only of the one true God, and which demands veneration of the earthly ruler, but worship only of the Heavenly King. And since, by the time of the Nativity of Christ, all the major pagan kingdoms had been swallowed up in Rome, it was to the transformation of Roman Statehood that the Lord came.

For, as K.V. Glazkov writes: "The good news announced by the Lord Jesus Christ could not leave untransfigured a single one of the spheres of man's life. One of the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ consisted in bringing the heavenly truths to the earth, in instilling them into the consciousness of mankind with the aim of its spiritual regeneration, in restructuring the laws of communal life on new principles announced by Christ the Saviour, in the creation of a Christian order of this communal life, and, consequently, in a radical change of pagan statehood. Proceeding from here it becomes clear what place the Church must occupy in relation to the state. It is not the place of an opponent from a hostile camp, not the place of a warring party, but the place of a pastor in relation to his flock, the place of a loving father in relation to his lost children. Even in those moments when there was not and could not be any unanimity or union between the Church and the state, Christ the Saviour forbade the Church to stand on one side from the state, still less to break all links with it, saying: 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Luke 20.25).²⁰³

Thus Christ is the true King, granting a qualified authority to earthly kings. Therefore Christians owe a qualified loyalty to the empire without full integration into it. *Full* integration was impossible, for, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, "in 'this world' Christians could be but pilgrims and strangers. Their true 'citizenship', politeuma, was 'in heaven' (Philippians 3.20). The Church herself was peregrinating through this world (paroikousa). 'The Christian fellowship was a bit of extra-territorial jurisdiction on earth of the world above' (Frank Gavin). The Church was 'an outpost of heaven' on earth, or a 'colony of heaven'. It may be true that this attitude of radical detachment had originally an 'apocalyptic' connotation, and was inspired by the expectation of an imminent parousia. Yet, even as an enduring historical society, the Church was bound to be detached from the world. An ethos of 'spiritual segregation' was inherent in the very fabric of the Christian faith, as it was inherent in the faith of Ancient Israel. The Church herself was 'a city', a polis, a new and peculiar 'polity'. In their baptismal profession Christians had 'to renounce' this world, with all its vanity, and pride, and pomp, - but also with all its natural ties, even family ties, and to take a solemn oath of allegiance to Christ the King, the only true King on earth and in heaven, to Whom all 'authority' has been given. By this baptismal commitment Christians were radically separated from 'this world'. In this world they had

²⁰³ Glazkov, "Zashchita ot Liberalizma" ("A Defence from Liberalism"), *Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Russia)*, N 15 (1636), August 1/14, 1999, p. 10.

no 'permanent city'. They were 'citizens' of the 'City to come', of which God Himself was builder and maker (Hebrews 13.14; cf. 11.10).

Let us now turn to Christ's second confrontation with a ruler of this world - His trial before Pilate. While acknowledging that his power was lawful, the Lord insists that Pilate's power derived from God, the true King and Lawgiver. For "you could have no power at all against Me," He says to Pilate, "unless it had been given to you from above" (John 19.11). These words, paradoxically, both limit Caesar's power, insofar as it is subject to God's, and strengthen it, by indicating that it has God's seal and blessing in principle (if not in all its particular manifestations). Nor is this conclusion contradicted by His earlier words: "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18.36). For, as Blessed Theophylact writes: "He said: 'My Kingdom is not of this world', and again: 'It is not from here', but He did not say: It is not in this world and not here. He rules in this world, takes providential care for it and administers everything according to His will. But His Kingdom is 'not of this world', but from above and before the ages, and 'not from here', that is, it is not composed from the earth, although it has power here".²⁰⁴

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "Let no-one imagine that Christ the Lord does not have imperial power over this world because He says to Pilate: 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' He who possesses the enduring has power also over the transitory. The Lord speaks of His enduring Kingdom, independent of time and of decay, unrighteousness, illusion and death. Some man might say: 'My riches are not on paper, but in gold.' But does he who has gold not have paper also? Is not gold as paper to its owner? The Lord, then, does not say to Pilate that He is not a king, but, on the contrary, says that He is a higher king than all kings, and His Kingdom is greater and stronger and more enduring than all earthly kingdoms. He refers to His pre-eminent Kingdom, on which depend all kingdoms in time and in space..."²⁰⁵

The Lord continues: "Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin" (John 19.11). The one who delivered Christ to Pilate was Caiaphas, chief priest of the Jews. For, as is well known (to all except contemporary ecumenist Christians), it was the Jews, His own people, who condemned Christ for blasphemy and demanded His execution at the hands of the Roman authorities in the person of Pontius Pilate. Since Pilate was not interested in the charge of blasphemy, the only way in which the Jews could get their way was to accuse Christ of fomenting rebellion against Rome - a hypocritical charge, since it was precisely the Jews, not Christ, who were planning revolution, and in fact rebelled in 66 A.D.²⁰⁶ Not only did Pilate not believe this accusation: as the Apostle Peter pointed out, he did everything he could to have Christ released (Acts 3.13), giving in only when he feared that the

²⁰⁴ Bl. Theophylact, *On John* 18.36.

²⁰⁵ Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part III, September 30, pp. 395-396.

²⁰⁶ Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), "Christ the Savior and the Jewish Revolution", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, no. 4, July-August, 1988, pp. 11-31.

Jews were about to start a riot and denounce him to the emperor in Rome. This fact has the consequence that, insofar Pilate could have used his God-given power to save the Lord from an unjust death, Roman state power appears in this situation as the potential, if not yet the actual, protector of Christ from His fiercest enemies. In other words, already during the life of Christ, we see the future role of Rome as “that which restrains” the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7) and the guardian of the Body of Christ.

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Since the Christians had not taken part in the Jewish revolution, and always, unlike the Jews, stressed their civic loyalty to the Roman Emperor, one would have thought that the Romans would have had no problems in treating the Christians as tolerantly as (in general) they treated the Jews.

But the matter was not as simple as that...

Dvorkin writes: “The Roman government in practice was tolerant to any cult if only it did not incite to rebellion and did not undermine morality. Moreover, the Romans thought that one of the reasons for their military successes was the fact that while other peoples worshipped only their own local gods, the Romans showed marks of honour to all the gods without exception and for that were rewarded for their special piety. All cults not established by the state were allowed, but theoretically did not have the right to propagandize in Rome, although their gods also entered into the Roman pantheon. In the first century after Christ religions already known to the contemporary Roman were not, as a rule, persecuted for propagandizing. However, the law retained its prior force and theoretically the possibility of applying it remained. The permitted religions had to satisfy two criteria: place and time. Religion was always a local matter – that is, it was linked to a definite people living in a definite locality, - and also an ancient matter, linked to the history of this people. It was more complicated to assimilate the God of the Jews, Who had no representation and did not accept sacrifices in any place except Jerusalem, into their pantheon. The Jews themselves did not allow His representation to be placed anywhere and stubbornly declined to worship the Roman gods. The Jews were monotheists and theoretically understood that their faith in principle excluded all other forms of religion. Nevertheless, in spite of all the complications with the Jews and the strangeness of their religion, it was still tolerated: the religion of the Jews was a national one and, besides, ancient, and it was considered sacrilege to encroach on it. Moreover, the Jews occupied an important political niche that was for the Romans a stronghold of their eastern conquests. In view of all these considerations, the Romans gritted their teeth and recognized the Jewish religion to be permitted. Privileges were given to the Jewish people also because their rites seemed strange and dirty. The Romans thought that the Jews simply could not have proselytes among other peoples and would rather repel the haughty Roman aristocrat. Therefore the Jews were given the right to confess their belief in one God. Until the rebellion of 66-70 the Roman

authorities treated them with studied tolerance. Augustus gave the Jews significant privileges, which, after the crisis under Caligula, who wanted to put his statue in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. Mark 13.14 and II Thessalonians 2.3-4), were again renewed by Claudius.

“The circumstances changed when Christianity appeared. Having examined it, the Romans classified the Christians as apostates from the Jewish faith. It was precisely the traits that distinguished the Christians from the Jews that made them still lower in the eyes of the Romans even than the Judaism they had little sympathy for. Christianity did not have the right of belonging to historical antiquity – it was the ‘new religion’ so displeasing to the Roman conservative. It was not the religion of one people, but on the contrary, lived only through proselytes from other religions. If the propagandizing of other cults by their servers was seen rather as a chance violation, for Christians missionary work was their only modus vivendi – a necessity of their very position in history. Christians were always reproached for a lack of historical and national character in their religion. Celsius, for example, saw in Christians a party that had separated from Judaism and inherited from it its inclination for disputes.

“The Christians could demand tolerance either in the name of the truth or in the name of freedom of conscience. But since for the Romans one of the criteria of truth was antiquity, Christianity, a new religion, automatically became a false religion. The right of freedom of conscience that is so important for contemporary man was not even mentioned at that time. Only the state, and not individuals, had the right to establish and legalize religious cults. In rising up against state religion, the Christians became guilty of a state crime – they became in principle enemies of the state. And with such a view of Christianity it was possible to interpret a series of features of their life in a particular way: their nocturnal gatherings, their waiting for a certain king that was to come, the declining of some of them from military service and above all their refusal to offer sacrifices to the emperor.

“The Christians refused to carry out this self-evident, most simple of state duties. Beginning with the Apostle Paul, they affirmed their loyalty, referring to the prayers they said for the emperor, for the authorities and for the homeland. But they refused to recognize the emperor as ‘Lord’ and to carry out even an external worship of the idols, for they knew only one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Christians accepted both the state and society, but only to the degree that they did not limit the Lordship of Christ, did not drown out the confession of the Kingdom.

“The Kingdom of God had come and been revealed in the world, and from now on became the single measure of history and human life. In essence, the Christians by their refusal showed that they – almost alone in the whole of what was then an exceptionally religious world – believed in the reality of the idols. Honouring the idols meant recognizing the power of the devil, who had torn the world away from the knowledge of the only true god and forced it to

worship statues. But Christ had come to free the world from this power. Paganism came to life in its true religious significance as the kingdom of evil, as a demonic invasion, with which the Christians had entered into a duel to the death.

“Christianity came as a revolution in the history of the world: it was the appearance in it of the Lord for the struggle with that which had usurped His power. The Church had become the witness of His coming and presence. It was precisely this witness that it proclaimed to the whole world...”²⁰⁷

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The first persecution against the Christians was that of Nero in 64, in which the Apostles Peter and Paul were killed. It was a local persecution in Rome, and was not directly related to religion. The real reason was that Nero needed scapegoats for the fire he himself had caused which destroyed a large part of the city.

It was not until the persecution under Domitian in 92 that we see the first violent *ideological* clash between Rome and the Church. Domitian proclaimed himself “lord and god”, and required people to swear “by the genius of the emperor”. Those who did not were proclaimed to be “atheists”. The Apostle John was exiled to Patmos for his refusal to obey the emperor.²⁰⁸

However, over the next two centuries and a bit, until the persecution of Diocletian in the early fourth century, periods of persecution, while cruel, were sporadic and short-lived. Thus in the early second century the Emperor Trajan ordered the end of the persecution after the death of St. Ignatius the God-bearer, so impressed was he by the saint’s confession... With the possible exception of Diocletian’s persecution, these persecutions did not threaten the very existence of the Church. Indeed, taken as a whole, the persecutions of the first three centuries of the Church’s life under the pagan Roman emperors cannot be compared, either in length or bloodthirstiness, to the much more recent persecutions in Soviet Russia. Rather than destroying the Church, they shed the blood that, in Tertullian’s phrase, was the seed of future Christian generations.

Roman power already began fulfilling the role of protector of the Christians in 35, when, on the basis of a report sent to him by Pilate, the Emperor Tiberius proposed to the senate that Christ should be recognized as a god. The senate refused this request, and declared that Christianity was an “illicit superstition”; but Tiberius ignored this and forbade the bringing of any accusations against the Christians. Moreover, when St. Mary Magdalene complained to the emperor about the unjust sentence passed by Pontius Pilate

²⁰⁷ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81.

²⁰⁸ Domitian was seen in antiquity as the worst of the Roman emperors, worse even than Nero and Caligula (Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, p. 114).

on Christ, the emperor moved Pilate from Jerusalem to Gaul, where he died after a terrible illness.²⁰⁹ Again, in 36 or 37 the Roman legate to Syria, Vitellius, deposed Caiaphas for his unlawful execution of the Archdeacon and Protomartyr Stephen (in 34), and in 62 the High Priest Ananias was similarly deposed for executing St. James the Just, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. In between these dates the Apostle Paul was saved from a lynching at the hands of the Jews by the Roman authorities (Acts 21, 23.28-29, 25.19).²¹⁰ So at first the Romans, far from being persecutors of the Christians, were their chief protectors against the Jews – the former people of God...

The Lord Himself accepted the Roman political order as legitimate, and exhorted His disciples to obey it as long as it did not compel them to disobey the Law of God: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22.21). Although Christians, being in essence free-born sons of the Heavenly King, were inwardly not subject to the yoke of earthly kings, nevertheless this yoke was to be accepted voluntarily "lest we should offend them" (Matthew 17.27). For, as St. Theophan the Recluse writes, "The Lord paid the required temple tribute and kept all other practices, both temple-related and civic. He fulfilled this and taught the Apostles to do the same, and the Apostles in turn passed this same law on to all Christians. Only the spirit of life was made new; externally all remained as it had been, except what was clearly against the will of God – for instance, participating in sacrifices to idols, etc. Then Christianity gained the upper hand, displaced all the former practices, and established its own."²¹¹

Following in this tradition, St. Peter writes: "Be subject for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right... Fear God. Honour the emperor" (I Peter 2.13, 17).

And St. Paul commands Christians to give thanks for the emperor "and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty" (I Timothy 2.1-2). For it is precisely the emperor's ability to maintain law and order, "a quiet and peaceful life", which makes him so important for the Church. And so "let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power that is not from God; the powers that be are ordained by God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and those who resist shall receive for themselves damnation" (Romans 13.1-2).²¹²

²⁰⁹ Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, part III, July 22, p. 94. Annas and Caiaphas also came to bad ends.

²¹⁰ Professor Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, London: Routledge, 1994, chapter 1.

²¹¹ St. Theophan, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2010, p. 167.

²¹² The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside Russia wrote that "the Apostles Peter and Paul required of the Christians of their time submission to the Roman authority, even though it later persecuted the followers of Christ. The Romans by nature were distinguished

The exact meaning of these words of the Apostle Paul has been much disputed in recent times. The question is: is the apostle saying that *all* political authority is established by God, whatever its attitude to God Himself? Or are there grounds for asserting that some authorities are not established by God, but only *allowed to exist* by Him, and that these “authorities” should not be obeyed as being in fact established by Satan?

The consensus of the Holy Fathers is that the apostle was not saying that everything that calls itself an authority is blessed by God, but that political authority is *in principle* good and God-established and therefore should be obeyed – because, as he goes on to say, political power is in general wielded in order to punish evil-doers and protect public order. Roman power, he says, is established by God, and therefore is a true political authority that must be obeyed in all its commands that do not directly contradict the commandments of God Himself. Hence the veneration and obedience that the early Christians displayed towards it.

Thus St. Clement of Rome writes: “Give us, O Master, peace and concord, even as Thou didst give it to our forefathers when they called devoutly upon Thee in faith and truth. And make us obedient to Thine own almighty and all-holy name, and to all who have the rule and governance over us upon the earth. For it is Thou, O Lord, Who in Thy supreme and ineffable might hast given them their sovereign authority; to the intent that we, acknowledging the glory and honour Thou hast bestowed upon them, should show them all submission. Grant to them health and peace, that they may exercise without offence the sovereignty which Thou hast given them.”²¹³

by their moral valor, for which, according to the words of Augustine in his book *On the City of God*, the Lord magnified and glorified them. To the genius of the Romans humanity owes the working out of a more perfect law, which was the foundation of its famous governmental structure, by which it subjected the world to itself to an even greater degree than by its renowned sword. Under the shadow of the Roman eagle many tribes and nations prospered, enjoying peace and free internal self-government. Respect and tolerance for all religion were so great in Rome that they were at first also extended to recently engendered Christianity. It is sufficient to remember that the Roman procurator Pilate tried to defend Christ the Savior from the malice of the Jews, pointing out His innocence and finding nothing blameworthy in the doctrine He preached. During his many evangelical travels, which brought him into contact with the inhabitants of foreign lands, the Apostle Paul, as a Roman citizen, appealed for the protection of Roman law for defense against both the Jews and the pagans. And, of course, he asked that his case be judged by Caesar, who, according to tradition, found him to be innocent of what he was accused of only later, after his return to Rome from Spain, did he undergo martyrdom there.

“The persecution of Christians never permeated the Roman system, and was a matter of the personal initiative of individual emperors, who saw in the wide dissemination of the new Faith a danger for the state religion, and also for the order of the State, until one of them, St. Constantine, finally understood that they really did not know what they were doing, and laid his sword and sceptre at the footstool of the Cross of Christ...” (*Encyclical Letter of the Council of Russian Bishops Abroad to the Russian Orthodox Flock*, 23 March, 1933; *Living Orthodoxy*, #131, vol. XXII, N 5, September-October, 2001, pp. 13-14)

²¹³ St. Clement of Rome, *To the Corinthians*, 60.

Again, in the second century St. Justin the Martyr wrote: “We worship God only, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as emperors and rulers of men and women, and praying that with your imperial power you may also be found to possess sound judgement...”²¹⁴

The holy Martyr Apollonius (+c. 185) expressed the classic Christian attitude towards the emperor thus: “With all Christians I offer a pure and unbloody sacrifice to almighty God, the Lord of heaven and earth and of all that breathes, a sacrifice of prayer especially on behalf of the spiritual and rational images that have been disposed by God’s providence to rule over the earth. Wherefore obeying a just precept we pray daily to God, Who dwells in the heavens, on behalf of [the Emperor] Commodus who is our ruler in this world, for we are well aware that he rules over the earth by nothing else but the will of the invincible God Who comprehends all things.”²¹⁵ Again, Athenagoras of Athens in his *Representation for the Christians* to Marcus Aurelius wrote that Christians pray for the authorities, so that the son should inherit the kingdom from his father and that the power of the Caesars should be continually extended and confirmed, and that everyone should submit to it. And St. Theophilus of Antioch wrote: “Therefore I would rather venerate the king than your gods – venerate, not worship him, but pray for him... Praying in this way, you fulfil the will of God. For the law of God says: ‘My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not mix with rebels’ (Proverbs 24.21)” (*Three Books to Autolytus*)

Tertullian (+ c. 240) employed a similar argument. “Anticipating Eusebius, he insisted that Christians rendered ‘such reverential homage as is lawful for us and good for him; regarding him as the human being next to God who from God has received all his power, and is less than God alone.’ Christians, Tertullian argued, were even perfectly willing to offer sacrifice on behalf of the emperor, though it had to be a Christian sacrifice: ‘We therefore sacrifice for the emperor’s safety, but to our God and his, and after the manner God has enjoined, in simple prayer.’ Pagan sacrifices are useless, the ‘food of devils’. Christians appeal to God, praying ‘for the imperial well-being, as those who seek it at the hands of Him who is able to bestow it.’.. Christians do just what the imperial cult demands, though in his own way.”²¹⁶ In other words, the only legitimate sacrifice a Christian can make to the emperor is the sacrifice of prayer on his behalf; for he rules, not as a god, but “by the will of God”. So the Christians by no means refused to give to Caesar what was his. Indeed, the emperor was, in Tertullian’s words, “more truly ours (than yours) because he was put into power by our God”, which is why the Christians prayed that he should have “a long life, a safe empire, a quiet home, strong armies, a faithful senate, honest subjects, a world at peace”.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ St. Justin the Martyr, *First Apology*, 17.

²¹⁵ *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 93.

²¹⁶ Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010, p. 281.

²¹⁷ Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 33.1.

As for the pagan sacrifice to the emperor himself, Hieromartyr Hippolytus of Rome (+235) wrote: “Believers in God must not be hypocritical, nor fear people invested in authority, with the exception of those cases when some evil deed is committed [Romans 13.1-4]. On the contrary, if the leaders, having in mind their faith in God, force them to do something contrary to this faith, then it is better for them to die than to carry out the command of the leaders. After all, when the apostle teaches submission to ‘all the powers that be’ (Romans 13.1), he was not saying that we should renounce our faith and the Divine commandments, and indifferently carry out everything that people tell us to do; but that we, while fearing the authorities, should do nothing evil and that we should not deserve punishment from them as some evildoers (Romans 13.4). That is why he says: ‘The servant of God is an avenger of [those who do] evil’ (I Peter 2.14-20; Romans 13.4). And so? ‘Do you not want to fear the authorities? Do good and you will have praise from him; but if you do evil, fear, for he does not bear the sword without reason’ (Romans 13.4). Consequently, insofar as one can judge from the cited words, the apostle teaches submission to a holy and God-fearing life in this life and that we should have before our eyes the danger that the sword threatens us. [But] when the leaders and scribes hindered the apostles from preaching the word of God, they did not cease from their preaching, but submitted ‘to God rather than to man’ (Acts 5.29). In consequence of this, the leaders, angered, put them in prison, but ‘an angel led them out, saying: God and speak the words of this life’ (Acts 5.20).”²¹⁸

This attitude was well exemplified by St. Maurice and his Christian legion in Agaunum. Like many martyrs before them, they did not refuse to fight in the armies of the pagan Roman emperors against the pagans. But they refused to destroy a village composed of fellow-Christians. For “we are your soldiers, yes,” said Maurice, “but we are also the soldiers of God. To you, we owe the dues of military service – but to Him the purity of our souls.”²¹⁹

So even the persecuting emperors were recognized as having legitimate authority: it was only when their commands contradicted the Law of God that they were defied. And even then, there is no hint of physical rebellion against the powers that be among pre-Constantinian Christians. Their attitude to Diocletian was like that of the Prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar: his power is from God, even if he sometimes uses it against God.

However, the mention of Daniel reminds us that there was a somewhat different and darker attitude to Rome among the Christian writers. Following Daniel’s prophecy of the four beasts (Daniel 7), Rome was seen as the last of four kingdoms – the others were Babylon, Persia and Macedon – that would finally be destroyed in the last days by the Kingdom of Christ. According to

²¹⁸ *The Works of St. Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome* in Russian translation, vol. 1, p. 101. Quoted in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 56.

²¹⁹ Eucherius of Lyons, *The Passion of the Martyrs*.

this tradition, the pagan absolutist kings who persecuted the people of God were not legitimate rulers but tyrants. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, is called “tyrant” in some liturgical texts: “Caught and held fast by love for the King of all, the Children despised the impious threats of the tyrant in his boundless fury”²²⁰

Now the distinction between the true monarch, *basileus*, and the unlawful usurper, rebel or tyrant, *tyrannis*, was not new. Thus King Solomon wrote: “My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not mix with rebels” (Proverbs 24.21). After Solomon’s death, there was a rebellion against his legitimate successor, Rehoboam, by Jeroboam, the founder of the northern kingdom of Israel. And although the Prophets Elijah and Elisha lived and worked mainly in the northern kingdom, they always made clear their loyalty to the legitimate kings of Judah over the usurping kings of Israel. Thus when both kings, in a rare moment of alliance, approached the Prophet Elisha for his advice, he said to the king of Israel: “What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother... As the Lord of hosts lives, Whom I serve, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you, nor see you.” (II Kings 3.13, 14)...

The Greek philosophers also made a clear distinction between monarchy and tyranny. Thus Aristotle wrote: “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.”²²¹

If Rehoboam and Nebuchadnezzar were tyrants, then it was logical to see tyranny also in the Roman emperors who persecuted the Church. Thus some early interpreters saw in one or other of the evil symbolic figures of the Revelation of St. John the Theologian, which was written during the persecution of Domitian, references to Roman power. Indeed, what contemporary Christian could not fail to think of Rome when reading about that great city, symbolically called a whore and Babylon, who sits on seven hills (Rome is situated on seven hills), who is “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”, that is, the multitude of pagan cults that all found refuge in Rome, “a woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (17.5, 6)?

Thus Hieromartyr Victorinus of Petau wrote that the whore’s downfall was “the ruin of great Babylon, that is, of the city of Rome.”²²² In other words, Rome, according to this tradition, was seen, not as a lawful monarchy or the blueprint of a future Christian autocracy, but as a bloody and blasphemous

²²⁰ *Festal Menaion*, The Nativity of Christ, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Seven, second irmos.

²²¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, IV, 10.

²²² Hieromartyr Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.

despotism, in the tradition of all the ancient despotisms that took their origin from Nimrod's Babylon.²²³

This tradition became more popular as the history of pagan Rome reached its bloody climax in the early fourth century. For the Church was now threatened, not with a merely local persecution by local madmen, but with a determined attempt to destroy it completely at the hands of men who considered themselves gods and whose personal lives were often extraordinarily corrupt. The empire concentrated in itself, and especially in its capital city, all the demons of all the pagan cults together with all the moral depravity and cruelty and rabid antichristianity which those cults encouraged. How could such a kingdom be established by God? Was it not that tyrannical beast of which Scripture said that it was established by the devil (Revelation 13.2)?

And so the image of the Empire was ambiguous for the early Christians: it was both a true kingdom, an anti-type of God's Kingdom, and a tyranny, a forerunner of the kingdom of the Antichrist that would be wiped out at the Second Coming of Christ Himself...

Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the more optimistic view of Rome as the true kingdom that prevailed. And the essentially loyal attitude of the Christians to Rome is demonstrated by the fact that even during the persecution of Diocletian, when the Church was threatened with extinction, the Christians never rebelled against the empire, but only against the unlawful demands of the emperors. And in reward for this faith and patience, the Lord finally broke the crust of ancient pagan despotism, bringing to birth a new creature designed specifically for the spreading of the Faith throughout the world - the Roman Christian Autocracy...²²⁴

²²³ Some saw in I Peter 5.13 a similar identification of Rome with Babylon, but this is doubtful. The Babylon referred to there is probably Babylon in Egypt, from where St. Peter was writing his epistle. However, there can be no doubt that for John's first readers the image of Babylon would have reminded them in the first place of Rome under Nero and Domitian.

²²⁴ Fr. Michael Azkoul, *The Teachings of the Orthodox Church*, Buena Vista, Co.: Dormition Skete publications, 1986, part I, p. 110.

20. CHRIST AND THE SYNAGOGUE

The Apostles were all Jews, and in spite of persecution from the Jewish authorities they did not immediately break definitively with the Jewish community in Jerusalem, continuing to worship in the Temple and to read the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, which they saw as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. True, the first Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) established that pagan converts to Christianity did not have to practice Mosaic rites: faith in Christ and baptism was all that was required to become a fully-entitled member of the Church. But the Jewish Christian community in Palestine retained its outward semblance to Judaism, partly in order to facilitate the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. And this approach bore fruit, in that, at least in the first two generations, there was a steady trickle of converts from the Jews into the Church of Jerusalem, headed by the much-revered St. James the Just, the Brother of the Lord. Of course, the Christians differed fundamentally from the Jews in their worship of Christ as the Messiah and God; and the specifically Christian rite of the Eucharist was restricted only to those – both Jews and Gentiles – who believed in Christ and accepted baptism. Nevertheless, for the first forty years or so after the Resurrection the Church did not hasten to break all bonds with the Synagogue, hoping that as many Jews as possible could be converted.

The Jews were not deprived of signs that they were losing the Grace of God. Even the fiercely anti-Christian Talmud preserves a record of some of these signs. Thus Dr. Seraphim Steger writes, commenting on Gemara, 39b, that during the last 40 years of the Temple's existence, from 30 to 70, "a bad omen occurred on Yom Kippur every year because:

"(1) The Lot for the LORD came up in the left hand, not the right hand of the High Priest of Israel on Yom Kippur. What happened in 30 CE that might have caused this? Could it have been the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Yeshua Ha-Maschiach? Could it have been that the High Priest of Israel had lost his authority because now there was a new High Priest in town, Yeshua Ha-Maschiach? In his Letter to the Hebrews the Apostle Paul speaks of Yeshua Ha-Maschiach as a High Priest after the Order of Melchezadek sitting at the right hand of the Father in the Heavens.

"Because the crimson ribbon tied between the horns of the bullock did not miraculously turn white for the last 40 years the Temple stood when the scapegoat was thrown over the cliff in the wilderness, we can say that the LORD did not accept the Temple sacrifice of the scapegoat for the nation of Israel on Yom Kippur. Why? Could it be because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, our Passover (Pesach) Sacrifice has been slain for us once and for all had been accepted by the Father on our behalf? Consequently, there was no more need for a scapegoat because Christ not only was a propitiation for our sins, but has carried our sins away from us as far as the East is from the West.

“(2). We can say that for the last 40 years the Temple stood neither did the westernmost Menorah lamp miraculously shine longer than the others as it had once done, now indicating that the Presence of the Lord, the Shikinah glory, had deserted the Temple all those last 40 years. Was the Shikinah, the glory of the Lord, now to be found outside the Temple? Could it be that it was now to be found in the Church, having descended upon the Church at Pentecost some 50 days after the crucifixion and resurrection of Yeshua?

“(3). We can say that during those last 40 years the Temple stood, the doors to the Hekel//Hekhal, the Holy Place/sanctuary, opened repetitively during those last 40 years by themselves, when they should have been closed, showing that access to the LORD in the Holy Place was not limited to the priests in their daily service, or the Holy of Holies to the High Priest but once a year. Could it be that through the risen Yesua Ha-Mashiach, Jesus the Messiah, “the Door” as He is sometimes called in the New Testament Gospels, that worship in the “Holy Place” was now open not just to the priests but to all who wished to enter in and to draw close to the Holy God of Israel, through faith in Yeshua, in the Church?

“Now, this testimony of the last 40 years that the Temple stood, is juxtaposed to the passages about a Simeon the Righteous who ministered in the Temple for 40 years [so presumably a priest, or levite at a minimum], during whose time the Temple was blessed.

“Reading this gemara again we can see that during the 40 years Simeon ministered, the sacrifices for the Israel were blessed and the scapegoat accepted, (removing the sins of the entire nation) because the lot for the Lord would always come up in the right hand. I.e., the people of Israel were being blessed by the LORD. Interestingly, after those 40 years, sometimes the sacrifices were accepted, sometimes not. Also, the priests suffered from the curse on the omer, two loaves, and shewbread--i.e., they were not nourished by the bread of the Temple as they were before.

“Who is Simeon the Righteous?

“... There is controversy over who this “Righteous Simeon” may have been since there are 4 that have born this name in traditional Jewish history and there is some question of later Rabbinical fabrication of their tradition to favor their views at that later time. Perhaps this Simeon was none of the four major candidates. Could this Simeon possibly be Simeon the Just and Pious mentioned in the Gospel of Luke 2:25-36, the Simeon the Orthodox Church remembers as “Righteous Simeon” who held in his arms infant Jesus Christ at His presentation in the temple? Let’s look into this a bit further.

“We can see that during the 40 years Simeon ministered the Lord forgave the sins of the nation of Israel because the crimson-coloured strap [tied between the bullocks horns] would become white after the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness. As part of the blessing of the nation of Israel the Lord

was forgiving the sins of the Israelites, sanctifying and preparing them for the enfleshment of the Logos.

“We can see that during the 40 years Simeon ministered the Shekhinah Glory/Holy Spirit remained present in the Holy of Holies blessing the nation [in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God] because throughout those forty years the westernmost light was shining, having been lighted first and burning longer than the other lights. The Lord was blessing and preparing the Temple and its priests for receiving God in the flesh.

‘Lastly, we can see that during the 40 years Simeon ministered the fire of the pile of wood kept burning strong on the altar showing that the Lord was accepting of all the animal, meal, grain, oil, and wine sacrifices commanded in the Torah, the Law of Moses, under the Old Covenant, further underscoring the sanctifying the Temple, the priests, the nation, and all the people by the various offerings.’²²⁵

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Although the Apostles did not immediately break completely with the Synagogue, nevertheless they rejected the possibility of salvation through the Mosaic Law and declared that salvation was only in Christ. Nor, as St. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, added, “is there salvation in any other, but there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4.12). St. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was particularly clear on this point, writing his Epistle to the Galatians precisely in order to refute the Judaizing Christians. Already in his earliest Epistle he wrote that the Jews “killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us and do not please God and are contrary to all me, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost...” (I Thessalonians 2.15-16).

The final break between the Jews and the Christians took place after the condemnation and execution of St. James, the Brother of the Lord, and the rebellion of the Jews against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The situation for the Christians now changed – first in relation to the Jews, who saw the Christians as traitors to the national cause, and consequently also in relation to the Romans, who now had to treat the Christians as a

²²⁵ Steger, “Tidbits of 1st Century Christian History Preserved in the Babylonian Talmud and their Relationship to St. Simeon the Righteous”, http://www.stseraphimstjohnsandiego.org/St_Seraphim_of_Sarov_and_St_john_of_Kronstadt_Orthodox_Church/History/Entries/2014/5/9_History__Tidbits_of_1st_Century_History_Preserved_in_the_Babylonian_Talmud.html. See also N. Federoff & T. Peterson, “Talmudic Evidence for the Messiah at 30 C.E. - Four Unique Events Point to Messiah and His Identity”, August 2, 2014, *Window View*.

separate religion. And the Jewish religion was changed in order that the Jews should set themselves apart finally and irrevocably from Christ...

Dr. Steger writes: "Just before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Roman army led by Vespasian, one of the leading sages of the Pharisees in Jerusalem, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, was captured by the Romans according to one early Palestinian tradition and taken against his will to the town of Yavne'el / Jamnia (modern Yavne on the Mediterranean coast) which served as a place of detention for those who had surrendered to the Romans. In Jamnia Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai reconstituted the Sanhedrin, proclaimed New Moons and leap-years, and proceeded to construct a new religion for the war torn nation: 'Rabbinical Judaism' which was centered around the beliefs of the Pharisees as well as the practices of the Synagogue [the priests having become superfluous since the destruction of the Temple and the discontinuance of its services and sacrifices]. He preserved the oral traditions of the schools of the Pharisees encompassing the years 536 BC to AD 70. Jamnia subsequently became the new spiritual center for those Jews who survived the war.

"Some 150 years later Rabbi Yehudah haNasi set to writing a broad and comprehensive redaction of the Oral Law known as the Mishnah. Subsequent rabbinical commentaries, the Gamara, were added to each of the individual tractates forming two authoritative collections known as the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmudim. These contained 700 years worth of the oral tradition of the rabbinical schools. Their final forms were completed around AD 600."²²⁶

Norman Cantor writes: "This withdrawal of the rabbis from the political fate of the homeland was the end result of what was already clear in the first century B.C. Pharisaic Judaism was a self-subsisting culture and a kind of mobile religious and moral tabernacle that could function autonomously and perpetually almost anywhere that the Jews had a modicum of physical security and economic opportunity. This was to be the single most continuous and important theme in Jewish history until modern times, the sacred chain that binds the generations together..."²²⁷

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Now the Jews constituted a large and important part of the population of the Empire. "Jewish colonies," writes Alexander Dvorkin, "could be found in any corner of the Mediterranean world - from Cadiz to the Crimea. In all there lived up to 4 million Jews in the diaspora out of a general population of the Roman Empire of 50 million, while the Jewish population of Palestine consisted of not more than one million people.

²²⁶ Steger, *op. cit.*

²²⁷ Cantor, *The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

“In the first century after Christ there were 11 or 12 synagogues in Rome. But the highest percentage of Jewish settlement was in Alexandria: throughout Egypt (including Alexandria) there lived about a million Jews. The municipal authorities had to reckon with them, although the social isolation of the Jews did not allow them to form their own kind of ‘lobby’ for participation in the local power structures.²²⁸ Everywhere that they lived they refused to be merged into the life of their pagan surroundings, but unfailingly kept to their own religion and customs. Every Saturday they gathered to chant psalms and to read the Scriptures, after which there followed a sermon on the subject of the Biblical extract read and common prayers.

“Although scattered throughout the world, the Jews preserved the feeling of unity with the land of their fathers: they carried out private pilgrimages to the holy city of Zion and every year sent contributions to the Temple. Sometimes this export of currency from the provinces with its numerous Jewish population created definite difficulties for the Roman tax authorities. However, the Romans understood that in this question - as, however, in all questions connected with the basic principles of Judaism, - it was much more peaceful not to stop the Jews from acting in their own way. The Jews were not excluded from a single sphere of public life in which they themselves wanted to take part. But, of course, not all Jews observed their native customs as strictly as their religious leaders would have liked, and many of them experienced a powerful temptation to give in to seduction and live no differently from their neighbours.

“But the Jews for their part also exerted a noticeable influence on the inhabitants of the Empire. Although both the Greeks and the Romans saw circumcision as a disgusting anti-aesthetic custom, very many of the pagans were attracted to Judaism by its strict monotheism, the purity of its moral life and the antiquity (if not the style) of its Sacred Scriptures. There was no teaching on asceticism in Judaism (if you don’t count some marginal groups), but it spoke out for chastity, constancy and faithfulness in family life. In their communities the Jews constantly practised charity, visiting the sick and giving alms to the poor.

“Around many of the synagogues in the diaspora there formed groups of pious pagans whom the Jews usually called ‘God-fearers’ (in general this term was applied to every pious member of the synagogue). A pagan could pass through circumcision and ritual washing (immersion from the head down in a basin of water, which was required for the reception of converts into Judaism), but this did not often take place. As a rule, the Hellenized Jews of the diaspora, who were much more open to the external world than their rigorist Palestinian brethren, to the chagrin of the latter accepted converts from the pagans into their circle without insisting that circumcision was necessary for their salvation.

²²⁸ Contrast this with the power of the Jewish lobby in the United States today (V.M.).

“The net of synagogues covering the empire turned out to be providential preparatory path for the Christian preaching. Through it Christianity penetrated into the midst of those who were drawing near to Judaism. Among these groups of former pagans the Christian missionaries found their own first uncircumcised followers. One could liken them to a ripe fruit, for they had the advantage not only of a lofty morality but also a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. From them the first Christian communities were formed. They consisted of the most varied people, not only from the proletarians and lower levels of society who had despaired of finding justice in this life, as the Marxist historians and those with them affirmed. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans gives a greeting to Erastus, a city guardian of the general purse; in Athens a member of the Areopagus (the city council), Dionysius, was converted; and in Thessalonica there were ‘quite a few noble women’ (Acts 17.4). The governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan (111-113) writes about the multitude ‘of Christians of various classes’. The majority of these people were educated pagans who came to Christianity from circles attached to the Jews.”²²⁹

Or they were already converted to Judaism, and from there converted naturally again to Christianity. Indeed, we find that many of the Christian converts, especially among the women, came from precisely the same social strata as the Gentile converts to Judaism – and these strata could be very lofty. Thus “Poppaea Sabina, the emperor Nero’s second wife, made no secret of her tendency to Judaism”²³⁰ – while St. Paul wrote from Rome that he had made converts among the Praetorian Guard (Philippians 1.13).

However, “as the rate of conversion to Judaism intensified, so did the government’s disquiet and the resentment on the part of many Latin intellectuals”.²³¹ The first recorded expulsion of Jewish converts from Rome was in 139 BC. A second was in 19 AD, when the Emperor Tiberius exiled four thousand converts to Sardinia.

In 49-50 the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews again. For they were constantly “making disturbances”, according to Suetonius, “at the instigation of Chrestus [Christ]”. Of course, it was not Christ Who instigated the Jewish riots – it was rather the Jews who instigated riots against the Christians, as we see several times in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and continued after the Fall of Jerusalem. The confusion arose because in the beginning the Romans made no clear distinction between Jews and Christians, who lived “under the cover of Judaism”, as Tertullian put it. However, in the reign of Nero the distinction had become clear, and it was the Christians, not the Jews, who were put to the torch for supposedly burning down Rome...

²²⁹ Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novogorod, 2006, pp. 41-42.

²³⁰ Sand, op. cit., p. 171.

²³¹ Sand, op. cit., p. 169.

The Jews were different from the other conquered nations of the Roman Empire in three major ways. First, their faith was exclusive; they claimed to worship the one and only True God, and rejected the ecumenist tolerance of each other's faiths and gods practised by the other peoples of the empire. Secondly, and especially after the Romans' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, they could never reconcile themselves with their conquered status, or delight in the achievements of the *pax Romana* like most of the other conquered nations. And thirdly, they were unique in that, although their homeland was Palestine, most Jews lived abroad, in the diaspora, which providentially allowed them to exert an important influence on the whole of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the Jewish religion, unlike Christianity, was a licit cult that was given a certain leeway by the Roman authorities. It was only when they openly rebelled against Rome in Judea in 66-70 and 135, and again in Libya in 115-117, that they were suppressed...

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We have seen that the Jews were powerful and successful proselytizers in the Greco-Roman world before and after the Coming of Christ. However, as Alfred Lilienthal writes, "it was in the face of growing competition from the new Christian faith that the rabbinate and other Jewish leaders ceased proselytization."²³² Instead they formed an inner ghetto around themselves, whose laws were their religion, whose lawmakers were the rabbis, and whose sacred text was not the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, but the Talmud...

The Talmud, which is without doubt the most abhorrent and anti-Christian book ever written, 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. It even asserts its own superiority over the Scriptures. For 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." Pharisaic-Talmudic Judaism is therefore a different religion from that of the Old Testament. It does not contain a formal creed in the manner of Christianity. But it does contain 613 commandments that all Jews are expected to fulfill and which constitute the essence of their religion.

As we have seen, it was the Pharisees who incited Christ's death because He preached a spiritual, universalist Kingdom that was opposed to their nationalist dreams. This opposition between the God-inspired Tradition of the Holy Scriptures and the man-made traditions of the Pharisees was pointed out to them by Christ when He said: "Thus have ye made the commandment of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15.6). And again He said: "Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23.24).

²³² Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1978, p. 10.

It was the Talmud that gathered together these man-made traditions, adherence to which was so strongly condemned by Christ. As 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.

"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'."²³³

A dominant feature of these Jewish "holy" books was their hatred of Christ and Christianity. "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

²³³ Reed, *The Controversy of Zion*, Durban, South Africa, 1978, p. 93.

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 fulfils 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.

“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 Talmudists.

"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 Jew 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..."²³⁴

Of particular importance for the future history of the Jews was their attitude towards usury. Now the Old Testament forbids the lending of money for interest to brothers, but allows it to strangers (Exodus 22.25; Leviticus 25.36; Deuteronomy 23.24). The Talmud exploited the letter of this law to justify outright exploitation of the Christians.

According to Oleg Platonov, it "teaches the Jew to consider the property of all non-Jews as 'gefker', which means free, belonging to no one. 'The property of all non-Jews has the same significance as if it had been found in the desert: it belongs to the first who seizes it'. In the Talmud there is a decree according to which open theft and stealing are forbidden, but anything can be acquired by deceit or cunning...

"From this it follows that all the resources and wealth of the non-Jews must belong to representatives of the 'chosen people'. 'According to the Talmud,' wrote the Russian historian S.S. Gromeka, "God gave all the peoples into the hands of the Jews" (Baba-Katta, 38); "the whole of Israel are children of kings; those who offend a Jew offend God himself" (Sikhab 67, 1) and "are subject to

²³⁴ 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). For a more detailed exposé of the Talmud and the religion founded upon it, see Michael Hoffman, *Judaism Discovered*, Independent History and Research, 2008.

execution, as for *lèse-majesté*" (*Sanhedrin* 58, 2); pious people of other nations, who are counted worthy of participating in the kingdom of the Messiah, will take the role of slaves to the Jews' (*Sanhedrin* 91, 21, 1051). From this point of view, ... all the property in the world belongs to the Jews, and the Christians who possess it are only temporary, 'unlawful' possessors, usurpers, and this property will be confiscated by the Jews from them sooner or later. When the Jews are exalted above all the other peoples, God will hand over all the nations to the Jews for final extermination.'

"The historian of Judaism I. Lyutostansky cites examples from the ancient editions of the Talmud, which teaches the Jews that it is pleasing to God that they appropriate the property of the *goyim* [Gentiles]. In particular, he expounds the teaching of Samuel that deceiving a goy is not a sin...

"Rabbi Moses said: 'If a *goy* makes a mistake in counting, then the Jew, noticing this, must say that he knows nothing about it.' Rabbi Brentz says: 'If some Jews, after exhausting themselves by running around all week to deceive Christians in various places, come together at the Sabbath and boast of their deceptions to each other, they say: "We must take the hearts out of the *goyim* and kill even the best of them." - of course, if they succeed in doing this.' Rabbi Moses teaches: 'Jews sin when they return lost things to apostates and pagans, or anyone who doesn't reverence the Sabbath.' ...

"To attain the final goal laid down in the Talmud for Jews - to become masters of the property of the *goyim* - one of the best means, in the rabbis' opinion, is usury. According to the Talmud, 'God ordered that money be lent to the *goyim*, but only on interest; so instead of helping them in this way, we must harm them, even if they can be useful for us.' The tract *Baba Metsiya* insists on the necessity of lending money on interest and advises Jews to teach their children to lend money on interest, 'so that they can from childhood taste the sweetness of usury and learn to use it in good time.'"²³⁵

²³⁵ Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998,

21. WHY ROME?

Why did God choose the Roman Empire over other States as the special instrument of His Providence and protector of His Church, to the extent that, from the time of St. Constantine in the fourth century, Christianitas came to be closely linked with Romanitas? Professor Sordi offers some speculative answers to this question.

First, "the Romans and the Christians, albeit in different ways and from different points of view, both represented a way of overcoming the Graeco-Barbarian and Graeco-Jewish antimony which the Hellenistic culture, despite all its ecumenical claims, actually contained within itself."²³⁶ Christianity is a truly universal religion in which "there is neither male nor female, ...neither Greek nor Jew, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Galatians 3.28; Colossians 3.11). The Jews were not inclined either to accept or to propagate this message; for in spite of the universalist hints contained in the prophets, the racial distinction between the Jews and Gentiles (or goyim) remained a fundamental divide in Jewish thought. Similarly, the Greeks, even in the persons of their greatest philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, looked on slaves, women and barbarians as unable to partake fully in the splendours of Hellenic civilization.

True, there was a universalist element in the Hellenistic philosophy of *Stoicism*, which extended the notion of *who* was entitled to equality and democracy beyond the narrow circle of free male Greeks to every human being. Fr. Frederick Copleston has summarised the Stoic idea as follows: "Every man is naturally a social being, and to live in society is a dictate of reason. But reason is the common essential nature of all men: hence there is but one Law for all men and one Fatherland. The division of mankind into warring States is absurd: the wise man is a citizen, not of this or that particular State, but of the World. From this foundation it follows that all men have a claim to our goodwill, even slaves having their rights and even enemies having a right to our mercy and forgiveness."²³⁷ Clearly, Stoicism helped prepare the way for Christ, in Whom "is neither Greek nor Jew, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3.11).

Another important element in Stoicism was *fate*. Stoicism took fate for a fact, and made a virtue of it. Since men cannot control their fate, virtue lies in accepting fate as the expression of the Divine Reason that underpins the whole universe. Moreover, virtue should be practised for its own sake, and not for any benefits it might bring, because fate may thwart our calculations...

²³⁶ Sordi, op. cit., p. 147.

²³⁷ Copleston, op. cit., p. 143.

However, it was not the Hellenistic Greeks who invented Stoicism, but the Romans who adopted this philosophy most eagerly, demonstrating thereby that typically Roman trait of being able, in Polybius' words, "more than any others before them have ever been to change their customs and to imitate the best".²³⁸ The classical Greek concepts of citizenship and equality before the law were now given a vastly deeper connotation and wider denotation through Roman writers like Cicero and his legions of imitators.

Indeed, the universalism of Roman law, applying a single standard to all citizens of the Roman Empire, regardless of race or culture or creed, came to be, with Christianity, one of the two main pillars of European civilization, giving practical expression to the universalist leanings of the Roman - and Christian - soul. Indeed, it was the universalism of Roman law that constituted the essence of the Roman people, Romanitas.

For, as Patrick Geary writes, in antiquity there were basically "two sorts of 'peoples'. The one was *constitutional*, based on law, allegiance, and created by a historical process. The other, standing largely outside the process of historical change, was *biological*, based on descent, custom, and geography." The Romans, in their own eyes, were the uniquely constitutional people. "Romans alone were given a sense of historical development, fluidity, and complexity. The ethnogenesis of the Roman people, as enshrined in the works of Virgil and Livy, created a populus out of disparate gentes. For Livy, Roman identity was the result of a continuous process of political amalgamation. First, Aeneas united the Trojans and the Aborigines 'under one law and one name'. Likewise, Romulus called together the 'multitude' and gave them laws by which they could coalesce into a single body of people. Thus the populus Romanus alone, unlike foreign 'peoples', had a history. That history was the story of how the Roman people, as a body of individuals who lived according to a single law, came into being. Here was no question of putative ancestry, geography, culture, language, or tradition. Throughout its long history, membership in the populus Romanus was a question of constitutional law, not natural law, and, thus theoretically accessible to all."²³⁹

Roberts writes: "The essential qualities of the structure which sustained [the Roman Empire] were already there under the republic, above all in the cosmopolitanism encouraged by Roman administration, which sought not to impose a uniform pattern of life but only to collect taxes, keep the peace and regulate the quarrels of men by a common law...."

"The empire and the civilization it carried were unashamedly cosmopolitan. The administrative framework contained an astonishing variety of contrasts and diversities. They were held together not by an impartial despotism exercised by a Roman élite or a professional bureaucracy, but by a constitutional system which took local elites and romanized them.

²³⁸ Polybius, in Sordi, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

²³⁹ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 42, 49-50.

From the first century AD the senators themselves included only a dwindling number of men of Italian descent. Roman tolerance in this was diffused among other peoples. The empire was never a racial unity whose hierarchies were closed to non-Italians. Only one of its peoples, the Jews, felt strongly about the retention of their distinction within it and that distinction rested on religion...²⁴⁰

In 212 the Emperor Caracalla offered citizenship to all free men in the empire, so that they could both identify with the empire as their own country and rise to the highest positions within it. "Though fiscally motivated," writes Leithart, "the constitution [of 212] had a profound effect on the character of the empire. The empire was transformed from a patchwork of cities with their own local cults, customs and laws into a single *civitas*, all its residents *cives*. Around the same time (223), Ulpian's treatise *De officiis proconsulis* was distributed to provincial governors as 'the first standard collection of laws and their underlying principles that provincial governors had ever received.' By the middle of the third century, the empire was theoretically a single city, with one law and one worship uniting its citizens."²⁴¹

Already in the first century we hear that "Hebrew of Hebrews", St. Paul, saying without shame or sense of contradiction: "*Civis romanus sum*", "I am a Roman citizen". And already from the beginning of the second century, we find non-Roman emperors of Rome; they came from as far afield as Spain and Arabia, Dacia and Africa.

For, as Rutilius Namatianus said of Rome: "You have made out of diverse races one *patria*".²⁴² And the poet Claudian wrote: "we may drink of the Rhine or Orontes", but "we are all one people". For the nations had become one in Rome:

*She is the only one who has received
The conquered in her arms and cherished all
The human race under a common name,
Treating them as her children, not her slaves.
She called these subjects Roman citizens
And linked far worlds with ties of loyalty.*²⁴³

"The breadth of the East," wrote the Spanish priest Orosius, "the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the islands are of my name and law because I, as a Roman and Christian, approach Christians and Romans."²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 198.

²⁴¹ Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010, p. 35. The flip side of this situation, however, was that "deviation from Roman religion was by definition treason..." (*ibid.*). Hence the persecution of Decius...

²⁴² Charles Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁴³ Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: Phoenix, 1996, p. 128.

²⁴⁴ Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, 5.2.

A second reason why Rome was chosen by God, according to Sordi, was that “the Roman soul suffered from a perennial nostalgia for the stern moral code and the virtues on which their culture had been founded and that a religion which called for rigorous moral commitment and the practice of personal and domestic austerity would have attracted many of those who were disgusted with the corruption they saw around them. Equally attractive to those who longed for the security of the group was, probably, the Christians’ strong community feeling and their capacity for mutual assistance in times of need; and in fact this kind of solidarity would be recognisable to the Romans as their own *collegia*, enlarged and enriched with new ideas and with a deeper sense of human values...”²⁴⁵ For “the conversion of the pagan world to Christianity,” concludes Sordi, “was first and foremost a religious conversion and ... that immense attraction the new religion exerted on the greatest of the empires of antiquity and its cosmopolitan capital grew from the fact that it answered the deepest needs and aspirations of the human soul.”²⁴⁶

In particular, the Romans’ religious concept of history, so different from the cyclical, naturalistic ideas of the Greeks and other pagans, fitted in well with the Christian concept. For, like the Christians, the Romans saw history as having an ethical basis and as moving towards a definite end in accordance with justice.

Thus Sordi writes: “Whereas Hellenic thinking had always seen the end in terms of natural phenomena based on the concept of the corruption of the human constitution and the exhaustion of the world itself, the Romans rarely saw things in these terms. For the Romans, even before the advent of Christianity, the concept of decadence was closely linked to morality and religion, so that the end tended to take on apocalyptic overtones. This concept was to emerge in full force during the great crisis of the third century, at the time of Decius and Valerian, but Augustan writers had already diagnosed it in Rome’s first great crisis, the Gallic catastrophe of 386 BC, and it was equally present in the first century before Christ. In all three cases, but particularly in the period preceding Augustus’ accession, the crisis was felt to be a consequence of a sin which had contaminated the roots of the Roman state and had caused the gods to hate it. For example, in the first century the civil wars symbolic of the *scelus* of Romulus’ fratricide, were thought to be the cause.”²⁴⁷ Equally in all three cases but particularly in the first century BC it seems that the Romans were convinced that the sin could be expiated, the

²⁴⁵ Sordi, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²⁴⁶ Sordi, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁴⁷ Thus the poet Horace wrote of the “original sin” of Remus’ murder, that “bitter doom pursues the Romans: a crime, a murdered brother, once Remus’s guiltless blood flowed on the ground, a curse upon his children.” (Jorge Martinez-Pinna, “The Founding of Rome”, *National Geographic History*, June-July, 2015, pp. 62-63) (V.M.)

punishment postponed and Rome renewed. With Augustus, the celebration of the return of the golden age follows punctually on the heels of the crisis, as will happen again under Gallienus.

“This religious concept of history with its sequence of sin, expiation and redemption, was part of the inheritance handed on to the Romans by the Etruscans. According to ancient Etruscan beliefs, every human being and every nation had been given a fixed period of life, divided into periods (*saecula* for nations), and marked by moments of crisis which could be postponed by means of the expiation of the sin which had originally caused them. The only exception was the supreme crisis, the last and fatal one, for which there was no remedy...”²⁴⁸

The real redeemer of Rome, of course, was not Augustus, but Christ, Who was born in Augustus’ reign and within the bounds of his empire. He truly expiated the original sin, not only of Rome, but of all mankind, and brought the enmity between man and God to an end. And the Roman conception of history undoubtedly made the reception of Christ’s Gospel easier; it was a “schoolteacher to Christ” just as the Jewish law was...

*

Thirdly, the Roman empire was not a “pure” despotism, - indeed, “perhaps the purest, the most absolute monarchy the world has ever seen”, according to David Starkey,²⁴⁹ - but, in J.S. McClelland’s words, “a fortunate mixture of the three basic types of government: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. The Roman consuls were its kings, the Senate its aristocracy, and its people and their tribunes its democracy. It was standard doctrine in the ancient world that ‘pure’ forms of government were not likely to last. Even the best of monarchies eventually became corrupted, self-disciplined aristocracies degenerated into oligarchies admiring only wealth, and democracies always ended up in mob rule. Rome was lucky, because in the government of the republic each part of the state tended to cancel out the vices of the other parts, leaving only their virtues. The people tempered the natural arrogance of the aristocrats, the senators tempered the natural turbulence of the people, while consulship for a year was a constant reminder to the consuls that they were only temporary kings.... The Romans stopped being the citizens of a free republic, and became the subjects of an emperor, with their fixed political ideas largely intact.”²⁵⁰

Each of these elements - monarchical, aristocratic and democratic - brought something important to Rome. On the one hand, its monarchical element served to provide that strong framework of law and order over a vast area, the *pax Romana*, which so greatly assisted the spread and establishment of

²⁴⁸ Sordi, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁴⁹ Starkey, *Crown & Country*, London: Harper, 2016, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ McClelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 85.

the Church - and this could not be done without a powerful authoritarian element. On the other hand, its democratic and humanistic elements served to encourage the belief in the free will of the individual human being, and the value of each individual soul, which is so important in Christianity. And they tempered the tendency to deify the ruler which was so pronounced in all the Near Eastern despotisms.

Old Rome was the universal kingdom that summed up the old world of paganism, both despotic and democratic, and later, under St. Constantine, crossed it with the autocratic traditions of Israel, thereby serving as the bridge between the State and the other-worldly Kingdom of the Church. It was universal both in the sense that it encompassed all the major kingdoms of the Mediterranean basin (except Persia), and in the sense that it came to embrace all the major forms of political and religious life of the ancient world. But its *external universalism*, Ecumenicity, was soon to be transformed and transfigured by its embracing of *internal universalism*, Catholicity, the Catholicity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. And from the day that Rome became Christian, her external universalism became more important, precisely because it raised the possibility that the internal universalism of Orthodox Catholicity could be spread throughout the world...

22. ROME AND CHINA: TWO VISIONS OF UNIVERSAL EMPIRE

As we have seen, Rome encompassed all the major kingdoms of Europe and the Middle East except Persia, and claimed to be the one, universal empire. However, there was another contemporary kingdom that also claimed universality and would seem to have had at least an equal claim to greatness – China. Moreover, the Chinese empire lasted much longer than Old Rome, expiring at almost the same time, the early twentieth century, as the Third Rome, Russia; it even eventually succumbed to the same enemy – communism. But China not only was not destined to become the cradle for the growth of Christian civilization, but remained more impervious to the True Faith than any other major nation on earth, acquiring its first truly Christian martyrs only in 1900.

Why? By attempting to answer this question, we may gain further insights into the specific qualities of Rome that made it the object of the Lord's election as *the Guardian of the Ark*, the saving Ark of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

China acquired both cultural and political unity at about the same time as Rome – in the late third century BC. Just as the Rome's final conquest of Carthage in 202 BC finally established her as the dominant power in the Western Mediterranean, which dominance was extended to the East by the battle of Actium in 31 BC, so the victory of the Ch'in over their last enemy in 221 BC established that there would be only one Chinese State on the North China plain, while the early Han dynasty had extended this rule over almost the whole of modern China by its fall in 9 BC.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ And yet, writes Dominic Lieven, "there was nothing inevitable about the predominance of empire in East Asia over the last two millenia. Nature in many ways pulled hard in the opposite direction, not merely because of China's unmanageable size but also because of the rivers and mountains that divide so much of southern China into semi-enclosed regions with separate economies, cultures and languages. A polity whose core, Han (that is, ethnic Chinese) population even today speaks a range of first languages almost as diverse as the major languages of Europe could easily be seen as ripe for divisions into nation states. For much of China's history, separate states did in fact exist. In the long run the preservation of a single written script understood and venerated by all educated Chinese as the medium of high culture and of government was crucial to China's unity. In the centuries immediately before China's unification in 221 BC, however, this script was beginning to diverge from one polity to another. The same era witnessed a 'proliferation of local literatures'. It was the supreme achievement of the 'First Emperor', Qinshihuangdi, to reverse this process irrevocably by reimposing a standardized Chinese script. 'Without the Ch'in reform, it is conceivable that several regionally different orthographies might have come into existence. And had this happened, it is inconceivable that China's political unity could long have survived.' In his vast and scholarly history of world government, Sam Finer comments that the First Emperor, in 'his short, barbarous, but prodigiously energetic reign irrevocably shaped the entire subsequent history of the Chinese state. His reign was decisive and irreversible.' No other individual has ever 'left so great and so indelible a mark on the character of government at any time or in any place of the world.'" (*Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 33-34).

Francis Fukuyama writes: "China succeeded in developing a centralized, uniform system of bureaucratic administration that was capable of governing a huge population and territory when compared to Mediterranean Europe. China had already invented a system of impersonal, merit-based bureaucratic recruitment that was far more systematic than Roman public administration. While the total population of the Chinese empire in 1 A.D. was roughly comparable to that of the Roman empire, the Chinese put a far larger proportion of its people under a uniform set of rules than did the Romans. Rome had other important legacies, particularly in the domain of law... But although Greece and Rome were extremely important as precursors of modern accountable government, China was more important in the development of the state."²⁵²

This last judgement is doubtful. While the Chinese State is as impressive in its own way as the Roman, it embodies what we may call the negative imperial idea as opposed to the more complex, but positive imperial idea of Rome. Chinese imperialism could only be despotic, having no way out, as it were, of the worship of the state; whereas Roman imperialism was able to develop into the unique - and uniquely God-pleasing - polity that is the Orthodox Autocracy.

Both universal empires of Rome and China proclaimed their exclusion of the northern barbarians who did not share in their civilization by building a wall. This was Hadrian's wall in the Roman West, and the far longer and more massive Great Wall of China. But there the similarities end.

Let us begin with the walls. Hadrian's wall was built by Roman professional soldiers, at no significant cost in lives. But the Great Wall of China, according to legend, cost a million lives. And this was only one of the empire's vast public works, such as the system of canals linking the Yangtse River with the Yellow River to the north and Hangchow to the south. J.M. Roberts writes: "Millions of labourers were employed on this and on other great irrigation schemes. Such works are comparable in scale with the Pyramids and surpass the great cathedrals of medieval Europe. They imposed equally heavy social costs, too, and there were revolts against conscription for building and guard duties."²⁵³

In other words, China was essentially the same kind of despotism as the pagan empires of Egypt and Babylon, whereas Rome, as we have seen, had evolved a unique system composed of republican, aristocratic and despotic elements. This meant that the vitally important combination of freedom and discipline that characterized Roman statehood was lacking in China.

²⁵² Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 21.

²⁵³ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, p. 359.

Moreover, the ancestor-worship which was at the root of the Egyptian and Babylonian systems of king-worship was still more clearly the root of Chinese despotism.

“As a rule,” writes Tikhomirov, “all the monotheistic religions are more favourable to the appearance of a monarchical form of supreme power [as opposed to aristocratic or democratic forms], while polytheistic religions, on the contrary, are not very favourable to it, unless the cult of ancestors creates the deification of the representative of a dynasty in some ascending line of kinship.

“It is understandable how the deification of ancestors, who were at the same time the founders of the royal dynasty, confers on the king the significance of being the living expression of the spirit and faith of the people. The presence of this element is more or less noticeable in all the ancient kingdoms. In Assyria the chief god was Assur, who was also worshipped as the protector of the dynasty. He is called the son of Shem [and therefore the nephew of Ham] in the Bible. In Egypt they openly declared that originally the gods ruled in the country - in other words, the ancestors of the kings were counted among the gods. As regards China, our well-known Sinologist S. Georgievsky has very convincingly explained the significance of the worship of ancestors through an analysis of Chinese hieroglyphs. As is well known, the hieroglyphs of the Chinese express, not sounds, but concepts and combinations of concepts, and therefore the analysis of hieroglyphs gives us the opportunity to determine what circumstances and facts conditioned the composition of a given hieroglyph. Thus, for example, we can clearly see from what elements ‘state’ or ‘army’ or ‘people’, etc., were constructed.

“Such an analysis of the hieroglyphs led Georgievsky to the conclusion that the ancient Chinese kings were no more than elected leaders. They were elected as leaders for their military services, since the hieroglyph ‘dai’ expresses precisely the fact that the royal person is skilled in military matters. And then this originally elected leader is later turned into a representative of Heaven itself.

“The general picture that emerges is as follows. One of the dynastic founders of the Chinese, having been elected as leader during their conquest of their present territories, was gradually turned into a supreme god, while the Chinese emperors became his ‘sons’. The son of the first leader, who had probably not been very powerful yet, offered sacrifices to him in accordance with the demands of ancestor-worship. Consequently he became a necessary mediator between the people and the dead leader, whose spirit was necessary to the people as a protector. In this way the authority of his descendants grew from generation to generation. All the later kings, on their death, filled up heaven with yet more spirits, who were protectors of the Chinese, and all of them lived in ‘Shan-Di’ (Heaven). But each Emperor was ‘the son of heaven’, and his very reign was called ‘the service of heaven’. In reality the ‘service of heaven’ was at the same time both a family obligation of the Emperor in

accordance with ancestor-worship, and administration of the people over whom all these spirits had ruled during their lives, becoming the protectors of their former subjects after death.

“The ancestor-worship that was obligatory for each separate family had no significance for all the other families of the Chinese people, while the cult of the powerful tribe of Shan-Di touched them all. The ancestors of the other families remained domestic spirit-protectors, while Shan-Di gradually grew into the main national Divinity. It is understandable what an aura of power the cult of Shan-Di gave to the Chinese Emperor, who was unquestionably the natural preserver of this cult by inheritance. In submitting to heaven, that is, Shan-Di, the people were thereby obliged to submit to his earthly representative, the Chinese Emperor, and could not refuse him obedience without at the same time refusing obedience to heaven itself. Thus from the original, fortunate war-leader, who was raised from the midst of the leaders of the Chinese clans equal to him, there grew, on the soil of ancestor-worship, a supreme power that no longer depended on the people’s desires and choices, but on the will of ‘heaven’, ‘Shan-Di’.”²⁵⁴

“According to traditional Chinese political theory,” writes Yuval Noah Harari, “Heaven (*Tian*) is the source of all legitimate authority on earth. Heaven chooses the most worthy person or family and gives them the Mandate of Heaven. This person or family then rules over All Under Heaven (*Tianxia*) for the benefit of all its inhabitants. Thus, a legitimate authority is – by definition – universal. If a ruler lacks the Mandate of Heaven, then he lacks legitimacy to rule even a single city. If a ruler enjoys the mandate, he is obliged to spread justice and harmony to the entire world. The Mandate of Heaven could not be given to several candidates simultaneously, and consequently one could not legitimize the existence of more than one independent state.”²⁵⁵

The concept of the will or mandate of heaven explained dynastic changes, as when the Shang dynasty was overcome by the Chou in 1027 BC. For, as Roberts writes, “the Chou displacement of the Shang was religious as well as military. The idea was introduced that there existed a god superior to the ancestral god of the dynasty and that from him there was derived a mandate to rule. Now, it was claimed, he had decreed that the mandate should pass to other hands.”²⁵⁶

Already in the Shang dynasty the king, according to Gernet, was both “head of the armies and chief priest”.²⁵⁷ Igor Shafarevich writes that the kings even in this very early period ruled in a despotic, quasi-socialist manner: they called their subjects “cattle”, their graves were surrounded by thousands of

²⁵⁴ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

²⁵⁵ Harari, *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind*, London: Vintage, 2011, p. 220.

²⁵⁶ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²⁵⁷ Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 22.

corpses of those killed to accompany them into the next life, agriculture was controlled by the king, even the time of marriages was determined by him.²⁵⁸

These despotic tendencies came to their peak in the reign of the first Ch'in emperor, Qin Shi Huang. As R.W. L. Guisso and C. Pagani write: "Although Shihuang had only eleven more years to live after [uniting the Warring States and] founding his dynasty, under his rule a total transformation of the land we now call China took place. He created new administrative units for the capital city of Xianyang and the rest of the country, he abolished the feudal system of landholding and removed the aristocratic warlords. Weights, measures and currencies were standardized throughout the land, and even such details as the width of chariot axles were regulated to help prevent ruts in the thousands of miles of new roads that were being constructed. The various and confusing local scripts were eliminated and one standardized script used throughout the land where a uniform and enormously detailed code of law was imposed everywhere.

"Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of labourers and convicts were conscripted into Shihuang's great building projects - the canals and irrigation works plus the hundreds of palaces and pavilions for the nobles whom he had moved away from their own conquered territories in order to weaken their power. His most magnificent works, those which would make his name immortal, were also being carried out during this period of enormous change - the Great Wall, his fabled palace at Afang and his enormous tomb where his childless concubines were buried with him.

"And in the year 213 BC an event took place which would make the First Emperor infamous to all succeeding generations - the burning of the country's books followed by the deaths of 460 [Confucian] scholars of the period whom he buried alive."²⁵⁹

In many ways, Shihuang represents the archetypal despot: his rise to power as a warrior, drive for uniformity, cruelty, megalomania and paranoia, building projects, militarization of society, mass displacement of vast numbers of people, distrust of thinkers and book-learning, fear of death and search for immortality. It is not, therefore, surprising that the modern despot Mao Tse-tung - who, like Shihuang, seized control over the whole of China from the north-west - should have looked to him as a role model.

"In 1958 at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao remarked that Qin Shihuang was a ruler who advocated the extermination of those who 'used the past to criticize the present.' Mao went on to say, 'What does he amount to anyway? He buried only 460

²⁵⁸ I.R. Shafarevich, *Sotsializm kak iavlenie mirovoj istorii* (Socialism as a phenomenon of world history), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 223-228.

²⁵⁹ Guisso and Pagani, *The First Emperor of China*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989, pp. 14, 16.

scholars, while we have buried 46,000 counter revolutionary scholars alive.”²⁶⁰ Again, “Mao praised Lord Shang, a brutal minister in the ancient Qing dynasty, describing both the wisdom and necessity of Lord Shang’s decrees. These included enslaving the lazy, linking households into networks of mutual surveillance and responsibility, and punishing those who failed to report crimes by slicing them in two at the waist”.²⁶¹

The vast structure of Chinese despotism rested upon a complex of ritual rules and hierarchies of family cults whose summit and linchpin was the emperor. It is the emperor, writes Gernet, who, by creating titles and ranks based on merits and demerits, “‘secreted’ the order which ensures the regular functioning of society as a whole. Since he does this, he does not intervene in quarrels; he contents himself with installing a mechanism which avoids them because it is based on the universal consensus... being completely impartial, he is the source and guarantor of universal order...”²⁶²

“No private undertaking nor any aspect of public life could escape official regulation. In the first place there was a whole series of state monopolies... This welfare state superintended, to the minutest detail, every step its subjects took from the cradle to the grave...”²⁶³

*

However, the most extraordinary thing about the First Emperor was not the vastness of his domain, but its permanence.

True, his personal dynasty collapsed only four years after his death, plunging China into civil war. As Alice Barnes-Brown writes, when he died at the age of 49 - ironically, this probably took place from drinking mercury, which he hoped would be the elixir of eternal life - “he left an enormous power vacuum. Panicked, the prime minister and other top concubines tricked Qin Shi Huang’s oldest (and most threatening) son into committing suicide, and placed his younger, more pliable son on the throne. Yet this proved to be a mistake, as the entire Qin dynasty was soon destroyed by a commoner’s revolt and army coup, led by a military general named Liu Bang. From the humblest of origins, he became Emperor of China, ushering in the Han era, which proved a much more stable and long lasting dynasty than the Qin period.”²⁶⁴

However, as Montefiore writes, Shihuang “created the reality and the idea of a Chinese empire, a similar territory to today’s People’s Republic of

²⁶⁰ Guisso and Pagani, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁶¹ *The Economist Review*, March 18, 2000, p. 4.

²⁶² Gernet, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²⁶³ Etienne Balazs, *La bureaucratie céleste: Recherches sur l'économie et la société de la Chine traditionnelle* (The Heavenly Bureaucracy: Research into the Economy and Society of Traditional China), Paris: Gallimard, 1968, pp. 22-23.

²⁶⁴ Barnes-Brown, “Terracotta Warriors”, *History Revealed*, , 52, February, 2018, p. 53.

China.”²⁶⁵ After all, in spite of changes of dynasty, Chinese despotism lasted for another 2100 years and more! Such extraordinary longevity requires an explanation...

The first reason lies in the fact that China, unlike Rome, was geographically isolated and so had few rivals. With the exception of the Mongols, no other nation attempted to conquer it, whereas Rome had to contend with Carthaginians, Parthians, Persians, Picts, Irish, Franks, Vandals, Huns, Goths, Alans, Bulgars, Pechenegs, Russians, Khazars, Arabs, Turks and Jews, not to mention innumerable internal revolts by disaffected generals. Moreover, the China managed to swallow up the barbarians that invaded her, making them into another form of Chinese, whereas the Romans were too few numerically to do that.

“The huge prestige and attraction,” writes Lieven, “not only of Chinese high culture but also of China’s technology, for instance its agricultural techniques, were a great source of both pride and power for the Chinese and their empire. Conquered peoples often assimilated willingly over time, bowing to the superiority of their rulers’ civilization. Much the same was true of Roman rule in Western Europe,”²⁶⁶ especially through the religion that they adopted in their maturity – Christianity. And yet no Germanic tribal ruler, however great his admiration for Roman civilization, would have done the equivalent of what one Tatar ruler did in 500 – impose Chinese customs and dress on his people by decree.²⁶⁷

However, this seeming strength of Chinese civilization contained within itself one major weakness – racial pride. The Romans followed the universalist tradition first exemplified by Cyrus the Great; they were able to see the superiority of the Greek civilization which they absorbed, and to learn from it. And their adoption from the Christians of the religion of the True God under St. Constantine probably extended the life of the empire for another eleven hundred years. The Chinese, on the other hand, were so convinced of their infinite superiority over all non-Chinese that, as Lieven writes, “from the Han era until today few Chinese have ever doubted the absolute superiority of their culture to all others in the region. One contemporary expert on China’s minority peoples speaks of ‘an innate, almost visceral Han sense of superiority.’”²⁶⁸

This conception was reinforced by the servile attitude of other eastern peoples to them. And so when the first western embassies came to them in the eighteenth century they thought that they must be bringing tribute, and could not understand the westerners’ refusal to kow-tow to them. That arrogance

²⁶⁵ Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁶⁶ Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁶⁷ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

²⁶⁸ Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

cost them dear, and led to the final collapse of the Chinese empire in 1911 and its surrender to communism in 1949.

But the most important element determining the fate of any empire is its religion. The Romans' adoption of Christianity under St. Constantine gave it discipline and stability but at the same time giving it the freedom to think and strive beyond the earthly homeland to the Heavenly Kingdom. The Chinese adoption of Confucianism, on the other hand, while introducing discipline and order - Confucius' definition of good government was: "May the prince be a prince, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son"²⁶⁹ - suppressed the striving for higher things.

It might have been different if the other Chinese religion, Taoism, with its amazing foreshadowings of Christianity, had triumphed.²⁷⁰ But while "for his personal spiritual satisfaction, the [first] emperor turned to Taoism and the folk beliefs which had become a part of it", "for ruling the state, he selected Legalism with its emphasis on strength, discipline and organization", and "for ruling his Blackhaired people, he chose Confucianism."²⁷¹ And so, as Roberts writes: "Over a social ocean in which families were the fish that mattered [there] presided one Leviathan, the state. To it and to the family the Confucians looked for authority; those institutions were unchallenged by others, for in China there were no entities such as Church or communes which confused questions of right and government so fruitfully in Europe".²⁷²

This point is reinforced by Fukuyama through his comparison between Chinese and Indian attitudes to politics and religion: "In China, there were priests and religious officials who officiated over the court's numerous ritual observances and the emperor's ancestral tombs. But they were all employees of the state and strictly subservient to royal authority. The priests had no independent corporate existence, making the Chinese state what would later be labeled 'caesaropapist'. In India, on the other hand, the Brahmins [priests] were a separate varna [social class] from the Kshatriyas [warriors] and recognized as having a higher authority than the warriors. The Brahmins did not constitute a corporate group as well organized as the Catholic church, but they nonetheless enjoyed a comparable degree of moral authority independent of the power of the state. Moreover, the Brahmin varna was regarded as the guardian of the sacred law that existed prior to and independently of political rule. Kings were thus regarded as subject to law written by others, not simply as the makers of law as in China. Thus in India, as in Europe, there was germ of something that would be called the rule of law that would limit the power of secular political authority."²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 178.

²⁷⁰ Hieromonk Damascene, *Christ the Eternal Tao*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1999.

²⁷¹ Guisso and Pagani, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

²⁷² Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

²⁷³ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

This is not to say that Confucianism never countenanced any rebellion against the state. But rebellion was rationalized in terms of a new "mandate from heaven" in such a way as to preserve the foundations of society intact. "For 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."²⁷⁴

Thus Hegel's later idea of the State as "the divine idea on earth" was in essence a reformulation of the Confucian Chinese conception of the State as the reflection of the impersonal heavenly order which rules the world and man. For, as N.N. Alexeyev writes, "for Confucius, as for Hegel, the State is 'the highest form of objective morality', than which there is nothing higher".²⁷⁵ This may partially explain why the Chinese accepted communism with its Hegelian philosophical roots so quickly...

There were other features making for the uniqueness of this monolithic and self-perpetuating system...

"Chinese government," writes Lieven, "though still ultimately dependent on local landowners' collaboration, was far more direct, centralized and bureaucratic than the Roman even in the first and second centuries, let alone subsequently under the Song and Ming dynasties. Writing on the period 27 BC to AD 235, one authority on Roman government comments that 'the Roman empire remained undergoverned, certainly by comparison with the Chinese empire, which employed, proportionately, perhaps twenty times the number of functionaries.' Even after the dramatic increase in bureaucracy and centralization under Diocletian in the next century, the late Roman empire still had only one-quarter of the Chinese level of bureaucrats."²⁷⁶

This meant, however, that the Romans could make dramatic changes more easily than the Chinese. Thus Constantine was able to ignore the Senate and bureaucracy and introduce an entirely new official religion, Christianity. This would have been impossible in China, where the bureaucrats, having a virtual monopoly of education and power (the army had less prestige and therefore less power in China than in Rome), and being committed to the perpetuation of their caste and its ideology, would have stopped any such moves. It was this capacity of Rome to renew itself - to receive a new faith in Christianity as it had received a new culture from Greece and a new political organization from the East - that made it the best political vehicle for the Gospel of Christ and its spread to the rest of the world.

"From the perspective of AD 2000 the crucial elements in Roman culture were the rationalist and logical way of arguing inherited from the Greeks, the

²⁷⁴ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

²⁷⁵ Alexeyev, "Khristianstvo i Idea Monarkhii" ("Christianity and the Idea of the Monarchy), *Put'* (The Way), N 6, January, 1927, p. 660.

²⁷⁶ Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Roman system of law, the Greek stress on the individual and on existential tragedy, and the Graeco-Roman tradition of self-government. To these one must add the impact of the Christian drama of Christ's life and resurrection; belief in the individual soul, its sinfulness and redemption; and the importance of monotheism and the exclusionary and dogmatic mindset it fosters. Most of these elements are alien to China's Confucian tradition, to Chinese Legalism and to later Buddhist influences on Chinese civilization."²⁷⁷

Interestingly, the Chinese and Roman empires (in their successive incarnations) have tended to mirror each other, with the peaks of the Chinese empire coinciding with the troughs in that of the Roman empire, and vice-versa. Thus in the seventh century, when Rome was at one of its lowest points, the Tang empire under the Emperor Wu (China's only female emperor) was at its peak. However, in the nineteenth century, when the Third Rome of Russia was at its peak, China was being torn apart by western imperialists. Again, today (under a new emperor called Shi) China is perhaps the most powerful country in the world, while Russia has declined terribly. There must be a lesson in this from the Divine Wisdom...

²⁷⁷ Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 29. According to the modern Chinese philosopher Gi-ming Shien, as interpreted by Fr. Seraphim Rose, the distinctions between various Chinese philosophies and religions are illusory. "In fact, there is a very strong idea in the Chinese mind of orthodoxy: that there is a right teaching, and that the whole society depends on that right teaching. This orthodoxy is expressed in different forms. My teacher made it quite clear that Taoism is the esoteric side, and Confucianism is the more social side. Taoism has to do with spiritual life and Confucianism with social, public life" (in Hieromonk Damascene (Christensen), *Father Seraphim Rose*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2003, p. 76).

23. THE LAST TEMPTATION: EMPEROR-WORSHIP

Let us look a little more closely at the cult of the emperor, that last and most serious obstacle to the whole-hearted embrace of Rome by the Church, the reconciliation of Romanitas with Christianitas...

Now religion in Rome had always been a department of State. As J.M. Roberts writes: "It had nothing to do with individual salvation and not much with individual behaviour; it was above all a public matter. It was a part of the res publica, a series of rituals whose maintenance was good for the state, whose neglect would bring retribution. There was no priestly caste set apart from other men (if we exclude one or two antiquarian survivals in the temples of a few special cults) and priestly duties were the task of the magistrates who found priesthood a useful social and political lever."²⁷⁸

"Nor was there creed or dogma..."

"Men genuinely felt that the peace of Augustus was the pax deorum, a divine reward for a proper respect for the gods which Augustus had reasserted. Somewhat more cynically, Cicero had remarked that the gods were needed to prevent chaos in society..."²⁷⁹

The gods in question were not only the specifically Roman gods, but all the gods of the various peoples of the empire. The tolerant, ecumenist attitude of the Romans to the different religions of the empire was thought to be one of the causes of its survival. None of the pagan cults excluded the others: in the minds of some of the sophisticated intellectuals who studied Greek philosophy they were all different expressions of a single Divinity...

²⁷⁸ M.V. Zyzykin writes: "In the beginning the priestly functions, being a constituent part of the imperium, had been carried out by State officials and only later were transferred to the particular duty of the priests..."

"[Religion] without the State did not have that independent life and task, distinguishing it from the task of the State, that the Christian religion has. Its task was to guard the material interests of the State. Each god was in charge of some aspect of earthly life and State life; prayers to the gods included only requests for material good things; each god was besought in accordance with his speciality, but the Roman gods did not touch the moral side of life..."

"Not one single god was concerned with questions of morality. None of the gods inspired or laid down moral rules. Care for the morality of the people lay on the family and the State; philosophical morality also appeared without the gods... It worked out that it was not the gods who ruled the will of the Romans, but the Romans - the will of the gods..."

"The priesthood among the Romans was not a special form of service established from on high. Among the Romans the right and duty to carry out sacrifices was indissolubly bound up with the imperium. In private life the priest was a representative of authority - the head of the family, of the tribe, of the college, of the brotherhood. In State life the natural priest was the head of the State... [Thus] the highest official of the State was the guardian of religion, and not only of State order..." (*Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, pt. I, pp. 37, 38, 42, 43) (V.M.)

²⁷⁹ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 203. Still more cynically, Seneca said that "the wise man will observe all the religious rites because they are prescribed by law, and not because they are pleasing to the gods".

It was a natural step from the empire tolerating the worship of all the gods to its worshipping itself. For if the gods were worshipped for the sake of the empire, then the empire was the supreme value. Thus, as Alexander Dvorkin writes, "The most capable emperors tried to... attach to the ancient popular cults the character of the worship of the state and its head. This patriotic deification of the Roman state began already in the time of the republic. The cult of *Dea Roma* was practiced in Smyrna already in 195 BC. It became noticeably stronger thanks to the popularity of the Empire in the provinces, which were happy with the improvement in the level of administration under the empire's laws..."²⁸⁰

Emperor-worship seems to have begun with Julius Caesar, who made himself dictator for life while refusing the title of "king" in respect for Rome's early, anti-monarchical traditions. On the Ides of March, 44 BC, Caesar was killed by a group of senators determined to preserve the republic from a return to one-man rule; and almost immediately a cult grew up. As Montefiore writes, "he turned down the throne but received the titles Father of the Country, *imperator*, dictator for life and consul for ten years, and he was declared to be sacred..."²⁸¹ Again, Jonathan Hill writes: "A number of inscriptions in the east, dating from late in his lifetime, hail him as a living god. Caesar himself clearly approved of the development, since he had a month named after himself, built a temple to himself, and appointed his friend Mark Antony as his own chief priest.

"Caesar's nephew, Augustus, the first true Roman emperor, developed some aspects of this idea and abandoned others. He did not have temples and priests dedicated to himself, but since he was Caesar's adopted son, he was known as 'the divine son'. He avoided actually calling himself a god, but he did not stop other people from doing so - especially in the provinces and the eastern part of the empire. He revived the old position of *pontifex maximus* or chief priest in the city of Rome, but he took over the position himself. All of Augustus' successors adopted the same title until AD 382. And after Augustus' death, he was officially deified. This became standard procedure for every emperor, except for the particularly unpopular ones; a witness would swear to the Senate that he had seen the dead emperor's soul ascend to heaven from his funeral pyre, and the Senate would agree that he was now a god. Even in their lifetimes, the emperors were held to be inspired by a divine spirit, 'Caesar's genius', and people were expected to worship this spirit..."²⁸²

Emperor-worship was not part of the original constitution of the Roman Empire; such famous emperors as Tiberius, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius explicitly rejected it; and in the case of those who tried to enforce it, such as Nero and Domitian, it was in essence an *import* from the eastern pagan

²⁸⁰ Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 29.

²⁸¹ Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

²⁸² Hill, *Christianity. The First 400 Years*, London: Lion Hudson, 2013, p. 130.

theocracies, an heretical *aberration* from the fundamental Roman conception, which was that the emperor is subject both to his own laws, of which he is the main custodian, and to the laws of God, being emperor "by the will of God" and not "as a god". "In fact," as Professor Sordi writes, "the imperial cult had never been imposed formally, or even encouraged, by any of the emperors to whom the Christian apologists from Aristides to Quadratus, from Melito to Athenagoras, were addressing their works."²⁸³

Thus the early Christians could quite clearly and sincerely distinguish the honour in which they held the institution of the empire and the emperor himself from the disgust they felt for the cult of emperor-worship during the few reigns in which it was imposed; which is why they refused to offer incense to the emperor's statue, while continuing to pay taxes and carry out military service.

Emperor-worship may have been imported from Egypt. Both Caesar and Augustus had been in Egypt; and Augustus was clearly impressed, as had been Caesar and Mark Anthony, by the civilization he found there. And by its queen, Cleopatra. He brought back an obelisk to Rome and named himself, it is said, after the month in which Cleopatra died, August... There is even a theory that Plutarch's story of Cleopatra's suicide by snake-bite was a rewriting of history ordered by Augustus, and that Cleopatra was in fact killed on Augustus' orders in order to remove a dangerous contender to the throne of Rome. For Cleopatra had made her son, Caesarion, her co-ruler, and he, being the natural son of Julius Caesar, was a more direct heir to Caesar than Augustus himself. If Caesarion had become the emperor in Rome, then not only would eastern ideas of divine kingship been introduced still more directly into Rome, but Rome itself may have become an oriental despotism...

Dio Cassius writes that Augustus "gave permission for sacred precincts to be set up in both Ephesus and Nicaea, dedicated to Rome and his father [Julius] Caesar, to whom he had given the title, the Divine Julius. These cities at that time held pre-eminent positions in Asia and Bithynia respectively. The Romans who lived there he bade pay honour to these two divinities, but he allowed the provincials, whom he styled Greeks, to consecrate precincts to himself, the Asians in Pergamum, the Bithynians in Nicomedia. From such a beginning this practice has also occurred under other emperors, and not only in the Greek provinces but also in the others that are subject to Rome. In the city of Rome itself and the rest of Italy, however, no emperor, no matter how deserving of praise, has dared to do this (i.e. style himself a god). Yet even there divine honours are accorded and shrines set up to emperors who have ruled well, after their demise."²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Marta Sorti, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 176.

²⁸⁴ Dio Cassius, LI, 20, in S. Ireland, *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 175.

It is no accident that the only martyr mentioned by name in Revelation is Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum, “where Satan’s seat is” (2.13). Pergamum was “Satan’s seat” because it was there that the worship of Augustus was first instituted. The altar at Pergamum later became the model for Lenin’s mausoleum in Moscow... However, the same emperor was compelled to curb any excessive tendencies in this direction by his regard for the traditions of republican Rome, where “king”, as we have seen, was a dirty word, and sovereign power was deemed to belong jointly to the Senate and the People. Julius Caesar had been murdered precisely because he made himself dictator. So Augustus, while wielding all power de facto, still maintained the fiction that he was merely *princeps*, “first among equals”. In this context, it is probably significant that Augustus allowed altars to be dedicated to himself only in the provinces, whose inhabitants he called “Greeks”, and not in Rome itself. The strength of this republican tradition, allied to other philosophical elements such as Stoicism, guaranteed that emperor-worship, as opposed to the worship of “ordinary” gods, remained an intermittent phenomenon. It was felt to be an essentially alien, non-Roman tradition throughout the imperial period. Thus if Augustus had a temple erected to his divinity, Tiberius rejected divine honours; if Domitian considered himself a god, Trajan emphatically did not.

“After Augustus,” writes Roberts, “emperors always held the office of chief priest (*pontifex maximus*) and political and religious primacy were thus combined in the same person. This began the increasing importance and definition of the imperial cult itself. It fitted well with the Roman’s innate conservatism, his respect for the ways and customs of his ancestors. The imperial cult linked respect for traditional patrons, the placating or invoking of familiar deities and the commemoration of great men and events, to the ideas of divine kingship that came from the East, from Asia. It was there that altars were first raised to Rome or the Senate, and there that they were soon reattributed to the emperor. The cult spread through the whole empire, though it was not until the third century AD that the practice was wholly respectable at Rome itself, so strong was the republican sentiment. But even there the strains of empire had already favoured a revival of official piety which benefited the imperial cult.”²⁸⁵

Sometimes the emperors deified their favourites. Thus early in the second century the Emperor Hadrian deified his favourite Antinous, of whom St. Athanasius the Great writes: “Although they knew he was a man, and not an honourable man but one filled with wantonness, yet they worshipped him through fear of the ruler... So do not be surprised or think that what we have said is improbable, for quite recently, and perhaps even up to now, the Roman senate decrees that their emperors who reigned from the beginning – either all of them or whomever they choose and decide upon – are among the gods, and prescribes that they be worshipped as gods.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁸⁶ St. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 9.

Similarly, Arnobius wrote: "We worship one born a man. What of that? Do you worship no one born a man? Do you not worship one or another, yes, countless others? Indeed, have you not elevated from the level of mortals all those you now have in your temples and made a gift of them to heaven and the stars?"²⁸⁷

The intermittency in the cult of the emperor was reflected, as we have seen, by intermittency in the persecution of Christians. Thus in the 150 years between Domitian and Decius, although Christianity remained technically illegal, the emperors initiated no persecution against the Christians, convinced as they were that they did not constitute a political threat. In 112, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, "wrote a famous letter to the emperor Trajan asking him for advice about Christianity. Apparently many people had been accuse of Christianity, but when Pliny interrogated them, he found that they seemed to be innocent of the crimes of which they were usually accused. He executed them anyway because he thought that their 'obstinacy and unbending perversity' should be punished, but he was unsure whether it was a crime simply to be a Christian, or whether the criminality lay in the things that Christians were said to do. Trajan replied (rather briefly, suggesting that this matter was low on his list of priorities) that Pliny was acting quite correctly. Any Christian that turned up should be executed if they refused to sacrifice to the gods, or freed if they did sacrifice, but it was not worth making a special effort to find and arrest them. In around 125 AD, the emperor Hadrian told the proconsul of Asia that Christians needed to be shown to have done something illegal before being punished, and that people making groundless accusations should themselves be punished severely. Most governors during the second and early third centuries seem to have taken this approach, and many Christian communities seem to have been quite open about their faith."²⁸⁸

The emperors were often more favourably inclined towards the Christians than either the Senate, which remained a powerful bastion of paganism, or the masses, who tended to blame the Christians' "atheism", that is, their refusal to worship the gods, for the disasters that befell the empire. The Roman authorities generally looked for ways to protect the Christians, and were only compelled to adopt stricter measures in order to appease the mob. We see this, for example, in the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna.

It was therefore in the Church's long-term interest to support the imperial power, enduring the occasional madmen, such as Nero and Domitian, and waiting for the time when the emperor would not only protect her against her enemies, but take the lead in converting the body of the empire to Christ.

²⁸⁷ Arnobius, *The Case against the Pagans*, I, 37:

²⁸⁸ Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

This looked as if it might happen already in the mid-third century, under the Emperor Philip the Arab, who was thought by many to be a secret Christian, and a little later under the Emperor Galerius, who declared his faith in Christ after witnessing a miracle of the Martyrs Cosmas and Damian.²⁸⁹ It was probably in order to counter Philip's influence that the next emperor, Decius, ordered all the citizens of the empire to worship the pagan gods, which led to many Christian martyrdoms. However, the persecutions of Decius and Valerian elicited a wave of revulsion in Roman society, and from the edict of Gallienus to the persecution of Diocletian, there was even a long period in which all the old anti-Christian laws were repealed and the Church was officially recognised as a legal institution

"It is not, perhaps, a coincidence," writes Professor Sordi, "that Gallienus' change of policy towards the senate went hand in hand with the official recognition of the Christian religion which the senate had forbidden for the previous two centuries. Gallienus broke completely with the pro-senate policy of the preceding emperors, he forbade the senators military command and he cut them off from all the sources of real power. It was this break with the senate, this decision on the part of Gallienus to do without its consent, that made it possible for the Emperor to grant to the Christians the recognition which was so necessary for the well-being of the empire, but which the traditionalist thinking of the senate had always feared so much."²⁹⁰

An important change in the relationship between the Church and the Empire was signaled when, in 270, the Christians of Antioch appealed to the Emperor Aurelian to remove the heretical bishop Paul of Samosata... It was Aurelian who introduced the monotheistic cult of the Unconquered Sun, the original faith of the future Emperor Constantine. And it would be Constantine who would make the crucial epoch-making change from the monotheistic cult of the Unconquered Sun to the monotheistic cult of the Unconquerable Sun of Righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ...

In a sense this would mark the passing of Rome herself. For we read in the *Life of Saints Cyril and Methodius* that once the Jewish teachers of the Khazars asked "the Philosopher" (St. Cyril): "If we accept that He [Christ] has already come, as you claim on the basis of the Prophets and other arguments, then how is it that the Roman Empire is still in power?" The Philosopher replied: "It is no longer in power, for it has passed away, like all empires in its likeness, for our Empire is not of Rome, but of Christ..."²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, pp. 142-143. Philip and his son and heir, also called Philip, were baptised by Hieromartyr Fabian, Pope of Rome. See Velimirovich, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, July 1, p. 5, August 5, pp. 157-158.

²⁹⁰ Sordi, *op. cit.*, p. 117. And yet he caused the martyrdom of the Holy Martyr Eugenia and her family, who are commemorated on December 24.

²⁹¹ *Life of SS. Cyril and Methodius*, chapter 10.

IV. NEW ROME AND THE NATIONS

24. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION: (1) THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

One major consequence of the Coming of the King of heaven and earth to His domain was that henceforth any political ruler could claim legitimacy for his rule only by submission to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, admitting that he himself ruled only as the *regent* or *vicar* of the One True King. Strictly speaking, no such ruler existed until the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian era. However, as we have seen, the Lord Himself made an important exception in the case of *Roman power*. Having been voluntarily enrolled into the Roman empire at His birth, having exhorted His followers to pay their taxes and “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s”, and having openly declared before Pilate, the representative of Roman power, that he would have no power at all if God had not given it him, Christ not only recognized Roman power as legitimate, but through this recognition prepared the way for its elevation to the status of regent or vicar of His own rule on earth. The moment of transition – that is, the moment when Roman power ceased from being unconsciously and as it were in spite of itself God’s vicar, but became consciously so, being openly recognized as such by God Himself, - took place with the coming to power of Constantine the Great...

“It would be no exaggeration,” writes Protopresbyter James Thornton, “to call the reign of Saint Constantine a genuine revolution, particularly from the standpoint of religion. The *Synaxarion* for May 21, the day of his commemoration, states that the Church was ‘able to inspire governors and profoundly transform the lives of men and states with the inbreathing of evangelical principles’. However, the Christian revolution was a peaceful revolution, a revolution from above, one that retained all that was wholesome from pagan antiquity – for example art, architecture, literature, and law -, while slowly extinguishing that which was spiritually noxious, unworthy, or morally debilitating. It wisely left essentially untouched the Roman societal structure and the economic system, anticipating their gradual evolution towards the good, under the influence of Christian teaching. Yet, it was a revolution that imbued the Empire with renewed life...”²⁹²

It was indeed a renewal, a Renovatio Imperii. 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

²⁹² Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, p. 97.

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."²⁹³

This Christian renewal of the Roman Empire was a vindication of the Christians' loyal and patient attitude to the pagan Roman empire. Tertullian had said in the third century, "The world may need its Caesars. But the Emperor can never be a Christian, nor a Christian ever be an Emperor."²⁹⁴ However, he was wrong: in response to the patience and prayer of the Christians, the most powerful, secular and pagan element in Old Roman society, the very apex of its antichristian system, was transfigured into an instrument of the Grace of God.

"The kingdom of this world", it seemed, had become "the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11.15).

Paradoxically, in spite of his vast - indeed, unprecedented - achievements, St. Constantine has received a remarkably bad press. He has been accused of being the originator of "Caesaropapism", of causing the fall of the very Church that he saved from destruction, even of a supposed "heresy of Constantinianism"...²⁹⁵ Let us examine these charges...

In 285 the Emperor Diocletian came to the throne. He promptly decided to divide his power into four, into a "tetrarchy" of emperors consisting of two Augusti, one for the East and the other for the West, together with their deputies, the Caesars. The four emperors were bound together through intermarriage and through the supposed descent of the Augusti from Jupiter and of the Caesars from Hercules, "gods by birth and creators of gods".

At first the reorganization worked well; peace and prosperity was restored to the empire. But then, in 299, an ominous event took place in Antioch. The priests repeatedly failed to get any responses to their questions through the entrails of their sacrificial victims. This seemed to indicate that the gods were displeased, and Diocletian was worried... In 302 the same thing happened, again at Antioch. Diocletian conferred with his fellow Augustus, Galerius, who advised him to persecute the Christians. Diocletian hesitated... Then he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Didyma. The oracle replied that "the just ones" had silenced the prophecy.

²⁹³ Florovsky, "Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert", *Christianity and Culture*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974, pp. 72, 74.

²⁹⁴ Tertullian, in Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 155.

²⁹⁵ Edward Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010, p. 250, note 61.

“The just ones” were interpreted to mean the Christians, and on February 23, the feast of the Terminalia, the persecution began. Later, the tetrarchy assembled in Rome to celebrate their joint rule and to establish the old religions and their morals and “exterminate completely” the new ones.²⁹⁶ Churches were destroyed, the Holy Scriptures burned, and Christians who refused to sacrifice were tortured and killed.

To many Christians it seemed that the world was about to end insofar as Diocletian’s persecution of the Christians, the worst in Roman history, threatened to destroy the Roman empire in its role as “that which restraineth” the advent of the Antichrist and thereby usher in the end of the world. As St. Constantine’s tutor, Lactantius, wrote: “It is apparent that the world is destined to end immediately. The only evidence to diminish our fear is the fact that the city of Rome continues to flourish. But once this city, which is the veritable capital of the world, falls and there is nothing in its place but ruins, as the sibyls predict, who can doubt that the end will have arrived both for humanity and for the entire world?”²⁹⁷

However, at the height of the persecution, on May 1, 305, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated and handed over power to four Caesars. This allowed the Caesar in the far West, Constantius Chlorus, to bring the persecution to an end in Gaul and Britain. Then, after Constantinus’ death, on July 25, 306, the Roman troops in York proclaimed his son Constantine emperor.

In 312 Constantine marched on Rome against the Caesar Maxentius. Just before the fateful battle of the Milvian Bridge, outside Rome, both Constantine and his army saw a cross of light in the sky with the words: “In this sign conquer” above it. Eusebius records the story as Constantine himself related it to him, confirming his words with an oath: “He said that at about midday, when the sun was beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription Conquer by This (Hoc Vince). At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also.”²⁹⁸

“Earlier than Eusebius, though,” writes Peter Leithart, “Lactantius, who as the tutor to Constantine’s sons was closer to the emperor than was Eusebius, recorded a similar story. According to his account, ‘Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle.’ Following the directive, he had their

²⁹⁶ Jean-Louis Voisin, “Le Songe de l’Empereur” (The Dream of the Emperor), *Histoire* (Le Figaro), 8, June-July, 2013, p.46.

²⁹⁷ Lactantius, *Divine Institutions*; quoted in Robert Garland, “Countdown to the Beginning of Time-Keeping”, *History Today*, vol. 49 (4), April, 1999, p. 42.

²⁹⁸ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 28; quoted in John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 39. See Jan Bremmer, “The Vision of Constantine”, <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal/files/9899550/Bremmer-CONSTANTINE.pdf>. Much later, in the reign of Julian the Apostate, the Martyrs Eusebius and Artemius confirmed the truth of this vision, having been witnesses of it themselves.

shields marked with the Greek letter *chi* (an 'X' shape), through which a perpendicular line was drawn and then curved around the top. The result was a *chi-rho* combination (which looks like the English letters XP), the first letters of the name of Christ."²⁹⁹ Although the two accounts differ, Leithart has convincingly shown that they can both be accepted as true, referring as they probably did to two different events...³⁰⁰

Constantine had the pagan standards removed and the Christian one with the *chi-rho*, the so-called Labarum, put in their place. The result was an easy victory over the much larger army of Maxentius. The next day, October 29, Constantine entered Rome and was hailed as Emperor of the West.³⁰¹

Breaking with tradition, Constantine refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, and in particular to Jupiter in the Capitol. By this extremely controversial and extremely courageous act, he demonstrated for all those with eyes of see that his conversion to Christianity was completely sincere. "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."³⁰²

Moreover, he 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.'"³⁰³

He continued to experience the power of the Cross 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."³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³⁰⁰ Leithart, *op. cit.*, chapter 4.

³⁰¹ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, London & Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 43.

³⁰² St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.25.

³⁰³ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 40.

³⁰⁴ 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 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".³⁰⁵ As 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."³⁰⁶

As a result, 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."³⁰⁷

Constantine's triumphal progress continued: when Licinius turned from toleration to persecution of Christians, Constantine defeated him at Chrysopolis in 324. The whole of the East now came within his dominion... And yet the Triumph of the Cross under St. Constantine 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.

³⁰⁵ Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, 48. 2-12.

³⁰⁶ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 27.

³⁰⁷ Eusebius, *Church History*, X, 2, 10.

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 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. Meanwhile, from day to day king, 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...”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Lev Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945* (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, p. 23.

25. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION: (2) KINGS AND TYRANTS

With regard to internal statehood, the Constantinian revolution was only partial. The hierarchical principle, for example, remained unchanged – Constantine was no democrat, and by abolishing the tetrarchy he reasserted one-man-rule. The distinction between true autocracy and tyranny also remained, although subtly modified in accordance with Christian priorities, as we shall see in detail later. The real change was in the idea that the State and its prosperity were no longer the highest values. For above the State was the Church, and the State existed in order to serve the Church, not vice-versa.

The hierarchical principle remained unchanged because it was fully in accordance with Christian teaching. For the Apostles did not only preach obedience to the emperor: they extended the hierarchical principle to every level of society. Thus "be subject for the Lord's sake," says St. Peter, "to *every* human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right..." (I Peter 2.13). This included even the institution of slavery: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentled, but also to the forward" (I Peter 2.18). Again St. Paul says: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And those who have believing masters must not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service" (I Timothy 6.1-2).

Following the Apostles, the Holy Fathers asserted that the hierarchical principle of one-man rule is natural, God-given and superior to any other principle of government. In developing this thought, they adopted the originally pagan idea that the earthly king is the image of the Heavenly King, purifying it of the tendency, so natural to pagan thought, to *identify* the earthly and the Heavenly, the image and its archetype. Earthly kings could be images of the Heavenly King, and were to be venerated as such; but they were not god-kings, not objects of worship. Thus Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea 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".³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

While rejecting the pagan idea of the despotic god-king, the Christian idea of the emperor as the image of the Heavenly King also excluded the no less pagan idea of democratism, rule by the people. 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."³¹⁰ Again, 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 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."³¹¹ And St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: "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...*"³¹²

Later generations of Byzantines remained faithful to the hierarchical principle. Thus St. John Chrysostom wrote: "Equality is known to produce strife. Therefore God allowed the human race to be a monarchy, not a democracy. But the family is constructed in a similar way to an army, with the husband holding the rank of monarch, the wife as general and the children also given stations of command."³¹³ Again, the champion of St. Chrysostom, St. Isidore of Pelusium, "after pointing to the order of submission of some to others established everywhere by God in the lives of rational and irrational creatures, concludes therefrom: "Therefore we are entitled to say that... power, that is, royal leadership and authority, is established by God."³¹⁴ And over four centuries later St. Theodore the Studite generalized the principle as follows: "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

³¹⁰ Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

³¹¹ St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 8. In accordance with Roman conceptions, St. Basil did not believe that monarchical power had to be hereditary. The virtue of hereditary succession was developed later.

³¹² St. Gregory, *Sermon* 29, 2. Cf. *Sermon* 3, 2.

³¹³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily* 34 on *I Corinthians*, 7.

³¹⁴ Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, in Richard Betts and Vyacheslav Marchenko, *Dukhovnik Tsarskoj Sem'i: Soyatitel' Feofan Poltavskij* (The Spiritual Father of the Royal Family: Holy Hierarch Theophan of Poltava), Moscow: Balaam Society of America, 1994, p. 213.

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 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."³¹⁵

The principle of one-man rule in politics was greatly strengthened in Byzantium by the idea that the fount of all secular law in the empire was *the emperor himself*. This did not mean, however, that the emperor's rule was completely arbitrary. He had to obey the Church, on the one hand, and his own laws, on the other. Thus St. Ambrose of Milan wrote to the Emperor St. Theodosius the Great that the emperor must respect and bind himself by the laws he promulgates, or he risks great dangers in the civil sphere: "And how, O Emperor, are we to settle a matter on which you have already declared your judgment, and have even promulgated laws, so that it is not open to any one to judge otherwise? But when you laid down this law for others, you laid it down for yourself as well. For the Emperor is the first to keep the laws which he passes. Do you, then, wish me to try how those who are chosen as judges will either come, contrary to your decision, or at least excuse themselves, saying that they cannot act against so severe and so stringent a law of the Emperor?"³¹⁶

From the time of Justinian in the sixth century we come across the idea that the emperor is "the living law", *the law personified*. As Tom Holland writes: "If it was true, as Justinian ringingly declared, that 'what medicine is to disease, so laws are to public affairs', then there was much that first needed to be done before the emperor's prescription could be applied to the sickening world. The sheer scale and antiquity of the Roman people's achievements in the field of law had resulted in a legacy that was intimidatingly chequered. Justinian, however, was hardly the man to duck such a challenge. His first step, only a few months into his reign, was the appointment of a commission to harmonise the various unwieldy collections of laws used by previous emperors, then, a year and a half later, he charged a second commission with the even more daunting task of collecting the entire stupendous body of private writings on Roman law. Complete constitutions had to be revised, almost two thousand individual books called in and minutely sifted; tens of thousands of excerpts made. The resulting codification, achieved in record

³¹⁵ St. Theodore, *The Philokalia*, volume IV, p. 93; in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 46-47.

³¹⁶ St. Ambrose, *Epistle 21*, 9.

time, was so staggering that it appeared to many something more than human. Justinian himself presented it proudly as a process of restoration; but there was something about it as well of a revolution. 'We have by means of old laws not only brought matters into a better condition, but we have also promulgated new laws.' The emperor saw no need to conceal the fact. He was himself, as he declared, *nomos empsychos* – the 'living law'. Here, in this self-promotion, was the ultimate refinement of what generations of emperors had been working to achieve. Henceforward, the rules by which the Roman people lived and were bound were to have just the single fountainhead: the emperor himself, enthroned in his palatial citadel. No wonder, then, that Justinian should have sought, not merely to impose his stamp upon the long centuries of Roman legal achievement, but also prescribe where and how that achievement should be taught. Private law schools were definitively banned. No teachers were to be licensed, save for those directly sanctioned by the state. Now, more than ever, the whole world was to be administered from the centre, from the palace of Constantinople."³¹⁷

This, as we shall see, did *not* mean that the emperor was also to govern the Church. But it did mean that in Greco-Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages, right down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the idea was firmly established that all true power, whether in Church or State, came from above, from God, being mediated through the one-man leader of the Empire or the collegial leadership of the Church. And this idea was passed down without distortion to the Third Rome, Russia.

Thus Professor I.M. Andreyev has characterized the three forms of statehood as follows: "Of the three forms of state power – monarchy, democracy and despotism – strictly speaking, only the first (monarchy) is based on a religious-ethical principle, the second (democracy) is based on an a-religious-ethical principle, and the third (despotism) is based on an anti-religious (satanic) principle."³¹⁸

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The Holy Apostles and Martyrs in the time of the pagan Roman empire believed, on the one hand, that the emperor's power was established by God and should be obeyed whenever possible, and on the other hand, that he should be disobeyed if he commanded something contrary to God's commandments. No authority, whether political or ecclesiastical, should be listened to if it contradicted the supreme authority, which is God. As the Apostles said to the Jewish Sanhedrin: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge" (Acts 4.19).

³¹⁷ Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, London: Abacus, 2014, pp. 159-160.

³¹⁸ Andreyev, "Pomazannik Bozhij" ("The Anointed of God"), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), 1951, p. 129.

According to Protestant writers, after the persecutions ended and the empire became Christian, the Church lost her independence and entered into a union with the State that made her a slave of the Emperors. Paradoxically, therefore, according to the Protestants, the triumph of the Church under St. Constantine was at the same time the end of the Church as an independent institution. Worse than that: according to some Protestants, as Fr. Irenaeos Plac writes, “the Church apostasized with the legalization of Christianity under Constantine, around 311-313 AD. The argument goes that with actual tolerance and later acceptance by the government, Church affairs became about power and worldly things, leading to the apostasy of the Church. This argument is rather easily disposed of, as many of the conventions these Protestants name as evidences of the apostasy are historically established to have been practiced well before the legalization of the Church. Whether it is icons, veneration of the Virgin mother, authority of bishops or most any other practice, the historical evidence for the universal practice of these marks of the faith are numerous. From the writings of St. Ignatius on bishops, to the excavation of 3rd century church buildings replete with icons, to ancient papyrus scrolls with hymns to the Theotokos, the idea that ‘everything changed in the Church with the edicts of Constantine is simply historically disprovable.”³¹⁹

As regards the Church’s relationship to the State, the Protestants are also wrong: the fourth-century Fathers showed a heroic independence even in relation to the most Christian of the Emperors. *Of course*, the accession of the first Christian Emperor with its many major benefits for the Church and for the spreading of Christianity was welcomed by the Church, and the bishops willingly entered into a “symphony of powers” between Church and State. But when the Emperors betrayed the Faith – as did, for example, most of the emperors in the fifty-year period between St. Constantine the Great and St. Theodosius the Great – the Holy Fathers rose up in protest against them, using language that was as strong as anything uttered against the pagan emperors.

Thus when St. Constantine’s son Constantius apostasized from Orthodoxy and converted to the Arian heresy, believing that Christ was not the pre-eternal God and Creator but a created being, 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.³²⁰ Again, St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote to Constantius: “You are fighting against God, you are raging against the Church, you are persecuting the saints, you hate the preachers of Christ, you

³¹⁹ Plac, *Facebook*, July 3, 2016.

³²⁰ 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 of by Daniel”.

are annulling religion; you are a tyrant no longer only in the human, but in the divine sphere... You lyingly declare yourself a Christian, but are a new enemy of Christ. You are a precursor of Antichrist, and you work the mysteries of his secrets."³²¹

Constantius showed his despotic tendencies at the Council of Milan in 355, when he said: "My will is law". To which St. Osius of Cordoba, replied: "Stop, I beseech you. Remember that 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 Shapur started to kill the Christian 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 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 to hope in eternal life. And after everyone had been killed, he himself was martyred.³²²

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 - that is, recognition of the power as tyrannical - did not necessarily mean rebellion. Thus the Fathers did not counsel rebellion against heretical emperors such as Constantius, 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 physical, attempts to have him removed. A baptized Christian who had studied together with Saints Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian in Athens, he tried to destroy the Orthodox Church and turn the empire back to paganism.

³²¹ F.W. Farrar, *The Lives of the Fathers*, Edinburgh, 1889, vol. I, p. 617.

³²² St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, April 17.

Another act of Julian's that elicited particular horror was his reversal of Emperor Hadrian's decree forbidding the Jews from returning to Jerusalem and, still worse, his helping the Jews to rebuild the Temple...

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."³²³

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 Gilbert 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..."³²⁴

It is instructive to consider how Julian died... Julian had killed the envoy of the Persian king Manuel, Savel and Ishmael for their refusal to worship idols. The Persian king Alamundar prepared an army against Julian to avenge their death. So Julian set off for Mesopotamia to meet him.³²⁵

On his way, he stopped in Ancyra, where St. Basil (not Basil the Great) defied him. "Basil was brought before him and the emperor tried to persuade him to abandon his faith in Christ, promising him honors and riches. Basil answered the emperor; "I believe in my Christ, Whom you denied and Who gave you this earthly kingdom; but, that will be taken away from you, shortly. Have you no shame of the sacred altar under which you were saved when they sought to kill you as an eight year old child? That is why this temporary kingdom will be taken from you shortly and your body will not be buried when your soul is violently wrested from you in bitter pains." Basil was tortured and killed for Christ.³²⁶

³²³ Quoted 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.

³²⁴ Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Gallimard, 1996, p. 167.

³²⁵ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, June 17.

³²⁶ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, March 22.

Julian went on to Antioch, where he reinstated paganism and killed more Christians. Then, as we read in the *Life* of St. Julian the Hermit of Mesopotamia (October 18), the believers asked St. Julian to pray that he should be overthrown. St. Julian prayed for this for ten days, and then heard a voice from heaven: "The unclean and abominable beast has perished." And it was true: the Apostate had perished in the war.³²⁷

But it was not only St. Julian's prayers that effected it. The Mother of God, St. Basil the Great and St. Mercurius the Great Martyr were also involved in this critical moment of Church history. Thus when St. Basil heard that Julian's army was returning from the expedition against the Persians, "he gathered together the multitude of Christians, with women and children, and commanded them that they should keep a fast of three days. Afterward, with the faithful, he ascended the summit of the mountain of Caesarea [in Cappadocia] that is named Didymon (Twin), because it has two peaks. On that mountain was also the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos. It was there that the Christians betook themselves, entreating and beseeching with a contrite heart the only compassionate God and His most pure Mother, that the will of the impious emperor [Julian the Apostate] might be changed. While the saint stood with the people in prayer, he was counted worthy of a vision. He beheld a multitude of heavenly host encircling the mountain. In the midst of them, he beheld a certain Woman enthroned with great glory. She uttered to the angels standing by, 'Call Mercurius to me, so that he might go and slay Julian, the enemy of my Son.' It then was made manifest to Saint Basil that the Martyr Mercurius came. After he had taken up his weapons, he received his order from the Woman, who was the most holy Theotokos, and he quickly took leave...

"After he beheld the vision, straightway, the saint descended with certain of the clergy into the city, where the Church of the holy Great Martyr Mercurius is situated. Within the church were to be found the precious relics of the martyr and his weapons, which were honored by the Christians. One hundred years had passed since the reigns of Decius, Gallus, Aemilianus, and Valerian, when the martyr lived and contested for Christ by his martyrdom in Caesarea. Upon entering those sacred precincts, Saint Basil could find neither the relics nor the martyr's weapons. He questioned the skevophylax [warden and keeper of the vessels] of the church to learn what happened to them. But he, not knowing the matter, solemnly replied that he knew nothing. The saint then came to know both that the vision was true, and that during that same night, the 26th of June, in the year 363, the ungodly emperor was slain."³²⁸

A mysterious warrior had appeared to Julian and thrust him through; his last words were: "Galilean [Christ], you have conquered!" St. Basil's friend, St. Gregory the Theologian, rejoiced at the news of his death: "I call to spiritual

³²⁷ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, October 18.

³²⁸ *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, January 1, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2003; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 19.

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 produced what our prayers and the will of God produced?" Gregory called Julian not only an "apostate", but also "universal enemy" and "general murderer", a traitor to Romanity as well as to Christianity, 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)." ³²⁹

What made Julian the Apostate so terrible in the eyes of the Holy Fathers was precisely the fact that he was an apostate, a Christian emperor who then reverted to paganism. Moreover, Julian was the first – and last – of the Byzantine emperors who trampled on the memory and legitimacy of St. Constantine, declaring that he "insolently usurped the throne". 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"³³⁰, then Julian's rejection of Constantine was clearly a rejection of the imperial order as such. In this sense Julian 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."³³¹ Jovian's being a "new Constantine" was a guarantee that he represented a return to the old order and true, Christian Romanity (*Romanitas*, Ρωμαιοσύνη). From this 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 from England to Georgia. After Julian, nobody believed that *all*

³²⁹ St. Gregory, *First Word against Julian*, 35; *Second Word against Julian*, 26.

³³⁰ Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 2, 3.

³³¹ Magdalino, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

emperors were established by God. The principle of monarchical power was good and from God – that was what St. Paul meant when he said that “all authority is from God” in Romans 13.1. But St. Paul had specified what he meant by “power” by saying that the king was “a servant of God for good”, to reward the good and punish the evildoers. This could not apply to rulers such as Julian. They were not kings or authorities, but rebels and tyrants.

St. Basil defined the difference between a true king and a tyrant as follows: “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 everyone 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.” 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.”³³² This definition seems very strict. For what Roman emperor was not subject to sin and always did good to those whom he ruled? By this definition almost all the emperors were in fact tyrants... However, we can bring St. Basil’s definition more into line with how the Christians actually regarded the emperors if we make two important distinctions. The first is between the personal evil of many of the emperors, on the one hand, and the goodness of the institution that they maintained and incarnated, on the other. And the second is between the status of the pagan emperors before Constantine, on the one hand, and the status of the pagan or heretical emperors after Constantine, on the other. As St. John Chrysostom said, commenting on Romans 13.1: “Is every ruler, then, elected by God? This I do not say, he [Paul] answers. Nor am I now speaking about individual rulers, but about the thing in itself. For that there should be rulers, and some rule and others be ruled, and that all things should not just be carried on in one confusion, the people swaying like waves in this direction and that; this, I say, is the work of God’s wisdom. Hence he does not say, ‘for there is no ruler but of God’, but it is the thing [monarchical power as such] he speaks of, and says, ‘there is no power but of God’.”³³³

And again he writes: “Is every ruler elected by God to the throne he occupies? Is every emperor, king, and prince chosen by rule? If so, is every law and decree promulgated by a ruler to be regarded as good, and thus to be obeyed without question? The answer to all these questions is, no. God has ordained that every society should have rulers, whose task it is to maintain order, so that people may live in peace. God allows rulers to employ soldiers, whose task it is to capture and imprison those who violate social order. Thus God will bless and guide any ruler and any soldier who acts according to these principles. But many rulers abuse their authority by amassing huge wealth for themselves at the expense of their people, by unjustly punishing those who dare to speak against their evil, and by making unjust wars against

³³² St. Basil, quoted in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, pp. 66, 102.

³³³ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 23 on Romans*, 1.

neighbors. Such rulers have not been elected by God, but rather have usurped the position that a righteous ruler should occupy. And if their laws are wrong, we should not obey them. The supreme authority in all matters is not the law of the land, but the law of God; and if one conflicts with the other, we must obey God's law."³³⁴

Rulers like Julian, according to the Fathers, were not established by God, but were allowed to ascend the throne by Him in order to punish the people. As St. Isidore of Pelusium wrote: "If some evildoer unlawfully seizes power, we do not say that he is established by God, 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."³³⁵ And again St. Jerome said: "He often permits wicked kings to arise in order that they may in their wickedness punish the wicked."³³⁶

As for obedience to the rulers, the principle was the same in the post-Constantinian and post-Julian era as in the pre-Constantinian era. As St. Basil the Great put it: "It is right to submit to higher authority whenever a command of God is not violated thereby."³³⁷ Again, Blessed Theodoret of Cyr wrote: "Paul does not incite us to obey even if we are being constrained to impiety..."³³⁸

Perhaps the most famous example of the Church refusing to obey the State 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'."³³⁹

Not only apostate or heretical emperors were opposed by the Fathers, but also any emperor who transgressed the Law of God. For, as St. Basil the Great wrote: "The Emperors must defend the decrees of God".³⁴⁰ And St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: "The law of Christ submits you to our power and our

³³⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *On Living Simply*.

³³⁵ St. Isidore, *Letter 6 to Dionysius*.

³³⁶ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 2.21.

³³⁷ St. Basil, *The Morals*, Rule 79 (Cap. 1).

³³⁸ Blessed Theodoret, P.G. 66, col. 864, commenting on Romans 13.5.

³³⁹ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 18.

³⁴⁰ St. Basil, *The Morals*, Rule 79.

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?"³⁴¹

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."³⁴² "The 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."³⁴³

This teaching came to be embodied in the canon law of the Church, as in the 30th Apostolic Canon, which defrocked any cleric who had obtained his post with the help of the secular authorities. Again, in the *Apostolic Constitutions* we read: "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."³⁴⁴

Perhaps the most striking and instructive example of the boldness of the fourth-century Christian hierarchs even against Orthodox emperors was provided by St. Ambrose of Milan.

Ambrose's views on Church-State relations were squarely in the tradition of the Eastern Fathers: "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."³⁴⁵

Now in 390, a riot took place in Thessalonica that led to the murder of several magistrates. In his anger on hearing the news, the Emperor Theodosius ordered the execution of the perpetrators. But there was no trial, and many innocents 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,

³⁴¹ St. Gregory, *Sermon 17*.

³⁴² St. Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*.

³⁴³ St. John Chrysostom, quoted in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarch Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, p. 68.

³⁴⁴ *Apostolic Constitutions*, XI, 34.

³⁴⁵ St. Ambrose, in Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: Phoenix, 1997, p. 156.

but your reason has not yet recognized the character of the deed. Peradventure your Imperial power prevents your recognizing 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...”³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 17, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 143-144.

26. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION: (3) EMPIRE AND PRIESTHOOD

In 324, Constantine defeated Licinius and imposed his rule on the East, thereby delivering the Christians from persecution. Rome was now, not the persecutor, but the protector, of the Christian people. Indeed, already years before Constantine had started to legislate in favour of Christianity with 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).”³⁴⁷

The decree on absolving the clergy from holding civic office is particularly interesting: “[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.”³⁴⁸ Some would see in this a cynical attempt to exploit the Deity in the interests of the emperor. But a more reasonable interpretation is that he was already feeling his way to a doctrine of the symphony of powers, in which the emperor helps the Church as her defender and “the bishop of those outside the Church”, while the Church helps the emperor through her prayers.

“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.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

³⁴⁸ Quoted in Charles Freeman, “The Emperor’s State of Grace”, *History Today*, vol. 51 (1), January, 2001, p. 11.

³⁴⁹ Salway, *A History of Roman Britain*, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 249-250.

Constantine tried to conform his legislation to Christian principles. He gave the Church the full honour due her as an institution founded by the One True God; for it was the Body of the God-Man Himself, and therefore higher than any human institution, not excluding the 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. One of the most powerful rulers in history, who exercised absolute political control over the whole of the ancient Roman empire, and did not shrink from waging war against, and executing, his political opponents, Constantine nevertheless deferred to the Church in all things spiritual.

As Edward Cutts writes: "The merit of Constantine's relations with the Church lies in what he abstained from doing, as much as in what he did. It was a proof of the highest genius in the Emperor... to realize as he did the position of the Church as an imperium in imperio; to appreciate as he did the true relations of the Emperor to the Church; and to take his line as he did, not shrinking from initiative and intervention, yet so rarely overstepping the due limits of his prerogative. It is not pretended, indeed, that Constantine's history is free from infringements of these right relations, but such exceptions are very few; and it is, on the whole, very remarkable that the true relations which ought to regulate the co-ordinate action of Church and State were so immediately and fully established, and on the whole so scrupulously observed, as they were by the first Christian Emperor."³⁵⁰

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 (318 in number, the same number as the servants of Abraham in his battle against the Babylonian kings), and did not sit on a royal throne, but on a little stool somewhat apart from the bishops.³⁵¹ He did not vote with the bishops, let alone impose his will on them. As Leithart writes, "Constantine did not dominate the council. He did not formulate the final creed, nor did he sign off on it – being, again, an unbaptized nonbishop. It is difficult, however, to believe that the bishops could have come to such a thoroughgoing conclusion [the defeat of Arianism, with only two bishops rejecting the agreement] without his political skill and strength of personality..."³⁵²

When he addressed the Council Constantine demonstrated his sincere belief that 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

³⁵⁰ Cutts, *Constantine the Great*, London: SPCA, 1881, pp. 160-161.

³⁵¹ Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, "The First Ecumenical Council", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 34, N 6, November-December, 1984, p. 9.

³⁵² Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

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 instil in others, destroy the seeds of all quarrels.”³⁵³ Again, to the Fathers who did not attend the Council he wrote: “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.’”³⁵⁴

Constantine saw himself as the instrument whereby God replaced the false religions 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.”³⁵⁵

Although Arianism was not finally defeated at this Council, and the Arians continued to stir up persecutions against the Church for decades, and even centuries to come, the Creed drawn up at Nicaea and completed by the addition of articles on the Divinity of the Holy Spirit and the Church at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381, became the official statement of faith of the True Church from henceforth; and the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 forbade any addition to, or subtraction from, its wording. The later Councils did not change the Creed, but made further definitions to combat further heretical interpretations of its articles. Thus the Third Ecumenical Council anathematized Nestorianism, which alleged that the Divine and Human natures of Christ were united only by a moral, and not by a personal, bond, so that the Virgin Mary could be called the Mother of Christ only, and not the Mother of God as the Church maintains. Again, the Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils of 451 and 553 condemned various manifestations of Monophysitism, which alleged that Christ was not fully man (the opposite error to Arianism). The Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-81 condemned Monothelitism, which alleged that Christ had only one will.

³⁵³ St. Constantine, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Ruskaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 71.

³⁵⁴ Sokolov, *Lektsii po Istorii Greko-Vostochnoj tserkvi* (Lectures on the History of the Greek-Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 15.

³⁵⁵ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, II, 28.

And the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 condemned Iconoclasm, which forbade the veneration of icons as if they were idols. The Seventh Council forms a fitting conclusion to the series of Councils concerned with Christological and Trinitarian heresies insofar as Iconoclasm attacked the Incarnation of Christ by denying the ability of Spirit to penetrate and sanctify matter (specifically, the matter of icons, but by inference also the matter of Christ's Body).

The Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787) are the seven pillars upon which the Orthodox Church is built (Proverbs 9.1), and every Orthodox Christian is obliged to accept their Divine authority. In them, and in the Local Councils held until the fall of the Empire in 1453, all the main dogmas of the Church – on the Holy Trinity, on the two Natures and Wills of Christ, on the Holy Spirit, and on the Divine Energies – were elaborated with the active participation of the emperors. Their significance was indicated by the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs in 1848: "Our faith received its beginning not from men or through a man, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1.12), which the divine Apostles preached, which the Ecumenical Councils confirmed, which great and wise teachers passed on by succession to the whole inhabited world, and which the martyrs sealed with their own blood. We will hold to this confession, which we have received in purity from so many men, and will reject every innovation as an inspiration of the devil."

The very hands-on approach to religion of St. Constantine was inherited by all of his successors. This participation was not always helpful, as during the reigns of the Arian and Iconoclast emperors; but in general the Emperors played a vital role in supporting the Church to uphold the true faith and eliminate heresy. They accepted the principle, most clearly expounded by the French saint Vincent of Lerins, that the truth is "that which has always, everywhere and by all [Christians] been believed" since apostolic times; in other words, all *innovations* in faith or morality must be false and must be rejected in council. The emperors, being sons of the Church, accepted this principle, and *in general* upheld it in their relations with the Church.

In this they were following the example first provided by St. Constantine. However, it is necessary to emphasize that 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 (Alferov) 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 conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church."³⁵⁶

The most famous definition of the relationship between Constantine and the Church is to be found in two passages from Eusebius' *Life*, 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 all the subjects of the empire" and leading them towards piety.³⁵⁷ The word translated "overseeing" [επισκοπει] here has the same root as the word for "bishop" [επισκοπος], thereby underlining the commonality of functions. So the emperor was not *really* a bishop, but only *like* a bishop - in both his missionary and in his 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 priests to help her missionary work in Georgia. Again, on hearing that the Christians were being persecuted in Persia he threatened to go to war with that state. On the other hand, he convened numerous councils of bishops to settle doctrinal disputes throughout the empire - in particular, those caused by the Donatists in Africa and the Meletians in Egypt and, above all, the empire-wide contagion caused by Arius.

In this way he acted as *the focus of unity* for the Church on earth. Nor did this role *within* the Church mean that he thought himself to have power *over* the Church. Thus 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."³⁵⁸ And on the decision of the Council of Arles (314) he said: "The bishops' decision

³⁵⁶ A. Tuskarev, *Tserkov' o Gosudarstve* (The Church on the State), Staritsa, 1992, p. 75.

³⁵⁷ Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, I, 44; IV, 24.

³⁵⁸ Having failed in their petition, the Donatists then decided that they didn't need Constantine anyway. For "what have Christians to do with kings? Or what have bishops to do with the palace?" (Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, I, 22).

should be looked upon as though the Lord Himself had been sitting in judgement.”

Constantine cared desperately that the bishops should achieve unity, and was deeply frustrated at every sign of disunity. Thus on hearing of the Donatist heresy he said: “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”. And at the opening of the First Ecumenical Council, convened to judge the heresy of Arius, he said: “I hold any sedition within the Church of Christ to be as formidable as any war or battle, and even more difficult to bring to an end. I am consequently more opposed to it than to anything else...”

The bishops understood Constantine’s sincere veneration for the Church; so when St. Athanasius was condemned by a council at Tyre, and appealed to the emperor, he was not asking the secular power to overthrow the decision of the ecclesiastical power, as the Donatists thought earlier in the reign, but was rather calling on a son of the Church (albeit not yet baptized) to defend the decision of the Holy Fathers against heretics. Even his most important and valuable contribution to the Council of Nicaea, his suggestion of the term homoousios, “consubstantial”, to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son was probably made in collaboration with Bishops Ossius and Alexander.³⁵⁹ 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...

The emperor as focus of unity was especially needed when the Church was afflicted by problems affecting the whole Church. 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 coordinating function. He alone could 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...

The pagan absolutist system of government had concentrated power in both the political and the religious spheres in the hands of one man. Thus in Rome the emperor was also the first priest, the pontifex maximus. Constantine did not renounce this title (the Emperor Gratian did that towards the end of the century.) As we have seen, however, he renounced any claims to lord it over the Church, and the fourth-century Fathers vigorously opposed any such attempt on the part of his successors. And yet this did not mean that they wished the emperor to play no part at all in Church affairs. On the contrary: they expected him to pass laws that would benefit the Church, convene Church Councils to resolve disputes and condemn heretics, and give

³⁵⁹ Leithart, op. cit., p. 170.

the force of secular law to the decisions of those Councils. Such a role was clearly incompatible with the complete separation of Church and State as that is understood today; in fact, it inevitably gave the emperor a considerable importance and influence in Church affairs. The question, then, arises: did the emperor have a quasi-priestly role, if not as *pontifex maximus* on the pagan model, at any rate as a kind of extra-hierarchical bishop, or “bishop of those outside”, to use St. Constantine’s phrase?

In later centuries this question would be bound up with the question of the significance of the sacrament of royal anointing that the Church bestowed on all new rulers. However, in early Byzantium there was no such sacrament – or at any rate, no *visible* sacrament, so the status of the Christian emperor was viewed not in the context of any Church rite, but in the context of the actual power that the emperor exercised in relation to the Church. And in the first half of the fifth century that power was increasing...

The reason for that was the decline in quality of the Church hierarchy, and the increasing influence of heretical teachings such as Nestorianism and Monophysitism. As the 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. Nor did the Church have any objection to this – so long as the Emperor was Orthodox. Some “interference” by them was even sanctioned by Canon 93 (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.”³⁶⁰

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...”³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Eerdmans edition, pp. 488, 489.

³⁶¹ Holy Transfiguration Monastery, “The Seat of Moses”, quoted in *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston, 1982, p. 65.

Emperors had to intervene especially when heretics became violent – as when the Monophysite heretic Dioscuros murdered St. Flavian. Thus the officials of Emperor Theodosius II played a major role in the Third Ecumenical Council. And it was the decisive intervention of the 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”.³⁶²

St. Isidore of Pelusium believed that some interference by the emperors was needed 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 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.”³⁶³ It was acting justly, in 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”.³⁶⁴

St. Leo, Pope of Rome, welcomed the interference of the emperors. Thus to the Emperor Theodosius II he wrote that he had “not only the soul of an Emperor, but also the soul of a priest”. And to the Emperor Marcian he wished “the palm of the priesthood as well as the emperor’s crown”.³⁶⁵ 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”.³⁶⁶ 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. At such times, when the majority of bishops

³⁶² St. Marcian, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³⁶³ St. Isidore, *Tvorenia (Works)*, Moscow, 1860, vol. 3, pp. 400, 410.

³⁶⁴ St. Isidore, quoted in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, vol. I, p. 244.

³⁶⁵ J. Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 11.

³⁶⁶ St. Leo, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

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, they were images of the Heavenly King, their vocation being, like His, to witness to the 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).

For, as Gilbert 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]'.³⁶⁷

It is in this context that one has to understand the highly rhetorical expressions applied to the rulers. "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. 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'; 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

³⁶⁷ Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996.

'Melchisedech noster, merito rex atque sacerdos'; towards 645 an anonymous panegyric characterised Clotaire I as *quasi sacerdos*; Paulinus, bishop of Aquilea, in 794 encouraged Charlemagne to be 'Dominus et pater, rex et sacerdos'. To justify the canonisation 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."³⁶⁸

The near-assimilation of the emperor to the priesthood can be seen in the evolution of the ceremony of coronation from pagan to Christian times. Thus Sir Steven Runciman writes: "When Diocletian instituted a coronation ceremony it was performed by the senior lay minister; and the first Christian Emperors continued the practice. Theodosius II, for example, was crowned by the prefect of the City of Constantinople. But at his successor Marcian's coronation the Patriarch was present³⁶⁹; and Marcian's successor Leo I was certainly crowned by the Patriarch. The Patriarch was by now the official with the highest precedence after the Emperor; but his intervention turned the coronation into a religious ceremony. In the course of it the Emperor underwent a sort of ordination; he received charismatic powers. Henceforward the Imperial Palace was known as the Sacred Palace. Its ceremonies were liturgical ceremonies, in which he placed the double role of God's representative on earth and representative of the People before God, a symbol both of God and of the Divine Incarnation. The acclamations to which he was entitled stressed his position. On Christmas Eve he was addressed in a prayer that begged Christ would 'move all nations throughout the universe to offer tribute to Your Majesty, as the Magi offered presents to Christ'. The Whitsun [Pentecost] hymns declare that the Holy Ghost descends in fiery tongues on to the Imperial head. At the same time the Emperor paid homage to God in the name of the Christian commonwealth. In the words of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogennitus it was through the Palace ceremonies that 'the Imperial power can be exercised with due rhythm and order and the Empire can thus represent the harmony and movement of the universe as it stems from the Creator'. The Byzantines fervently believed in this interpretation of the Emperor's position. It did not prevent them from seeking to depose an Emperor whom they thought unworthy or ungodly. His sanctity then might not preserve him from a violent death. It was the symbol, not necessarily the person, that they revered..."³⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the Empire and the Priesthood remained separate principles in the Byzantine understanding. They were both from God, and were meant to work in "symphony" to the glory of God, as the Emperor Justinian

³⁶⁸ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315.

³⁶⁹ According to Alexander Dvorkin, the crowning of Marcian and Pulcheria "was the first in history to be carried out in church" (*Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 292).

³⁷⁰ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 58-59.

proclaimed in his famous *Novella 6*. But they remained separate principles in the New Testament as in the Old (cf. the punishment of King Uzziah for trying to combine the two).

Indeed, so important is this distinction that its violation is the surest sign of the coming of the Antichrist. For if the Orthodox Emperor is “he who restrains the coming” of the Antichrist, then the combining of the two principles in one person is the surest sign that he has already come. Hence the fall of the Empire must herald his coming and the end of the world....

And yet in the last analysis it is not the Church that depends on the Empire, but the Empire on the Church. And the Church depends on her hierarchs’ preserving the correct confession of faith through the prayers of all the faithful in both the Heavenly and the Earthly Church. We see an instructive illustration of this in the *Life of St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome*: “In the course of the debates with the heretics [at the Council of Chalcedon in 451], doubts concerning the truth arose in the hearts of many; whereupon the holy fathers commanded that the Tome of Leo be read. This letter originally was sent by the Pope to Saint Flavian, the martyred Patriarch of Constantinople, when the latter convened a synod in the eastern capital to anathematize the unbelievers. It is said that the holy chief Apostle Peter himself edited the document. Thus, we read in *The Spiritual Meadow*, written by Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem: ‘Abba Menas, superior of Salam, a coenobium near Alexandria, related that he heard this from Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria: “While staying in Constantinople, I was a guest in the house of my lord Gregory, archdeacon of the Church of Rome, a truly illustrious and virtuous man [St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome]. He told me a story recorded in the archives of the Roman Church about the most blessed and Most Holy Pope Leo. He said that Leo wrote a letter to Saint Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, condemning the impious Eutyches and Nestorius, and put it on the tomb of Peter, the chief Apostle. Then he fasted, prayed, and kept vigils, begging the preeminent Apostle, “If I, as a man, have in this letter erred in any way or failed to explain the truth fully, do thou, to whom this Church and episcopal throne were entrusted, set it right.” Forty days later the Apostle appeared while Leo was praying. He said, “I have read your letter and corrected it.” The Pope took the epistle from the blessed Peter’s tomb, opened it, and found that it had been amended by the Apostle’s hand.”’ ...

““While I was synkellos of Eulogius, the holy Patriarch of Alexandria, I saw in a dream a radiant man of venerable appearance. He commanded, “Announce me to Patriarch Eulogius.” “Who are you, my lord?” I asked. He replied, “I am Leo, Pope of Rome.” I told Eulogius, “The most blessed and Most Holy Leo, Primate of the Roman Church, wishes to pay his respects.” Patriarch Eulogius rushed to meet the saint. The two men prayed, then exchanged a kiss and sat. The divine Leo asked Eulogius, “Do you know why I am here?” “No,” answered the holy Patriarch. “I have come to thank you,” said Leo, “because you have stoutly defended the letter I wrote my brother, Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople, refuting the impious Nestorian and

Eutychian heresies. You have understood my teaching well and proclaimed it fearlessly, thereby silencing the misbelievers. Know, brother, that you have gratified not me alone by your godly zeal and labor, but the chief Apostle Peter as well, for he read my epistle and corrected it. Above all you have pleased Christ our God, Who is Truth Itself, preached by us." I had the dream not once or twice, but three times. Convinced by this, I related it to Saint Eulogius. He wept, stretched out his hands to heaven, and said, "I thank Thee, O Master Christ our God, that Thou hast vouchsafed me, the unworthy, to proclaim Thy truth. In Thy great and ineffable compassion and by the intercessions of Thy servants Peter and Leo, Thou has deigned to accept my feeble efforts as Thou didst the widow's mites.""³⁷¹

³⁷¹ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, volume VI: February, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2003, pp. 207, 208.

27. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION: (4) RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Contrary to what is often thought, the pagan Roman emperors had been in general tolerant of religion. This was for reasons of political expediency – a multi-ethnic and multi-faith population is more easily controlled if all its faiths are respected and legalized. Another motive was superstition. After all, calculated the ruler, the god of this people is more likely to help me if I do not persecute his people... And so in Imperial Rome before Constantine periods of persecution were intermittent and generally short-lived, and directed exclusively at Christians. As Perez Zagorin writes, Rome “was tolerant in practice in permitting the existence of many diverse religious cults, provided their votaries also complied with the worship of the divine emperor as part of the state religion. Unlike Christianity and Judaism, Roman religion had no sacred scriptures and did not depend on any creed, dogmas, or ethical principles. It consisted very largely of participation in cult acts connected with the worship of various deities and spirits that protected the Roman state and were associated with public, family, and domestic life. At nearly all stages of their history the Romans were willing to accept foreign cults and practices; this de facto religious pluralism is entirely attributable to the polytheistic character of Roman religion and had nothing to do with principles of values sanctioning religious toleration, a concept unknown to Roman society or law and never debated by Roman philosophers or political writers.”³⁷²

Christianity introduced a new depth and a new complexity to the question of religious toleration. On the one hand, the Christians, like the Jews, rejected the idea of a multiplicity of gods, and insisted that there was only one name by which men could be saved – that of the One True God, Jesus Christ. This position did not logically imply that Christians wanted to persecute people of other faiths. But the “exclusivism” of Christianity, then as now, was perceived by the pagan-ecumenist majority, whether sincerely or insincerely, as a threat to themselves. On the other hand, the Christians set no value on the forcible conversion of people to the Faith: man, being in the image of God, was free, and could come to God only by his own free will. As the Christian lawyer Tertullian put it: “It does not belong to religion to force people to religion, since it must be accepted voluntarily.”³⁷³ In his *Barring of Heretics* (ca. 200) Tertullian insisted on the truth of Christianity and declared that heretics could not be called Christians. Nevertheless, he was “opposed to compulsion in religion and stated in other works that ‘to do away with freedom of religion [*libertas religionis*]’ was wrong. While Christians, he said, worship the one God and pagans worship demons, both ‘human and natural law’ ordain that ‘each person may worship whatever he wishes’.”³⁷⁴

³⁷² Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 4.

³⁷³ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 2.

³⁷⁴ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

However, Tertullian was writing at a time when the Church, as a persecuted minority, clearly benefited from religious toleration. What if the Church herself were to gain political power? After all, the Old Testament Kings were *required* by God to defend the faith of the people *as their first duty*, and the prophets constantly reminded them that they would be judged by God in accordance with their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this duty. This same duty was taken very seriously by the Byzantine emperors Constantine I, Theodosius I and Justinian I. Constantine is often accused of introducing religious intolerance into the State. However, in accordance with the Edict of Milan and the teaching of his tutor Lactantius, he professed and practiced a policy of religious toleration. For, as he declared: "It is one thing to undertake the contest for immortality voluntarily, another to compel others to do it likewise through fear of punishment."³⁷⁵ While not hiding his Christianity, and characterizing paganism as "superstition", he allowed the pagans to practise their faith. Thus in 324, just after defeating Licinius and taking control of the Eastern provinces, he wrote: "I wish, for the common good of the empire and of all men, that Thy people should be in peace and remain exempt from troubles. May those who are in error joyfully receive the enjoyment of the same peace and tranquillity as the believers, for the sweetness of concord will have the power to correct them also and lead them on the right path." In addition to allowing the pagans to practise their religion, Constantine never excluded them "from the administration of the State: one finds them among the praetorian prefects, the prefects of Rome, the ministers and even the entourage of the Emperor."³⁷⁶

Timothy 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 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."³⁷⁷

Constantine steadily went about his goal of Christianizing the empire, preaching and legislating against the enemies of the faith: by 324 pagan

³⁷⁵ Lactantius, in Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 637.

³⁷⁶ Pierre Maraval, "La Louve et la Croix" (The She-Wolf and the Cross), *Histoire* (Le Figaro), 8, June-July, 2013, p. 63.

³⁷⁷ Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

sacrifices had been banned, heresy was illegal, and the official religion of the Empire was Orthodoxy. Constantine also defended the Christians against the Jews. He released all slaves whom the Jews had dared to circumcise, and those Jews who killed their co-religionists for converting to Christianity were executed.³⁷⁸

And if his bark was worse than his bite, and many of his decrees were not executed by local governors, they nevertheless had a long-term effect. By the 350s pagan sacrifices were rare. “Heretics were exiled, and Arius’s books were burned, just as the anti-Christian treatise of Porphyry was destroyed by imperial order. Constantine’s religious policy created an ‘atmosphere’ of hostility to heresy as much as to paganism.”³⁷⁹

This raises the question, as Leithart writes: “If religion was a matter of free will, why did Constantine so vigorously oppose paganism in his decrees, letters and speeches, and how could he justify any restrictions on religion at all? If Constantine thought that religion should be free, what was he doing forbidding sacrifice?”

“Elizabeth Digeser offers terminology and categories that help make sense of Constantine’s policies. She distinguishes forbearance from toleration, and tolerance from ‘concord’. Forbearance is a pragmatic policy, not guided by moral or political principle. Forbearance might change to persecution if political conditions change. The periods of Roman acceptance of Christianity were periods of forbearance. Toleration is ‘disapproval or disagreement coupled with an unwillingness to take action against those viewed with disfavor in the interest of some moral or political principle.’ This principle could arise, as for Lactantius, from a theory concerning the nature of religion, or, alternatively, from a theory about human nature or about the limits of state power. By this definition, toleration does not involve an idea of the equality of all viewpoints but the opposite. Toleration assumes *disapproval* of certain religious expressions but refrains for principled reasons from using state power to suppress the disapproved religion. Beyond toleration, Digeser introduces the category of ‘concord’: ‘(1) its attitude of forbearance is dictated by some moral, political, or even religious principle and (2) it expects that by treating its dissenters with forbearance it is creating conditions under which they will ultimately change their behavior to conform to what the state accepts.’ These three strategies of religious policy build on one another: toleration assumes forbearance on principle, it expects that the forbearance will have the ultimate outcome of unity if not complete uniformity.”³⁸⁰

After Constantine, his hostility towards paganism and heresy was redirected against Orthodoxy. Thus the Emperor Constantius, an Arian, was

³⁷⁸ L.A. Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 340.

³⁷⁹ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

³⁸⁰ Liethart, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

also a persecutor of Orthodox Christians. And in the late 340s the Donatist Marculus was executed. Julian the Apostate was a pagan and persecuted pagans, killing the holy Martyrs Eusignius and Artemius. It was during the reign of Theodosius I (379-395) that the question of religious freedom was confronted directly for the first time, and in 384 Bishop Priscillian of Avila was executed on a charge of sorcery.³⁸¹

The Holy Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries rejected the idea of killing people for their faith. Thus the Church historian Socrates said: "It is not the custom of the Orthodox Church to persecute".³⁸² And St. Athanasius the Great said: "It is a characteristic of [true] religion not to force but to persuade."³⁸³ 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).³⁸⁴ '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'."³⁸⁵

At the same time, extending the boundaries of the empire could be justified on the grounds of facilitating Christian missionary work. Thus according to St. Gregory the Great, following Augustine, war could be waged "for the sake of enlarging the res publica within which we see God worshipped... so that the name of Christ will travel among the subject people through the preaching of the faith."³⁸⁶

St. John Chrysostom (+407) preached non-violence to heretics: "Christians above all men are forbidden to correct the stumblings of sinners by force... It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice."³⁸⁷

³⁸¹ Jonathan Hill, *Christianity: The First 400 Years*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013, pp. 233, 294.

³⁸² Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 3.

³⁸³ St. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 67; P.G. 25, p. 773.

³⁸⁴ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 19.

³⁸⁵ Troitsky, *Khristianskaia Filosofia Braka* (The Christian Philosophy of Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, p. 207.

³⁸⁶ St. Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, 1.73.

³⁸⁷ St. John Chrysostom, quoted by Fr. Antonious Henein, orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, 8 August, 2000.

St. John interpreted the parable of the wheat and the tares to mean that the heretics (the tares) should not be killed. But they were to be resisted in other ways. "As we can see from the many occurrences of the phrase 'stop the mouths of the heretics' in his writings, St. John showed not the slightest indulgence towards false teachings; indeed, much of his life as a preacher was devoted to combating such heretics as the Eunomians, the Judaizers, and the Manichaeans. However, he was resolutely opposed to the use of violence by the authorities to subdue heretics. And it is this reservation of his that must be carefully understood, if one is to grasp what may seem to be a contradictory view of heretics. He knew from pastoral experience that heretics were far more likely to be turned aside from their errors by prayer: 'And if you pray for the Heathens, you ought of course to pray for Heretics also, for we are to pray for all men, and not to persecute. And this is good also for another reason, as we are partakers of the same nature, and God commands and accepts benevolence towards one another' (*Homilies on the First Epistle to St. Timothy*, 7). Near the end of this homily on the dangers of anathematizing others, he says that 'we must anathematize heretical doctrines and refute impious teachings, from whomsoever we have received them, but show mercy to the men who advocate them and pray for their salvation.' In other words, we must love the heretic, but hate the heresy."³⁸⁸

However, it may be wondered whether St. John's words should be interpreted as an absolute ban on any kind of coercion in any circumstances. For there were other prominent and holy Christians contemporary with him who did approve of some measure of coercion in some circumstances. In particular, there was the question of the rights of the Christian emperor. If the Church as an institution or individual Christians could only persuade, not coerce, was it not the task of the emperor to coerce, or at any rate limit the activity of those who refused to be persuaded?

It is significant that no prominent churchman denounced the undoubtedly coercive laws passed against pagans and heretics by the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395). Theodosius decreed, writes John Julius Norwich, "that only those who professed the consubstantiality of the Trinity (in other words the Nicene Creed) could be considered *Catholic Christians* - a designation that appears here for the first time. 'All others,' the edict continues, 'we pronounce to be mad and foolish, and we order that they shall bear the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to bestow on their conventicles the title of churches: these are to be visited first by divine vengeance, and secondly by the stroke of our own authority, which we have received in accordance with the will of heaven.'"³⁸⁹

As Perez Zagorin writes, Theodosius "proscribed various heresies by name, ordered the confiscation of churches and private houses where heretics met

³⁸⁸ Hieromonk Patapios, "On Caution regarding Anathematization", *Orthodox Tradition*, January, 2000, p. 22.

³⁸⁹ Norwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

for worship, and deprived them of the right to make wills or receive inheritances. In the case of certain heretical sects [the Manichaeans] he commanded that their members be hunted down and executed. In his attempt to enforce uniformity of belief he also instituted legislation against paganism, including a comprehensive enactment in 395 forbidding anyone of whatever rank or dignity to sacrifice to or worship 'senseless images' constructed 'by human hands', on pain of heavy fines and other penalties. He was likewise the first emperor to impose penalties on Christians who profaned their baptism by reverting to paganism.

"... All subjects were expected to be worshippers in this [the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic] Church; and in addition to the spiritual and political authority its bishops wielded, it had the power of the state at its disposal to enforce its faith against heretics. The practical toleration and religious pluralism that had formerly been the Roman custom no longer existed. The change that took place is epitomised in an appeal made in 384 by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus - a Roman senator, orator, and prefect of Rome, and a defender of paganism - to the emperors Theodosius I and Valentinian II to restore the altar of the goddess victory to the Senate House (it had been removed by imperial decree after standing there for over 350 years, since the reign of the emperor Augustus at the beginning of the first century). Speaking in the name of the proscribed ancient religion of Rome, Symmachus declared that 'each nation has its own gods and peculiar rites. The Great Mystery cannot be approached by one avenue alone... Leave us the symbol on which our oaths of allegiance have been sworn for so many generations. Leave us the system which has given prosperity to the State.' His plea was of no avail, however, for the cross of Christ had conquered the Roman Empire, and the altar of Victory remained banished and abandoned."³⁹⁰

Zeal against heretics was, of course, not the exclusive preserve of the emperors. The Christians of Alexandria and the monks of Egypt were famous (or, in some cases, notorious) for their zeal. And when in 388 some Christians burned down the synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates, the Emperor Theodosius ordered its rebuilding at the Christians' expense.

However, St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, 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 synagogue... It

³⁹⁰ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24. However, Hill argues that it was not Theodosius' measures but Justinian's persecution in the sixth century that was "the first really thorough attempt on the part of the Roman authorities to stamp out paganism, and the first time that the various laws against paganism were seriously enforced" (*op. cit.*, p. 301).

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!"³⁹¹

"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."³⁹² Ambrose refused to celebrate the Liturgy until the imperial decree had been revoked. Theodosius backed down...

The "Ambrosean" position may be tentatively formulated as follows. On the one hand, in relation to those outside her the Church can herself adopt no coercive measures; she can do no more than reason, plead and threaten with *God's* justice at the Last Judgement. Her only means of "coercion", if it can be called that, is the excommunication of unrepentant Christians from her fold. On the other hand, the Church blesses the Christian State to use other, more physical means of coercion against those over whom she has no more influence. The purpose of this is not to *convert*; for only persuasion can convert, and as St. Basil the Great says, "by violence you can frighten me, but cannot persuade me". But there are other legitimate and Christian purposes for coercion: justice against evildoers, the restriction of their influence, and the protection of the young and weak in mind...

But even St. Ambrose never advocated the *execution* of heretics or Jews simply because they believed wrongly. This aversion against the execution of heretics is found in other saints. Thus when St. Martin of Tours (+397) signed the decision of a Synod condemning the Spanish heretic Priscillian and handing him over to the Emperor for execution, he felt the reproaches of his conscience, and never again attended a Synod of Bishops.³⁹³

However, we cannot say that the execution of heretics is *absolutely* forbidden by Orthodoxy... In the *Lives of the Saints* we find a few instances of

³⁹¹ St. Ambrose, *Letter* 40, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 69.

³⁹² Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 164.

³⁹³ Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St. Martin of Tours*. St. Ambrose of Milan and Pope Siricus of Rome also protested the execution (Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295).

saints blessing the execution of heretics, even of saints who were not secular rulers executing evildoers themselves. Thus in *The Acts of the Apostles* we read how the Apostle Peter in effect executed Ananias and Sapphira. Again, the Apostles Peter and Paul by their prayers brought about the death of Simon Magus. Again, St. Basil the Great prayed for, and obtained, the death of Julian the Apostate (by the sword of St. Mercurius the Great Martyr). And the holy hierarchs Patrick of Ireland and Leo of Catania in effect executed particularly stubborn perverters of the people.

Probably none of the early Fathers exercised himself more over the question of religious freedom than St. Augustine of Hippo. Zagorin writes: "Augustine carried on a long theological combat with three formidable heresies, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, and Donatism. Among his writings against the last of these and its followers, the Donatists, he left an invaluable record of his reflections on the justification of coercion against heretics to enforce religious truth. At the time he became bishop of Hippo, Donatism, which took its name from one of its first leaders, Donatus, bishop of Carthage, had already existed in North Africa for more than eighty years and had undergone considerable persecution. Originating in the early fourth century in an ecclesiastical controversy over a bishop who had [allegedly] compromised with paganism during the persecution by the emperor Diocletian and was therefore considered a betrayer of the faith, the Donatists formed a schismatic and rival church with its own clergy. Rigorists who believed in a church composed exclusively of the holy, they maintained that an unworthy priest could not perform a valid sacrament. By insisting on the rebaptism of converts, the Donatist church declared its rejection of the sacramental character of Catholic baptism. To some extent Donatism represented an expression of social protest against the profane world as a domain ruled by Satan. Its more extreme advocates, a fanatical fringe of zealots and ascetics known as Circumcellions, sought a martyr's death by any means, including suicide; they gathered as bands of marauding peasants who attacked estates and committed other acts of violence. As a self-described church of martyrs, the Donatists condemned the alliance between Catholicism and the Roman authorities as a renunciation of Christ in favour of Caesar, and their bishop Donatus was reported to have said, 'What has the Emperor to do with the Church?' In the course of its history Donatism became a considerable movement, although it remained largely confined to North Africa.

"In his numerous writings against this heresy, one of Augustine's constant aims was to persuade its followers by means of reason and arguments to abandon their errors and return to the Catholic Church. He did his best to refute its doctrines in a number of treatises and at first opposed any use of coercion against these heretics. A lost work of 397 repudiated coercion, and in an undated letter to a Donatist churchman he wrote: "I do not intend that anyone should be forced into the Catholic communion against his will. On the contrary, it is my aim that the truth may be revealed to all who are in error and that... with the help of God, it may be made manifest so as to induce all to follow and embrace it of their own accord.' To several Donatists he wrote

in around 398 that those who maintain a false and perverted opinion but without 'obstinate ill will' – and especially those 'who have not originated their error by bold presumption' but received it from their parents or others, and who see truth with a readiness to be corrected when they have found it – are not to be included among heretics. The heretic himself, however, 'swollen with hateful pride and with the assertion of evil contradiction, is to be avoided like a mad man'.

“Nevertheless, Augustine eventually reversed his position and decided to endorse coercion. Looking back at this development some years later, he said that at first he had believed that no one should be forced into the unity of Christ, and that the Church should rely only on speaking, reasoning, and persuasion 'for fear of making pretended Catholics out of those whom we knew as open heretics'. But then proven facts caused him to give up this opinion when he saw Donatists in his own city 'converted to Catholic unity by the fear of imperial laws' and those in other cities recalled by the same means. Reclaimed Donatists, he contended, were now grateful that 'fear of the laws promulgated by temporal rulers who serve the Lord in fear has been so beneficial' to them.

“We first learn of Augustine's change of mind in the treatise he wrote (ca. 400) as a reply to a letter by the Donatist bishop Parmenian, a leading spokesman of the movement. In this work he justified the intervention of the imperial government against the Donatists by making Saint Paul's theology of the state, as the apostle outlined it in the thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans (Romans 13.1-7). There Paul instructed Christians to be obedient to the higher powers as the minister ordained by God and armed with the sword for the repression of evildoers. In the light of this apostolic teaching, Augustine insisted that the emperors and the political authorities had the God-given right and duty to crush the sacrilege and schism of the Donatists, since they were as obligated to repress a false and evil religion as to prevent the crime of pagan idolatry. He further pointed out that the Donatists were guilty of many cruelties and had themselves appealed to the emperors in the past against the dissidents in their own church. Denying that those of them condemned to death were martyrs, he described them instead as killers of souls and, because of their violence, often killers of bodies.

“One of the arguments he put forward in defense of force in this work was his interpretation of Jesus' parable of the tares in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 13.24-30). This famous text was destined to be cited often during subsequent centuries in discussions of toleration and persecution, and to occupy a prominent place in the tolerationist controversies of the era of the Protestant Reformation. The parable first likens the kingdom of heaven to a good seed and then relates how a man sowed good seed in the ground, whereupon his enemy came in the night and planted tares, or weeds, there as well. When the wheat appeared, so did the tares. The man's servants asked their master if they should pull up the tares, but he forbade them lest they also uproot the wheat. He ordered that both should be left to grow until the

harvest, and then the reapers would remove and burn the tares and gather the wheat into the barn. The parable's point would seem to be that good people and sinners alike should be allowed to await the Last Judgement to receive their due, when God would reward the good with the kingdom of heaven and punish the bad with the flames of hell. Augustine, however, drew from it a very different lesson: if the bad seed is known, it should be uprooted. According to his explanation, the only reason the master left the tares to grow until the harvest was the fear that uprooting them sooner would harm the grain. When this fear does not exist because it is evident which is the good seed, and when someone's crime is notorious and so execrable that it is indefensible, then it is right to use severe discipline against it, for the more perversity is corrected, the more carefully charity is safeguarded. With the help of this interpretation, which reversed the parable's meaning, Augustine was able not only to justify the Roman government's repression of the Donatists but to provide a wider reason for religious persecution by the civil authorities.

“Augustine elaborated his position in favour of coercion in religion in a number of letters. In a lengthy epistle to the Donatist Vincent, he argued for the utility of coercion in inducing fear that can bring those who are subject to it to the right way of thinking. Maintaining that people could be changed for the better through the influence of fear, he concluded that ‘when the saving doctrine is added to useful fear’, then ‘the light of truth’ can drive out ‘the darkness of error’. To reinforce this view, he quoted the parable of the feast in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 14. 21-23), another of the texts that was to figure prominently in future tolerationist controversy. In this parable, a man prepared a great feast to which he invited many guests who failed to appear. After summoning from the city the poor, blind, and lame to come and eat, he found that room still remained, so he ordered his servants to ‘go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in [compelle intrare in the Latin Vulgate], that My house may be filled’. ‘Do you think,’ Augustine asked in a comment on this passage, ‘that no one should be forced to do right, when you read that the master of the house said to his servants, “Whomever you find, compel them to come in”’. He referred also to the example of the conversion of the apostle Paul, who ‘was forced by the great violence of Christ’s compulsion to acknowledge and hold the truth’ (Acts 9.3-18). The main point, he claimed, was not whether anyone was forced to do something, but whether the purpose of doing so was right or wrong. While no one could be made good against his will, the fear of punishment could persuade a person to repudiate a false doctrine and embrace the truth he had previously denied, as had happened to many Donatists who had thankfully become Catholics and now detested their diabolical separation.

“In dealing with heresy, Augustine thus laid great stress on what might be called the pedagogy of fear to effect a change of heart. He did not see coercion and free will as opposites in religious choice but claimed that fear plays a part in spontaneous acts of the will and may serve a good end. In one of his most important statements on the subject, contained in a letter of 417 to Boniface,

the Roman governor of Africa, he propounded a distinction between two kinds of persecution. '[T]here is an unjust persecution,' he said, 'which the wicked inflict on the Church of Christ, and ... a just persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts on the wicked.' The Church persecutes from love, the Donatists from hatred; the Church in order to correct error, the Donatists to hurl men into error. While the Church strives to save the Donatists from perdition, the latter in their fury kill Catholics to feed their passion for cruelty. Augustine was convinced that the coercion of heretics was therefore a great mercy because it rescued them from lying demons so that they could be healed in the Catholic fold. He rejected the objection of those who said that the apostles had never called upon the kings of the earth to enforce religion, since in the apostles' time there had been no Christian emperor to whom they could appeal. It was necessary and right, however, for kings to forbid and restrain with religious severity actions contrary to God's commandments, and to serve God by sanctioning laws that commanded goodness and prohibited its opposite.

"While admitting that it was better to lead people to the worship of God by teaching than to force them through fear of suffering, Augustine nevertheless averred that the latter way could not be neglected. Experience proved, he claimed, that for many heretics it had been a blessing to be driven out by fear of bodily pain to undergo instruction in the truth and then follow up with actions what they had learned in words. Schismatics, he noted, protested that men have freedom to believe or not to believe, and that Christ never used force on anyone. To this objection he countered with his previous argument that Christ had first compelled Paul to cease his persecution of the Christian Church by striking him blind at his conversion and only then taught him. 'It is a wonderful thing,' he said, 'how he [Paul] who came to the gospel under the compulsion of bodily suffering labored more in the gospel than all the others who were called by words alone.' Once again he drew on the injunction compelle intrare in the Gospel of Luke to affirm that the Catholic Church was in accord with God when it compelled heretics and schismatics to come in. In other letters he denied that the 'evil will' should be left to its freedom, and cited not only this same parable and the example of Christ's compulsion of Paul, but also God's restraint of the Israelites from doing evil and compelling them to enter the land of promise (Exodus 15.22-27), as proof of the Church's justice in using coercion.

"Although after his change of mind Augustine consistently approved the policy of subjecting heretics to coercion, he never desired that they should be killed. In writing to Donatists, he often stated that he and his brethren loved them and acted for their good, and that if they hated the Catholic Church, it was because 'we do not allow you to go astray and be lost'. Donatists had been subject to previous imperial legislation against heresy, but between 405 and 410 the emperor Honorius decreed a number of heavy penalties against them that put them outside the protection of the law for their seditious actions; he ordered their heresy to be put down in 'blood and proscription'. Augustine frequently interceded with the Roman authorities to spare their lives. In 408

he wrote to the proconsul of Africa urging Christian clemency and praying that though heretics [should] be made to feel the effect of the laws against them, they should not be put to death, despite deserving the extreme punishment, in the hope that they might be converted. To another high official he pleaded in behalf of some Donatists tried for murder and other violent acts that they should be deprived of their freedom but not executed that they might have the chance to repent.

“Although repression weakened Donatism, it failed to eliminate this deeply rooted heresy, which survived until the later seventh century when the Islamic conquest of North Africa destroyed every form of Christianity in this region. In the course of his career, Augustine, who was not only an outstanding thinker but a man of keen and sensitive conscience, wrestled strenuously with the problem of heresy and the achievement of Catholic unity by the use of coercion... ‘Pride’, he once wrote, ‘is the mother of all heretics,’ and fear could break down this pride and thus act as an auxiliary in the process of conversion. Whether the heretic was really sincere in professing a change of mind under the threat of bodily pain was a question that could best be left to God. Augustine certainly did not recommend the death penalty for heretics but strove tirelessly to save their souls from eternal perdition. He supported their repression by the Roman imperial government in the hope of restoring them to the Catholic Church, and because, as he said in a letter to some Donatists, ‘nothing can cause more complete death to the soul than freedom to disseminate error’.”³⁹⁴

But if freedom to disseminate error should be restricted, this did not mean that the truth could be known in any other mode than in freedom. For, as St. Maximus the Confessor said, “the mystery of salvation is for those who desire it, not for those who are being coerced”.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-32, 33.

³⁹⁵ St. Maximus, *P.G.* 90.880.

28. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION: (5) THE BOUNDARIES OF ROMANITY

A.N. Wilson writes: “Edmund Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* caused dismay to eighteenth-century churchmen with its controversial and primary contention that European civilization was undermined, less by the advance of the barbarian hordes without, than by the growth of Christianity within, its borders. What was it about Christianity, according to this diagnosis, which was so corrosive of the civilized idea? It was, surely, that the fanatical early Christians, zealous for a holy death, and fervently credulous about the greater reality of the life beyond than life before it, made civilization itself seemed superfluous. What use are the skills of statesmanship, of civil planning, of architecture, of laws, if at any moment, as the early Church taught and believed, the very edifice of worldly existence was going to be wound up, if the Maker was to bring the pageant of human history to a close, taking to Himself His few chosen ones in robes of white to sing perpetual hymnody before His throne, and hurling the rest, the huge majority, into pits and lakes of everlasting fire and destruction?”³⁹⁶

Of course, this is a parody of the true Christian teaching. If we take the very earliest writings of the New Testament, St. Paul’s epistles to the Thessalonians, we see that, while the early Christians certainly longed for the Second Coming of Christ, and thought it might be very soon, St. Paul warned against extreme apocalypticism: “Do not be shaken or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the Day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means, for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself to be God” (II Thessalonians 2.2-4).

In other words, the Day of Christ is not just around the corner. Some important events have to take place first – specifically, the coming of the Antichrist.

Moreover, the Antichrist will not come before another very important event takes place – the fall of the Roman empire, or monarchical power in general. For this is how the Holy Fathers interpret the words: “He who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His Coming” (II Thessalonians 2.7-8).

Roman, or monarchical power is that which “restrains” the coming of the Antichrist. When that is “removed”, then the Antichrist will appear – and only then will Christ come in glory to judge the living and the dead.

³⁹⁶ Wilson, *After the Victorians*, London: Hutchinson, 2005, p. 461.

“There is also another and a greater necessity,” writes Tertullian, “for our offering prayer on behalf of the emperors as also for the whole state of the empire, ... since we know that by the prosperity of the Roman empire the mighty power impending on the whole world and threatening the very close of the age with frightful calamities shall be delayed. And as we are loath to suffer these things, while we pray for their postponement we favour the stability of Rome - nay, we pray for the complete stability of the empire and for Roman interests in general. For we know that the mighty shock impending over the whole earth - in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes - is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman empire.”³⁹⁷

“The subject here,” writes Professor Marta Sordi, “was the interpretation given to the famous passage from the second Epistle to the Thessalonians (2.6-7) on the obstacle, whether a person or an object, which impedes the coming of the Anti-Christ. Without attempting to interpret this mysterious passage, the fact remains that all Christian writers, up to and including Lactantius, Ambrose and Augustine, identified this restraining presence with the Roman empire, either as an institution or as an ideology. Through their conviction that the Roman empire would last as long as the world (Tertullian *Ad Scapulam* 2) the early Christians actually renewed and appropriated as their own the concept of *Roma aeterna*. ‘While we pray to delay the end’ - it is Tertullian speaking (*Apologeticum* 32.1) - ‘we are helping Rome to last forever’.”³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 32.1.

³⁹⁸ Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 173. Tertullian also writes: “The Christian is hostile to nobody, least of all to the emperor, whom... he wishes well, with the whole Roman empire, so long as the world shall last, for so long as it shall last (*Ad Scapulum* 2). Again Lactantius writes: “It is apparent that the world is destined to end immediately. The only evidence to diminish our fear is the fact that the city of Rome continues to flourish. But once this city, which is the veritable capital of the world, falls and there is nothing in its place but ruins, as the Sibyls predict, who can doubt that the end will have arrived both for humanity and for the entire world?... The Sibyls openly speak of Rome being destined to perish. Hystaspes also, who was a very ancient king of the Medes,... predicted long before that the empire and name of Rome should be effaced from the globe... But how this shall come to pass I shall explain... In the first place, the empire shall be parceled out, and the supreme authority being dissipated and broken up shall be lessened,... until ten kings exist all together;... these... shall squander everything and impair and consume... The very fact proclaims the fall and destruction to be near, except that so long as Rome is safe it seems that nothing of this need be feared. But when indeed that head of the world shall fall and the assault begin that the Sibyls speak of coming to pass, who can doubt that the end has already come?... That is the city that has hitherto upheld all things, and we should pray and beseech the God of heaven, if indeed his decrees and mandates can be postponed, that that detested tyrant may not come sooner than we think” (*Institutes* VII, 15, 16, 25). And pseudo-Ephraim writes: “When the kingdom of the Romans shall begin to be consumed by the sword, then the advent of the evil one is at hand... And already is the kingdom of the Romans swept away, and the empire of the Christians is delivered unto God and the Father, and when the kingdom of the Romans shall begin to be consumed then shall come the consummation” (1, 5). See W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999, pp. 124-125. St. Ambrose of Milan also believed that the fall of Rome would bring in the Antichrist.

Thus St. John Chrysostom wrote about “him that restraineth”: “Some say the grace of the Holy Spirit, but others the Roman rule, to which I much rather accede. Why? Because if he meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly, that even now the grace of the Spirit, that is the gifts of grace, withhold him... If he were about come when the gifts of grace cease, he ought now to have come, for they have long ceased. But he said this of the Roman rule,... speaking covertly and darkly, not wishing to bring upon himself superfluous enmities and senseless danger.³⁹⁹ He says, ‘Only there is the one who restraineth now, until he should be taken out of the midst’; that is, whenever the Roman empire is taken out of the way, then shall he come. For as long as there is fear of the empire, no one will willingly exalt himself. But when that is dissolved, he will attack the anarchy, and endeavour to seize upon the sovereignty both of man and of God.”⁴⁰⁰

It follows that the early Christians, far from believing that political power and the fabric of Roman civilization was superfluous, were highly motivated to preserve it in being. For when that fabric collapsed, the Antichrist would come... So, while it was true that the Christians placed no ultimate, permanent value on Roman civilization, they were by no means its enemies.

Fr. Georges Florovsky has described this antimony well. “The Early Christians,” he writes, “were often suspected and accused of civic indifference, and even of morbid ‘misanthropy’, odium generis humani, - which should probably be contrasted with the alleged ‘philanthropy’ of the Roman Empire. The charge was not without substance. In his famous reply to Celsus, Origen was ready to admit the charge. Yet, what else could Christians have done, he asked. In every city, he explained, ‘we have another system of allegiance’, alloy systema tes patridos (*Contra Celsum*, VIII.75). Along with the civil community

³⁹⁹ For he could have been accused of preparing the fall of Rome, aeterna et invicta, which would have given them an excuse for persecuting the Christians on the same basis as they persecuted the Jews - as political revolutionaries. (V.M.). Cf. Patriarch Nikon of Moscow: “It is necessary to investigate: who is he who restrains, and why does Paul speak about him unclearly? What hinders his appearance? Some say - the grace of the Holy Spirit, others - Roman power. I agree with the latter. For if Paul had meant the Holy Spirit, then he would have said so clearly. But he [the antichrist] was bound to come when the gifts of the Holy Spirit should become scarce, they have already become scarce a long time ago. But if he is speaking of Roman power, then he had a reason for concealment, for he did not want to draw from the Empire persecution on the Christians as if they were people living and working for the destruction of the Empire. That is why he does not speak so clearly, although he definitely indicates that he will be revealed at the fitting time. For ‘the mystery of iniquity is already at work’, he says. By this he understands Nero, as an image of the antichrist, for he wanted people to worship him as god. ... When he who restrains now will be taken away, that is, when Roman power will be destroyed, he will come, that is, as long as there is fear of this power nobody will introduce anarchy and will want to seize for himself all power, both human and Divine. For, just as earlier the Median power was destroyed by the Babylonian, and the Babylonian by the Persian, and the Persian by the Macedonian, and the Macedonian by the Roman, so this last will be destroyed by the antichrist, and he by Christ...” (in Zyzykin, op. cit., part 2, pp. 48-49).

⁴⁰⁰ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on II Thessalonians*.

there was in every city another community, the local Church. And she was for Christians their true home, or their 'fatherland', and not their actual 'native city'. The anonymous writer of the admirable 'Letter to Diognetus', written probably in the early years of the second century, elaborated this point with an elegant precision. Christians do not dwell in cities of their own, nor do they differ from the rest of men in speech and customs. 'Yet, while they dwell in the cities of Greeks and Barbarians, as the lot of each is cast, the structure of their own polity is peculiar and paradoxical... Every foreign land is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is a foreign land... Their conversation is on the earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.' There was no passion in this attitude, no hostility, and no actual retirement from daily life. But there was a strong note of spiritual estrangement: '*and every fatherland is a foreign land.*' It was coupled, however, with an acute sense of responsibility. Christians were confined in the world, 'kept' there as in a prison; but they also 'kept the world together,' just as the soul holds the body together. Moreover, this was precisely the task allotted to Christians by God, 'which it is unlawful to decline' (*Ad Diognetum*, 5, 6). Christians might stay in their native cities, and faithfully perform their daily duties. But they were unable to give their full allegiance to any polity of this world, because their true commitment was elsewhere...."⁴⁰¹

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So the Christians were "in" the world of Roman statehood, culture civilization, but not "of" it. The question is: how, if at all, did this attitude change when the Empire became Christian under Constantine?

In fundamentals, not at all. Thus it was precisely in the fourth century, the century of the Christianization of the Empire, that monasticism arose as an institution that defied worldly conventions, choosing the uncultivated desert over Roman city life. However, though supremely unworldly, the monks were not revolutionaries in a political sense. They remained loyal to the Roman Empire and its Orthodox Christian emperors. And holy monks such as St. Anthony the Great or St. Isaac of the Dalmatian monastery, or St. Sabbas the Sanctified, would leave their deserts in order to defend the faith or give counsel to the emperors when the Empire was in spiritual or material danger.

The basic principles of monasticism were not new, being simply the uncompromising practice of the Gospel commandments. From the beginning, during the apostolic period as during the pagan persecutions, there had been Christian men and women living essentially monastic lives. But as a large-scale, semi-institutionalized movement involving flight from the main inhabited centres into the desert, monasticism may be said to date from the fourth century, and in particular from the lives of the first well-known hermit, St. Anthony, and the first organizer of coenobia, St. Pachomius.

⁴⁰¹ Florovsky, "Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert", *Christianity and Culture*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974, pp. 68-69.

The major centre of fourth-century monasticism was Egypt, and this location in itself tells us much about the nature of the movement. First, Egypt was, with Babylon, the world-centre of pagan religions and demonic enchantment of all kinds. However, there was a tradition that when Christ as a child had entered Egypt all the idols of the nation had fallen down, and the monks saw themselves as following in Christ's footsteps. Therefore they deliberately set out for the desert and the graveyards where the demons were thought to dwell in the greatest numbers, and there they exorcised them by mighty feats of prayer and fasting.

Secondly, the climate and ecology of the Egyptian desert was extremely severe, and life was hard even for those who had no other purpose than to earn their living. But the monks drastically limited themselves even in those material consolations which were available. In this way they practised the Gospel commandments relating to poverty, chastity, obedience and self-denial in all things, translating them into the terse philosophy of the desert: "Give your blood, and receive the Spirit."

Thirdly, with a few exceptions (such as the Roman St. Arsenius), the Egyptian monks were of Coptic peasant stock, usually illiterate, with no part in that rich Greco-Roman civilization which the conversion of St. Constantine was opening up to Christian influence. And yet so striking were their spiritual attainments that well-educated Christians from the West, such as Saints John Cassian, Jerome and Melanie, as well as from the East, such as Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, came to them as to their teachers in Christian philosophy. In this way the Egyptian monks demonstrated both the possibilities of the royal priesthood of the laity (monasticism was essentially a lay movement), and reasserted a truth which was in danger of being lost as many wise and mighty men of the world entered the Church - the truth, namely, that lack of formal education is no barrier to the attainment of Christian wisdom, and that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty,... that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Corinthians 1.27-29).

Fourthly, these visitors from abroad took back with them the lessons they had learned in Egypt and applied them with astonishing success in their homelands, so that monasticism spread into the deserts of Palestine, Syria and Cappadocia, Gaul, Wales and Ireland. The Egyptian monks themselves rarely left their desert (although the names of seven of them are found in the Irish martyrologies), but the reports of their exploits (especially St. Athanasius' *Life of Antony*) fired the imaginations of Christians with the desire to imitate them. Thus long after Egyptian monasticism had succumbed to Monophysitism and Islam, its principles were still being practised far to the west and north. Moreover, by the second half of the millenium the spiritual wisdom of the Egyptian monks had been combined in an exceedingly fruitful union with the more secular wisdom of the Greco-Roman world, so that the English monks in

Germany and Scandinavia, or the Greek monks in the Balkans and Russia, brought with them not only the Faith but also the rudiments of education (in the case of Saints Cyril and Methodius' mission to the Slavs, even the alphabet). Thus monasticism became the major missionary and civilizing force throughout the rural areas of Europe and the Middle East, and even the urban households of the bishops were as often as not monastic communities.

Fifthly, the Egyptian monks took a leading part in the doctrinal disputes of the day, the most famous example being St. Anthony's expedition to Alexandria to support St. Athanasius against the Arians. This demonstrated the important truth that the Faith was the concern not only of bishops and kings, but also of the humblest layman. This was a truth that towards the end of the first millennium was beginning to be lost in the West, where the sacramental hierarchy of the clergy, led by the increasingly despotic papacy, was tending to replace completely the royal priesthood of the laity and the charismatic authority of the Spirit-bearing monks...

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So how did the Church relate to "culture" in the narrower sense of the material trappings of civilization? For the triumph of Constantine entailed not only a change of regime, nor even a change of religion, but also, in consequence of the latter, a change of culture. This was the high culture of Byzantium, its art and music and architecture, whose imprint has not been erased even now, especially in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Now the Lord says nothing directly about culture. Indirectly, however, He makes it clear that high culture does not constitute part of "the one thing necessary" for salvation. For He was incarnate in one of the least cultured regions of the Roman empire, and deliberately chose uneducated fishermen to be His apostles. The Jews looked down on uncultured Galilee: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1.46). And yet it was from the fishermen of Galilee that true enlightenment came to the world...

The most educated of the apostles was St. Paul, who came from the Greek city of Tarsus and was trained in the law by great rabbinic teachers such as Gamaliel. And yet, while freely acknowledging his debt to Greek philosophy, he, too, says nothing directly about culture. Evidently, he felt that it was not essential for salvation, noting that not many highly cultured, educated or powerful people were being saved. "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise,... that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Corinthians 1.26-27, 29).

But of course, insofar as the roots of culture lie in religion, - the word "culture" comes from cultus, "religious worship", - and insofar as the religion of the Greco-Roman world was pagan, and linked with such immoral activities as temple prostitution, the preachers of the Christian faith could not

be simply indifferent to the culture around them. And as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, we find a definitely negative attitude towards the music, painting and especially the rhetorical art of their time in such early Christian writers as Tertullian and Origen. For “the whole of the culture of that time was built, defined and penetrated by a false faith. One has to recognize that some historical forms of culture are incompatible with the Christian attitude to life, and must be avoided or cast out.”⁴⁰² In accordance with this attitude, Tertullian said: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”, and the martyrs destroyed idols and pagan temples because they were not just what we would call cultural monuments but witnessed to false religion. The modern attitude of valuing them for their aesthetic beauty or “cultural value” was unknown to them.

Not that it is impossible, or always wrong, to dissociate a work of art’s original religious meaning from its aesthetic value. Indeed, this is part of what was involved in the fusion of Christianity and Hellenism that began in the fourth century: the forms of ancient Hellenistic culture – its philosophical concepts, artistic conventions and architectural shapes – were dissociated from their original content and context in the worship of false gods and turned and transformed into the service of the true God. Thus ancient Egyptian portraiture was transformed into the iconography that we see today in St. Catherine’s monastery in Sinai, while the architecture of the Pantheon in Old Rome was transfigured out of all recognition into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in New Rome. The resulting synthesis was the glorious civilization of Byzantium, the core or cradle civilization and culture of the whole of Christendom, East and West, for the first millennium of Christian history, and of the Orthodox East until the eighteenth century.

However, the creation of a Christian culture through a synthesis with the old pagan culture was not the only impact made by Christianity. The new faith was also determined to *destroy* the old culture so as to destroy its demonic influence on backsliding Christians; and this is precisely what happened in some regions. Thus the oldest and most tenacious of the pagan cultures, the Egyptian, which had survived more or less intact after being conquered by Persian, Greek and Roman rulers, did not survive the coming of Christianity.

The tenacity of the old faith is clearly seen in Cleopatra, the last of the Greek rulers of Egypt, who behaved like an old-fashioned pharaoh building temples in the old style dedicated to the old gods, and suffering a thoroughly Egyptian death at the bite of an asp, the old Egyptian symbol of eternity. But when the Christians came to Egypt, the statues of the old gods were defaced and the hieroglyphs – the language of the ancient pagan priesthood – destroyed. The last known pagan temple, which is found in the far south of the country, contains the last known hieroglyph dating to 394 AD...

⁴⁰² Florovsky, “Vera i Kul’tura” (Faith and Culture) in *Vera i Kul’tura*, St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 664.

This creation of a Christian culture to replace the pagan culture of the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world, was not only not a matter of indifference or little importance to the Church, but a task of the greatest importance for her. For whether we understand "culture" in the narrow sense of "a position or orientation of individual people or human groups whereby we distinguish 'civilized' from 'primitive' society", or in the broader sense of "a system of values"⁴⁰³, all men living in society – and even monks living in the desert – live in a culture of some kind, and this culture inescapably influences their thoughts and feelings for better or for worse. Culture counts because it influences faith – as faith influences culture. So the formation of the culture of Christian Byzantium was not, as Fr. George Florovsky writes, "what historians of the 19th century usually called 'the Hellenization of Christianity', but rather the conversion of Hellenism. And why should Hellenism not be converted? After all, the acceptance of Hellenism by Christians was not simply a servile perception of an undigested pagan heritage. It was the conversion of the Hellenistic mind and heart.

"In fact, this is what happened: Hellenism was cut through with the sword of the Christian Revelation and thereby completely polarized. We must call Origen and Augustine Hellenists. But it is completely obvious that this is another type of Hellenism than we find in Plotinus or Julian. Of all Julian's directives the Christians hated most of all the one that forbade their preaching of the arts and sciences. This was in reality a belated attempt to exclude Christians from the building up of civilization, to separate ancient culture from Christian influence. In the eyes of the Cappadocian Fathers this was the main question. St. Gregory the Theologian lingered on it for a long time in his sermons against Julian. St. Basil the Great considered it necessary to write an address 'to young people about how they could draw benefit from Hellenistic literature'. Two centuries later, Justinian excluded all non-Christians from scholarly and educational activity and closed the pagan schools. There was no hostility to 'Hellenism' in this measure. Nor was it an interruption of tradition. The traditions were preserved, and even with love, but they were being drawn into a process of Christian reinterpretation. This is the essence of Byzantine culture. It was the acceptance of the postulates of culture and their re-evaluation. The majestic church of the Holy Wisdom, the pre-eternal Word, the great church of the Constantinopolitan Sophia, remains forever a living symbol of this cultural achievement."⁴⁰⁴

There is no obvious correlation between culture and sanctity. Most of the early Christians and martyrs were uneducated slaves, and there was very little specifically Christian art before the fourth century. Nevertheless, it is clear that the great culture of Byzantium was necessary for the survival of Christianity down the ages. In this sense Christian culture was necessary in

⁴⁰³ Florovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

⁴⁰⁴ Florovsky, "Khristianstvo i Tsvilizatsia" (Christianity and Civilization), in *Vera i Kul'tura*, *op. cit.*, pp. 642-643.

the same way that Christian statehood was: as a bulwark defending the Church from the outside. We see this most clearly in theology: the theological achievements of the Ecumenical Councils, and the refutation of the heresies that arose at that time, would have been unthinkable outside the sophisticated philosophical language and culture that the Greeks inherited from Plato and Aristotle. But nobody suggested that mastery of Byzantine art and philosophy was necessary to salvation. In a general way, we can see that a decline in piety is accompanied by a decline in culture. This is particularly clear in Western culture, which declines sharply from the Carolingian period in the late eighth century. However, this is by no means a universal rule: some of the greatest products of Byzantine culture were produced in what Sir Steven Runciman called "the Last Byzantine Renaissance" - the period from 1261 to 1453 that was in general (and in spite of the hesychast saints) a period of religious decline.

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Constantine not only renewed the empire from within: he transformed the very ideology of empire, and the relationship of Rome to other kingdoms and empires.

The pagan Roman empire was founded on the familiar fallen passions of love of glory and love of power. Excuses were found for invading neighbouring territories; many innocent "barbarians" were killed, and their lands and property plundered. Nations that resisted Roman power, such as the Carthaginians and the Jews, were treated with vengeful cruelty. Julius Caesar's extraordinarily bloody conquest of Gaul may serve as an example of how the Roman empire was typically expanded.

Constantine tried to change this bloody tradition. Although an experienced and highly successful soldier himself, who did not flinch from extreme measures when he considered them necessary, he glorified peace rather than war, Christ rather than himself or Rome, and while defending the boundaries of the empire, undertook no offensive campaigns beyond them. The one apparent exception to this rule only goes to prove that the imperial ideology really had changed.

The apparent exception was *Persia*, the age-old rival of Rome in the East, which had deeply humiliated Rome by defeating and capturing the Emperor Valerius in 260, and against which Constantine was preparing an expedition when he died in 337.

"Constantine's abortive Persian conquest," writes Leithart, "looks like another Roman adventure driven by sacrificial frenzy, vengeance and a desire to keep enemies in their subordinate place. Yet there are hints that between 306 and the 330s something had changed. Sometime before, Constantine had written a 'tactful, allusive, and indirect' letter in his own hand to Shapur. Addressing the Persian king as a 'brother', he summarized the 'most holy

religion' that had given him 'deeper acquaintance with the most holy God'. Finding common ground with nonsacrificial Persian Zoroastrian practice, Constantine emphasized that the 'God I invoke with bended knees' is horrified by 'the blood of sacrifices' and recoils from 'their foul and detestable odors.' The sacrifice he craves is 'purity of mind and an undefiled spirit' that manifests itself in 'works of moderation and gentleness'. 'He loves the meek,' Constantine continued, 'and hates the turbulent spirit.... While the arrogant and haughty are utterly overthrown, he requites the humble and forgiving with deserved rewards.'

"The purpose of the letter was to advise Shapur about how to deal with the sizable Christian community in his own realm. Constantine was an eyewitness of 'the end of those who lately harassed the worshippers of God by their impious edicts,' and he warned Shapur not to follow their example. Everything is 'best and safest' when men follow God's laws and recognize that God is at work through the church, endeavouring to 'gather all men to himself'. He expressed his joy at hearing that Persia was full of Christians, and he closed the letter with a prayer that 'you and they may enjoy abundant prosperity, and that your blessings and theirs may be in equal measure,' so that 'you will experience the mercy and favor of that God who is the Lord and Father of all.'

"Constantine's letter has been called a 'veiled warning' and has been interpreted as a provocation, a threat and a sign of his belief that as Roman emperor he had responsibility for all Christians. Constantine's Persian policies certainly backfired. He initiated his final campaign when a delegation from Armenia visited Constantinople in 336 to ask him for assistance against a Persian coup. Since the conversion of the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates) in 314, Armenia had been officially Christian, more explicitly so than was the Roman Empire under Constantine. In the 330s, Persians under Shapur II had invaded, captured and blinded the Armenian King Tirhan, and placed Shapur's brother Narseh on the Armenian throne. Constantine responded swiftly. He designated his nephew Hannibalianus as 'king of kings' and gave him authority over Armenia and Pontus. Like his letter, his preparations for war with Persia were intended, among other things, to defend a Christian people. When Constantine died before the campaign could be launched, Shapur, apparently suspicious that the Christians of Persia were allied with Rome, initiated a violent persecution. Persian Christians, in response, kept themselves aloof from the dominant orthodoxy of the West.

"Yet I cannot agree that the letter to Shapur was intended as a provocation. Constantine warned Shapur, but he warned him of divine judgement, not that he would personally take vengeance if Shapur were to attack Christians. In the closing section Constantine issued an altar call, inviting Shapur to protect Christians and to join him in worship of the high God, the God of the Christians. Hermann Dorries summarizes the message of the letter as an invitation to share in the blessing of Christianization: 'what the true faith had done for the Roman Empire,' Constantine urged, 'it would do also for the

Persian.' It was an unprecedented diplomatic move – a Roman emperor who 'attributed his success to heavenly assistance... invited his only formidable enemy to share in this aid.' More broadly, the letter reveals how far Constantine had moved from tetrarchic political theology. For Diocletian 'religion and nation meant the same thing,' but for Constantine there was a potential unity, even between East and West, even between Persia and Rome, that transcended boundaries and national interests..."⁴⁰⁵

This is an insightful and true remark, and if anything underestimates the revolutionary character of Constantine's new imperial ideology. Pagan religion and politics was irredeemably *particularist*. The pagan gods protected particular men and cities or states against other men, cities and states that were protected by other gods. And if pagan Rome had a policy of including as many local gods as possible into its "pantheon" (which means "all gods"), this did not alter the fundamentally particularist nature of its religion. Christianity was difficult to absorb within this structure not only because the Christians refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods, but also because their God was of a totally different kind – universal, completely all-encompassing, and infinitely above everything that can be called "god", "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1.21). Moreover, this God claimed dominion not only over Rome but also over all the kingdoms of men...

When Constantine came to power, being a sincere, determined and deeply thoughtful Christian, he sought to adapt the Roman political theology to its new God, making it truly *universalist*. Scornfully rejecting all divine honours for himself, he sought to subdue himself and all his subjects to the true King of kings. But this also transformed his relationship with other kings, such as Shapur of Persia. For Shapur, too, had been given his dominion by God, making him and Constantine no longer rivals, but "brothers", as Constantine himself put it – if not in Christ, at any rate in kingship, as political rulers established by God. But this had the further consequence that extension of the empire by the former rapacious methods was no longer acceptable. Only if Shapur maltreated his Christian subjects or other Christians, such as the Armenians, could Constantine intervene to defend his brothers in Christ on the assumption that Shapur had now ceased to be his brother in kingship, having "disestablished" himself from God.

But where did this leave the Roman Empire? No longer unique, but just one kingdom among many?

Not quite. If all legitimate political authorities have been established as such by God, and there is no genuine authority that has not been thus established (Romans 13.1), this would appear to place all authorities essentially on the same level. But the Roman Empire remained unique in that

⁴⁰⁵ Leithart, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247.

Christ had been born in it and God had chosen the empire also to be the birthplace and seed-plot of His Church. This gave it a certain uniqueness, seniority and prestige in the eyes of all Christians, even those who lived in other polities and therefore owed obedience to other authorities, thereby making it in this sense *the universal empire*. But this did not mean that the empire was destined to become *the universal ruler of all nations*, as some later Byzantines tended to think: it meant that the Roman Empire would be, as long as it lasted, the “first among equals” among Christian states, and therefore the object of *universal veneration* by the Christians of all nations.

Another consequence of this theology was that the Roman Empire had a special obligation to spread the Gospel to other kingdoms and nations, to be *missionary*. And Constantine, as always, was fully alive to this consequence. As Leithart writes, he “had a deep sense of historical destiny, and as a result his foreign policy was guided in part by the desire to extend the church’s reach. He envisioned a universal empire united in confession of the Nicene Creed, an empire that would have a symbolic center in the Church on Golgotha in Jerusalem and that would stretch to India and Ethiopia and someday include even Persia. But Constantine did not necessarily regard annexation into the Roman empire as an essential element of that vision. He seems instead to have envisioned a Christian commonwealth. Perhaps the empire would have remained dominant, but in Constantine’s cosmopolitan mind it would not have been coextensive with ‘Christ’s dominion’.

“Though he probably did not impose Christianity on conquered Goths, his triumphs among the Goths assisted the spread of Christianity. After his victory in 332, Bishop Ulfila was consecrated and sent as a missionary in Gothic territory. Churches were also established in the ‘Mountain Arena’, the Arab territories that served as a buffer between the empire and Persia. Eusebius mentions Arab Christian communities, and there was an Arab bishop at the council of Nicaea. Further east in Iberia (Georgia) [where St. Nina evangelized] there were Christians, and to the south Ethiopia (Aksum) also became Christian under Ezana. As already noted, Armenia became officially Christian shortly after Constantine defeated Maxentius. By the time he died, Constantine had left behind a ‘universal Christian commonwealth embracing Armenians, Iberians, Arabs, and Aksumites’ that continued to take form under his Byzantine successors. This was *not*, it should be noted, an extension of Roman governance; it is rather that Roman imperial order had been reshaped, to some degree, by the demands of Christian mission...”⁴⁰⁶

Although Constantine never received a visible anointing to the kingdom, 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

⁴⁰⁶ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

received a royal sceptre, O all-wise one, asking great mercy for us.”⁴⁰⁷

St. Constantine died at midday on Pentecost, 337 shortly after receiving Holy Baptism, 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”; Rome and much of what the Romans called “the inhabited world” had been baptized through him (at his death about 40% of the empire was Christian), receiving true renewal of spirit in the Holy Spirit. In his reign the process of converting the world that began at Pentecost reached its first climax...

Why did he leave his baptism so late? Was it because ruling the empire involved committing so much violence that he had to put off baptism until as late as possible? Possibly⁴⁰⁸...

However, Constantine’s actions at the very end can be seen as a kind of final sermon and testament in symbolical language. Thus after his baptism he put off the imperial purple, never to put it on again – for the kingdoms of this world pass away, never to return. But then he put on the shining white baptismal robe, never to take it off again – for the Kingdom of God, which is not of this world, abides forever...

⁴⁰⁷ *Menaion*, May 21, Mattins for the feast of St. Constantine, sedalen.

⁴⁰⁸ 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).

It must be remembered, however, that the Eusebius of Caesarea’s ascription of Constantine’s baptism to Eusebius of Nicomedia (who was, after all, an Arian, albeit a secret one) was disputed from early times. Thus the *Chronicle* of St. Theophanes dismisses the claims of Eusebius of Caesarea as Arian lies. John Malalas says he was baptized by St. Sylvester, Pope of Rome, in the 500s. And the *Life of St. Sylvester of Rome* written in the early 400s says that St. Sylvester baptized St. Constantine. This theory can also be found in the liturgical texts for St. Constantine’s feast in the *Menaion* (Hieromonk Enoch).

29. THE FALL OF OLD ROME

St. Constantine's transfer of his capital from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople marked the beginning of the end of the Western Empire. For the old capital, weighed down by its pagan past, was in no position to defend and unify the newly Christianized empire, and would soon prove incapable of defending even herself. As for the new capital, in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, it was to be "a bond of union between East and West to which the most distant extremes from all sides are to come together, and to which they look up as the common centre and emporium of their faith."⁴⁰⁹

Hoping in this way to make a fresh start for the Christian empire, St. Constantine implicitly admitted that the old capital was irredeemable. The symbolism of his act was clear: if the state, like the individual man, was to be redeemed and enjoy a long and spiritually fruitful life, it, too, had to make a complete break with the past, renounce the demonic sacrifices and pagan gods and philosophies that it had loved, and receive a new birth by water and the Spirit. (The fact that New Rome quickly filled up with the statues and monuments of paganism did not change the aim and the symbol.)⁴¹⁰

For Old Rome, in contrast to many of her individual citizens, had never been baptized. There was a pagan rotteness at her heart that even its Christian head, the Emperor, was not able to cut out.⁴¹¹ And so her doom was sealed...

"As the Oxford historians Peter Heather and Bryan Ward-Perkins have argued, the final breakdown in the Western Roman Empire began in 406, when Germanic invaders poured across the Rhine into Gaul and then Italy. Rome itself was sacked by the Goths in 410. Co-opted by an enfeebled emperor, the Goths then fought the Vandals for control of Spain, but this merely shifted the problem south. Between 429 and 439, Genseric led the Vandals to victory after victory in North Africa, culminating in the fall of Carthage. Rome lost its southern Mediterranean bread-basket and, along with it, a huge source of tax revenue. Roman soldiers were just barely able to defeat Attila's Huns as they swept west from the Balkans. By 452, the Western Roman Empire had lost all of Britain, most of Spain, the richest provinces of North Africa, and southwestern and southeastern Gaul. Not much was left besides Italy. Basiliscus, brother-in-law of [the Eastern] Emperor Leo I, tried and failed to recapture Carthage in 468. Byzantium lived on, but the Western Roman Empire was dead. By 476, Rome was the fiefdom of Odoacer, king of the Goths.

⁴⁰⁹ St. Gregory, in Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: Phoenix, 1997, p. 198.

⁴¹⁰ See Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 11.

⁴¹¹ See Dirk Bennett, "Ecstasy in Late Imperial Rome", *History Today*, vol. 48 (10), October, 1998, pp. 27-32.

“What is most striking about this history,” writes Niall Ferguson, “is the speed of the Roman Empire’s collapse. In just five decades, the population of Rome itself fell by three-quarters. Archaeological evidence from the late fifth century – inferior housing, more primitive pottery, fewer coins, smaller cattle – shows that the benign influence of Rome diminished rapidly in the rest of western Europe. What Ward-Perkins calls ‘the end of civilization’ came within the span of a single generation.”⁴¹²

If we are talking about the city itself, then it took a little longer than a single generation: it took seventy years from Alaric’s invasion in 406 to the deposition of the last emperor, Romulus Augustulus, in 476, when a barbarian officer in the Roman army, Odovacar, killed the father and uncle of Romulus and sent Romulus himself into retirement. But then, instead of taking the imperial crown himself, he did a remarkable thing: he declared that “there was no need of a divided rule and that one, shared emperor was sufficient for both [Eastern and Western imperial] territories”. And then he sent the imperial cloak and diadem to the Eastern Emperor Zeno... The old empire of Old Rome was dead, long live the new empire of New Rome!⁴¹³

*

When Rome fell for the first time, Blessed Jerome wrote from Bethlehem: “At the news my speech failed me, and sobs choked the words that I was dictating. She has been captured – the City by whom the whole world had once been taken captive. She dies of hunger before dying by the sword – scarcely do any men survive to be led off into captivity. The fury of the starving fastens on to nourishment unspeakable; they tear each other to pieces, the mother not sparing even the infant at her own breast.”⁴¹⁴

Cannibalism had taken place also during the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It was a characteristic sign of God’s turning away from His people. Therefore a theological and historiosophical explanation that reflected the spiritual, no less than the political and social gravity of the situation was required...

Tertullian had said: “In the Emperor we reverence the judgement of God, Who has set him over the nations”⁴¹⁵. It followed that the fall of the western emperor had to express the *reversal* of God’s judgement, His guilty verdict against the Romans, perhaps the whole *oikoumene*. Indeed, for patriotic Romans like Jerome, the fall of the City of Old Rome was equivalent to the fall of the whole of humanity: “The flame of the world has been extinguished and in the destruction of a single city, the whole human race has perished!”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² Ferguson, “Complexity and Collapse: Empires on the Edges of Chaos”, *Foreign Affairs*, March-April, 2010, pp. 27-28.

⁴¹³ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, p. xiii.

⁴¹⁴ St. Jerome, Letter 127, *P.L.* 22, col. 1094.

⁴¹⁵ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 32.

⁴¹⁶ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, prologue.

The emphasis was somewhat different among the Holy Fathers in the eastern half of the empire. They emphasised heavenly patriotism, the patriotism of the City who "Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 10.10) over any earthly patriotism, even Roman patriotism; for "here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come" (Hebrews 13.14). Thus St. John Chrysostom wrote: "If you are a Christian, no earthly city is yours...."

"Though we may gain possession of the whole world, we are withal but strangers and sojourners in it all.

"We are enrolled in heaven: our citizenship is there! Let us not, after the manner of little children, despise things that are great, and admire those which are little!

"Not our city's greatness, but virtue of soul is our ornament and defense.

"If you suppose dignity to belong to a city, think how many persons must partake in this dignity, who are whoremongers, effeminate, depraved and full of ten thousand evil things, and at last despise such honor!

"But that City above is not of this kind; for it is impossible that he can be a partaker of it, who has not exhibited every virtue."⁴¹⁷

The pagans were quick to come forward with their own explanation of the fall of Rome: Rome had fallen because she had deserted her gods. They pointed out that it was precisely since the ban on pagan practices imposed by Theodosius the Great in 380 that the barbarians had begun to overwhelm the empire. To refute this notion, and to show that the disasters suffered by the empire were allowed by God to chasten and purify His people, Augustine wrote the first five books of his *City of God*, written shortly after Alaric's sack of Rome. "God's providence," he wrote, "constantly uses war to correct and chasten the corrupt morals of mankind, as it also uses such afflictions to train men in a righteous and laudable way of life. It removes to a better state those whose life is approved, or keeps them in this world for further service."⁴¹⁸

In the second part of the work, he describes the origin, history and final destiny of two Cities - the City of God, which is holy and destined for eternal bliss, and the City of Man, which is sinful and destined for the eternal fire. The Roman Empire, like the Church herself of which it is the ally, contains citizens of both Cities, both wheat and tares. When the state is ruled by a truly Christian ruler, like Theodosius, one can see "a faint shadowy resemblance between the Roman Empire and the Heavenly City"; which is why one must obey the law and render one's patriotic and civic duty to the State.

⁴¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *On the Statutes*.

⁴¹⁸ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, I, 1.

However, this view was juxtaposed, in Augustine's thought, with a more radical, apolitical and even anti-political view. Thus at one point he calls Rome a "second Babylon".⁴¹⁹ He points out that there was always a demonic element at the heart of the Roman state, which has not been eliminated even now. Sin, fratricide – Romulus' murder of Remus – lie at the very root of the Roman state, just as sin and fratricide – Cain's murder of Abel – lie at the beginning of the history of fallen humanity.

Therefore it should not surprise us that the Roman Empire should decline and fall. "If heaven and earth are to pass away, why is it surprising if at some time the state is going to come to an end? If what God has made will one day vanish, then surely what Romulus made will disappear much sooner." "As for this mortal life, which ends after a few days' course, what does it matter under whose rule a man lives, being so soon to die, provided that the rulers do not force him to impious and wicked acts?"⁴²⁰ For it is the Jerusalem above that is our *real* Fatherland, not Rome here below.

Augustine's purpose was to wean men away from trust in political institutions, whether pagan or Christian, and to trust in God alone. Christian rulers were, of course, better than pagan ones. But politics in general was suspect. The empire had been built up through a multitude of wars, many of them quite unjust. And yet "without justice what are governments but bands of brigands?"⁴²¹ It was not that Augustine was not a loyal Roman citizen, but the fall of Old Rome contributed to an atmosphere of introspection and self-criticism that sought explanations for the fall in sin, both at the individual and at the collective level. Thus Augustine distanced himself from a too close identification of Romanitas (Romanness) and Christianitas (Christianity). As F. van der Meer interprets his thought: "Compared with Christianity, what significance was there in things, admittedly good in themselves, like the order, unity and authority of the Roman Empire?..."⁴²²

However, "the order, unity and authority of the Roman Empire" *was* of value. Even the barbarian conquerors of Rome recognized that. Thus Ataulf, the son of the famous Alaric, said: "To begin with, I ardently desired to efface the very name of the Romans and to transform the Roman Empire into a Gothic Empire. Romania, as it is commonly called, would have become Gothia; Ataulf would have replaced Caesar Augustus. But long experience taught me that the unruly barbarism of the Goths was incompatible with the laws. Now, without laws there is no state. I therefore decided rather to aspire to the glory of restoring the fame of Rome in all its integrity, and of increasing it by means of the Gothic strength. I hope to go down to posterity as the restorer of Rome, since it is not possible that I should be its supplanter."⁴²³

⁴¹⁹ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XVIII, 2.

⁴²⁰ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, V, 17.

⁴²¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, IV, 4.

⁴²² Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1961, p. 584.

⁴²³ Ataulf, in Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

The Romans attached enormous importance to *law*. As Peter Heather writes, "Roman imperial state ideology had long since identified the existence of written law as the single factor which distinguished the Roman world as a higher order of divinely inspired human society, far superior to that of any known or conceivable neighbour."⁴²⁴ Thus in the second preface to his *Judicial Code* the Emperor Justinian wrote: "The maintenance of the integrity of the government depends upon two things, namely, the force of arms and the observance of the laws: and, for this reason, the fortunate race of the Romans obtained power and precedence over all other nations in former times, and will do so forever, if God should be propitious; since each of these has ever required the aid of the other, for, as military affairs are rendered secure by the laws, so also are the laws preserved by force of arms."

The Goths (not only Ataulf, but also the Ostrogothic King Theoderic later in the century) bought in to this vision, to the extent of seeing themselves as restorers, rather than supplanters, of Rome and the upholders of her laws. Even the Huns, who were still more barbaric than the Goths, respected the greatness of Rome. Thus Attila was turned back from sacking Rome in 452 by the eloquent embassy of Pope Leo I and a vision of Saints Peter and Paul, who appeared in a vision with St. Leo and threatened the Hun with death.⁴²⁵

Augustine believed Rome had not been destroyed, but chastized. By this tribulation God was purifying the Roman nation, as He had purified Israel in Old Testament times. Rome would emerge from this period of affliction cleansed and better able to carry out her civilising mission in the world... But the catastrophe of 410 did not produce the regeneration of Rome that Augustine had hoped for. If it was still true at the beginning of the century that Rome was being chastized, not destroyed, by the end it had to be admitted that the disease was more serious and chronic, and the treatment more radical, than Augustine had recognised...

For the sad fact was that Old Rome was still not profiting from the opportunity presented by the conversion of St. Constantine to regenerate herself. She remained throughout the fifth century in a situation of spiritual and political crisis not dissimilar to that in the time of Diocletian. As Christopher Dawson writes: "It was literally Rome that killed Rome. The great cosmopolitan city of gold and marble, the successor of Alexandria and Antioch, had nothing in common with the old capital and rural Latin state. It served no social function, it was an end in itself, and its population drawn from every nation under heaven existed mainly to draw their Government doles, and to attend the free spectacles with which the Government provided them. It was a vast useless burden on the back of the empire which broke at last under the increasing strain."⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴²⁵ Patrick Howarth, *Attila*, London: Robinson, 2001, p. 132.

⁴²⁶ Dawson, *Progress and Decay*.

The real rulers of the later western empire when the emperor was campaigning against the barbarians, were the senators. Snobbish and immensely rich, they had much to lose from the empire's fall. However, as a visitor to Rome remarked, they did not want to serve the State, "preferring to enjoy their property at leisure".⁴²⁷ "In spite of frequent lip-service to the romantic concept of Eternal Rome," writes Grant, "many noblemen were not prepared to lift a finger to save it... They also undermined the state in a very active fashion. For of all the obstacles to efficient and honest administration, they were the worst. They forcibly ejected collectors of taxes, harboured deserters and brigands, and repeatedly took the law into their own hands... They often remained hostile to the Emperor, and estranged from his advisers. For a long time many were pagans while their ruler was Christian."⁴²⁸

The free poor of Rome did not come far behind the senators in corruption. The Christian Emperor Honorius had abolished the circuses and gladiatorial contests after witnessing the martyrdom of the Syrian monk Telemachus on January 1, 404. However, in spite of that, writes Grant, "a hundred and seventy-five days of the year were given up to public shows, as opposed to a mere hundred and thirty-five two centuries earlier; moreover the fabric of the Colosseum was restored as late as 438. It is also true that in the mid-fourth century 300,000 Romans held bread tickets which entitled them to draw free rations from the government; and even a century later, when the population of the city had greatly diminished, there were still 120,000 recipients of these free supplies. Certainly the population of Rome was largely parasitic. However, the city proletariat played little active part in guiding the course of events which brought the later Roman Empire to a halt.

"It was, on the other hand, the 'free' poor of the rural countryside upon whom the government, struggling to raise money for the army, imposed the full rigours and terrors of taxation. Although technically still distinguishable from slaves, they were no better off and perhaps worse off, since they often found themselves driven into total destitution. Between these rustic poor and the government, the relationship was that of oppressed and oppressor, of foe and foe.

"This is perhaps the greatest of all the disunities that afflicted the Western Empire. The state and the unprivileged bulk of its rural subjects were set against each other in a destructive and suicidal disharmony, which played a very large and direct part in the downfall that followed. It was because of this rift that the taxes that were needed to pay the army could not be raised. And because they could not be raised, the Empire failed to find defenders, and collapsed."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁴²⁸ Grant, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76, 78.

⁴²⁹ Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 60. Another reason that enough taxes could not be raised was that more and more barbarian groups occupied more and more of the taxable agricultural land.

But there was a still greater disunity... Professor Mary Beard has argued that the main cause of the *rise* of Rome to mastery over the ancient world was its ability to co-opt the conquered peoples as fellow citizens and then send them out to fight for an empire in which they now had a big stake. In other words, it was “boots on the ground” that won Rome her empire; she was simply able to put more men in the field than any of her rivals.⁴³⁰

If we accept this thesis, then we can put forward an analogous thesis for the *fall* of the empire – namely, that Rome fell when she began to fail to co-opt her conquered peoples. One of the greatest and most enduring legacies of Roman civilization was the principle – enshrined in law in 222 – that every citizen is equal before the law, whatever his nationality or faith. This was no empty principle, as we see as early as the career of St. Paul, who, though a member of the despised race of the Jews, was able to win a trial in Rome because he was a Roman citizen. But by the fifth century this principle was no longer being applied; universalism had given way to a new kind of tribalism. And this in spite of the fact that the official religion of Rome was now Christianity, the most universalist of faiths.

It was not the Emperors that were to blame: although there were no really distinguished Emperors after Theodosius I, they remained Orthodox. The burdens they imposed on the people were not imposed willingly, but because of the desperate situation of the empire. They failed because Roman society was divided both against itself and against her non-Roman subjects and foederati – and a divided house cannot stand...

In the past Rome had not been too proud to learn from, and unite with, the nations whom she conquered. The classic example was the Classical Greeks who conquered Rome culturally while submitting to her politically. Nor, centuries later, had she despised the humble fishermen who preached a Jewish God Whom they themselves had crucified. The success of the apostles even among the emperor’s own family was witnessed by St. Paul, who declared: “My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [of the emperor]” (Philippians 1.13), and came to fruition with the conversion of St. Constantine.

Even when the last pagan Roman emperor, Julian the apostate, tried to reverse the Constantinian revolution, the momentum proved unstoppable. Like all the previous persecutors of the Christians, he perished in agony, crying, “You have triumphed, Galilean!” And when the last Emperor to unite East and West, Theodosius the Great, bowed in penitence before a Christian bishop, Ambrose of Milan, it seemed as if Ambrose’s dream of a Rome purged of its pagan vices and uniting its traditional virtues to the Cross of Christ – a Rome truly invicta and aeterna because united to the invincible and eternal God – had been realized.

⁴³⁰ Beard, “Why Rome Ruled the World”, *BBC History Magazine*, April, 2016, pp. 32-36.

For, as St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, said, addressing Rome: “[The Apostles] promoted thee to such glory, that being made a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal state, and the head of the world through the blessed Peter's holy See thou didst attain a wider sway by the worship of God than by earthly government. For although thou wast increased by many victories, and didst extend thy rule on land and sea, yet what thy toils in war subdued is less than what the peace of Christ has conquered... That state, in ignorance of the Author of its aggrandisement, though it ruled almost all nations, was enthralled by the errors of them all, and seemed to itself to have fostered religion greatly, because it rejected no falsehood [an excellent definition of ecumenism]. And hence its emancipation through Christ was the more wondrous in that it had been so fast bound by Satan.”⁴³¹

Of course, there is a big difference between conquering a nation and then magnanimously giving the conquered people certain privileges, on the one hand, and being invaded by a nation and having to suffer various atrocities and indignities at their hands, on the other. Nevertheless, even among the pagans there were those who understood that magnanimity pays – even if you are now the invaded people. Thus the senator and philosopher Themistius, writing in about 370, said that “it is the task of kings – those who have a right to that title – rather than rooting out completely this surfeit of human temperament whenever they restrain the insurgent barbarians, to safeguard and protect them as an integral part of the empire. For this is how things are: he who harries the barbarians to no good purpose sets himself up as king of the Romans alone, while he who shows compassion in his triumph knows himself to be king of all men, especially over those whom he protected and watched over when he had the chance to destroy them utterly.”⁴³²

However, after the first sack of Rome, the gulf between the Romans and the barbarians was becoming too great. Not that the barbarians, who settled in the empire through necessity to escape the hordes that pressed on them from the east, were always resolved to destroy it. On the contrary, as we have seen, they came to admire and emulate it. But the Romans themselves were not interested in converting or integrating them. Empire had gone to their heads; they despised the German hordes. Thus the Christian poet Prudentius, who had once declared that the peoples of the empire were “equals and bound by a single name”, now despised the barbarians:

*As beasts from men, as dumb from those who speak,
As from the good who God's commandments seek,
Differ the foolish heathen, so Rome stands
Alone in pride above barbarian lands.*⁴³³

⁴³¹ St. Leo, *Sermon LXXXII*, on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

⁴³² Themistius, *Oration 10*; in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassel, 2004, p. 113

⁴³³ Prudentius, in Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

In the last analysis it was this pride, more than any purely political or economic factors, that destroyed Old Rome. Rome ceased to be the universal ruler when she abandoned her own tradition of universalism, transmuted now into *Christian* universalism. By refusing to come to terms with Alaric because he was a Goth (albeit a Christian Goth), although he was not seeking to destroy Rome but only find a place for his people within her empire, the Romans provoked the first sack of Rome in 410, which weakened the State and made later, still more catastrophic sacks inevitable.

Not all Romans were so proud, of course: churchmen such as the Italian St. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, the Spanish priest Orosius and the Gallic priest Salvian of Marseilles, were hopeful that a new Romano-Germanic order could be constructed. After all, the fall of Rome could be seen, not just as God's wrath against the Romans, but also His mercy towards the barbarians, by creating an unprecedented opportunity to bring them to the Christian Faith. For as Orosius, a priest from Braga who fled to Hippo from the Vandals, wrote: "It would seem that the mercy of God ought to be praised and glorified in that so many [barbarian] nations are receiving, even at the cost of our own weakening, a knowledge of the truth which they never could have had but for this opportunity."⁴³⁴ Moreover, they had the example of the Gothic Martyrs Sabbas (+372) and Nicetas (+378), and the very early translation of the Bible into the Gothic language, to show that a real conversion of the barbarians was possible.⁴³⁵

And so, while the Western Empire died, Christian Romanitas itself did not die. Although the Antichrist took its place temporarily in the sense that pagan and heretical rulers took the place of Orthodox ones, under the rubble of the old empire new kingdoms were arising that were to restore Orthodoxy and reincarnate the spirit of Christian Rome, uniting both Romans and barbarians in the One, Holy and Catholic Church. As Peter Heather writes, "new rulers at the head of politically reasonably coherent bodies of military manpower, which had within living memory originated from beyond the imperial frontier, were now masters of the bulk of the old Roman west. Alongside Odovacar, Anglo-Saxon kings controlled most of central and southern Britain, their Frankish counterparts ran northern and eastern Gaul, Visigothic monarchs controlled south-western Gaul and Spain, Burgundian dynasts the Rhone valley, and the richest lands of Roman North Africa were in the hands of the Vandalic Hasding dynasty. Groups from the old north-central zone of Europe as it had stood at the birth of Christ thus generated a huge revolution on Roman soil, replacing the old monolithic empire with a series of successor states."⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, VII, 41.

⁴³⁵ Unfortunately, most of the Goths were converted to Arianism rather than Orthodox Christianity, in spite of the intense efforts of St. John Chrysostom (+407) to draw them to the truth faith... See J.W.C. Wand, *A History of the Early Church to A.D.500*, London: Methuen, 1982, pp. 181-184.

⁴³⁶ Heather, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

Moreover, the memory of Old Rome and her achievement did not die; it was to remain profoundly influential for centuries to come. And there continued to be great native Romans, such as St. Gregory the Great, who remained passionately attached to bringing the glorious traditions of Rome – both Old and New – to the unenlightened barbarians. Even the twentieth-century atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell concluded: “The problem of a durable and satisfactory social order can only be solved by combining the solidity of the Roman Empire with the idealism of St. Augustine’s City of God...”⁴³⁷

⁴³⁷ Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, p. 515.

30. THE SYMPHONY OF POWERS

When Justinian the Great ascended the throne in 527, he set about trying to reunite the Christian world. For his great dream, as Protopresbyter James Thornton writes, “was to restore the Empire’s lost Western provinces. Previous rulers had sacrificed these territories, when they became threatened by the onslaughts of barbarian tribes, for the sake of the defense of the far more important and far wealthier East. But Saint Justinian’s thoughts hearkened back to the time of Saint Constantine I and Theodosius I, when the Empire stretched from the British Isles to the Euphrates... That Roman lands should have fallen into the hands of heretics and barbarians was, to the Saint’s mind, an affront to God’s will. It is also true, as the historian Charles Diehl (1859-1944) writes, that in principle Byzantine Emperors never admitted to any loss of territory. It is true that lands were lost to various barbarian incursions; but, to the Byzantine way of thinking, these lands were simply being temporarily administered by another local ruler on behalf of the Emperor. It was Constantinople’s right to reassert outright control when it served the sovereign’s pleasure.”⁴³⁸

Now large parts of the Christian world had seceded from the Empire for religious as well as political or military reasons. Thus Old Rome was in schism from Constantinople because of the Monophysitism of the Emperor Anastasius; while most of the Semitic and Coptic parts of the Eastern Empire had fallen into Monophysitism or Nestorianism. And so 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 largely successful: in relation to the Monophysites in the East - less so. Nevertheless, the union, however fleeting, of the five ancient patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in one 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 *on earth* was the emperor.

This unity was not achieved without some pressure, especially on the Roman patriarchate. Thus when the Orthodox 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.”⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute, for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, pp. 251-252.

⁴³⁹ Pope Agapetus, in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958, p. 151.

However, writes Fr. John 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...”⁴⁴⁰ 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.”⁴⁴¹

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.”⁴⁴²

As if to symbolize the unity he had achieved, Justinian built Hagia Sophia, the greatest church in Christendom and without a peer to this day. 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.⁴⁴³

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

⁴⁴⁰ Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 291.

⁴⁴¹ Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 178.

⁴⁴² L.A. Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 162.

⁴⁴³<http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/Law508/Roman%20Law/JustinianCodexEnglish.htm>.

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* need to be emphasized. First, both the priesthood and the empire "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, 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, this symphony being grounded in their common origin in God. The unity of the two powers is emphasized in the *Seventh Novella* (2, 1), where it was admitted that the goods of the Church, though in principle inalienable, could be the object of transactions with the emperor, "for the difference between the priesthood (ιερωσύνη) and the empire (βασίλεια) is small, as it is between the sacred goods and the goods that are common to the community."⁴⁴⁴

Secondly, however, insofar as the symphony of powers existed, not only between two men, but between two *institutions*, the priesthood and the empire, it went 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

⁴⁴⁴ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 313.

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."⁴⁴⁵

Thirdly, Justinian had in mind not any kind of harmony, but only a true symphony that comes from God. As I.N. Andrushkevich points out, the word "symphony" [consonantia] 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.⁴⁴⁶ Where these conditions are not met, what we have, as A.V. Kartashev, the minister of religion under the Russian Provisional Government, pointed out, "is no longer symphony, but *cacophony*".⁴⁴⁷ Or, preserving the Latin root of the words, we should call it the *dissonance* of powers...

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

Again, 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." These Canons include those that forbid resort to the secular power in Church matters: Canon 12, Fourth Ecumenical Council; Canons 11 and 12 of Antioch; and (later) Canon 3 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that, as we have seen, Justinian did not always observe this restriction on his own power...

⁴⁴⁵ Alferov, "Ob uderzhanii i symphonii" ("On Restraining and Symphony"), <http://www.monarhist-spb.narod.ru/D-ST/Dionisy-1./htm>, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴⁶ Andrushkevich, "Doktrina sv. Imperatora Iustiniana Velikago" ("The Teaching of the holy Emperor Justinian the Great"), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 4 (1529), February 15/28, 1995, pp. 4-12.

⁴⁴⁷ Kartashev, *Vossozdanie Svyatoj Rusi* (The Recreation of Holy Russia), Moscow, 1991, p. 83.

“As regards the judicial branch,” writes Fr. Alexis 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’.”⁴⁴⁸

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 reglamentation. Bishops received broad powers in State affairs (more exactly, numerous State duties were imputed to them)”⁴⁴⁹.

For example, in episcopal elections there was a contradiction between Justinian’s laws, which included the leading laymen of the locality in the electoral body – an enactment that gave an avenue for imperial influence on the elections through these laymen – and the custom of the Church, according to which only bishops took part in the election.⁴⁵⁰ In practice, the Church’s laws prevailed in this sphere, but Justinian’s laws remained in force.⁴⁵¹ The recruitment of bishops to undertake secular duties was contrary to Apostolic Canon 81 insofar as it led 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

⁴⁴⁸ Nikolin, *Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁹ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁰ According to later Byzantine practice, and the practice in many Orthodox kingdoms, there was one layman who could take part in the election of bishops – the emperor or king.

⁴⁵¹ See Bishop Pierre L’Huillier, “Episcopal Elections in the Byzantine East: a few comments”, *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, N 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.

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."⁴⁵²

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*."⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, 34.

⁴⁵³ Alferov, "Monarkhia i Khristianskoe Soznanie" ("The Monarchy and Christian Consciousness"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_11.htm, p. 7.

31. THE POSITION OF THE ROMAN PAPACY

The question facing the Old Rome of the West after the collapse of the Western empire was: to what extent was she able, and willing, to integrate herself into the New Rome of the East? Odovacar had appeared to want that. But his Ostrogothic kingdom remained independent, and had to be subdued by force during the reign of Justinian in the next century. Was the destruction of the ancient institutions too thorough, and the dominance of the Germanic kings too great, to permit Old Rome to continue in a real, and not merely nominal union with New Rome? Or, even if the answer to that question was: no, would the jealousy of the old capital towards her younger supplanter hinder her, as the jealousy of the Jews towards the Christians had prevented their integration into the New Testament Church?

In order to answer these questions, let us return to the era of St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (440-461), who, as we have seen, was completely "eastern" in his respect for the East Roman Emperor. Following the teaching of St. Ambrose of Milan, that there is "one God, one empire, one emperor"⁴⁵⁴, he was both loyal to the Emperor and encouraged him to take a major part in Church affairs. While the prerogatives of the *Church* of Old Rome were jealously guarded, there was no jealousy in relation to the *Emperor* that ruled from New Rome, no attempt to exalt the weak western emperors in his place. Later Popes such as Gregory the Great (like Leo, the scion of an Old Roman aristocratic family) continued this tradition. They maintained close relations with the Empire of New Rome, and understood Church-State relations in essentially the same, "symphonic", almost symbiotic way as in the East, with the Emperor being expected to play an important part in Church affairs, and the Pope - in political affairs. In fact, until at least the eighth century, the Popes were the most consistent upholders of Romanitas, the politico-ecclesiastical unity of Orthodox Christendom, in both East and West...

However, towards the end of the fifth century, and after the fall of the last western emperor, we see the beginnings of a characteristically "western" understanding of Church-State relations that placed particular emphasis on the independence of the Church from the State, and was reflected in a rejection of the comparison, common in the East, between the Emperor and Melchizedek. This comparison might be valid in some respects, said the Popes, but not if it meant that a mortal man could combine the roles of king and priest in the manner of Melchizedek. Thus "before the coming of Christ," wrote Pope Gelasius (492-496), "there existed people... who were, according to what sacred history tells us, at the same time both kings and priests, such as Melchizedek. This example was followed in his domain by the devil, who always, in a tyrannical spirit, claims for his own that which is fitting for divine worship, to the extent that the pagan emperors were also called pontiffs. But when there came He Who was in truth both King and Priest,

⁴⁵⁴ St. Ambrose, quoted in Archimandrite Luke, "Church, Monastics, Empire", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 56, N 4, p. 11.

from that time the emperor ceased to give himself the name of pontiff and the pontiff to lay claim to the royal pomp. For, although we say that the members of Christ, the true King and Priest, have, by reason of their participation in the glorious nature, received both the one and the other dignity through the sacred generosity [of Christ], so that they are at the same time 'a royal and a priestly race', nevertheless Christ, remembering the weakness of men..., has divided the spheres of the two powers by means of a distinction of duties and callings..., desiring that His own [children] should be guarded by grace-filled humility and should not once again become victims of human pride. So that the Christian emperors need the pontiffs for eternal life and the pontiffs conform to the imperial laws as regards the course of temporal things. Thus spiritual activities have been separated from carnal activities.... He who is entrusted with secular matters should not appear to preside over divine things, so that the modesty of the two orders should be respected...."⁴⁵⁵

And so, as he wrote to the Emperor Anastasius, "there are two powers which for the most part control this world, the sacred authority of priests and the might of kings. Of these two the office of the priests is the greater inasmuch as they must give account even for kings to the Lord at the Divine Judgement. You know that although by your rank you stand at the head of the human race, you nevertheless bend your will before the leaders of Divine affairs, you turn to them in matters relating to your salvation, and you receive the heavenly sacraments from them. You know, consequently, that in matters of the faith you must submit to their lawful decisions and must not lord it over them - not submit them to your will, but be yourself guided by their judgements." But "in matters touching public order, the Church hierarchs know that the emperor's power has been sent down on you from above, and are themselves obedient to your laws, for they fear to be shown as opponents of your will in worldly affairs."⁴⁵⁶

However, as Dagron points out, this was very much a western perspective: the easterners continued to attach a quasi-priestly character to the figure of the emperor - but without the sacramental functions of the priesthood. The difference in perspective is explained partly by the fact that in the fifth century Rome had little support from Byzantium in her struggle with the barbarians, and the popes were often forced to fill the political vacuum themselves, as when Pope Leo the Great went to Attila and succeeded in turning him away from Rome.⁴⁵⁷ The fall of Old Rome had created a vacuum

⁴⁵⁵ Gelasius, *Tractatus IV*; translated from Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

⁴⁵⁶ Gelasius, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 74.

⁴⁵⁷ This was achieved through the miraculous intervention of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. After St. Leo had obtained all his requests from Attila, the Hun's followers asked him why he had surrendered to "a single, unarmed Roman". "Apparently, you could not see the two men from heaven, one standing to the right of the Pope, the other to the left. They held bared swords and threatened to kill me if I disobeyed God's prelate," replied Attila (in St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, vol. 6: February, 2003, p. 2006).

in political authority which the Eastern Emperors before Justinian were unable to fill and which the Germanic Arian kings only partially filled. Into this vacuum stepped the Popes, as a result of which, when the Popes argued for the independence of the Church from the State, they were speaking from the position of the first authority in *both Church and State* in the West.

The rejection of the comparison with Melchizedek was also influenced, as Dagron points out, by St. Augustine's *The City of God*, "in which, during his exegesis of Melchisedek, Augustine affirms that from now on Christ is the only Mediator between God and men, the only One to have put on the eternal priesthood. In the time of Israel, the earthly kingdom 'was a type of' the spiritual kingdom, but since the Incarnation the City of God has found its King once and for all. The break is a sharp one: before the coming of Christ a royal priesthood is possible whether by Divine economy (Melchisedek) or by diabolical counterfeit (the Roman imperator-pontifex maximus); after the coming of Christ this very notion is lanced with illegitimacy; the regale sacerdotium has devolved to the Son of God and by extension to the Christians as a whole... A true Christian emperor is not a Roman emperor converted or faithful to Christianity, or an emperor who could draw a new legitimacy from Old Testament models, but an emperor whose power has been in part confiscated by Christ and whose competence has been modified by the installation of Christianity, who will have to adopt the pose of humility before the new wielders of spiritual power, who will be constantly suspected of belonging to 'the earthly City', of remaining pagan or of identifying himself through pride with the Antichrist."⁴⁵⁸

And so Augustinian scepticism with regard to secular authority, together with the unparalleled prestige of the Popes in the West, combined to introduce a new, specifically western exaltation of ecclesiastical power.

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There was another source of this specifically western attitude: the quasi-mystical belief of the Popes that the Apostle Peter lived and spoke through them in a completely unique way simply as a result of the fact that he had died in Rome; so that just as the Apostle Peter had bestowed the episcopate on the Roman Church, so the Roman Popes, acting as the reincarnation, as it were, of Peter, were the source of the episcopate of the whole of the rest of the Church.

The Eastern bishops understood the phrase "the see of Peter" in a quite different way. For them, apostolic succession came, not from Peter alone, but from all the apostles. In any case, the Church of Antioch was also founded by SS. Peter and Paul, and the Church of Jerusalem - by the Lord Himself. So there was nothing extraordinary about the Church of Rome. "The remaining apostles," wrote St. Cyprian of Carthage, a western bishop, "were necessarily

⁴⁵⁸ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

also that which Peter was, endowed with an equal partnership both of honour and of power... The episcopate is one, an individual share in which individual bishops hold as owners of a common property."⁴⁵⁹

By the middle of the fifth century, the mystical attitude towards the papal see was entrenched even in the minds of the western emperors. Thus in 445 Emperor Valentinian III declared in his *Constitution*: "We are convinced that the only defence for us and for our Empire is in the favour of the God of heaven: and in order to deserve this favour it is our first care to support the Christian faith and its venerable religion. Therefore, inasmuch as the pre-eminence of the Apostolic See is assured by the merit of S. Peter, the first of the bishops, by the leading position of the city of Rome and also by the authority of the Holy Synod, let not presumption strive to attempt anything contrary to the authority of that See."⁴⁶⁰

Undoubtedly the man who gave this idea the most impetus was Pope Leo the Great. He believed that, just as the Empire was universal and ruled by a single man, so the Church, as a parallel institution to the Empire, was universal and should be ruled by a single man, which man had to be the Pope since he represented St. Peter. Thus St. Leo gave his legates to the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon strict instructions that, as legates of the see of St. Peter, they should preside over the Council, and that his Tome should be read at the beginning and presented as the fully sufficient expression of the Orthodox position, without the need for any further discussion or debate.⁴⁶¹ (In fact, Leo's legates did not preside, and his Tome was read only at the end, when it was subjected to searching scrutiny.) Again, at the fourth session of the Council the Roman legate Paschalius spoke of Pope Leo as "the bishop of all the churches". And the legates refused to accept Canon 28 of the Council, which gave Constantinople second place after Old Rome on account of her position as the imperial city of the Empire. The legates considered this a "humiliation" of "the apostolic see" in their presence.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ St. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 4, 5.

⁴⁶⁰ Henry Bettenson and Christopher Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, third edition, 1999, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁶¹ This is not as arrogant as it sounds. According to his *Life*, St. Leo wrote his Tome and then "put it on the tomb of Peter, the chief Apostle. Then he fasted, prayed, and kept vigil, begging the preeminent Apostle, 'if I, as a man, have in this letter erred in any way or failed to explain the truth fully, do thou, to whom this Church and episcopal throne were entrusted, set it right.' Forty days later the Apostle appeared while Leo was praying. He said, 'I have read your letter and corrected it.' The Pope took the epistle from the blessed Peter's tomb, opened it, and found that it had been amended by the Apostle's hand" (St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, vol. 6: February, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2003, p. 207).

⁴⁶² See Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 299, 309.

St. Leo was too tactful, too Orthodox and too genuinely concerned for the welfare of the Church to make an issue of this.⁴⁶³ However, as the see of Constantinople grew in power and influence, the Popes renewed their attacks on Canon 28. Thus Pope Gelasius saw no reason why Constantinople should be exalted in this way. After all, he wrote to the bishops of Dardania, it was “not even a metropolis”!⁴⁶⁴ Rome’s jealousy went so far as to break communion with Archbishop Acacius of Constantinople, although the East accepted him as Orthodox. The “Acacian schism” was finally overcome, but not before Pope Hormisdas had again anathematized Acacius. Moreover, he insisted that “the apostolic see has always kept the Orthodox faith unharmed”, and that “those who do not agree in everything with the apostolic see” should not be commemorated.

Patriarch John of Constantinople signed the *libellicus*, but only after cunningly adding the phrase: “I proclaim that the see of the Apostle Peter and the see of this imperial city are one”, thereby witnessing to the truth of St. Cyprian’s words that “the episcopate is one” ...⁴⁶⁵

Rome’s pretensions were dealt a further blow by the Emperor Justinian nearly forty years later, when he forced Pope Vigilius to accept the condemnation, enshrined in the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, of the so-called “Three Chapters”, although this led to some western councils - in Africa and Northern Italy (the so-called “Aquilean schism”) - breaking communion with Vigilius. However, the fact that these western councils, and some individual saints⁴⁶⁶, felt able to break with the Pope shows that they did not consider him to be infallible. Moreover, Vigilius’ penitential letter to Patriarch Eutyches of Constantinople was an admission of his fallibility...

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⁴⁶³ However, we should not forget his harsh treatment of St. Hilary, Archbishop of Arles, who disputed his jurisdiction over the Gallican see of Besancon and was thrown into prison in Rome for his protest. He died in 449 out of communion with Rome (Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 369).

⁴⁶⁴ Abbé Vladimir Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1866, p. 198.

⁴⁶⁵ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 398, 399.

⁴⁶⁶ The Irish St. Columbanus of Luxeuil wrote to Pope Vigilius and suggested that he may have fallen into heresy. In that case, he continued, those “who have always kept the Orthodox Faith, whoever these may be, even if they seem to be your subordinates,... shall be your judges... And thus, even as your honour is great in proportion to the dignity of your see, so great care is mindful for you, lest you lose your dignity through some mistake. For power will be in your hands just so long as your principles remain sound; for he is the appointed keybearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, who opens by true knowledge to the worthy and shuts to the unworthy; otherwise if he does the opposite, he shall be able neither to open nor to shut.” “For all we Irish,” as he said to another Pope, “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 Spirit, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching; none has been a heretic, none a Judaizer, none a schismatic; but the Catholic Faith, as it was delivered by you first, who are the successors of the holy apostles, has been maintained unbroken.” (G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970, pp. 47, 49, 51, 39)

The tendency to papism was not only checked but crushed under perhaps the greatest of the Popes, Gregory I, towards the end of the sixth century. An Old Roman aristocrat and patriot, he believed in the primacy, but not universal sovereignty, of "the apostolic see". He never tried to override the rights of Local Churches, still less proclaim an infallible headship over them.

Indeed, in his vehement opposition (following the example of his predecessor, Pelagius II) to the title of "universal bishop" first offered by the Emperor Maurice to St. John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Gregory provided an invaluable lesson to all subsequent Popes of the limits of their power and jurisdiction. For he accused St. John of pride, and wrote to him that in accepting this title he was "at enmity with that grace which was given to all [bishops] in common". He reminded him that the Fourth Ecumenical Council had offered the title of "universal" to the Roman Pope as a mark of honour to St. Peter, but that none of the Popes had accepted it, "lest by assuming a special distinction in the dignity of the episcopate, we should seem to refuse it to all the brethren".⁴⁶⁷

In a letter to the Emperor, St. Gregory wrote of St. Peter: "He received the keys of the celestial Kingdom; the power to bind and to loose was given to him; the care of all the Church and the primacy were committed to him; and yet he did not call himself *universal Apostle*. But that most holy man, John, my brother in the priesthood, would fain assume the title of *universal bishop*. I can but exclaim, *O tempora! O mores!*"⁴⁶⁸ In another letter to Patriarchs Eulogius of Alexandria and Anastasius of Antioch, St. Gregory makes the point that "if a Patriarch be called universal, this takes from all the others the title of Patriarch"⁴⁶⁹.

After St. John the Faster's death, St. Gregory wrote to his successor at Constantinople, Cyriacus: "You must not consider this same affair as unimportant; for, if we tolerate it, we *corrupt the faith of the whole Church*. You know how many, not heretics only but heresiarchs, have arisen in the Church of Constantinople. Not to speak of the injury done to your dignity, it cannot be denied that if any one bishop be called *universal*, all the Church *crumbles if that universal one fall!*"⁴⁷⁰

Finally, in another letter to the Emperor, St. Gregory wrote: "I pray your Imperial Piety to observe that there are some frivolous things that are inoffensive, but also some others that are very hurtful. When Antichrist shall come and call himself God, it will be in itself a perfectly frivolous thing, but a very pernicious one. If we only choose to consider the number of syllables in this word, we find but two (De-us); but if we conceive the weight of iniquity of this title, we shall find it enormous. I say it without the least hesitation:

⁴⁶⁷ Guettée, *op. cit.*, pp. 208, 211.

⁴⁶⁸ Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁴⁶⁹ Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

⁴⁷⁰ Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

whoever calls himself the universal bishop, or desires this title, is, by his pride, THE PRECURSOR OF ANTICHRIST, because he thus attempts to raise himself above the others. The error into which he falls springs from pride equal to that of Antichrist; for as that wicked one wished to be regarded as exalted above other men, like a god, so likewise whoever would be called sole bishop exalteth himself above the other."⁴⁷¹

And so we find the heresy of papism thoroughly refuted by one of the greatest of the Popes. St. Gregory reaffirms the doctrine taught by St. Cyprian and the Orthodox East, that all bishops are essentially equal in grace, because the grace of the episcopate is one, and the bishops receive their grace, not from one man or one see, but from the episcopate as a whole. Consequently, the heresy that attempts to create, as it were, a fourth level of the priesthood above that of bishop, in the form of a *universal* bishop having sovereignty over all the others, undermines the ecclesiology of the Church, and is like the heresy of the Antichrist, who will also exalt himself above all other men...

With the heresy of papism suppressed, at least temporarily, the West flourished and the papacy herself rose to the peak of its real and not vain glory and power.

The six centuries or so from the papacy of St. Gregory the Great to that of Gregory VII and the emergence of the new Papist Empire of the medieval Popes constitute a fascinating period in which the Orthodox Christian forms of political and ecclesiastical life gradually succumbed to the new, heretical forms - but only after a fierce struggle during which the Orthodox staged several "comebacks".

In this struggle two forces were especially prominent: the papacy, and the new national kingdoms of Western Europe. Until the reign of Charlemagne at least, the relationship between these two forces was one of mutual respect and benefit. The Popes, with rare exceptions, were by no means "papist" and dictatorial in relation to the national kingdoms and their national synods of bishops, but provided a vital source of unity, stability and enlightenment for the embryonic new nation-states and Churches. In their turn, the kings and their bishops frequently travelled to Rome and worked closely with the Popes, receiving instruction, books, relics, icons, chanters and moral and spiritual support. It was a different matter, however, when it came to relations between the Popes and the Eastern Emperors, of whom they were the secular subjects for approximately two hundred years after Justinian's reconquest of Rome in 540. On the one hand, as the first see in Christendom the papacy sought to be in "symphony" with the Emperor in Constantinople, and always saw herself as the "Imperial Church" (to the extent that her rival patriarchate in the New Rome allowed it). On the other hand, relations were often strained, especially when the Emperor tried to impose a heretical confession on the papacy.

⁴⁷¹ Guettée, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

32. THE SYMPHONY OF NATIONS

To what extent can we speak of *nations* in the modern sense in this period?

Francis Fukuyama has put forward the important thesis that the Church had a “devastating impact on tribal organization throughout Western Europe. The German, Norse, Magyar, and Slavic tribes saw their kinship structures dissolve within two or three generations of their conversion to Christianity.”⁴⁷² This was in sharp contrast to China, India and the Middle East, where tribal bonds continued to be strong, and it made possible the emergence of the larger and more heterogeneous unit of *the nation*.

How did the Church effect this change? In the first place, of course, membership of the Church creates a higher and deeper unity than any ties based on kinship; and so to the extent that the Western peoples became truly Christian, the family of the Church replaced the family of the tribe, while the family of the nation became an intermediate link.

However, there were more specific ways in which Church law broke up the old bonds. Thus Larry Siedentop points out that “by transferring religious authority from the father to a separate priesthood, the Christian church removed the religious basis of the paterfamilias. It curtailed the claims to authority of the family head, relaxing the ties of subordination that had previously bound its members.”⁴⁷³

Again, building on the work of the social anthropologist Jack Goody, Fukuyama points out that the Church “took a strong stand against four practices: marriages between close kin, marriages to the widows of dead relatives (the so-called levirate), the adoption of children, and divorce. The Venerable Bede, reporting on the efforts of Pope Gregory I to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in the sixth century, notes how Gregory explicitly condemned the tribe’s practices of marriage to close relatives and the levirate. Later church edicts forbade concubinage, and promoted an indissoluble, monogamous lifetime marriage bond between men and women...”

These practices that were banned by the Church were what Goody calls “‘strategies of heirship’ whereby kinship groups are able to keep property under the group’s control as it passed down from one generation to another. Life expectancy in Europe and the Mediterranean world of the time was less than thirty-five. The probability of a couple’s producing a male heir who survived into adulthood and who could carry on the ancestral line was quite low. As a result, societies legitimated a wide range of practices that allowed individuals to produce heirs. Concubinage has already been discussed...; divorce can be seen as a form of serial concubinage in monogamous societies.

⁴⁷² Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 239.

⁴⁷³ Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual*, London: Penguin, 2014, p. 116.

The levirate was practiced when a brother died before he produced children; his wife's marriage to a younger brother ensured that his property would remain consolidated with that of his siblings. Cross-cousin marriage ensured that property would remain in the hands of close family members."⁴⁷⁴

The Church's rules also enhanced the status of women, who were now allowed to own property in their own names and dispose of it as they wished. We see the change in Gaul, in the transition from Salic law (c. 510) to the Lex Ribuaria (c. 600). "Famously, the former prohibits any female inheritance of ancestral land, while the latter relaxes such restrictions."⁴⁷⁵

Fukuyama expresses the somewhat cynical thought that the Church thereby profited materially from these rules, because widows and property-owning Christians who died without heirs often gave their land to the Church. However, it made sense that a believing society should look to the Church rather than the tribe as its agent of social security and endow it accordingly. And the Church certainly carried out this role impressively in this period.

Not only at the social level, but also at the political level, the level of relationships between states, the impact of Christianization was profound... The pagan Roman empire had introduced the important idea that all Roman citizens, of whatever nationality, were in some sense equal under the law. Building on that, the Church proclaimed that all baptized Christians, of whatever nationality, were equal under the law of Christ. Similarly, just as the pagan Roman empire had proclaimed that Rome encompassed the whole *oikoumene* or "inhabited world", so Christian Rome now saw herself as encompassing the whole family of Christian nations under her paternal leadership. As Sir Steven Runciman writes, "Ideally, it [the Empire] should embrace all the peoples of the earth, who, ideally, should all be members of the one true Christian Church, its own Orthodox Church."⁴⁷⁶

"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

⁴⁷⁴ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

⁴⁷⁵ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁷⁶ Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 1.

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 [pagan] Rome had never conceived of..."⁴⁷⁷

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*, modeled on the father-son relationship. The Roman Emperor was the head and father of a family of Christian rulers united, not by a single political or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but by common membership of the civilization of Christian Rome. If we restrict ourselves to speaking only of the Orthodox Christian States and peoples, then within this single commonwealth there was, 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 and sons of the Roman Emperor.

As it was developed in succeeding centuries, writes I.P. Medvedev, "this doctrine 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

⁴⁷⁷ Lieven, *Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 9-10.

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)..."⁴⁷⁸

And so from Britain in the West to Georgia in the East to Ethiopia in the south "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 Greek, 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."⁴⁷⁹ This internationalism was underlined by the Emperors' diverse nationalities. Thus Constantine was a Roman, Theodosius I - a Spaniard, Justinian I - an Illyrian or Thracian, Maurice and Heraclius - Armenians and Leo the iconoclast - a Syrian.

"Much suggests that for many centuries after the fall of the Western Roman empire, there persisted within the western consciousness a sentiment that just as Christians knew unity in the one body of Christ which was the universal ecclesia, so ideally they should know it also in one body politic, a universal res publica. If one reason why this did not find expression was the concrete reality of western political multiplicity, another was the impossibility of conceiving any polity but the Roman empire as having a legitimate claim to universality yet the impossibility also of recognizing in the empire as it actually existed the universal res publica of the western vision. This was a deadlock which could be broken only if the Roman empire were recast in a satisfactory western mould. The speed and strength with which the imperial idea came to be reasserted once western circumstances were propitious to such a recasting [in the time of Charlemagne] are themselves the strongest argument that it had never been banished but had simply lain dormant. Two things were necessary for its reinvigoration and realization: first, the emergence of a western Grossreich ... without which its entertainment would have been wholly utopian; second, the inclusion within this polity of Rome..."⁴⁸⁰

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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

⁴⁷⁸ Medvedev, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 138-139.

⁴⁷⁹ Fr. George Metallinos, "Apo ti Romaiki oikoumenikotita ston Ethnistiko Patriotismo" ("From Roman Universalism to Ethnic Patriotism"), *Exodos*, Athens, 1991, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁰ P.D. King, "The barbarian kingdoms", in *Cambridge History of Medieval Thought*, c. 350 - c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 144-145, 146.

same time - the underlying unity of Orthodox Christian civilization throughout the Mediterranean area enabled unity of faith to be recovered before long. It was only in the first half of seventh century, with the rise of Islam in the East, and towards the end of the eighth century, with the rise of the Carolingian empire in the West, that the first more or less permanent cracks in the unity both of faith and civilization began to appear.

And so the idea of a symphony of nations, of a single Christian Roman Empire extending from the Atlantic to the Caspian, was a living spiritual reality, and one that endured also in the West until at least the reign of Charlemagne at the end of the eighth century. Indeed, so widely accepted was the ideal of "One Faith, One Church, One Empire" that when Charlemagne came to create his western rival to the Empire, he also spoke of "the Christian people of the Romans" without ethnic differentiation, and tried 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."⁴⁸¹

However, it was only to be expected that such a wonderful ideal would be attacked by the enemy of mankind. His main weapons in the West as in the East were political dissonance (war, rebellion) and ecclesiastical division (schism, heresy). So let us look at how the ideal fared in reality in each of the major Christian nations that emerged in the West after the fall of Old Rome.

⁴⁸¹ Agobard, quoted in R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1988, p. 147.

33. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (1) VANDAL NORTH AFRICA

The Western Roman empire began unraveling after the Emperor Honorius withdrew the legions from Britain in 410. This process continued unabated throughout the fifth century, until the final fall of the empire in 476. But out of its ruins several barbarian kingdoms composed of amalgamations of various Germanic tribes gradually came into existence.

The questions that arose in relation to these kingdoms were: What would be their relationship with the Roman Empire that still existed in the East, in Constantinople? Was the Eastern Roman Empire now the only legitimate political authority for those of Roman descent living on its former territories in the West? Or were the western barbarian kings also legitimate powers, the legal successors of Rome in some sense?

Now North Africa, being since its subjection in the third century BC the bread-basket of Rome, was a highly Romanized and Christianized province, as is proved by the numerous archaeological remains that survive to this day. Moreover, it gave birth to some of the most influential writers of Western Christendom, such as Tertullian, St. Cyprian of Carthage and St. Augustine of Hippo. At the same time, it was the birthplace of the most stubborn, violent and long-lasting schismatic movement in the Early Church, the Donatists. It was therefore perhaps no surprise that shortly after the death of St. Augustine in 430, North Africa became the object of the wrath of God. In 439, after eight years of war, the capital, Carthage, fell to the Vandals, the most anti-Roman and anti-Christian of all the barbarian tribes, under their king, Gaiseric. St. Quodvultdeus, Metropolitan of Carthage, and many of his flock, were exiled to the Neapolitan coastline, where Quodvultdeus died in about 450. Gaiseric was a rigorous Arian; he banished Orthodox priests who refused to perform the Arian services and even sacked Rome in 455.⁴⁸² In 484 Huneric, not without some irony, used a Roman law of 412 directed against the Donatists to embark on a savage persecution against the Orthodox Christians.

The defection of such an important province could not be looked on with indifference by the Emperor of New Rome, the ambitious and western-oriented Justinian I, especially when, 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 heretical assemblies under ban. As he himself put it, God "deemed it proper that the injuries of the Church should be avenged through me".⁴⁸³

The Vandal kingdom of North Africa could never have been considered a legitimate successor of Roman power because it was not only not Orthodox,

⁴⁸² Tim Newark, *Warlords*, London: Brockhampton Press, 1996, p. 323.

⁴⁸³ *Cod. Just.* 1.27.1.1-2; in Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

but a persecutor of the Orthodox. Its aggression can be explained in part, as Heather writes, by the fact that it “had been carved out of the living body of a still very vital Western Empire by the Vandal conquest of Carthage in 439, whereas all the other Western successor states emerged both more slowly and more consensually, a generation or so later, as the central Roman state gradually ran out of revenues and the capacity to direct events. And since Catholicism [Orthodoxy] was unambiguously the religion of the empire, Vandal monarchs tended to be highly hostile towards it, deliberately fostering an alternate Christianity among the warriors who had put them in power.”⁴⁸⁴

Nevertheless, its political philosophy was closely modeled on Rome – except in its tendency to persecute the Orthodox. Thus in Vandal North Africa we find, as P.D. King writes, “a sovereign monarchy, Roman and Christian in its bases,” in which “there is no trace of a popular assembly, of any other constitutional curb on the exercise of the king’s will, of any area of activity exempt from royal control. As the emperor wielded authority in religious matters, calling councils, deciding which creed his subjects should follow, persecuting dissidents – for what could be more germane to the public welfare than God’s propitiation by correct worship? – so did the Arian Vandal king. Generic (d. 477) even established a permanent rule of succession, vesting the crown in his house; here he went further than any emperor chose, or dared, to do. A throne and the purple, witnessed for the 530s, will assuredly have appeared earlier, as had the diadem. The king described himself in traditional imperial nomenclature, as ‘Our Piety’ and ‘Our Clemency’, held himself to possess ‘majesty’ and was addressed in reverential language customarily employed of the emperor. Instances of *imitatio imperii* could easily be multiplied. Most significant, the ruler considered heavenly authority to be the source of his own. God Himself had conceded his dominions to him, said Huneric (d. 484); he held them ‘by divine favour’.

“The Vandal picture anticipates that eventually yielded by all the [western] *regna* in numerous respects. But Huneric’s statements merit especial note as the vanguard of a formidable army of testimony to the currency in the kingdoms of the belief that the ruler was such by God’s *fiat*. At its roots lay the most fundamental of principles, that all that existed or occurred terrestrially was ultimately traceable to the celestial will, not to the intrinsic merits or unaided efforts of men... Like anything else, political power existed by God’s will; and those who wielded it occupied their positions by His favour. By Christ’s own witness (*John* 19.11), Pilate’s power against Him derived ‘from above’, and Paul’s statement in *Romans* 13.1 was unequivocal: ‘There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God’. When orthodox bishops declared that ‘divine favour’ had ‘provided’ Theoderic (d. 526) – an Arian! – to govern Italy, or a seventh-century Frankish formula attributed elevation to kingship to ‘divine mercy’, or Ine of Wessex (d. 725) called himself king ‘mid Godes gife’, they were operating with precisely the

⁴⁸⁴ Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

same notion expressed in the celebrated formula 'king by the grace of God' which was to become part of the Carolingian royal intitulatio, for gratia, 'grace', meant simply 'favour'. Indeed, already the Lombard, Agilulf (590-616), was 'king by the grace of God' and the Visigoth, Svinthila (621-31), brought to kingship 'by divine grace'. Nicely illustrative of the root-concept was Boniface's designation of Aethelbald of Mercia (d. 757) as 'you whom not your own merits but God's abundant mercy constituted king and prince of many' ..."⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁵ King, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

34. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (2) OSTROGOTHIC ITALY

For the Romans of North Africa, it was clear where their loyalties lay: with Rome, and not with their barbarian and heretical rulers. But for the Romans of Italy and Spain the matter was less clear-cut. On the one hand, they remained socially and legally separate from their Gothic rulers ("Ostrogothic", that is, Eastern Gothic in Italy, and "Visigothic", that is, Western Gothic in Spain). But on the other hand, unlike the Vandals the Goths did not, in general, persecute the Faith, fostered Roman culture, and allowed the Romans to follow their own laws.

As John Julius Norwich writes, the situation in south-western Europe from Spain through Southern France to Italy was that of "a Roman land-owning aristocracy living comfortably on its estates, perfectly satisfied with the status quo and doubtless grateful that the immense distance separating them from Constantinople reduced imperial interference [expressed especially in the form of heavy taxation] to the point of imperceptibility."⁴⁸⁶

The barbarian rulers of Italy had a healthy respect for Rome and her traditions of law and education. We have seen how much Ataulf, the son of the fearsome Alaric, had respected Romanitas. And after the last Western Emperor, Romulus, was deposed by the Ostrogothic King Odoacer, he was not killed but given a respectable pension.

Odoacer's murderer and successor, Theodoric, was equally respectful. Thus in about 507 he wrote to the Emperor Anastasius in Constantinople: "You are the fairest ornament of all realms; you are the healthful defence of the whole world, to which all other rulers rightfully look up with reverence, because they know that there is in you something which is unlike all others: we above all, who by Divine help learned in your Republic [Constantinople: Theodoric had spent ten years in the city as a child] the art of governing Romans with equity. Our royalty is an imitation of yours, modeled on your good purpose, a copy of the only Empire; and in so far as we follow you do we excel all other nations."⁴⁸⁷

"Procopius, the main Byzantine historian of this era, describes Theodoric as popular and dignified. The Gothic king, we are told, 'was exceedingly careful to observe justice, he preserved the laws on a sure basis, he protected the land and kept it safe from the barbarians dwelling round about, and attained the highest possible degree of wisdom and manliness.' Though in time Theodoric himself could be considered 'in name a tyrant', Procopius goes on, 'in fact he was as truly an emperor as any who have distinguished themselves in this office from the beginning.'"⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 253.

⁴⁸⁷ Theodoric, in Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁸ Colin Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2007, p. 12.

What could be wrong with obeying a ruler who, though not a Roman, consciously modeled himself on Rome? He was an (Arian) heretic, yes; but he did not persecute the Orthodox in the way the Vandals did. And in any case, Anastasius was also a (Monophysite) heretic. So the question who was the legitimate ruler of Italy was not so clear to the Roman population of Italy, in spite of their presumed natural sympathy for the Empire. If they had lived peaceably enough for more than one generation under Arian Ostrogothic rulers, why should they rise up against them now? If that pillar of Orthodoxy, the Roman Pope, recognized King Theoderic as legitimate⁴⁸⁹, who were they to treat him as illegitimate?

However, things changed after the ascension to the throne of the New Rome of the strictly Orthodox Justin I, and then, after the death of King Theoderic, of his nephew, the famous Justinian I, in 527... We have seen that Justinian wanted to reconquer the West for Rome and Orthodoxy, and that he had found a clear casus belli for going to war with the Vandals in their persecution of the Orthodox. Such a casus was more difficult to find in relation to the religiously tolerant and pro-Roman Ostrogothic kings. However, he found one in the murder of the pro-Roman Ostrogothic Queen Amalasantha in 534 by the new King Theodahad.

Led by the famous generals Belisarius and Nerses, Roman armies reconquered Italy, 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.⁴⁹⁰ Tactfully, Patriarch John Kappadokes of Constantinople continued to recognize the primacy of the see of Old Rome (which, however, he declared to be one church with the see of New Rome),⁴⁹¹ 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 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)." ⁴⁹²

Italy was again Roman and Orthodox. The famous frescoes of Justinian and Theodora in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, the former Ostrogothic capital, are superimposed on the earlier frescoes of Theoderic, thereby commemorating the restoration of Romanity. And although the wars had lasted a generation and been exceedingly costly, and the north was soon

⁴⁸⁹ Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁴⁹⁰ Tom Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, p. 19.

⁴⁹¹ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁴⁹² A. Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great: the Emperor and Saint*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982, p. 82.

overrun by another Arian Germanic race, the Lombards, the leaders of Roman society, such as Pope Gregory I, were convinced it had all been worth it.

In the longer term, however, Justinian's wars in Italy, far from consolidating Romanity in the province, laid the foundations for its eventual alienation from New Rome. The bitterness of the vanquished, the increased vulnerability of the devastated province to external invasion, the bad treatment that even the Popes sometimes received from the Emperors, all left their mark... And so after Justinian's death, no ruler in continental Western Europe continued to acknowledge the authority of the Roman Empire over himself; and his ideology of "One Faith, One Church, One Empire" began to weaken there, as it was already weakening in the Monophysite East.

Thus, as King writes, "no writer testifies to the currency of the old ideology. Though this was still maintained by imperial subjects [in Italy], it could not have carried its earlier conviction. It had been the closeness of correspondence between universalist ideality and political, cultural and religious reality which had endowed the former with the great strength of its grasp upon men's minds. That correspondence was now lacking, as Jordanes, writing in 551, acknowledged. To him, the *res publica* (destined on Daniel's authority to last until the end of the world) still indeed held what it had once subjected ('almost the entire earth'); but it did so, when not actually, then - the word is an exquisite choice - 'imaginarie'. Time served only to widen the gap which had opened up. It is not clear that any western *regnum* recognized imperial authority after Justinian, while the incongruity of identifying the Christian world and the empire grew ever more patent. The calamitous reverses suffered by the seventh-century empire at Muslim and pagan hands made matters worse. Moreover, westerners were deeply alienated by the character, real or perceived, of the contemporary empire. Fear and hostility on the political and military fronts played a role, while in imperial Italy resentment at high taxation and inadequate defence fuelled animosity towards what was seen as a foreign regime. Throughout the west as a whole, indeed, the empire was regarded as essentially a Greek affair... Closely related was enmity in the theological sphere; the age was full of controversies which confirmed the widespread - and again traditional - western distrust of easterners as intellectual conjurers, given to unorthodoxy. In turn the theological disputes were bound up with the fundamental papal-imperial conflict, usually latent but occasionally exploding into violent life; this and its concomitants, including the ill-treatment of some popes by some emperors, brought further hostility..."⁴⁹³

Yet none of this argues for repudiation of the political universalist *ideal*; and the fact is that this was not *denied*, even implicitly... The only exception to this rule, as we have seen, was the Vandal kingdom of North Africa. But in Europe the ideal, though battered, survived...

⁴⁹³ King, *op. cit.*

35. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (3) FRANKISH GAUL

“The Visigothic King Euric (466-84),” writes Chris Wickham, “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 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... will henceforth be a knowledge of letters’; the official hierarchy had gone, only traditional Roman culture remained...”⁴⁹⁴

The archiepiscopate of Arles was a bastion of Roman traditions in France, and for a time played the role of a metropolitan centre on a par with Rome. Thus St. Hilary, Archbishop of Arles (430-449) became “de facto head of the whole of the Gallican Church and presided over Episcopal councils in Riez (429), Orange (441) and Bezons (442).” Again, St. Caesarius of Arles (503-542) “introduced a series of disciplinary reforms in the spirit of Romanitas (Romanity), which confirmed the independence of bishops from the local civil and juridical authorities, proclaimed the inalienability of church property, introduced disciplinary rules for clergy (including celibacy for the priesthood) and established sacramental obligations for laymen (regular communion, conditions for marriage, etc.).”⁴⁹⁵

A threat to the continuance of Christian Roman Gaul came from the Arian kings – the Ostrogothic Alaric of Toulouse and the Visigothic Theoderic of Ravenna. However, as we have seen, these were not intolerant of Orthodox Christianity, and St. Caesarius was able to establish good cooperative relations with both of them.

⁴⁹⁴ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, p. 87.

⁴⁹⁵ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 354, 359.

Another threat was originally posed by Clovis, first king of the Franks, who in 486 defeated the last representative of Roman power at the Battle of Soissons. However, in 496 he was converted to Orthodoxy under the influence of his wife, St. Clothilde, and St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims.

St. Gregory of Tours tells the story: "The queen asked Saint Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, to summon Clovis secretly, urging him to introduce the king to the word of salvation. And the bishop sent for him secretly and began to urge him to believe in the true God, maker of heaven and earth, and to cease worshipping idols, which could help neither themselves nor any one else. But the king said: 'I gladly hear you, most holy father; but there remains one thing: the people who follow me cannot endure to abandon their gods; but I shall go and speak to them according to your words.' He met with his followers, but before he could speak the power of God anticipated him, and all the people cried out together: 'O pious king, we reject our mortal gods, and we are ready to follow the immortal God whom Remigius preaches.' This was reported to the bishop, who greatly rejoiced, and bade them get ready the baptismal font. The squares were shaded with tapestried canopies, the churches adorned with white curtains, the baptistery set in order, the aroma of incense spread, candles of fragrant odour burned brightly, and the whole shrine of the baptistery was filled with a divine fragrance: and the Lord gave such grace to those who stood by that they thought they were placed amid the odours of paradise. And the king was the first to ask to be baptized by the bishop. Another Constantine advanced to the baptismal font, to terminate the disease of ancient leprosy and wash away with fresh water the foul spots that had long been borne. And when he entered to be baptized, the saint of God began with ready speech: 'Gently bend your neck, Sigamber; worship what you burned; burn what you worshipped.' The holy bishop Remigius was a man of excellent wisdom and especially trained in rhetorical studies, and of such surpassing holiness that he equalled the miracles of Sylvester. For there is extant a book of his life which tells that he raised a dead man. And so the king confessed all-powerful God in the Trinity, and was baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and was anointed with the holy ointment with the sign of the cross of Christ. And of his army more than 3000 were baptized. His sister also, Albofled, was baptized, who not long after passed to the Lord. And when the king was in mourning for her, the holy Remigius sent a letter of consolation which began in this way: 'The reason of your mourning pains me, and pains me greatly, that Albofled your sister, of good memory, has passed ; away. But I can give you this comfort, that her departure from the world was such that she ought to be envied rather than mourned.' Another sister also was converted, Lantechild by name, who had fallen into the heresy of the Arians, and she confessed that the Son and the holy Spirit were equal to the Father, and was anointed."⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁶ St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*.

Clovis' baptism, together with the stunning victories that he won over the Arian kings, was a tremendous boost to Gallic Romanitas. St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, congratulated him on his baptism in terms that showed that he regarded Clovis' kingdom as still part of the Empire: "Let Greece rejoice in having chosen our princeps".⁴⁹⁷ Again, St. Gregory of Tours wrote that he 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."⁴⁹⁸

Actually, since the Emperor Anastasius was a heretic, Clovis was the only major Orthodox Christian ruler at this time, if we exclude the British King Arthur. Moreover, he consciously stressed the continuity of his rule with that of Rome. As Fr. Andrew Louth writes: "Like most of the barbarian kingdoms that appeared in the Western Roman Empire, [the Frankish realms] inherited something of the administrative structure of the Roman Empire, and could claim to rule as representative, in some way, of the true Roman emperor, who resided in New Rome, Constantinople. This understanding was fictional in several respects: the Roman or Byzantine emperor had no choice over his Merovingian representative in Gaul and, although taxes were still being collected, the dynamics of political society in the West were changing in the direction of a society ruled by military warlords, who gave protection to those who lived in their domains and rewarded their followers with booty from fighting amongst themselves, and further afield, and who accepted the overlordship of the Merovingian kings. The fiction was nevertheless significant, not least in the way it articulated political legitimacy in terms of the ideals of the Roman Empire."⁴⁹⁹

Clovis defeated the Arian Visigothic King Alaric II at Vouillé in 507. Then in 511 the Franks' allies against the Visigoths, the Burgundians, were converted from Arianism to Orthodoxy. And although the Arian Theoderic profited from the Visigoths' defeat to incorporate their kingdom into his (the Franks took Aquitaine), the revival of Orthodoxy continued, receiving its strongest boost in 518 when the Monophysite Emperor Anastasius, died, and was succeeded by the Orthodox Justin I. In 526 the Ostrogothic King Theoderic died, and his kingdom lost its hold on the Visigoths and Vandals, leaving the Franks as the most powerful force in the West. The Gallo-Romans now set about working with their Frankish king to create the Merovingian Orthodox kingdom, the most glorious period in the history of France.

⁴⁹⁷ St. Avitus, *Letter 4*; in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴⁹⁸ St. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II, 38, p. 154. During the coronation of the Russian Tsars, too, the bystanders were showered with gold and silver, symbolizing the betrothal of the Tsar with the State. See Fr. Nikita Chakirov (ed.), *Tsarskie Koronatsii na Rusi* (Imperial Coronations in Rus'), New York: Russian Orthodox Youth Committee, 1971, p. 22.

⁴⁹⁹ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, pp. 67-68.

“Established at Paris, Clovis governed this kingdom by virtue of an agreement concluded with the bishops of Gaul, according to which [Gallo-Roman] natives and [Frankish] barbarians were to be on terms of equality... 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 their 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.”⁵⁰⁰

Our main source for Frankish history, *The History of the Franks* by St. Gregory of Tours, confirms this account. As 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.”⁵⁰¹ 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 (V, 19). But St. Gregory shows no sympathy for the bishop, 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.⁵⁰²

The Eastern Orthodox had a high opinion of the sixth-century Franks. Thus The 6th century Byzantine lawyer, scholar, poet, and historian Agathias Scholasticus in his *Histories* provides the following assessment: "The Franks have a common frontier with Italy. They may reasonably be identified with the people who in ancient times were called 'Germans'... Their system of government, administration and laws are modelled more or less on the Roman pattern, apart from which they uphold similar standards with regard to contracts, marriage, and religious observance. They are in fact all Christians and adhere to the strictest Orthodoxy. They also have magistrates in their cities and priests and celebrate the feasts in the same way as we do, and, for a barbarian people, strike me as extremely well-bred and civilized and as

⁵⁰⁰ “New Advent” Catholic encyclopaedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06238a.htm>

⁵⁰¹ Wickham, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁵⁰² 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.

practically the same as ourselves except for their uncouth style of dress and peculiar language. I admire them for their other attributes and especially for the spirit of justice and harmony which prevails amongst them. Although on many occasions in the past and even during my own lifetime their kingdom has been divided between three or more rulers they have never yet waged war against one another or seen fit to stain their country's honour by the slaughter of their kith and kin. And yet whenever great powers are seen to have reached a state of parity, arrogant and uncompromising attitudes are inevitably engendered and the logical outcome is rivalry, the lust for domination and a host of other passions that constitute a fertile breeding-ground for unrest and dissension. Nevertheless nothing of the kind occurs in their case no matter how many different kingdoms they are split up into. In the rare event of some dispute arising between their kings they draw themselves up ostensibly in battle-formation and with the apparent object of deciding the issue by force of arms and then confront one another. But once the main body of the army on either side has come face to face they immediately lay aside all animosity, return to mutual understanding and enjoin their leaders to settle their differences by arbitration, or failing that by placing their own lives at stake in single combat. For it is not right, they say, or in keeping with ancestral precedent for the common good to suffer injury and upheaval on account of some personal feud of theirs. The immediate result is that they braid their ranks and lay down their arms. Peace and quiet are restored, normal communications resumed, and the horrors of war are forgotten. So law-abiding therefor and public spirited are the subject classes and so docile and amendable to reason, when need be, are the masters. It is for this reason that the basis of their power remains secure and their government stable and that they have not lost any of their territory but have actually increased it greatly. When justice and amity are second nature to a people then their state is guaranteed happiness and stability and rendered impregnable to enemy attack. So, living this virtuous life, the Franks rule over their own people and their neighbours, the succession passing from father to son."

Gaul, therefore, was the great success story of Romanity in the West. Without a drop of blood being shed, Gaul remained loyal to Constantinople, preserving both the faith and the political forms of Romanity more closely than any other continental nation.

Indeed, as David Starkey writes, under the rule of Clovis and his successors, "most aspects of sub-Roman society – the architecture, language, literature, manners and, above all, Roman Christianity – continued to flourish in the most successful regime since the fall of the Western Empire".⁵⁰³

⁵⁰³ Starkey, *Crown & Country*, London: Harper, 2011, pp. 28-29.

36. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (4) VISIGOTHIC SPAIN

In the fourth century Spain had been an important part of the Roman Empire, producing such great Christians as St. Osius, bishop of Cordoba, and the Emperor Theodosius I. Its recovery from the hands of the Arian Visigoths was therefore an important part of Justinian's strategy of reuniting the Empire. By the 550s the Roman armies had carved out a province in the south-east of Iberia called Spania.

Now it might have been expected that 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 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."⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁴ 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.

Indeed, as David Keys writes, “Hermenegild’s conversion was a massive challenge to the political system as a whole.”⁵⁰⁵

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 camp⁵⁰⁶). 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. Moreover, his brother Rekhared, who became king after the death of Leogivild, “commanded that the body of his elder brother, Saint Hermenegild, be given all the honors due a martyr of Christ”.⁵⁰⁷ 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”⁵⁰⁸

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”⁵⁰⁹, 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, Rekhared 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”.⁵¹⁰

Led by the Church, Spain now entered perhaps the greatest period in her history. The two law-codes, one for the Romans and the other for the Visigoths, were fused into one.⁵¹¹ There were frequent councils in which the king and the bishops took part, and at which an extensive programme of

⁵⁰⁵ Keys, *Catastrophe*, London: Arrow Books, 2000, p. 204.

⁵⁰⁶ 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).

⁵⁰⁷ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2001, vol. III: November, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁸ Ziegler, *Church and State in Visigothic Spain*, Washington, D.C., 1930, p. 30.

⁵⁰⁹ St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, III, 30.

⁵¹⁰ St. Demetrius, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵¹¹ See Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

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 as a model for ceremonial, and for a close identification between the episcopacy and the king."⁵¹²

But the kingship completely dominated the episcopate in Visigothic Spain. As King writes, "nothing lay outside the purview of the king. Far from there being an autonomous body, 'the church', authority over which belonged to others, society and the church were conceptually equated. It was precisely because fact did not correspond to idea that such savage action was taken against the Jews, whose presence within the territorial but beyond the ideological confines of the kingdom affronted the Christian, unitary premisses of the Visigothic standpoint. The king's authority over clerics and religious matters, inherent in his God-given responsibility for the health of society, was fully accepted by the *sacerdotium* itself. Kings nominated bishops, judged metropolitans, summoned councils, established agenda and confirmed rulings. They even provided excommunication as a legal penalty."⁵¹³

At the same time, the kings 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..."⁵¹⁴

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 the establishment or re-establishment of Orthodoxy. This did not mean, however, that Christians were *obliged* to rebel against pagan or heterodox régimes; for civil war is one of the worst of all evils and is to be undertaken only in the most exceptional circumstances...

⁵¹² Wickham, *op. cit.*, p. 136. This is confirmed by Heather: the kings "drenched themselves in a Roman and Christian sacrality, which determinedly echoed that of the emperors in Constantinople" (*op. cit.*, p. 214).

⁵¹³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁵¹⁴ Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

37. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (5) CELTIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

It was not only in the Mediterranean provinces of France, Spain and Italy that the consciousness of Romanity survived and re-established itself around the Church. 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*⁵¹⁵, and had taken the title Britannicus Maximus, “the greatest of the Britons”, in 315. However, in spite of some impressive architectural remains at Bath, York and Hadrian’s Wall, 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. And the Britons retained, with the Jews, the reputation of being the least assimilated people in the Empire.⁵¹⁶

Perhaps for that reason Britain became the platform for several rebellions against the central authorities in the late Empire. Thus in 350 a British officer called Magnentius donned the purple and was acclaimed by the army at Autun, only to be defeated the next year. Again, in 383 Magnus Clemens Maximus, leader of the army in Britain, seized power in the West and killed the Western Emperor Gratian. Now Maximus, unlike Magnentius, was an Orthodox Christian, a champion of the Church and a fine defender of the Western frontier against the Germans. 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”.⁵¹⁷

St. Ambrose of Milan rejected Maximus and remained loyal to Gratian’s co-emperor Valentinian II (in spite of the fact that his mother, Justina, was an Arian and his resolute enemy). He travelled to Trier in the winter of 383-4 to meet Maximus, but 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 according to Paulinus “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.”⁵¹⁸ In 388 he was defeated and executed by the Eastern Emperor Theodosius.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁵ In York. The place under York Minster where this hugely important event took place has now been excavated by archaeologists.

⁵¹⁶ Michael Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, Cornell University Press, 1998.

⁵¹⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, I (2, VI).

⁵¹⁸ Paulinus, *Life of St. Ambrose*, chapter 19, in the translation by E.R. Hoare.

⁵¹⁹ Norwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-111.

The way in which Ambrose could reject the British usurper Maximus, although his credentials were as good as many a pagan emperor, 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.⁵²⁰ In 410 the Roman legions left Britain and the British found themselves outside the Empire. As Procopius wrote: “The Romans never succeeded in recovering Britain, but it remained from that time on under tyrants.”⁵²¹ St. Gildas the Wise, writing in the 540s, blamed his countrymen, saying that they had “ungratefully rebelled” against “Roman kings”, and had failed in their “loyalty to the Roman Empire”.⁵²² It is difficult to argue with that judgement: the British began as they continued to be thereafter - innovators, even revolutionaries, in political theory and practice... The land formerly known as “the Roman island” became, from the beginning of the fifth century, “a province fertile in tyrants” (St. Jerome)⁵²³, thus reverting to its rebelliousness under Carausius and Allectus in the late third century.⁵²⁴

And yet the distinction between true kings and tyrants continued to be made here. 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 [regnum]” he would face God’s judgement on “wicked kings” [regibus].⁵²⁵ 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”.

⁵²⁰ Zosimus, *New History*, 6.2.

⁵²¹ Procopius, *The Vandal War*, 3.2.38.

⁵²² St. Gildas, *On the Ruin of Britain*, 4.1, 5.1, 15.1.

⁵²³ Christopher Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998, chapters 2, 8 and 9.

⁵²⁴ Kevin Butcher, “The First British Empire”, *BBC History Magazine*, June, 2016.

⁵²⁵ St. Patrick, *Letter to Coroticus*, 21, 19.

St. Gildas makes the distinction between kings and tyrants still clearer. 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 even “wore the purple”.⁵²⁶

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. David Miles writes: “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.”⁵²⁷ In any case, 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.⁵²⁸

In general, however, Gildas was withering about the kings: “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 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...”⁵²⁹

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 was 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 Ahab and Magnus Maximuses.

⁵²⁶ St. Gildas *On The Ruin of Britain*, 25. Bede interprets this to mean that they were “of royal race”.

⁵²⁷ Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, London: Phoenix, 2006, p. 162.

⁵²⁸ Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman (*King Arthur: The True Story*, London: Arrow, 1993) have made an excellent case for the historicity of King Arthur.

⁵²⁹ St. Gildas *On The Ruin of Britain*, 27.

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. And 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 now stronger than ever. Thus Simon Young writes that "in the west... there are various Celtic successor states but those too have left Rome far behind them. No surprise there. The west had, after all, always been the least Romanised part of Britannia and it was the very fact that they had primitive tribal societies instead of sophisticated urban ones that allowed the Celtic kingdoms to come through the storm in one piece. They were better able to fight off the barbarians. Indeed, the only Roman thing that survived there was Christianity - that had been the official religion of the later empire - and, closely connected to Christianity, Latin writing..."⁵³⁰

Fr. Gregory Telepneff notes 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]."⁵³¹

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 *Antiphony* 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

⁵³⁰ Young, "Apocalypse then circa 410", *BBC History Magazine*, March, 2010, p. 48.

⁵³¹ Telepneff, *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs*, Etna, Ca.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998, p. 70.

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.”⁵³²

However, as 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.”⁵³³

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 (if we exclude the Jews and the Armenians at the other end of the empire, which had dogmatic underpinnings). 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)⁵³⁴, the older Church of Wales strongly asserted its independence. Thus when the Roman St. Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury (+604), 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.

⁵³² Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, London: HarperCollins, 2005, pp. 418-419.

Most recently, a papyrus has been founded attached to the cover of an early Irish psalter, which is the first tangible proof of links between the Irish and Coptic Churches (Philip Kosloski, “Irish Worker Discovers Ancient Manuscript that Links Irish Church to Egypt”, November 30, 2016, http://aleteia.org/2016/11/30/irish-worker-discovers-ancient-manuscript-that-links-irish-church-to-egypt/?utm_campaign=english_page&utm_medium=aleteia_en&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1480489892).

⁵³³ Wickham, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁵³⁴ 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).

In 664 the Synod of Whitby united the Celtic and Roman traditions in the British Isles. It was rejected by the Welsh, who went into schism for a century.⁵³⁵ Both the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Churches regarded them as schismatics. 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".⁵³⁶ Again, St. Aldhelm of Sherborne, wrote about them: "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 [used in common with clergy of 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'."⁵³⁷

Some have argued that the Welsh were in fact making the first major protest against the Papist heresy. Thus according to one, somewhat suspect source, the Welsh said to Augustine: "Be it known and declared that we all, individually and collectively, are in all humility prepared to defer to the Church of God, and to the Bishop of Rome, and to every sincere and godly Christian, so far as to love everyone according to his degree, in perfect charity, and to assist them all by word and deed in becoming children of God. But as for any other obedience, we know of none that he, whom you term the Pope, or Bishop of bishops, can demand. The deference we have mentioned we are ready to pay to him as to every other Christian, but in all other respects our obedience is due to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Caerleon, who is alone under God our ruler to keep us right in the way of salvation."⁵³⁸

However, this is an anachronistic argument. For the Pope of St. Augustine's time, Gregory I, was vehemently opposed to any idea of a universal "Bishop of bishops", and the Roman Church in the seventh century was as Orthodox as any in the oikoumene. In fact, the Welsh rebellion, motivated by pride and nationalist hatred, had nothing to do with Papism as such, although it did demonstrate the fruits of that anti-conciliar and *anti-Roman* spirit of which Papism, paradoxically, was to be the most disastrous example.

⁵³⁵ 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.

⁵³⁶ Quoted in A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, 1964, volume I, p. 122.

⁵³⁷ *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, translated by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, Ipswich: Brewer, 1979, p. 158. The Latin text is in Haddan & Stubbs, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203.

⁵³⁸ Haddan & Stubbs, *op. cit.* p. 126.

38. THE WESTERN KINGDOMS: (6) ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

While the Celts were preserving the faith in the north and the west of the British Isles, the south and east, the heart of the old Roman province of Britain, had been overrun by the pagan Anglo-Saxons. By the end of the sixth century, Old Rome, restored to ecclesiastical and political unity with New Rome, was recovering its power and influence in the West. The crucial figure in this revival was Pope Gregory I - "the Great", as he is known in the West, "the Dialogist", as he is known in the East. As well as restoring the power and influence of the papacy throughout continental Western Europe, he determined on recovering Britain, "the Roman island", where the heirs of Christian Rome in Britain had been driven to the West or absorbed into the pagan Anglo-Saxon settlements that dominated most of the island.⁵³⁹

To this end, in 597 St. Gregory sent a band of forty Roman monks, led, as we have seen, by St. Augustine of Canterbury, to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons. The Roman missionaries tried hard to reconstruct the few bridges that connected the land with its Romano-British past, heading straight for the former Roman centres such as Canterbury and York, London and Dorchester. Thus three churches in Kent were built over late Roman mausoleums; the memory of the first British martyr Alban was faithfully kept at Verulamium; and the first wooden church in York was built in the middle of the vast Roman praetorium where St. Constantine had been hailed as emperor in 306.⁵⁴⁰

Place-names in "eccles-", coming from the Brittonic *ecles, "a church" (ultimately from the Greek ecclesia), in some parts of Southern Scotland, the Midlands and East Anglia probably indicate the continuity of church life there from Romano-British into Anglo-Saxon times.⁵⁴¹

In general, however, the missionaries found a virtual cultural tabula rasa amid pagans who knew next to nothing about Rome.⁵⁴² This makes the enthusiastic embrace by the English of Romanitas, both in its religious and political aspects, the more remarkable. Thus by the 680s the last English kingdom, Sussex, had been converted to the faith. Thereafter references to paganism in the sources are remarkably few.⁵⁴³

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⁵³⁹ Trefor Jones, *The English Saints: East Anglia*, Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1999, pp. 13-21.

⁵⁴⁰ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 8.

⁵⁴¹ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 70-71, 29-30.

⁵⁴² "Augustine of Canterbury began his mission with an almost clean slate" (Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 25). Nevertheless, many Byzantine finds have been found by archaeologists in the early Byzantine period. See Dr. Caitlin Green, "A Very Long Way from Home: Early Byzantine Finds at the Far Ends of the World", <http://www.caitlingreen.org/2017/03/a-very-long-way-from-home.html?m=1>, March 21, 2017.

⁵⁴³ Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

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 Empire, they were newcomers whose conversion to Romanitas, the world of Roman Christendom, 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."⁵⁴⁴

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).⁵⁴⁵ English missionaries such as St. Boniface of Germany and St. Willibrord of Holland worked 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 in need of alms.

As the English were absorbed into Christian Rome by the Roman missionaries, the symbolism of Romanitas 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, becoming one of those numerous kings who owed allegiance, albeit formal, to the Emperor in New Rome..."⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁴ C.W. Jones, *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England*, Cornell, 1947.

⁵⁴⁵ A whole quarter of the city was called "Il Borgo Saxono" because of the large number of English pilgrims it accommodated. Peter Llewellyn, (*Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, p. 254) 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."

⁵⁴⁶ Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996, p. 15.

The Romanization of England was greatly aided by the appointment, in 668, of a Greek from Tarsus, St. Theodore, as archbishop of Canterbury. He created a single Church organization and body of canonical law, and convened Councils that formally recognised the Ecumenical Councils and rejected the heresy of Monothelitism. Bishops like SS. Wilfrid, Egwin and Aldhelm strengthened the links with Rome by frequent trips there, and abbots like SS. Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrid imported books, icons and even the chief chanter of the Roman Church to make sure that even in the furthest recesses of the north things were done as the Romans did them.

In Church-State relations, too, the English followed the Roman-Byzantine model. Thus King Ethelbert and Archbishop Augustine (in Kent), King Oswald and Bishop Aidan (in Northumbria), and King Cynegils and Bishop Birinus (in Wessex) enjoyed "symphonic" relations. A striking example of such "symphony" was to be found in eighth-century Northumbria, where Archbishop Egbert ruled the Church while his brother Edbert ruled the State:

*So then Northumbria was prosperous,
When king and pontiff ruled in harmony,
One in the Church and one in government;
One wore the pall the Pope conferred on him,
And one the crown his fathers wore of old.
One brave and forceful, one devout and kind,
They kept their power in brotherly accord,
Each happy in the other's sure accord.⁵⁴⁷*

The acceptance of the symphonic pattern of Church-State relations in England may well have been aided by the fact that sacral kingship was a traditional institution among the Germanic tribes even before their conversion to Christianity. With the coming of Christianity, writes Chaney, there was "a separation of royal functions, the sacrificial-priestly role of the Germanic tribal monarch going to the Church hierarchy and that of sacral protector remaining with the king. This separation of power manifested itself not in the obliteration of the religious nature of kingship but in the establishment of a sphere of action by and for the ecclesia apart... from that of the regnum."⁵⁴⁸ According to François Guizot, this separation of powers is the source and guarantor of one of the most fundamental principles of Christian, and especially English Christian civilization, liberty of conscience. "The separation of temporal and spiritual power is based upon the idea that physical force has neither right nor influence over souls, over conviction, over truth. It flows from the distinction established between the world of thought and the world of action, between the world of internal and that of external facts..."⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Alcuin, *On the Saints of the Church of York*, 11.1250-283; in Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York*, York: Sessions Book Trust, 1974

⁵⁴⁸ Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, Manchester University Press, 1970, p. 259.

⁵⁴⁹ Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin, 1997, p. 42.

The English Church retained close links with Rome, and Canterbury never made claims for autonomy in the manner of Arles or Ravenna. Nevertheless, the English Church remained de facto independent of Rome administratively. Between 669 and 1050, according to Dvorkin, there were 376 episcopal ordinations in England, and not one of them required papal intervention...⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁵⁰ Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 477. However, papal legates presided at the Council of Chelsea in 786.

39. THE SACRAMENT OF ROYAL ANOINTING

The rite of royal anointing appears to have originated in the West, although it is not certain where. According to one tradition, Clovis, first Christian king of the Franks received the sacrament (if it was not in fact the initiatory rite of chrismation) in a miraculous fashion after his baptism by St. Remigius, Archbishop of Rheims, on Christmas Day, 496: "When the moment came for anointing the newly-baptized King with holy Chrism, the Bishop saw that it was lacking. Raising his eyes to Heaven, he implored God to provide it, whereupon a white dove came down from Heaven with a vial of miraculous oil."⁵⁵¹

Early in the sixth century the Italian archbishop Gregory anointed the first Christian King of the South Arabian kingdom of Omir (or Himyar), Abraham, in the presence of St. Elesbaan, king of Ethiopia: "Raising his eyes and mind and hands to heaven, he prayed fervently and for a long time that God, Who knows the life and thoughts of every man, should indicate to him the man who was worthy of the kingdom. During the prayer of the archbishop, the invisible power of the Lord suddenly raised a certain man by the name of Abraham into the air and placed him in front of King Elesbaan. Everyone cried out in awe for a long time: 'Lord, have mercy!' The archbishop said: 'Here is the man whom you demanded should be anointed to the kingdom. Leave him here as king, we shall be of one mind with him, and God will help us in everything.' Great joy filled everyone on beholding the providence of God. Then King Elesbaan took the man Abraham, who had been revealed by God, led him to the temple of the All-Holy Trinity which was in the royal city of Afar, put the royal purple on him and laid the diadem on his head. Then St. Gregory anointed him and the bloodless Sacrifice was offered for the kings and all the people, and both kings communicated in the Divine Mysteries from the hands of the archbishop..."⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ *The Synaxarion*, Convent of the Annunciation of our Lady of Ormylia (Chalkidike), 1998, volume I, October 1, p. 254. Harold Nicolson, tells the story as it was recounted some 300 years later: "On that occasion there was such a crowd in church that the priest who arrived with the holy oil with which the king was to be anointed was unable to push through the throng. The bishop, having no oil available, paused; a state of embarrassed tension descended on the king and the congregation. At that moment a dove fluttered into the cathedral bearing in its beak a *lekythion* or phial of scented oil brought straight from heaven. It was with this sacred oil that Clovis was anointed and the *lekythion* was thereafter preserved in a reliquary shaped like a dove. This precious relic, known as *la sainte Ampoule*, was jealously preserved by succeeding Archbishops of Rheims, who insisted that no French monarch could claim to have been properly anointed unless the ceremony were performed at Rheims and the oil of the *sainte Ampoule* (which had the magic property of renewing itself at every coronation) poured over his head and hands. Even Joan of Arc refused to recognise Charles VII as King of France and always addressed him as Dauphin until he had been anointed at Rheims." (*Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, p. 23)

⁵⁵² "The Life of the Holy Hierarch Gregory, Bishop of Homer", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVII, N 6, November-December, 1996, pp. 5-6.

It may be that royal anointing originated in Britain; for St. Gildas, referring to events taking place in the fifth century, wrote: "Kings were anointed [Ungebantur] not in God's name, but as being crueller than the rest; before long, they would be killed, with no enquiry into the truth, by those who had anointed them, and others still crueller were chosen to replace them."⁵⁵³

Not long after this, in 574, the Irish apostle of Scotland, St. Columba, consecrated the first Orthodox King of Scotland, Aidan Mor, who was to become the ancestor of all the Celtic kings of Scotland and, through James VI of Scotland and I of England, of the present British royal family.⁵⁵⁴ The seventh-century Abbots of Iona Cummineus Albus and Adomnan both relate how, when the saint was staying "in the island of Hymba [probably Jura], he was in an ecstasy of mind one night and saw an Angel of the Lord who had been sent to him, and who held in his hand a glass book of the Ordination of Kings. The venerable man received it from the Angel's hand, and at his command began to read it. And when he refused to ordain Aidan as king according to the direction given to him in the book, because he loved his brother Iogenan more, the Angel, suddenly stretching out his hand, struck the saint with a scourge, of which the livid mark remained on his side all the days of his life, and he added these words, saying: 'Know thou for certain that I am sent to thee by God with this glass book, that according to the words which thou hast read in it, thou mayest ordain Aidan to the kingship - and if thou art not willing to obey this command, I shall strike thee again.' When, then, this Angel of the Lord had appeared on three successive nights, having in his hand that same glass book, and had pressed the same commands of the Lord concerning the ordination of that king, the saint obeyed the Word of the Lord, and sailed across to the isle of Iona where, as he had been commanded, he ordained Aidan as king, Aidan having arrived there at the same time."⁵⁵⁵

St. Columba then went with King Aidan to the Synod of Drumceatt in Ireland, where the independence of Dalriada (that part of Western Scotland colonised by the Irish) was agreed upon in exchange for a pledge of assistance to the mother country in the event of invasion from abroad.

It is significant that these early examples of Christian kingmaking come from parts of the world remote from the centres of Imperial power. Neither

⁵⁵³ St. Gildas, *On the Ruin of Britain*, 21.4.

⁵⁵⁴ Lucy Menzies, *Saint Columba of Iona*, Felinfach: J.M.F. Books, 1920, 1992, p. 134; John Marsden, *The Illustrated Columcille*, London: Macmillan, 1991, p. 145.

⁵⁵⁵ St. Adomnan of Iona, *Life of Columba*. St. Columba is usually described as an abbot, but he may also have been a bishop. Hieromonk Gorazd (Vopatry) of Charles University, Prague, has suggested, on the basis of John Ryan's *Irish Monasticism*, that "bishops had a classical leadership role in the Irish Church until approximately the thirties of the 6th century. With the spread of monasticism the whole system of ecclesiastical control was affected. Jurisdiction was exercised not only by bishops whether they were also abbots or not, but also by abbots who were only priests. About one half of the main abbots were bishops and about a half were priests." (private communication, November 7, 2012)

Ethiopia nor Ireland had ever been part of the Roman Empire⁵⁵⁶; while Britain had fallen away from it. Perhaps it was precisely here, where *Romanitas* was weakest or non-existent, that the Church had to step in to supply political legitimacy through the sacrament, especially since here *a new dynasty in a new Christian land* was being created, which required both the blessing of the former rulers and a special act of the Church.

In continental Europe, if we exclude the doubtful case of Clovis, the sacrament of royal anointing first appeared in Spain. A possible reason for this is that Spain lacked a stable monarchy, and the sacrament may have been seen as helping to supply stability. Thus Collins writes that in the first half of the seventh century, “principles by which legitimacy of any king could be judged, other than sheer success in holding onto his throne against all comers, seem to be conspicuously lacking. Thus Witteric had deposed and killed Liuva II in 603, Witteric had been murdered in 610, Sisebut’s son Reccared II was probably deposed by Swinthila in 621, Swinthila was certainly deposed by Sisenand in 631, Tulga by Chindaswinth in 642. Ephemeral kings, such as Iudila, who managed to strike a few coins in Baetica and Lusitania in the early 630s, also made their bids for power.”⁵⁵⁷

The only generally recognized authority that could introduce order into this chaos was the Church. And so, probably toward the middle of the seventh century, the Orthodox Church in Spain introduced the rite of royal anointing. From now on, kings would not only be *called* “kings by the grace of God”, they would be *seen* to be such by the visible bestowal of sacramental grace at the hands of the archbishop.

Moreover, paradoxically, it gave some kind of justification for the deposition of kings. For, as King writes, “they never talked of deposition, and it was the fiction of abdication to which they resorted when Svinthila was in fact toppled by revolt. The introduction of the Old Testament rite of royal anointing, perhaps in 631 to make it visibly and ceremonially clear that Svinthila’s usurping successor ruled by God’s favour, confirmed and buttressed the loftiness of the monarchical status.”⁵⁵⁸

In 672 King Wamba was anointed by the archbishop of Toledo.⁵⁵⁹ The ceremony was described by St. Julian of Toledo: “When he had arrived there, where he was to receive the *vexilla* of the holy unction, in the praetorian church, that is to say the church of Saints Peter and Paul, he stood resplendent in his regalia in front of the holy altar and, as the custom is, recited the creed to the people. Next, on his bended knees the oil of blessing was poured onto

⁵⁵⁶ Nor had India, which provides another early example of sacramental kingmaking in the consecration of King Barachias by St. Ioasaph. See St. John of Damascus, *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 552-553.

⁵⁵⁷ Roger Collins, “Julian of Toledo and the Royal Succession in Late Seventh-Century Spain”, in P.H. Sawyer & I.N. Wood, *Early Medieval Kingship*, University of Leeds, 1979, p. 47.

⁵⁵⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁵⁵⁹ Wickham (*op. cit.*, p. 130) regards this as a “novelty” introduced by Wamba himself.

his head by the hand of the blessed bishop Quiricus, and the strength of the benediction was made clear, for at once this sign of salvation appeared. For suddenly from his head, where the oil had first been poured on, a kind of vapour, similar to smoke, rose upon the form of a column, and from the very top of this a bee was seen to spring forth, which sign was undoubtedly a portent of his future good fortune."⁵⁶⁰

It was probably from Spain that the rite of the anointing of kings was introduced into France.⁵⁶¹ And after Pope Stephen anointed the Frankish King Pepin in 754 the rite became standard practice in kingmaking throughout the West. Thus in 781 Pepin's successor, Charlemagne, had two of his sons anointed by Pope Hadrian as kings of Aquitaine and Italy. And in 786 King Offa of Mercia had his son Egfrith anointed.

It was some time, however, before anointing came to be seen as *constitutive* of true kingship. As in Rome and Byzantium, western kings who were raised to the throne by election or acclamation only were not considered illegitimate; it was simply that anointing added an extra authority and sacred character to the monarchy. The extra authority and grace provided by the sacrament of anointing produced tangible results: in Spain, Francia and England the introduction of anointing, accompanied by stern conciliar warnings "not to touch the Lord's Anointed", led to a reduction in regicides and rebellions and a strengthening of monarchical power. In Spain, this process came to an abrupt end in 711, when most of the peninsula was conquered by the Arab Muslims. In Western Francia (modern France), it was brought to an end towards the end of the ninth century by the Vikings, in spite of the efforts of such champions of royal power (and opponents of papal despotism) as Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims; and France did not develop a powerful monarchy until the twelfth century. But in Eastern Francia (modern Germany) and in England, the monarchy survived and put down deep roots.

Janet Nelson writes: "If relatively many reigning Merovingians and no Carolingians were assassinated, this can hardly be explained simply in terms of the protective effect of anointing for the latter dynasty, at least in its earlier period. More relevant here are such factors as the maintenance of a fairly restrictive form of royal succession (and the Carolingians' abandonment of polygamy must soon have narrowed the circle of royals) and the growth of a clerically-fostered ideology of Christian kingship."⁵⁶²

However, all these factors were related. Once it became accepted that the Church had an important part to play in kingmaking through the sacrament of anointing, it also became natural for the Church to have a say in deciding

⁵⁶⁰ St. Julian, in Collins, *op cit.*, pp. 41-42.

⁵⁶¹ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁵⁶² Nelson, J.L. "Inauguration Rituals", in Nelson, J.L. *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, London: Hambledon Press, 1986, p. 59.

who was the best candidate for the throne, and then in administering a coronation-oath in which the king swore to protect the Church...

Theoretically, too, the Church could refuse to sanction a king, and even lead the people in rebellion if he did not rule rightly. Thus St. Isidore of Seville said: "You will be king if you act rightly; if you do not, you will not be", which contains a play on the words *rex*, "king", and *recte*, "rightly",⁵⁶³ and an implicit threat on the part of the Church to withhold recognition of the king in certain circumstances. Moreover, in the Latin version of Justinian's famous *Sixth Novella*, there is also a clear indication that, for the symphony of powers to be effective, the king must rule rightly (*recte*).

Joseph Canning writes: "The specific contribution which the anointing rituals made to the development of the idea of theocratic kingship appeared clearly in Hincmar's *ordines*. Anointing had become the constitutive element in the king-making process: it was the bishops who as mediators of divine grace made the king. There was thus a relative downgrading of other, traditional aspects of inauguration: the consent of the great men of the kingdom, enthronement and the feast. The episcopal anointing represented the third stage of the elaboration of the notion of kingship by the grace of God, the first being the Pauline view that all rulership was divinely sanctioned, and the second that the monarch derived his power directly from God. Anointing transformed kingship into another, higher dimension, because such unction was understood to be a sacrament. There was thereby involved a crucial change in the meaning attributed to the 'grace' by which the medieval king ruled. Whereas previously, *gratia* in this context meant 'favour', thus indicating the source of his power (the possibly sacramental nature of eighth-century unction remains obscure), now *gratia* also definitely signified 'supernatural grace' infused into the king through the mediation of the bishops in order to enable him to perform his sacred ministry of rulership over clergy and laity within his kingdom understood as a church in the wider sense."⁵⁶⁴

St. Constantine had called himself "the bishop of those outside", his ministry being understood as analogous to that of a bishop, but extending beyond the jurisdiction of any bishop into the pagan world and therefore subject to the Church in a moral, but not in a jurisdictional sense. In the West by the ninth century, however, when the boundaries of the kingdom and the Church were almost coterminous, the king's ministry was seen as almost entirely *within* the Church, which perception was reinforced by his anointing *by* the Church, and by the fact that the symbolism of the rite, including the staff and ring and vestments, were almost identical to that of episcopal consecration. This served to increase the king's sacred character; but it also enabled the Church to intervene more decisively both in the kingmaking

⁵⁶³ St. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 9.3.4, col. 342.

⁵⁶⁴ Canning, *A History of Western Political Thought, 300-1450*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 55.

process and in the definition of what the king could and could not do, and, if necessary, in his deposition...

There was a contractual element between Germanic kings and their subjects. Thus "in 843 Charles the Bald swore to uphold the honour of both his clerical and lay *fideles*, and the respective laws under which they lived, whereas they swore to sustain the honour of the king". And in 858 he promised "'like a faithful king' to honour and protect the persons and legal position of his *fideles*".⁵⁶⁵ What was new from the ninth century onwards was the increased role played by the Church in this process, both in that protecting the Church's rights was considered the *most* important part of the king's obligations and in that it was the Church that administered the coronation oath. Also new was the hint, as we have seen, that the bishops might depose the king if he broke his oath, as Charles the Bald implicitly admitted at his coronation in 869, when he said that he could be expelled from his consecration "by no one, at least without hearing and judgement by the bishops, by whose ministry I was consecrated king".⁵⁶⁶

Now the fact that the king was anointed by the bishop did not mean that the king was thereby subject to the bishop, any more than Christ's baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist meant that He was subject to the Baptist.⁵⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the hint was there, and in 833 Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son, was in fact forced to abdicate by his bishops, even though he had been anointed by the Pope himself. Again, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, "subjected more than one king to harsh criticism, to penance and even to excommunication"⁵⁶⁸ As he put it in 881: "So much greater is the responsibility of the priesthood in that they must render account in God's judgement even for the very kings of men, and by so much greater are the rank and prestige of bishops than of kings because kings are consecrated to their kingship by bishops, but bishops cannot be consecrated by kings."⁵⁶⁹ Unlike later popes like Gregory VII, Hincmar was not trying to weaken monarchy, but to strengthen and purify it; for he saw that Christian society in his troubled age could not survive without the sacred power of the anointed kings...

⁵⁶⁵ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵⁶⁶ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁶⁷ Archimandrite Pantaleimon, "On the Royal Martyrs", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 31, N 4, July-August, 1981, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁸ Janet Nelson, "Hincmar of Rheims: Kingship, Law and Liturgy", in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 169-170.

⁵⁶⁹ Hincmar, in Janet Nelson, in "National Synods, Kingship and Royal Anointing", in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 253.

40. THE DISSONANCE OF NATIONS: CHRISTIANS, JEWS AND PERSIANS

The degree of identity achieved by Justinian between the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Empire was striking, but it was not, of course, complete. Not only were there Roman citizens who were not Orthodox – the Monophysite Copts and Syrians: 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 it is certainly evident in antiquity.

Perhaps the clearest example is that of Armenia, which 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. After the Muslim conquest in the seventh century, 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 Donatist Berbers, The Celts of Wales (with whom Justinian had relations⁵⁷⁰), the Monophysite Copts and Syrians – and, of course, the Jews...

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The hostility of the Jews towards Christianity and Christian Rome had not waned since apostolic times. 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

⁵⁷⁰ There is intriguing evidence that in about 540 the Emperor Justinian was sending subsidies to the kingdom of Gwynedd. However, after the great plague of 547, links between Britain and the East appear to have been cut off. See Michelle Ziegler, "Emperor Justinian and the British Kings, c. 540", Heavenfield, <https://hefenfelth.wordpress.com/2015/03/20/emperor-justinian-and-the-british-kings-c-540>.

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.”⁵⁷¹

The Jews also called the Roman Empire “the kingdom of the Edomites”. Thus Rabbi David Kimchi writes in *Obadiah*: “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.”⁵⁷²

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], 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 which 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

⁵⁷¹ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 201-202.

⁵⁷² Quoted in Rev. I.B. Pranaitis, *The Talmud Unmasked*, St. Petersburg, 1892, Bloomfield Books, Sudbury, Suffolk, pp. 43, 80, 81.

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.”⁵⁷³

In about 520, 4000 Christians were martyred by the Jewish ruler of the South Arabian land of Omir (or Himyar), Yusuf A’sar Yath’ar.⁵⁷⁴ Again, in 555 the Jews supported the Samaritans in their rebellion against Byzantium.

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A new era began with the murder of the Emperor Maurice by the bloody tyrant Phocas in 602. Under Phocas, everything began to go wrong for Byzantium, and the resurgent Persian empire under Chosroes even reached Chalcedon, within sight of Constantinople. Sassanid Persia was the successor of the Parthian empire; the two empires had been the greatest enemy of Rome in the late pagan and early Christian periods, and had given *Roma invicta* her most massive and humiliating defeats. “Sassanid Persia,” writes Roberts, “was a religious as well as a political unity. Zoroastrianism had been formally restored by Ardashir [or Artaxerxes, the first Sassanid ruler], who gave important privileges to its priests, the *magi*. These led in due course to political power as well. Priests confirmed the divine nature of the kingship, had important judicial duties, and came, too, to supervise the collection of the land-tax which was the basis of Persian finances. The doctrines they taught seem to have varied considerably from the strict monotheism attributed to Zoroaster but focused on a creator, Ahura Mazda, whose viceroy on earth was the king. The Sassanids’ promotion of the state religion was closely connected with the assertion of their own authority.”⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 340-341, 350.

⁵⁷⁴ 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, *Religio-philosophskie Osnovy Istorii*, chapters 41 and 42; Tom Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, London: Abacus, 2014, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷⁵ J.M Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, pp. 252-253.

Thus “ultimately,” as Tom Holland writes, “in the spiritual dimension as well as the earthly, one protagonist mattered more than any other: the *Shahansha* himself. He alone could claim to have been touched by the divine. *Asha* – the supreme virtue of [the good god] Ohrmazd – could not possibly be maintained without him. Nor, indeed, could the privileges and pretensions of the priesthood. Ahrman [the bad god], in the malignancy of his cunning, had always been assiduous in his attempts to cultivate heresy and demon-worship. Not every corner of *Iranshahr* had been illumined by the light of Zoroaster’s teachings. While some of the Iranians’ ancient gods – the Lady Anahita pre-eminent among them – had come to be ranked by the Zoroastrian priesthood as loyal lieutenants of Ohrmazd, others, so Zoroaster himself had warned, were not gods at all, but demons. Their cults, idols and adherents all needed smashing. Only *Shahanshar*, in the final reckoning, was up to the job. If the religion of Zoroaster, instituted of Ohrmazd himself, self-evidently existed to serve as the protector of humanity, it was the function of kingship, in the opinion of the priesthood, to serve as ‘the protector of religion’.”⁵⁷⁶

However, Khodadad Rezakhani thinks the dominance of the Zoroastrian clergy has been exaggerated: “The existence of a Zoroastrian theocracy, presided over by a dominant priestly establishment, is based on fragments of evidence, some of which date back hundreds of years to around the sixth and seventh centuries. Apart from the absence of any ‘orthodox’ Zoroastrian doctrine in the Sasanian world, we have no evidence of the presence of a dominant clergy. Late Sasanian kings are known for making public overtures to their native Christian communities. Khosrow [Chosroes] II Aparviz (1. 591-628), the quintessential late-Sassanian king, married one, perhaps two, Christian wives and had a Christian chief minister. Likewise, in the course of mustering support for his campaigns against Byzantium, he supported the Nestorian Christian community within his domains, buttressed the Nestorians of Syria and, upon conquering and entering Jerusalem, moved the True Cross from Jerusalem to Khuzistan in south-west Iran in order to provide prestige for the Christians of his empire. The presence of a dominant Zoroastrian religious structure is unlikely to have allowed such relations with members of another religion.

“Christians, in fact, were the dominant population in the western regions of the Sasanian realm at this time. Mesopotamia, the heart of the Sasanian Empire (*dil-i Eranshahr*), was populated mainly by Aramaic-speaking Christians and Jews. South-West Mesopotamia was the realm of the Arab kingdom of Hita, the land of the Lakhmids, who ruled the Arab tribes of northern Arabia on behalf of the Sasanians. Eastern Arabia was also populated by Arabic-speaking peoples, who were controlled via the Sasanian administration of Bahrayn, which included all of eastern Arabia down to what is now Oman. Southern Arabia, the former kingdom of Himyar, had become part of the Sasanian Empire following its conquest around 570.”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁵⁷⁷ Rezakhani, “Arab Conquests and Sasanian Iran”, *History Today*, April, 2017, p. 33.

In 602 King Chosroes II defeated the Byzantine armies under the bloody tyrant Phocas and conquered Antioch and Jerusalem. Then he wrote to Phocas' successor, Heraclius: "Chosroes, greatest of gods, and master of the earth, to Heraclius, his vile and insensate slave. Why do you still call yourself a king?"⁵⁷⁸ But Heraclius patiently reorganized the shattered empire and the army; and in 622, the same year in which Mohammed fled to Medina, he embarked on one of the greatest feats of arms in Christian history, and by 629 had comprehensively defeated Chosroes, thereby finally bringing old-style pagan despotism to an end in the Middle East. In 630, the same year in which Mohammed conquered Mecca, Heraclius triumphantly returned the Holy Cross from Persia to Jerusalem. But the last ten years of his reign were miserable and tragic: disgraced by his marriage to his niece and his embracing of the Monothelite heresy, he saw all his conquests reversed by the new power of the Muslim Arabs...

In these wars, the Jews had taken the side of the enemies of Rome. This was partly because Phocas had persecuted them and compelled them to be baptised. But a long tradition of Jewish demonization of Rome also played its part. As David Keys writes: "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 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, Anastasius, was captured, killed and mutilated. But the revolt was soon put down - and the 800-year-old Antiochian Jewish community was almost totally extinguished."⁵⁷⁹

The situation was no better in the Holy Land. The Jews appealed to all the Jews of Palestine to join the Persians, and according to the chronicler Theophanes 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

⁵⁷⁸ Chosroes, in Charles Oman, *The Dark Ages, AD 476-918*, London, 1919, p. 207.

⁵⁷⁹ Keys, *Catastrophe*, London: Arrow books, 2000, pp. 91-92.

course did not spare the Christians' and 'did not spare the holy things of the Christians'. Graetz reduces the number of Christians killed to 19,000..."⁵⁸⁰

After he had defeated the Persians, the Emperor Heraclius turned his attention to the Jews of Jerusalem, banishing them to a distance of three miles from the city, and then repeated the error of his predecessor by decreeing that all the Jews of the empire should be baptized. But the pendulum swung again; in 638 the new power of the Islamic Arabs under Caliph Omar entered the Holy City⁵⁸¹; and the Jews rejoiced, saying 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.'"⁵⁸²

Thus in spite of Heraclius' heroic campaigns against the Persians, the first half of the seventh century was a catastrophic period for the Roman empire. Vast areas of the East - Egypt, Syria, Palestine - were lost, first to the Persians, and then to the Muslim Arabs. Not only were the territories lost, but also the loyalty of most of the local populations, Semitic, Coptic and Armenian, whose religious differences with Roman Orthodoxy were compounded by anti-Roman nationalist feeling. And Heraclius' attempts to heal the wounds by adopting the heresy of Monothelism only made things worse. St. Anastasius of Sinai considered the defeats and defections that took place in his reign to be Divine punishment for his heresy...⁵⁸³

The Jews continued to be persecuted by the Byzantine emperors. 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."⁵⁸⁴ A fresh

⁵⁸⁰ 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). See Antiochus Strategos, "The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 AD," in F.C. Conybeare, *English Historical Review*, 25 (1910) pp. 502-517, http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/antiochus_strategos_capture.htm.

⁵⁸¹ Eliciting Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem's comment: "Surely this is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet standing in the holy place."

⁵⁸² Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem*, London: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 233.

⁵⁸³ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁵⁸⁴ Thus the eighth canon of the 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

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.⁵⁸⁵ 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. 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..."⁵⁸⁶

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..." (V.M.)

⁵⁸⁵ 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.)

⁵⁸⁶ Mango, *op. cit.*, pp 92-93.

41. ISLAMIC DESPOTISM AND MILITARISM

St. John of Damascus (+749) says of the origins of Islam: "There is also the superstition of the Ishmaelites which to this day prevails and keeps people in error, being a forerunner of the Antichrist. They are descended from Ishmael, [who] was born to Abraham of Agar, and for this reason they are called both Agarenes and Ishmaelites. They are also called Saracens, which is derived from Sarras kenoi, or destitute of Sara, because of what Agar said to the angel: 'Sara hath sent me away destitute.' These used to be idolaters and worshiped the morning star and Aphrodite, whom in their own language they called Khabár, which means great. And so down to the time of Heraclius they were very great idolaters. From that time to the present a false prophet named Mohammed has appeared in their midst. This man, after having chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and likewise, it seems, having conversed with an Arian monk, devised his own heresy. Then, having insinuated himself into the good graces of the people by a show of seeming piety, he gave out that a certain book had been sent down to him from heaven. He had set down some ridiculous compositions in this book of his and he gave it to them as an object of veneration."⁵⁸⁷

By the time of his death in 632, Mohammed had established the dominion of his new religion of Islam over the whole of Arabia. He did not proclaim himself a king, still less a Persian-style "king of kings", but a mere prophet – albeit the last and greatest of them. In fact, he was the prophet of one of the Arabian pagan demons, the moon-god Allah⁵⁸⁸, whom he proclaimed to be the one true God. In spite of the clearly pagan origins of his faith, Mohammed claimed to abhor every kind of man-worship and idolatry.

Christianity was spread by 12 defenceless men not enjoying any political or military support and using no power except the power of preaching and prayer; it is truly the religion of peace. However, although Mohammed himself fought only relatively small-scale wars for the control of Arabia, his successors, the early caliphs, went with fire and sword throughout the Middle East and North Africa, conquering a vast swathe of land from Spain to India in the first sixty years.⁵⁸⁹ Islam in general has been the most violent religion in history.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ St. John, *The Fount of Knowledge*, Part 2: *Epitome of Heresies*.

⁵⁸⁸ Nektarios Lignos writes: "Allah, worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia, is the god Muhammad's Quraysh tribe worshipped, the moon god who was married to the sun goddess and they had three daughters – Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat. This is why we see the crescent moon symbol in conjunction with Islam."

⁵⁸⁹ In Africa, the Muslims reached as far south as Makuria (modern-day Sudan). "During the summer of 642 AD, the Orthodox Christian Kingdom of Makuria defeated a Muslim invasion at the First Battle of Dongola. Ten years later the Orthodox Makurians would defeat a second and larger invasion force by the Caliphate. This resulted in a peace that lasted for nearly 700 years." (Hieromonk Enoch, Facebook communication, July, 2016)

⁵⁹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 254-258.

The despotic pagan civilizations place the rights of the collective over the rights of the individual, thereby giving the state a despotic power and discouraging freedom of thought. Western civilization, on the other hand, generally allows freedom of conscience and some autonomy to the religious sphere. Islam places religion above the state, and religious law above state law.

Roger Scruton has probed the difference between western and Islamic ideas in an illuminating way.⁵⁹¹ The core religion of the West, Orthodox Christianity, grew up in the context of the Roman empire, and from the beginning gave the state a certain autonomy. The Christian was obliged to obey the state in all its laws that did not directly contradict the commandment of God: "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22.21). For although his ultimate loyalty was to God, the Christian was also a citizen of the state. He did not rebel against the State, but gradually worked on its crude mores until it became Christian itself. Then Church and State worked in harmony with each other in a "symphony of powers". The Church was universal, and had members in many different countries. The State, on the other hand, was territorial, being based on the feeling of a common destiny of all or most of the people on that territory, reinforced by commonalities of language, culture and religion.

Islam, however, did not encourage the growth of stable territorial nation-states or empires. There were tribes, and there was the universal religion, and very little of what we may call "political infrastructure" in between. There was *shariah*, the law of Allah, but very little in the way of state law, and certainly nothing comparable to the legal structures created by Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian. And so, while the Muslims considered "the People of the Book", the Jews and Christians, to be higher than pagans and therefore entitled to some respect, there was no such thing as equality under the law for all citizens, regardless of their faith, a typically Roman conception.

The promises of the Muslims to "the People of the Book" have counted for little in practice. Thus in 638, writes Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "after a year-long siege [of Jerusalem], [Patriarch Sophronius] handed over the city to Caliph Omar on definite conditions. The churches at the holy places (first of all Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre) remained in the possession of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, half of whose churches were turned into mosques. The preaching of Christianity to Muslims was forbidden, and the Christian churches into which Caliph Omar entered were seized by the Muslims and converted later into mosques. Later, this agreement was often broken by the Muslims, and the majority of the churches were destroyed. Even the very church of the Resurrection over the Holy Sepulchre was destroyed more than once. And yet the agreement with Omar created a certain basis for the further existence of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. It was recognized as a legal person,

⁵⁹¹ Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*, London: Continuum, 2002.

and the possessor of a series of churches and plots of land in Palestine. It was allowed to carry out Divine services, to look after the spiritual needs of Christians and even to judge the Christian population in civil cases. On the whole the Mohammedans did not interfere in the internal administration of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, although they often carried out external acts of violence and theft on the Christian population and clergy. The patriarch himself was elected by the Synod, although the Caliph confirmed him.

“The main feature of this agreement was the preservation of the earthly existence of the Jerusalem Church, the guarantee of its legal existence, possession of churches and property, the right to carry out open public services. The cost that had to be paid for this was not only complete loyalty to the Mohammedan authorities and prayers for the caliph and his army, but also – which is more important – the refusal to preach Christianity to the Muslims and their own children who had been seduced into Islam. But the Arabs by deceit and violence converted thousands of Christians to their faith – and the archpastors of the Church did not dare to protest against this, and did not dare openly to carry out anti-Islamic propaganda, which was punished by death at all times in Islamic countries.”⁵⁹²

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What was the nature of Islamic power? Bernard Lewis writes that “the power wielded by the early caliphs was very far from the despotism of their predecessors and successors. It was limited by the political ethics of Islam and by the anti-authoritarian habits and traditions of ancient Arabia. A verse attributed to the pre-Islamic Arabic poet ‘Abid ibn al-Abras speaks of his tribe as ‘laqah’, a word which, according to the ancient commentators and lexicographers, denotes a tribe that has never submitted to a king. ‘Abid’s proud description of his people makes his meaning clear:

*They refused to be servants of kings, and were never ruled by any.
But when they were called on for help in war, they responded gladly.*

“The ancient Arabs, like the ancient Israelites depicted in the books of Judges and Samuel, mistrusted kings and the institution of kingship. They were, indeed, familiar with the institution of monarchy in the surrounding countries, and some were even led to adopt it. There were kings in the states of southern Arabia; there were kings in the border principalities of the north; but all these were in different degrees marginal to Arabia. The sedentary kingdoms of the south used a different language, and were part of a different culture. The border principalities of the north, though authentically Arab, were deeply influenced by Persian and Byzantine imperial practice, and represent a somewhat alien element in the Arab world...

⁵⁹² Alferov, “Vizantijskij servilizm i sovietskoe sergianstvo” (Byzantine servility and Soviet sergianism), <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=63406>, pp. 5-6.

“The early Muslims were well aware of the nature of imperial monarchy as practised in their own day in Byzantium and in Persia, and believed that the state founded by the Prophet and governed after him by his successors the caliphs represented something new and different...”⁵⁹³

However, the Ummayyad Caliphs in Damascus, and then the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, fell under strong Byzantine and then Persian influence...

Take the case of one of the best, and probably the most powerful, of the early caliphs, Muawiya, who in 661 became, as Simon Sebag Montefiore writes, “the Caliph of the vast empire that included Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Persia and Arabia... He ruled through Christian bureaucrats and tolerated Christians and Jews alike, seeing himself as something between Arab sheikh, Islamic caliph and Roman emperor. He was tolerant and pragmatic, following an early, looser version of Islam, happy to worship at Christian and Jewish sites, and share their shrine.” However, despite his “tolerance”, he continued to conquer Christian lands such as Rhodes and Cyprus, and almost took Constantinople. Later he expanded the empire into eastern Persia, central Asia, the Sahara and today’s Libya and Algeria.

Living as he did in Syria, whose culture was Byzantine, Muawiya began to be influenced by Byzantine ideas and practices. “Byzantine influence on the emerging Islamic civilization, a tidal pull that now reached its high-water mark, went far beyond the caliph’s assumption of royal ways. It covered virtually all areas of life...”⁵⁹⁴ Thus he was criticised, writes Colin Wells, “for putting on royal airs. In defense he explained ‘that Damascus was full of Greeks, and that none would believe in his power if he did not behave and look like an emperor.’”⁵⁹⁵ And his public designation, before his death in 680, of his son Yazid as his successor constituted a break with Islamic tradition and the adoption of the principle of dynastic succession.⁵⁹⁶

“Yazid failed to grasp the succession, facing rebellions in Arabia and Iraq. Muhammed’s grandson Hussein rebelled to avenge his father Ali’s death but was brutally murdered at Karbala in Iraq, his martyrdom creating the Shia, ‘the party’, a division that still splits Islam today. However, after Yazid’s early death, Muawiya’s old kinsman Marwan started to reconquer the empire, dying in 685 and leaving this troubled inheritance to his son Abd al-Malik, the second of the titanic Ummayyad Caliphs. Abd al-Malik was less human and flexible but more ruthless and visionary than Muawiya. He first mercilessly crushed the rebellions, retaking Iraq and Arabia; in Jerusalem he built the Dome of the Rock...

⁵⁹³ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, London: Phoenix, 1995, pp. 140-141.

⁵⁹⁴ Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, pp. 129-130.

⁵⁹⁵ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵⁹⁶ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

“... Abd al-Malik saw himself as God’s shadow on earth: if Muawiya was Caesar of the Arabs, he was a mixture of St. Paul and Constantine the Great – he believed in the marriage of empire, state and god. As such it was Abd al-Malik who collated the book of Islam – the Koran – into its final form (the inscriptions in Jerusalem’s Dome of the Rock are the first examples of the final Koran text), who defined Islamic rituals and who unified Islam into a single religion recognizable today with the emphasis on Koran and Muhammed, expressed in the double *shahada*: “There is no God but God and Muhammed is the apostle of God’. Abd al-Malik and his son Caliph Walid expanded their empire to the borders of India and the coasts of Spain. Yet their dynasty remained part Islamic theocrats, part Roman emperors, often living in a distinctly unIslamic decadence. This led to the family’s downfall in the revolution of 750, when they were replaced by the Abbasid caliphs who ruled from Iraq and blackened the reputation of the Ummayyads. To the Shia, they remained heretics and sinners because the Shia believed the real Caliphs were the twelve descendants from [Muhammed’s cousin] Ali and [his wife] Fatima: indeed the Shia of Iran still await the return of the Twelfth...”⁵⁹⁷

It was Abu Muslim, a manumitted Persian slave, who raised the standard of revolt, defeated the Umayyads and created the Abbasid dynasty. A few years later, Al-Mansur (754-775), having moved the capital of the empire to Baghdad, came under the influence of Persia with its strong despotic tradition. And so Muslim “democratism” soon passed into a despotism no less fierce than the monarchies that Islam had destroyed. The caliphs of the ninth century, particularly Mamun (813-833), believed their authority to be unlimited. And the Fatimid ruler Al-Hakim even believed he was god...

Despotism in politics leads to the persecution of all non-State religion. Thus when Caliph Mutasim, Mamun’s brother and successor, conquered the Byzantine fortress town of Amorion, he executed forty-two prisoners who refused to renounce Christianity and embrace Islam.⁵⁹⁸ That Muslim statehood should become despotic was a natural consequence of the lack of a separation of Church and State, which gave an absolute, unchecked power to the Caliphs, embodying as they did both religious and political authority.

“The increasingly authoritarian character of government”, writes Lewis, “and the disappointment of successful revolutionaries is vividly expressed in a passage quoted by several classical authors. A certain Sudaif, a supporter of the Abbasids, is cited as complaining of the changes resulting from the fall of the Umayyads and the accession of the Abbasids to the caliphate: ‘By God, our booty, which was shared, has become a perquisite of the rich. Our leadership, which was consultative, has become arbitrary. Our succession, which was by the choice of the community, is now by inheritance.”⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, pp. 98, 99-100.

⁵⁹⁸ In Moorish Spain, too, we find an increase in Christian martyrdoms (and apostasies to Islam) at this time. See Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 308-312; Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 80-88.

⁵⁹⁹ Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

There were differences between the Sunnis and the Shias on the nature of Islamic power. One of the questions dividing them was whether the caliphate should be elective or hereditary. "The Shia maintained that the caliphate should be hereditary in the line of the Prophet, and therefore that all the caliphs, except only for the brief rule of Ali and of his son Hasan, were usurpers. The more generally accepted view of the Sunni Muslims was that the caliphate was elective, and any member of the Prophet's tribe, Quraysh, was eligible."⁶⁰⁰ Al-Mansur in Spain made the caliphate there hereditary, but thirty years after his death the people abolished it altogether.

Another of the differences between the Sunnis and the Shiites was that the latter believed in a certain separation, even antagonism between the imamate and the State. "The myth of the Hidden Imam... symbolized the impossibility of implementing a truly religious policy in this world, since the caliphs had destroyed Ali's line and driven the *ilm* [the knowledge of what is right] from the earth. Henceforth the Shii *ulama* [learned men, guardians of the legal and religious traditions of Islam] became the representatives of the Hidden Imam, and used their own mystical and rational insights to apprehend his will. Twelver Shiis (who believe in the twelve *imams*) would take no further part in political life, since in the absence of the Hidden Imam, the true leader of the *ummah* [the Muslim community], no government could be legitimate."⁶⁰¹

The Sunnis, on the other hand, tended to conflate political and religious power. Thus according to T.P. Miloslavskaya and G.V. Miloslavsky, they believed that the caliphate's secular and spiritual powers (the sultanate and the imamate) were indivisible.⁶⁰² Again, Colin McEvedy writes that "the successors of Mohammed, the Caliphs, combined, as he had, the powers of Emperor and Pope".⁶⁰³ Again, Ninian Smart writes that Islam "demands institutions which cover the whole life of the community. There is nothing in Islam... corresponding to the Church. There is no place for a special institution within society devoted to the ends of the faith. For it is the whole of society which is devoted to the ends of the faith."⁶⁰⁴ And again, Bernard Lewis writes: "It is sometimes said that the caliph was head of State and Church, pope and emperor in one. This description in Western and Christian terms is misleading. Certainly there was no distinction between imperium and sacerdotium, as in the Christian empire, and no separate ecclesiastical institution, no Church, with its own head and hierarchy. The caliphate was

⁶⁰⁰ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁶⁰¹ Armstrong, *Islam*, New York: Modern Library, 2002, pp. 67, 68-69.

⁶⁰² Miloslavskaya and Miloslavsky, "Kontseptsiia 'Islamskogo Edinstva' i Integratsionnie Protsessy v 'Musul'manskoi Mire'" ("The Conception of 'Islamic Unity' and Integrational Processes in 'the Muslim World'"), in *Islam i Problemy Natsionalizma* (Islam and the Problems of Nationalism), Moscow: Nauka, 1986, p. 12.

⁶⁰³ McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*, London: Penguin, 1961, p. 36.

⁶⁰⁴ Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, London: Fontana, 1971, p. 538.

always defined as a religious office, and the caliph's supreme purpose was to safeguard the heritage of the Prophet and to enforce the Holy Law. But the caliph had no pontifical or even priestly function... His task was neither to expound nor to interpret the faith, but to uphold and protect it – to create conditions in which his subjects could follow the good Muslim life in this world and prepare themselves for the world to come. And to do this, he had to maintain the God-given Holy Law within the frontiers of the Islamic state, and to defend and, where possible, extend those frontiers, until in the fullness of time the whole world was opened to the light of Islam..."⁶⁰⁵

However, this indivisibility of powers resulted in a gradual undermining of the quasi-democratic ideal of early Islam by the reality of the caliphs' almost unlimited power. On the one hand, the caliphs wanted to create an order in which, "as ideally conceived, there were to be no priests, no church, no kings and no nobles, no privileged orders or castes or estates of any kind, save only for the self-evident superiority of those who accept the true faith to those who wilfully reject it – and of course such obvious natural and social realities as the superiority of man to woman and of master to slave."⁶⁰⁶ But on the other hand, they were military leaders, and success in war required that they should be able to command no less obedience.

As François Guizot points out, the separation of spiritual and temporal power is a legacy of Christianity which the Islamic world abandoned: "This separation is the source of liberty of conscience; it is founded upon no other principle but that which is the foundation of the most perfect and extended freedom of conscience. The separation of temporal and spiritual power is based upon the idea that physical force has neither right nor influence over souls, over conviction, over truth. It flows from the distinction established between the world of thought and the world of action, between the world of internal and that of external facts. Thus this principle of liberty of conscience for which Europe has struggled so much, and suffered so much, this principle which prevailed so late, and often, in its progress, against the inclination of the clergy, was enunciated, under the name of the separation of temporal and spiritual power, in the very cradle of European civilisation; and it was the Christian Church which, from the necessity imposed by its situation of defending itself against barbarism, introduced and maintained it... It is in the combination of the spiritual and temporal powers, in the confusion of moral and material authority, that the tyranny which seems inherent in this [Muslim] civilisation originated."⁶⁰⁷

Another reason for the despotism inherent in Islam is the belief that all people are bound to obey Allah, and that those who do not obey – with the partial exceptions of the Jews and Christians – have no right either to life or freedom or property. The whole world is divided into the "House of Islam"

⁶⁰⁵ Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

⁶⁰⁶ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁶⁰⁷ Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin, 1997, pp. 42, 55.

(which means “obedience”), on the one hand, and the “House of War”, on the other. Therefore the natural state of relations between the two “Houses” is one of struggle, or “jihad”, interrupted only by temporary periods of peace permitted for purely tactical reasons.⁶⁰⁸

Thus the Koran says: “Kill the unbelievers wherever you find them” (Koran 2:191). “Make war on the infidels living in your neighbourhood” (Koran 9:123). “Fight and kill the unbelievers wherever you find them, take them captive, harass them, lie in wait and ambush them using every stratagem of war.” (Koran 9:5; cf. 8:60). “O believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Let them find firmness in you” (Sura: 9; Ayat: 123). “Fight those who believe not... even if they be People of the Book [Jews and Christians] until they willingly agree to pay the tribute in recognition of their submissive state” (Sura: 9; Ayat: 29). “You will be called to fight a mighty nation; fight them until they embrace Islam” (Sura: 48; Ayat: 16).

The 15th-century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun summed up the difference between the Christian view of war and the Islamic view: "In the Muslim community, jihad is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the jihad was not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defense. But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations."⁶⁰⁹

Thus, as L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: “In submitting without question to God, the Muslim becomes a spreader of the power of God on earth. Everyone is obliged to submit to Allah, whether they want to or not. If they do not submit, then they have no right to live. Therefore the pagans are subject either to conversion to Islam, or to extermination. Violent conversion to Islam, is nothing prejudicial, from the Muslim point of view, for people are obliged to obey God without question, not because they desire it, but because Allah demands this of them.”⁶¹⁰

Again, as Kenneth Craig writes, holy war, or jihad, “was believed to be the recovery by Islam of what by right belonged to it as the true and final religion but which had been alienated from it by the unbelief or perversity embodied in the minorities whose survival – but no more – it allowed...”⁶¹¹

And if it allowed their existence, this was not because they had the “right” to survive, but because, for the time being, it was not advantageous to the Muslims – or within their power – to kill them...

⁶⁰⁸ Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, London: Penguin, 2015, pp. 101-102.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/.../ibn-khaldun-on-holy-...>

⁶¹⁰ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁶¹¹ Craig, *The Arab Christian*, London: Mowbrays, 1992, pp. 57-58.

A particular aspect of Islamic despotism that is of particular relevance today in view of the activities of ISIS is its practice of slavery and the kidnapping and raping of captive women. This is an extract from an interview conducted by Kevin Allen conducted with a former Muslim, "George", who became an Orthodox Christian:

"But wasn't it Muslim slave traders who actually went into Africa and then enslaved Africans for sale to the Europeans and so on?"

"Yes, what is known as the Arab slave trade begun in the seventh century, with the rise of the Islamic Empire and lasted well into the twentieth century in some places such as Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the Sudan, where there are still reports of slave trading to this present day. The Arab Muslim slave trade reached a vast area including the Sub-Saharan east and west Africa, which was the major supplier, then there was central Asia, the Mediterranean region, Eastern Europe including the lands of the Slavic peoples.

"There are even reports of the slave trade extending as far north as British Isles and Iceland. America at the time of its infancy fell victim to the Muslim traders to what was known as "Barbary States," which were independent Islamic states that run along the coast of north Africa.

"One thing I'd like to note is that in Islamic law it is not permissible to enslave free-born Muslims. Therefore only those born into slavery and non-Muslim captives are allowed to be taken as slaves. This could account for the fact that the vast majority of the people enslaved were those who inhabited the regions that bordered the territory of the Islamic empires and in particular the Christians were targeted."

"But we see radical Islamic groups now like ISIS regularly kidnapping and enslaving and selling women and others. Is this practice of enslavement approved of in the Quran and the Hadith?"

"Yes it is. It's not a very popular notion but I mean it definitely has been sanctioned by the Quran and Hadith. Groups such as ISIS look at the atrocities that they are committing as a holy war and as such any non-Muslim women captured become their property, even if these women are married. In the Quran such captives are frequently referred to as "ma malakat aymanukum" or "what your right hand possesses." One such reference can be found in the Quran in Surah or chapter 4 verse 24, and it says, "And also forbidden are all married women except those whom your right hand possess. This is the law's ordinance to you."

"What I just quoted is a part of a longer section that speaks about the women who are lawful for a man to have sexual relations with. In connection

to these verses the Hadith, the tradition from the life of Mohammed that gives the reason or circumstances in which this verse was revealed, it says,

““The apostle of Allah sent a military expedition to Awtas on the occasion of the battle of Hunain. They met their enemy and fought with them. They defeated them and took them captives. Some of the companions of the apostle of Allah were reluctant to have intercourse with the female captives in the presence of their husbands who were unbelievers. So Allah, the Exalted, sent down the Quranic verse, ‘And also are forbidden, all married women except those whom your right hands possess. This is the law’s ordinance to you.’”

““And then there is another example that can be found in the Quran, Surah 33 verse 50, where it is actually speaking through Mohammed himself personally. It says, “O Prophet, indeed we have made lawful to you your wives to whom you have given their due compensation and those whom your right hand possesses from what Allah has given of you of the captives ...””⁶¹²

When, in the ninth century, St. Cyril Equal-to-the-Apostles was sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to preach the gospel among the Saracens, in their capital city he had to enter into a dispute about faith with Muslim scholars. Among others, they asked him: «Your God is Christ. He commanded you to pray for enemies, to do good to those who hate and persecute you and to offer the other cheek to those who hit you, but what do you actually do? If anyone offends you, you sharpen your sword and go into battle and kill. Why do you not obey your Christ?» Having heard this, St. Cyril asked his fellow-polemists: «If there are two commandments written in one law, who will be its best respecter – the one who obeys only one commandment or the one who obeys both?» When the Hagarenes said that the best respecter of law is the one who obeys both commandments, the holy preacher continued: «Christ is our God Who ordered us to pray for our offenders and to do good to them. He also said that no one of us can show greater love in life than he who gives his life for his friends (John 15:3). That is why we generously endure offences caused us as private people. But in company we defend one another and give our lives in battle for our neighbours, so that you, having taken our fellows prisoners, could not imprison their souls together with their bodies by forcing them into renouncing their faith and into godless deeds. Our Christ-loving soldiers protect our Holy Church with arms in their hands. They safeguard the sovereign in whose sacred person they respect the image of the rule of the Heavenly King. They safeguard their land because with its fall the home authority will inevitably fall too and the evangelical faith will be shaken. These are precious pledges for which soldiers should fight to the last. And if they give their lives in battlefield, the Church will include them in the community of the holy martyrs and call them intercessors before God.»

⁶¹² Fr. John, “Islam Through the Heart and Mind of a Convert to Orthodox Christianity”, Part 1”, *Journey to Orthodoxy*, March 11, 2016, <http://journeytoorthodoxy.com/2016/03/islam-heart-mind-convert-orthodox-christianity-part-1/>

42. THE DISSONANCE OF POWERS: (1) MONOTHELITISM

Justinian's doctrine of the Symphony of Powers, the unity of kingship and priesthood in one State, echoed the Chalcedonian teaching on the unity of the Divine and human natures in the one Christ. It is therefore not surprising to find that under later emperors who renounced Chalcedonian Orthodoxy and embraced heresy (Monothelism, which renounced the human will of Christ, and Iconoclasm, which rejected His full incarnation), the Symphony of Powers was also renounced – or rather, reinterpreted in such a way as to promote the prevailing heresy. The emperor, from being a *focus* of unity in the religious sphere, became an *imposer* of unity – and a false unity at that.

In the seventh century the Monothelite heretics wanted St. Maximus the Confessor to acknowledge the power of a Monothelite 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 Melchizedek 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 Melchizedek is the unique type. If you say that there is another king and priest after the order of Melchizedek, 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 Melchizedek. 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'.⁶¹³ And 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."⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁶¹⁴ *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

St. Maximus fled to Rome, where, as we have seen, Pope St. Martin convened a Council in the Lateran in 649 that anathematized Monothelitism. In the second session of the Council a special libellus was composed by the eastern monks living in Rome (of whom there were many, including the future St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury⁶¹⁵). Later, Saints Martin and Maximus were arrested by Byzantine officials, and transported in chains to Constantinople.

During St. Maximus' interrogation, when Bishop Theodosius of Caesarea claimed that the Lateran Council had been 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 homooousion, proclaiming the blasphemous teaching that the Son 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."⁶¹⁶

Both St. Maximus and St. Martin suffered for the faith from the tyrant emperor Constans II, dying after torture in distant exile. And it was St. Maximus who summed up the causes of tyranny as follows: "The greatest authors and instigators of evil are ignorance, self-love and tyranny. Each depends on the other two and is supported by them: from ignorance of God comes self-love, and from self-love comes tyranny over one's own kind..."⁶¹⁷

Although Rome under Pope St. Martin clashed strongly with the Eastern Empire on religious matters, the West Romans remained loyal to the Empire in the political sphere. And from the time of Pope Vitalian Rome and Constantinople drew steadily closer as invasions by Arabs from the south and Lombards from the north demonstrated to the Romans how much they needed Byzantine protection. Religious differences were underplayed; Constans II received communion from the Pope on a visit to Rome; and Eastern influence in the Roman Patriarchate steadily increased. An example of this was Pope Vitalian's sending, in 668, of a Greek, St. Theodore, to be archbishop of Canterbury, and another Greek, St. Hadrian, to kick-start English ecclesiastical education, together with a Roman chanter, John, to introduce Roman Byzantine chant into England. Indeed, from the time of Pope St. Agatho (+680), who was a Sicilian Greek, until Pope Zacharias (+752), all the Popes were either Greeks or Syrians; the Roman Church, now filled with eastern refugees from the Muslim invasions, became a thriving outpost of Byzantine faith and culture.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Andrew Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes, Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, AD 590-752*, E-book, pp. 176-177.

⁶¹⁶ *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 22-23.

⁶¹⁷ St. Maximus, *Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice: First Century*.

⁶¹⁸ Thus the iconography of Rome in this period is unquestionably Byzantine. See Daniel Esparza, "The 'Sistine Chapel of the Middle Ages' is back in business", *Aleteia*, May 5, 2017.

Although the main opponents of Monothelitism – St. Sophronius of Jerusalem and St. Maximus the Confessor – were Greek, all the four Eastern and Greek-speaking patriarchates – Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem – fell into the heresy, leaving only the Western patriarchate of Rome to uphold the Orthodox faith. Thus in 649 a Local Council in Rome attended by St. Maximus anathematized the heresy and the four Monothelite patriarchs. And so, with the East sunk in heresy and overrun first by the Persians and then, more permanently, by the Muslims, the West became briefly the savior both of Orthodoxy and Romanity.

The pattern of Greek theological leadership fortified by Western hierarchical constancy continued until the final extirpation of the heresy. Thus at a Local Council in Hatfield in England in 679 led by St. Theodore “the Greek”, Archbishop of Canterbury, and at another Local Council in Rome under Pope St. Agatho in 680 at which the decision of the English Council was read out by St. Wilfred of York, Monothelitism was formally anathematized. This was confirmed for the Eastern Churches at the Sixth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 681, at which St. Agatho’s epistle played an important part.

Unfortunately, however, traces of the still dormant heresy of papism are evident in St. Agatho’s epistle, notably the assertion that the Orthodox teaching rests on the rock of the Roman Church, which “remains foreign to all error of every kind” and “by the grace of God has never departed from the way of truth”. Agatho passes over in silence the uncomfortable fact that in 638 Pope Honorius died in the Monothelite heresy. The Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, together with Agatho’s legates, anathematized Honorius as “a pillar of heresy”; and this anathematization, as Dvorkin points out, “was repeated at the Seventh Ecumenical Council and proclaimed by all the Popes at their enthronement right until the 11th century.”⁶¹⁹

Nevertheless, this period represents the high-water-mark of Western Orthodoxy. In the seventh and early eighth centuries the West entered probably its most truly Christian period, its golden age. It was united ecclesiastically under a patriarchate that was more consistently Orthodox than any of the eastern patriarchates, with a vigorous monasticism on the Benedictine model, and with national kingdoms in England, France, Italy and

⁶¹⁹ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 515. Excerpt from the Profession of Faith required upon the Consecration of a new Bishop of Old Rome, used from the late 7th century until sometime in the 11th century: “Also the authors of the new heretical dogmas: Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople, together with Honorius, who paid incentive to their depraved assertions.” (*Patrologia Latina, Volume 105*, fol. 52, Liber Diurnus). Additionally, Pope St. Leo II (+683), in a letter to the Emperor states: “We anathematize also even Honorius, who did not purify this Apostolic Church with the Doctrine of the Apostolic Tradition, but by wicked betrayal sought to subvert the Immaculate [Faith].” (Letter to Emperor Constantine IV, (*Patrologia Latina Volume 96*, fol. 408)

(up to a point) Spain consciously basing their administrations on the Byzantine model of Church-State relations. Spain fell to the Moors in 711, but in 732 the Muslims were defeated for the first time by the Frankish leader Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers. This victory saved Christianity in the West, and significantly relieved the pressure on the Emperors in the East. At the same time, the Byzantine Emperor Leo III's repulsion of the Arabs outside Constantinople some fifteen years earlier could be said to have saved the Balkans and Central Europe from the Muslims.

These events demonstrated the interdependence – for the time being – of the two halves of Christendom... However, the linguistic and cultural, as well as the doctrinal, differences between East and West were beginning to widen. St. Gregory the Great (+604) was the first Pope who did not speak Greek, although he had served in Constantinople, and remained loyal to the Byzantine Empire. In the sixth century Latin was still regularly spoken in Byzantium⁶²⁰, but from the time of the Emperor Heraclius the East stopped using Latin even in its official documents, although it always retained the title of “Empire of the Romans”. The last emperor who came to Rome did so in 663 and the last pope to go to Constantinople went there in 710.⁶²¹ Moreover, the patience of the West Romans was tested when the Council *in Trullo* (692) rejected certain Roman customs, such as fasting on Saturdays.

This did not mean, however, that the Romans began to submit to Constantinople in the religious sphere. After a short period of theological equivocation from the death of St. Martin to the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681, the Roman Popes resumed their traditional role of critics of Eastern waywardness in the faith. This was particularly evident during the period of the iconoclast heresy.

⁶²⁰ Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple*, London: Phoenix Press, 2002, p. 62.

⁶²¹ Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-330.

43. THE DISSONANCE OF POWERS: (2) ICONOCLASM

For over a hundred years, from the 730s to 843, the iconoclast heresy ruled in Byzantium, with only one Orthodox interlude from 787 to 815. At the beginning of the first period, Emperor Leo III espoused the heresy and began to persecute the iconophiles, which sent streams of Orthodox refugees to the West, where Popes Gregory II and III anathematized it. In 733, Leo took the whole Roman diocese of East Illyricum, including the bishoprics of Sicily, South Italy, Crete, mainland Greece and the Balkans into the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The period of Western Christendom's political and cultural orientation towards the Eastern Empire was coming to an end...

Leo's 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 successor of the 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."⁶²²

Again, the Seventh Council (convened in Nicaea in 787) decreed: "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".⁶²³ The epistle also produced 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".⁶²⁴

⁶²² 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 spiritual gifts that of "governments" (κυβερνησεις), which could plausibly be interpreted as referring to political government. But of course, this gift was that of governing the State, not the Church...

⁶²³ Seventh Ecumenical Council, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 91. As Gervais Dumeige points out, the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea was freer than 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*, Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1978, p. 195).

⁶²⁴ Seventh Ecumenical Council, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 91.

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 priest 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 build 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 begun to observe the decrees of the Fathers..."⁶²⁵

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."⁶²⁶

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 Monothelitism and Iconoclasm. Just as Monothelitism 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 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 called "forerunner of the Antichrist" in the service books, and was anathematized by the Church as "the tormentor and *not Emperor* Leo the Isaurian".⁶²⁷ The later iconoclast

⁶²⁵ Pope Gregory II, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 87.

⁶²⁶ Pope Gregory II, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 82.

⁶²⁷ *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

emperor, Constantine Copronymus, was also anathematized and denied the title of emperor: “the tyrant, *and not Emperor*”. 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*”.⁶²⁸

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. For, as the Council declared: “The priest is the sanctification and strengthening of the Imperial power, while the Imperial power is the strength and firmness of the priesthood”.

However, while the role of the Emperor in the Church was now defined in iconographic terms as an icon of Christ the King, and as such necessarily Orthodox, in the second phase, or renewal of the iconoclast heresy that took place from 815 we see an interesting new argument put forward by the iconoclasts: that an emperor that is truly an icon of Christ must necessarily be victorious in battle, having the blessing of Christ on all his works. But the unfortunate fact was that the iconoclast emperors Leo III and Constantine V were on the whole victorious in battle, while the iconophile emperors Constantine VI and Irene, Michael I Rangave and Nicephorus, were defeated. So this spoke in favour, according to the iconoclasts, of the iconoclast emperors having the true faith...⁶²⁹

Of course, this was not a theological argument. The success of an emperor or king in battle may or may not be a function of the Orthodoxy of his faith. Sometimes God allows an Orthodox king to be defeated for quite different reasons. Saul fell at Gilboa because of his impiety, and David triumphed because of his piety. But Josiah, though righteous, was defeated and killed in battle, as were St. Oswald of Northumbria and St. Lazar of Serbia.

Again, in the life of the sixth-century St. Elesbaan, king of Ethiopia, we read that he “lived when Arabia was ruled by Dunaan, the oppressor of Christians. The pious Elesbaan was unable to look on indifferently as believers in Christ were being massacred. He declared war on Dunaan, but his military campaign was unsuccessful.

“Wishing to learn the reason for his defeat, Elesbaan, with prompting from above, turned to a certain hermit. He revealed to the emperor that he had proceeded unrighteously in deciding to take revenge against Dunaan, since the Lord had said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay!’ (Hebrews 10:30).

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).

⁶²⁸ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, pp. 89, 94.

⁶²⁹ Nun Cassia (Senina) (editor), *Zhitia Vizantijskikh Sviatykh Epokhi Ikonoborchestva* (Lives of the Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclast Period), vol. I, St. Petersburg: Kvadrivium, 2015, p. 10.

“The hermit counselled St Elesbaan make a vow to devote his final days of life to God, to escape the wrath of God for his self-willed revenge, and then to defeat Dunaan. St Elesbaan made a vow to the Lord, and marching off with his army against the enemy, he defeated, captured and executed him. After the victory the saint resigned as emperor, secluded himself within a monastery and for fifteen years he dwelt in strict fasting and asceticism.”⁶³⁰

If we are to speak of Orthodox kings as icons of Christ the King, we must nevertheless remember that they were sinners who, with their peoples, were very often chastized by God... Moreover, God’s merciful chastisement of His sons explains why the history of the Orthodox peoples is so often a history of wars and suffering. Not that the other peoples did not suffer also. But God especially chastises those whom He loves, His sons by grace and adoption. For “if you endure chastening, God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there who his father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons...” (Hebrews 12.7-8).

Another witness that might is not right in world history comes in the lives of the forty-two Amorian martyrs at the hands of the Muslims. When some Muslim sages tried to persuade the Christians to apostasize to Islam on the grounds that they were everywhere victorious against the Christians, the latter replied: "If you would gauge the truth of a faith by victories in wars, then this would mean that all the idolatrous nations, who from time to time have conquered the world, such as the Persians, Greeks, Romans and others, possessed the true faith. This, even you Muslims would never acknowledge. And because you have been victorious over the Christians now, this does not mean that your faith is better; rather, that our sins are greater and because of this, God punishes us, through you."⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ *Life of St. Elesbaan*, Holy Cross Monastery.

⁶³¹ St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *Prologue from Ohrid*, March 6.

V. THE PAPAL DESPOTISM

44. CHARLEMAGNE AND POPE LEO III

For centuries, and in spite of the intermittent expression of papist ideas⁶³², the Roman Papacy had seen itself as part of the Byzantine Empire and a vital link with the four patriarchates of the East. This position was reinforced in a cultural sense during the period of the “Byzantine papacy” of the seventh and early eighth centuries, when several of the Popes were Greek or Syrian in origin, and many eastern monks fled to Rome to escape persecution by Monothelite or Iconoclast emperors. Even when the Emperor Leo deprived the papacy of its lands in Southern Italy and the Balkans, the Popes still looked to New Rome as the capital of the Christian *oikoumene*. They still commemorated the eastern emperors at the Liturgy, and still used the emperors’ coinage. East and West still constituted one Christian world...

However, the relationship began to undergo strain when the Lombards penetrated further south into Italy, and Leo, occupied with his Muslim enemies in the East, could offer the papacy no military support. The Popes in desperation looked for other defenders, and found them in – *the Franks*...

The first act that “brought the Franks into Italy” was 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 – the last of the Greek popes⁶³³ – 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.

This was a truly revolutionary act: removing legitimate dynasties and putting upstarts in their place is not usually considered the business of churchmen... Be that as it may, Zechariah’s, successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly increased the links with “the most Christian king of the Franks”. Having been deserted by the iconoclast eastern emperor at a moment when Rome was in great peril from the Lombards, he crossed the Alps and in the summer of 754 gave Peppin the title of “patrician”, re-

⁶³² Perhaps the earliest was in 608, when the tyrant emperor Phocas gave Pope Boniface IV the title “Vicar of Christ”, while reserving for himself the title, “Christ’s deputy in the East”.

⁶³³ 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 ‘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, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 79).

consecrated him and his queen and blessed him and his successors to rule in perpetuity.

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. Whether Stephen already 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.⁶³⁴ Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor's regnal year, and began to issue their own coins.⁶³⁵

Pepin more than fulfilled his side of the bargain: he defeated the Lombards, restored the Pope to Rome and gave him the former Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna, thereby laying the foundation for the Papal States and the role of the Popes as secular as well as spiritual rulers. As Joseph Overbeck writes: In exchange for receiving anointing from Pope Stephen Pepin had had "to sign a document by which he engaged himself to conquer the Exarchate, which the Longobards had wrested from the hands of the Byzantine Emperor, and to hand it over to the Pope. Pepin accomplished the conquest. When the Emperor sent his Legates to reclaim his lawful property, Pepin referred to the Pope as owner. In private life we should call such transactions cheat and robbery, but as part and parcel of the 'Patrimonium of S. Petri' they are hallowed. Or shall we defend main force as a 'legal title,' and cover the robberies of the Longobards with a moral cloak? Then we might as well all at once sanction highway robbery... It is a curious, not to say providential, fact that Piedmont, the first country touched by Pepin on his invading tour in Italy, when Pope Stephen asked him to take the sword in St. Peter's behalf, was the very country that was to destroy the Papal States."⁶³⁶

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] 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

⁶³⁴ Norman Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 288-290.

⁶³⁵ Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple*, London: Phoenix Press, 2002, p. 47.

⁶³⁶ Overbeck, "Rome's Rapid Downward Course", <http://nftu.net/romes-rapid-downward-dr-j-joseph-overbeck>. Overbeck is referring to the successful rebellion of Piedmont against Rome in the mid-nineteenth century.

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."⁶³⁷

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.⁶³⁸

The forgery was probably directed 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 Leo III's earlier depredations. But in the long 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 bishop, 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...

In 768, King Pepin's son, Charles, later known as Charlemagne, ascended the throne. He destroyed the power of the Lombards and vigorously expanded the boundaries of his kingdom from the Elbe to the borders of Byzantine Italy and Hungary. In Western Europe, only the British Isles, Brittany, Scandinavia and some parts of Spain remained beyond his grasp. He promoted education and art, held twice-yearly Synods of his bishops and nobles, suppressed heresy (while introducing the *Filioque*) and tried to weld the varied peoples and customs of his realm into a multi-national whole.

The early part of Charlemagne's reign is notorious for his slaughter of hundreds of leaders of the Saxon pagans, and his imposition of the death penalty on them if they refused to convert to Christianity. Thus one of the capitularies of Saxony (775-790) reads: " If any one of the race of the Saxons hereafter concealed among them shall have wished to hide himself unbaptized, and shall have scorned to come to baptism and shall have wished to remain a pagan, let him be punished by death."⁶³⁹ Some have excused the

⁶³⁷ Henry Bettenson and Christopher Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: SPCK, 1999, p. 52.

⁶³⁸ 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.)

⁶³⁹ See D. C. Munro in - University of Pennsylvania. Dept. of History: Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history, published for the Dept. of History of the University of Pennsylvania., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press [1900]. Vol. VI, No. 5, pp. 2-4.

king on the grounds that Saxon paganism was truly barbaric and anti-Christian. Others have pointed out that a few decades later the Byzantine Emperor murdered thousands of Paulician (Manichaeen) heretics. So it was a barbaric age – which does not, however, excuse such behaviour...

*

Charlemagne's empire was seen by the Franks as a resurrection of the Western Roman Empire. Thus the marble steps leading up to his throne came from temples in Rome.⁶⁴⁰ And according to his English adviser, Deacon Alcuin, Charlemagne, like King David, combined the functions of royal leadership and priestly teaching in order to guide his people to salvation.⁶⁴¹ As early as 775 Cathwulf wrote to Charlemagne, comparing him to the Father, the bishop to the Son: "Always remember, my king, with fear and love for God your King, that you are in His place to look after and rule over all His members and to give account on judgement day even for yourself. And a bishop is in second place: he is only in Christ's place. Ponder, therefore, within yourself how diligently to establish God's law over the people of God."⁶⁴² Again, in 794 Paulinus of Aquileia called him "king and priest".

Charlemagne dominated the Church in his empire. As D.E. Luscombe writes, "Among the principal tasks of a Carolingian monarch were the convening of church councils, the nomination of bishops, the maintenance of clerical discipline and public morality, and the promulgation of sound religious doctrine. Carolingian monarchy was theocratic; it intervened extensively in church affairs..."⁶⁴³ And so, at the very moment that the Seventh Ecumenical Council was decreeing the proper spheres of Church and State in the East, Caesaropapism was threatening to undermine that decree and re-establish itself in the West...

By the 790s Charlemagne was already not just a king, but *de facto* emperor. But the resurrection of the Western Empire needed a special sanction that only the Church could give. The opportunity to gain this came with the election of a new Pope, Leo III.

Leo was no supporter of caesaropapism, the "king-priest" idea. Thus when, in 796, Eadbert Praen, an English priest, assumed the crown of the sub-kingdom of Kent for himself, he was immediately rejected by the Archbishop of Canterbury and later anathematized by Leo. Such a priest-king, he wrote, was like Julian the Apostate...⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰ Jack Watkins, "Charlemagne: Part 1 of 2", *Catholic Life*, December, 2008, p. 43.

⁶⁴¹ Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 50.

⁶⁴² Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁶⁴³ Luscombe, "Introduction: the Formation of Political Thought in the West", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 - c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 166.

⁶⁴⁴ A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, 1964, vol. III, p. 524.

Nevertheless, he needed the support of Charlemagne; and to that end he was prepared to make compromises... 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...”⁶⁴⁵

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. This is difficult to believe. Everything suggests that the events leading up to the coronation were carefully stage-managed by the two men, each of whom possessed something that only the other could give.⁶⁴⁶

However, there is evidence that in later years Charlemagne drew back from the confrontation with Constantinople that his new title of “Emperor of the Romans” threatened. He dropped 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 idea⁶⁴⁷). In this way he hoped “to unite the Eastern and Western provinces”, as the Theophanes put it⁶⁴⁸ - 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...

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 save the man

⁶⁴⁵ Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, pp. 30-32.

⁶⁴⁶ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, chapter 5.

⁶⁴⁷ Herrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

⁶⁴⁸ Theophanes, in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958, p. 268.

who presides over the Roman - that is, the Constantinopolitan kingdom."⁶⁴⁹ As Russell Chamberlin writes: "The Byzantines derided the coronation of Charlemagne. To them he was simply another barbarian general with ideas above his station. Indeed, he took care never to style himself Imperator Romanorum. His jurists, dredging through the detritus of empire, came up with a title which met with his approval: Romanum gubernans imperium 'Governing the Roman Empire'. The resounding title of this first of the post-classical Western Emperors was 'Charles, Most Serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and merciful Emperor, governing the Roman Empire and by the mercy of God, King of the Lombards and the Franks'."⁶⁵⁰ Alcuin even supported the idea that Charlemagne was greater than both the Pope in Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople: "There have hitherto been three persons of greatest eminence in the world, namely the Pope, who rules the see of St. Peter, the chief of apostles, as his successor...; the second is the Emperor who holds sway over the second Rome...; the third is the throne on which our Lord Jesus Christ has placed you to rule over our Christian people, with greater power, clearer insight and more exalted royalty than the aforementioned dignitaries. On you alone the whole safety of the churches of Christ depends."⁶⁵¹

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 Alcuin in the previous century still followed the convention of calling 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!"⁶⁵²

And yet the ultimate winner from Charlemagne's coronation was probably not the emperor, but the Pope. Judith Herrin writes that his "acclamation as imperator et augustus only partly answered Alcuin's proposals for a grander title and did not please the Frankish theologians. They did not consider that

⁶⁴⁹ Quoted in Richard Chamberlin, *Charlemagne, Emperor of the Western World*, London: Grafton books, 1986, p. 52.

⁶⁵⁰ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *History Today*, vol. 53 (11), November, 2003, p. 57. And yet in 812 the legates of Emperor Michael I saluted Charles in Aachen with the title "emperor". So from 812, as A. Vasiliev says, "there were two Roman emperors, in spite of the fact that in theory there was still only one Roman empire" (*op. cit.*, p. 268). There is an interesting parallel to this in the theory of the One Christian Empire in contemporary China. Thus when the Chinese empire actually split between the Khitans and the Sung in 1004, "to preserve the myth of indivisibility the relationship between the two emperors was henceforth expressed in the language of a fictional blood relationship" ("China in the year 1000", *History for All*, vol. 2, issue 6, December / January, 2000, p. 37).

⁶⁵¹ Alcuin, in Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York*, York: Sessions Book Trust, 1974, p. 111.

⁶⁵² Alcuin, in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 148.

the Bishop of Rome had any right to bestow an imperial title and thus assume a crucial role in the ceremony. The Franks did not conceive of Roman ecclesiastical authority as something overarching which covered the whole of Charles's territories. Within northern Europe, papal authority was hedged by the claims of many archbishops to an equal power...

"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."⁶⁵³

Fr. Andrew Louth confirms that the real winner was the Pope: "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..."⁶⁵⁴

So the foundations were laid for the growth of papal power in the political as well as the ecclesiastical spheres... As for Charlemagne's empire, if it was meant to be a restoration of the Western Roman Empire, it must be judged to have failed; for it disintegrated after his death and the death of his son Louis the Pious into three separate kingdoms (roughly coterminous with modern France, Germany and Northern Italy), and continued to disintegrate in the tenth century. One reason for this was that he failed to create the political bureaucracy and tax collection systems that were so important in preserving the Roman Empire.⁶⁵⁵ Another reason was the fact that the dukes and counts

⁶⁵³ Herrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 128.

⁶⁵⁴ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁶⁵⁵ Heather writes: "Fundamentally, the early Middle Ages saw the emergence of a new smaller type of state structure. With no state-run professional army, no large-scale systematic taxation of agriculture, and no developed central bureaucratic structure, the early medieval state swallowed up a much smaller percentage of GDP than had its Roman predecessor. As far as we can tell, this had nothing to do with right-wing ideologies and everything to do with a basic renegotiation of centre-local relations around the brute fact that landowning elites now owed their ruler actual military service, which put their own very physical bodies on the line. Equally important, all the changes conspired together... to make it much more difficult for early medieval rulers to hold together large geographical areas over the longer term.

"There was also the further, critical difference in the type of economic assets that the ruler of a smaller early medieval state structure had at his disposal. Although late Roman emperors

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 – that is, until the 810s.⁶⁵⁶

For the idea of selfless service to the king as the Lord's anointed had to compete with the idea of the loyalty of a band of warriors to a leader that was conditional on his providing greater success in war and therefore more plunder than anyone else. The state was not yet fully a *res publica*, a *public* thing, 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. As Heather writes, "the fruits of expansion power... were a crucial element in the rise of the Carolingians. It really is one of the most significant statistics of them all that Carolingian armies were in the field for eighty-five out of the ninety years from the accession of Charles Martel to 803/4. The vast majority of these campaigns were aggressive and expansionary, and the renewable wealth they liberated – in all its forms – made it possible for four generations of the dynasty to build their regimes without eroding the fixed assets of the royal fisc... In the small-state world of early medieval Europe, expansionary warfare replaced large-scale taxation as the source of renewable wealth that was necessary to maintaining a powerful central authority in anything but the shortest of terms."⁶⁵⁷

However, Charlemagne's real weakness was spiritual rather than institutional. He took his own strength 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 role of the *Basileus*. Still more seriously, he usurped 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, whereas in 794 Charlemagne convened a false council at Frankfurt which, without consulting the Pope, 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.

were landowners in their own right, like their Carolingian successors, they drew the majority of their much larger overall income from tax revenues. And tax revenues were entirely renewable..." (op. cit., p.279)

⁶⁵⁶ However, see the *life* of St. William of Toulouse (+812), for an example of a completely non-acquisitive warrior lord (*Living Orthodoxy*, vol. V, N 2, March-April, 1983, pp. 3-5).

⁶⁵⁷ Heather, *op. cit.*, pp. 287, 288. 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."

This rejection of the Acts of the Seventh Council has been ascribed to a mistranslation.⁶⁵⁸ But we may suspect that the mis-translation was not entirely fortuitous (was there really nobody at the court who read Greek?), and that Charlemagne was actually looking for an excuse to reject the Eastern Empire as idol-worshipping and heterodox and put himself forward as the one true and Orthodox Christian Emperor. Be that as it may, his adoption of the Filioque made *him* a heretic rather because: (a) it contradicted the words of Christ 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.⁶⁵⁹

Nor was Charlemagne's iconoclasm without consequences. In the early ninth century, Bishop Claudius of Turin preached iconoclasm. And although the heresy did not prevail (it was opposed by the Irishman St. Dungalus of Pavia⁶⁶⁰), a sharp decline in iconography is evident in the West from this time.⁶⁶¹

The Filioque immediately produced conflict between Frankish and Greek monks in Jerusalem. And within the Frankish camp itself there was opposition: Alcuin rejected the innovation in a letter to the monks of Lyons, and Pope Leo III had the Creed *without* the Filioque inscribed in Greek and Latin on silver shields and 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.

⁶⁵⁸ 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).

When, in 792, Charlemagne sent the *Acts* of the Seventh Council in this inaccurate translation to the kings and bishops of Britain, it was supposed that the Fathers of the Council had asserted, in the words of Symeon of Durham, "that icons are to be adored, which is altogether condemned by the Church of God"; and the reader Alcuin brought back to the continent the negative opinion of the British Church (Haddan & Stubbs, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-469).

⁶⁵⁹ See St. Photius the Great, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, Boston: Studion Publishers, 1983; "The Filioque: Truth or Trivia?", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, March 21 / April 3, 1983.

⁶⁶⁰ http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0760-0860,_Dungalus_Reclusus,_Responsa_Contra_Perversas_Claudii_Tauronensis_Episcopi_Sententias,_MLT.pdf.

⁶⁶¹ However, recognizably Byzantine-style iconography still remained in the West. See for example the frescoes of the tenth-century Spanish church of St. Peter del Bural: https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fupload.wikimedia.org%2Fwiki%2Fcommons%2Fthumb%2F7%2F75%2FAbsis_de_Sant_Pere_del_Bural%252C_11th_c._fresco.jpg.

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 Leo by his imposition of heretical innovations on the Church. Indeed, the former champion of Orthodoxy and Romanity against the heretical and 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 Fr. John Romanides puts it, “that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman!”⁶⁶²

Another important innovation of the Carolingian period was the replacement of leavened bread by unleavened in the Eucharist. As Fr. Joseph Jungman writes, “In the West, various ordinances appeared from the ninth century on, all demanding the exclusive use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist.. Still, the new custom did not come into exclusive vogue until the middle of the eleventh century. Particularly in Rome it was not universally accepted till after the general infiltration of various usages from the North.”⁶⁶³

This issue did not figure among the theological differences that arose between Pope Nicholas I and St. Photius in the 850s. However, it *did* become important two centuries later, when the schism between Rome and Constantinople became permanent. At that time the Latin innovation was seen as damaging the symbolism of the human nature of Christ insofar as leaven signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit that makes human nature rise.⁶⁶⁴

Charlemagne’s empire began to crumble quite soon after his death in 814. His son Louis the Pious suffered rebellions from his sons Lothar, Pippin and Louis, and was even deposed briefly by the latter. On his death in 840 the empire was divided between his three surviving sons, Lothar, Louis the German and Charles. When Lothar claimed the whole empire, the other two brothers met with their armies at Strasbourg in 842 and swore allegiance to each other and a united front against Lothar.

⁶⁶² J. Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 31.

⁶⁶³ Jungman, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, volume II, pages 33-34. Jungman goes on to say that, “the opinion put forward by J. Mabillon, *Dissertatio de pane eucharistia*, in his answer to the Jesuit J. Sirmond, *Disquisitio de azymo*, namely, that in the West it was always the practice to use only unleavened bread, is no longer tenable” [op. cit., page 33].

“Now, the fact that the West changed its practice and began using unleavened bread in the 8th and 9th century -- instead of the traditional leavened bread -- is confirmed by the research of Fr. William O’Shea, who noted that along with various other innovative practices from Northern Europe, the use of unleavened bread began to infiltrate the Roman liturgy at the end of the first millennium: “Another change introduced into the Roman Rite in France and Germany at the time [i.e., 8th - 9th century] was the use of unleavened bread and of thin white wafers or hosts instead of the loaves of leavened bread used hitherto” [O’Shea, *The Worship of the Church*, page 128]. Cited by Fr. Ambrose Maonaigh on Facebook, July 6, 2016.

⁶⁶⁴ See V. Moss, “The Bread of the Eucharist”, https://www.academia.edu/13506091/THE_BREAD_OF_THE_EUCHARIST.

“The oaths and pledges... were given in the vernacular languages of each of the armies, rather than the kings’ own languages or in Latin. Charles speaks to Louis’ army in Old High German, ‘*teudisca lingua*’, and they pledge in the same. Louis and Charles’ army speak in Proto-French, ‘*romana lingua*’. By speaking to their brother’s army in their own language, each oath-taker ensured they were understood and neither could escape being held to their word.

“The Oaths are important, not just for the treaty they forged but for the languages they used: in the Carolingian Empire Latin was the standard language of writing. The Oaths of Strasbourg are the very earliest written evidence of a Romance language to survive and are, therefore, the earliest words to be written in the language that would become French. The Old High German portions are one of the earliest known texts written in the language. Together they give a glimpse of how multilingual the Carolingian Empire was. Louis and Charles were both multilingual and literate.

“Thanks in part to the alliance made that day in Strasbourg the war was brought to an end in August 843 with the Treaty of Verdun. With this treaty the Empire was subdivided: Lothar took the central region around Aachen, with lands stretching down to Italy; Louis the German took East Francia, which was roughly the territory east of the Rhine; and Charles the Bald took West Francia, the western two thirds of what is now France. This subdivision created geographical regions with their own languages, political organisations and identities, which laid the foundations for the shape of western Europe.”⁶⁶⁵

When, in 1978, President Giscard d’Estaing of France and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt decided to relaunch the European Project by agreeing to work towards the creation of a common currency for the West European region, they met beside the tomb of Charlemagne in his old capital of Aachen. This was appropriate; for, as K.N. Leontiev writes: “It was precisely after the fall of the artificial empire of Charles 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 first by means of envy and imitation 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

⁶⁶⁵ “Oaths of Strasbourg Sworn”, *History Today*, February, 2017, p. 8.

watershed after which the West begins more and more to bring its own civilization 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. On the other hand, it acquires for its genius the Southern Slavs...., and then... Russia.”⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶ Leontiev, “Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo” (“Byzantinism and Slavism”), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 94-95.

45. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (1) FROM NICHOLAS I TO JOHN VIII

The new relationship between the Roman papacy and the Carolingian empire produced by Charlemagne's coronation in Rome in 800 caused changes in the political ideology of the Franks, on the one hand, who came to see themselves as the *real* Roman Empire, more Roman and more Orthodox than the Empire of the East; and on the other hand, in the ecclesiology of the Popes, who came to see themselves as *the only* Church of this renewed Roman Empire, and as having ultimate jurisdiction over *all* the Churches in the world.

However, as long as Charlemagne lived the change in political ideology was much more prominent, while the change in the papacy's perception of itself was still hidden. As he wrote to Pope Leo III, he saw himself not only as protecting the Church from external dangers but also "internally strengthening it in the knowledge of the Christian faith". And he was true to his word: Charlemagne initiated and funded a huge project of reform and education, whose result, as Peter Heather writes, was "a total transformation of the Church of Western, Latin Christendom... Charlemagne used his religious authority to define a mass Christian piety which was to apply to everyone within his empire."⁶⁶⁷

However, during the reign of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, the Frankish bishops quickly reasserted their authority.

Thus D.E. Luscombe writes: "At the same time as Carolingian kingship acquired a greater ecclesiastical role, and as the king appeared more and more to be an ecclesiastical person, voices were raised on behalf of the Frankish bishops who asserted that kingship was an office within the church, accountable to the priesthood. The removal from office of the emperor Louis the Pious at Compiègne in 833 provided an opportunity to develop such themes. Whatever the effective reasons and causes underlying Louis' deposition, bishops were predominant in the assembly at Compiègne. They represented their role as penitential: Louis' power had been wrested from him by God because of his incapacity and the bishops now had to impose public penance."⁶⁶⁸

The shift in the balance of power from king to bishops was remarkable. It could be argued that the power of the Carolingian empire never recovered from this blow to their authority. Thus while the Eastern Empire recovered its strength after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the Frankish Empire began to disintegrate after the bloody battle of Fontenoy in 841, which was fought between Charlemagne's three grandsons.

⁶⁶⁷ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, pp. 336, 345.

⁶⁶⁸ Luscombe, "Introduction: the Formation of Political Thought in the West", *Cambridge History of Medieval Thought, c. 350 - c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 167.

The Frankish bishops were especially concerned to assert their authority against their metropolitans, who had been the lynch-pins of Charlemagne's educational programme. To this end they wanted to increase the power of the Pope over the metropolitans. And in order to increase the papacy's authority a forged collection of canons was composed in about 850 in Western Francia called *The Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*.

"Its author," writes Alexander Dvorkin, "was a Frankish cleric who has remained unknown, hiding himself under the pseudonym of Isidore Mercator (St. Isidore). To Isidore of Seville (+636) is ascribed a collection of genuine sources of church law. The pseudo-Isidore took a Gallic edition of this as his basis, and succeeding in forging, interpolating, false attributing and reworking a huge quantity of papal decrees, which, together with the resolutions of the councils, became the main source of canon law in all the provinces 'captured' by the papacy. Marius Mercator was the name of a Spanish writer of the fifth century from whom the pseudo-Isidore borrowed the prologue for his compilation.

"The pseudo-Isidore compiled 70 decretals in the name of venerated popes who ruled before the Council of Nicaea (325), and also wove his own interpolations into the genuine materials of a much later period. One should remember that the earliest genuine decretal belongs to Pope Siricius (385). The pseudo-Isidore did a huge work, putting genuine later citations into the completely different context of much earlier works. His main task was, it would seem, the defence of the local interests of the Frankish bishops, who wanted, instead of a nearby and effective secular power, and also metropolitan control, to have a much more distant and, consequently, much less effective papal power. The pseudo-Isidore wanted to defend the bishops juridically from archbishops and metropolitans, and also from their own clerics and laity. The only way of achieving this, it seemed to the pseudo-Isidore, was to proclaim the absolute monarchy of the Roman popes.

"Thus the pseudo-Isidore laid a juridical basis for the absolute and universal power and authority of the Roman see. In the decretals the pope is proclaimed to be the supreme lawgiver, without whose approval not a single council could be convened nor a single conciliar resolution become valid. He was the supreme judge without whose permission not one bishop could be defrocked and who decided all the 'main affairs' in the Church. Anyone unhappy with the decision of a local council or local metropolitan could appeal to the pope, and on him depended the final decision, to which everyone had to submit without question. In this way bishops were freed from the judgement of laity and even from the power of their own metropolitans. According to the decretals, in countries distant from Rome, the pope appointed vicars of the apostolic throne, or primates, who enjoyed in the locality all the privileges of the pope, and who served in this way as channels of the central power of the Roman first-hierarchs. Thus according to the

pseudo-Isidorean decretals the authority of the pope in the Church became even higher than the authority of the Ecumenical Councils. Far from Francia, the Pope, as the successor of the prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, had the complete fullness of power in the Universal Church and was proclaimed as the head of the whole Christian world."⁶⁶⁹

In 858 Nicholas I succeeded to the see of Rome. He was a West Roman by birth (his father was the regionarius Theodore), who spent his pontificate in violent conflict with the Frankish Emperor Louis II. According, therefore, to Fr. John Romanides' theory of the Frankish origin of the heretical papacy, 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, the first truly "papist pope", trying to impose *his* tyranny on everyone, kings and bishops, easterners and westerners. He first waged war against the major metropolitan sees of the continental West - Archbishops John of Ravenna, Hincmar of Rheims and others, who, as we have seen, were also the main target of *The Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*. This brought the Frankish metropolitans briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him...

Thus Metropolitan Hincmar of Rheims deposed his suffragan, Bishop Rothad of Soissons. Rothad appealed to Rome. "Nicholas' initial response," writes Heather, "was to refer the matter back to a provincial synod, as was standard contemporary practice, and where the outcome, with Hincmar in the chair, was only too predictable. Rothad, however, was a resourceful individual who took to the road, which led, as of course they all do, direct to Rome, carrying with him a copy of *Pseudo-Isidore*. Nicholas' attitude then changed suddenly and drastically. On being confronted with the 'evidence' of ancient Christian practice, the Pope issued a new ruling on 24 December 862. Following the rules laid down in *Pseudo-Isidore*, he now required that Rothad's appeal should be heard in Rome, with himself in the chair.

"A weapon crafted in the north for other purposes entirely had found its way to Rome into the hands of a Pope who was not afraid to use it. The results were explosive. Nicholas was no shy, retiring individual, and had not been afraid to involve himself widely in the affairs of the Western Church in any case, asserting his own authority ruthlessly in 860-1, prior to Rothad's arrival, over Archbishop John of Ravenna's attempts to remain independent..."⁶⁷⁰

Peter Llewellyn tells the story: "During the pontificate of Benedict Archbishop John of Ravenna had increased his local power, but Nicholas soon received from the suffragans of Ravenna and from 'the senators of Ravenna and its uncounted population' appeals for protection from their archbishop. Letters and legates that were sent to John without effect were followed by a

⁶⁶⁹ Dvorkin, *Ochreki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, pp. 599-600. Cf. Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 356

⁶⁷⁰ Heather, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-60.

summons to Rome. At a Synod in Rome early in 861 John was excommunicated by the pope and at once fled to Pavia to ask help from [the Emperor] Louis. Louis offered him the company of two imperial *missi* to Rome, but Nicholas refused to accept them and John's enemies in Ravenna invited the pope there. Louis, anxious to avoid a rupture with the papacy, withdrew his support from John and his brother duke Gregory. When John was finally received in Rome with two *missi* as guarantors of his personal safety, he was compelled at a synod in December 861 to renounce all territorial ambitions. He swore to make a visit *ad limina* every two years, to allow no episcopal elections in Emilia save those canonically managed, and to raise only the canonical tribute from his suffragans. He was to restore all stolen property and above all to exercise no civil jurisdiction in private cases. The right of appeal to the resident papal *missus* in Ravenna and to the papal *vestararius* was always to remain open.

“It was a moral and legal victory for Nicholas, the papacy and for Rome, but it threatened Louis' hold over Italy and the prospects of a successful war against the Arabs [in the south of Italy]. In 860 his position had become precarious through the opposition of two great feudatories of central Italy, Lambert the son of duke Guy of Spoleto and count Ildebert of Camerino. These fled, Ildebert to the sultan of Bari and Lambert to Adelchis of Benevento. Their flight gave Louis an opportunity to assert his control over central Italy and to prepare for his great campaign. Pentapolis was occupied by his troops and the payment of tribute to the papal authorities was forbidden; instead public land was distributed to Franks to outweigh the influence of the papal party. Two years later there came another occasion to establish his power over Rome. When Louis' brother Lothair, King of Lorraine, repudiated his wife and married and crowned his mistress Waldrade, a synod of bishops at Metz had, under pressure from the king, and giving voice to national aspirations among the episcopate, condoned the act; the papal legate, Bishop Radoald of Porto, had succumbed to bribes and also given his assent. Nicholas promptly [in October 863] excommunicated the king [and the two archbishops who had presided over the synod in Metz], and Archbishop John's partisans in Emilia prevailed on Louis to support his brother and march on Rome. As the Frankish army approached, 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, 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.”⁶⁷¹

⁶⁷¹ Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, pp. 273-275.

Nicholas may have been right in some of his judgements. But that was not the point: the point was the way in which he rode roughshod over the rights of provincial metropolitans, who since Charlemagne had recognized only the emperor's right to interfere in their jurisdiction. Thus 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."⁶⁷²

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If the papacy could cite some precedents for claiming supreme power over the Church in the West, in the East it had *no* jurisdiction. But in 863 Nicholas defrocked even St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople.⁶⁷³ The Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin* for 864 responded cuttingly 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".⁶⁷⁴ 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... Before the coming of Christ it was the case that there existed, in a type, men who were at once kings and priests: sacred history tells us that the holy Melchisedech was one of these. The devil, as one who ever strives, with his tyrannical spirit, to claim for himself what belongs to the worship of God, has imitated this example in his own members, so that pagan emperors might be spoken of as being at the same time the chief pontiffs. But He was found Who was in truth both King and Pontiff. Thereafter the emperor did not lay hands on the rights of the pontificate, nor did the pontiff usurp the name of emperor. For that one and the same 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ

⁶⁷² Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1867, p. 305, note.

⁶⁷³ "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, p. 298). Note the reference only to *six* ecumenical councils.

⁶⁷⁴ Quoted in Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, p. 168.

Jesus' (I Timothy 2.15), so separated the functions of the two authorities, giving each its own proper activities and distinct honours (desiring that these properties should be exalted by the medicine of humility and not brought down again to the depths by man's arrogance..."⁶⁷⁵

This would suggest that Nicholas supported the Orthodox teaching on the separation of the secular and ecclesiastical powers. And indeed, his treatment of the traditional theme of Melchizedek is Orthodox. However, while it was useful for him to preach the Orthodox doctrine in order to limit the power of the emperor, he accepted few, if any, limitations on his own power. He even hinted that the Byzantine emperors might not be legitimate emperors of the Romans, which would imply that the only legitimate emperor was the Frankish one, or, if the *Donation of Constantine* was to be believed, the Pope himself! Thus he said that it was ridiculous for Michael to call himself Roman emperor, since he did not speak Latin.⁶⁷⁶

Then he demanded from the Emperor the return of his territories in the Greek-speaking south of Italy: "Give us back the patrimony of Calabria and that of Sicily and all the property of our Church, whereof it held possession, and which it was accustomed to manage by its own attorneys; for it is unreasonable that an ecclesiastical possession, destined for the light and service of the Church of God, should be taken from us by an earthly power." Finally, he sent missionaries to Bulgaria, which was deep within the traditionally Byzantine sphere. To add injury to insult, these missionaries preached the heresy of the Filioque to the newly converted Bulgarians. For this reason, a Council convened at Constantinople in 867 presided over by St. Photius, and at which the archbishops of Trèves, Cologne and Ravenna were present, excommunicated and anathematized Nicholas.

In 867 St. Photius convened a large Council in Constantinople, to which he invited the archbishops of Ravenna, Trèves and Cologne who appealed to him against Nicholas. Nicholas was defrocked. However, his successor, Hadrian II, rejected the Council and burned its Acts. Then in 869 a palace revolution in Constantinople enabled him to convene a Council there 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 read that any have judged him."⁶⁷⁷ St. Photius refused to defend himself, saying that the thirty-three bishops convened in this Council could not presume to reverse the decision of the three hundred and eighteen bishops who had proclaimed him legitimate Patriarch.

⁶⁷⁵ Nicholas I, in Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104-105.

⁶⁷⁶ Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 81.

⁶⁷⁷ Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

According to Joseph Overbeck, "Hadrian II, succeeded in having the Pseudo-Isidorean principles (these legalized lies) recognized" by the Council, "which was packed for the occasion. There can scarcely be found a more miserable sham than this Council, in which three disguised Saracen merchants were slyly introduced to act as the representatives of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, as we learn from the evidence of the Patriarchs themselves in the Synod of 879."⁶⁷⁸

In 872 Hadrian II was succeeded by John VIII. At first, his language was scarcely less authoritarian than that of his predecessors. But in time he did come to recognize St. Photius as lawful, and sent his legates to the Great Council of Constantinople in 879-880, which was attended by about four hundred bishops. This Council annulled, under the legates' signature, the acts of the anti-Photian council. It also decreed that there was no papal jurisdiction in the East, although the papal primacy was recognised.

The Council also anathematized another heresy of Pope Nicholas, the addition of the word Filioque, meaning "and from the Son", to the original text of the Nicene Creed, which meant that the Holy Spirit was affirmed as proceeding from the Father *and the Son*. without the Filioque. So Pope John formally recognised that he had no jurisdiction in the Eastern Church and that the Filioque was a heresy!..⁶⁷⁹

He had a hard task ahead of him, however. As he wrote to Photius: "I think your wise Holiness knows how difficult it is to change immediately a custom which has been entrenched for so many years. Therefore we believe the best policy is not to force anyone to abandon that addition to the Creed. But rather we must act with wisdom and moderation, urging them little by little to give up that blasphemy. Therefore, those who claim that we share this opinion are not correct. Those, however, who claim that there are those among us who dare to recite the Creed in this way are correct. Your Holiness must not be scandalized because of this nor withdraw from the sound part of the body of our Church. Rather, you should aid us energetically with gentleness and wisdom in attempting to convert those who have departed from the truth..."⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ Overbeck, "Rome's Rapid Downward Course", <http://nftu.net/romes-rapid-downward-dr-j-joseph-overbeck>.

⁶⁷⁹ "Those who would refuse to reject and to correct this error [i.e. the Filioque] would be unworthy of pardon even if they spoke from the height of the throne which they professed to be the highest of all and even if they should put forth the confession of Peter and the blessing which he received from Christ for it, even if they should shake before our eyes the Keys of the Kingdom. For in proportion that they pretend to honour Peter by these Keys, they dishonour him if they destroy what he established, if they root up the foundations of the Church which he is supposed to support." (Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid, (+1107) *De lis in quibus Latini Accusantur*, as quoted in *The Papacy and the Orthodox* by A.E. Siecienski, pg. 266).

⁶⁸⁰ Pope John VIII, P.G. 102, 813; translated by Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians*, Nordland, 1975, pp. 129-130, 137; cf. V. Moss, "Western Saints and the Filioque", *Living Orthodoxy*, volume IV, N 1, January-February, 1982.

St. Photius seems to have accepted this, and remained in communion with Rome for the rest of his life, referring to the Pope as “my John”. But in 903 his successor St. Nicholas the Mystic broke communion with Pope Christopher because the latter introduced the Filioque into the Creed of the Roman Church again. In 904, however, communion was again restored - until 1009.

There is an inner connection between the theory of papal infallibility, the introduction of the Filioque and the removal of the invocation of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Liturgy. Infallibility belongs to God, not man; truth and grace are maintained in the Church through the operation, not of any one man or group of men, but through the workings of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore if the Popes were to “promote” themselves to the heights of infallibility, they had somehow to “demote” the Holy Spirit and take His place in the Divine economy. This was done through the Filioque, which made the Spirit as it were subject to *both* the Father *and* the Son, and by the doctrine of the Pope as the “Vicar of Christ” - to the Pope also. With the Holy Spirit lowered to a position below that of the Son, and the Pope raised to the position of the Son’s vicar or regent, the way was paved for proclaiming the Pope as, in the words of a recent book with the imprimatur of the Vatican, “the ultimate guarantor of the will and teaching of the Divine Founder”⁶⁸¹.

Thus was the Papist heresy crushed - for the time being. Through the Constantinopolitan Councils of 867 and 879-889, the Filioque was recognized as a heresy and Pope Nicholas I as a heretic. Most significantly, as we have seen, the Acts of the 879 Council were signed also by the legates of Pope John VIII. Implicitly, this meant a rejection also of the political claims of the Carolingian empire; for both the Eastern and the Western Churches 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 Frankish rulers did not give up their claims. Thus, as Romanides writes, 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

⁶⁸¹ Mgr. Oliveri, *The Representatives*, Apostolic Legation of London, 1980. Cf. Pope John-Paul II: “The Pope is...the man on earth who represents the Son of God, who ‘takes the place’ of the Second Person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity.” (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 3)

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.'"⁶⁸²

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. Moreover, in its false doctrines, and in the coerciveness of its missionary work⁶⁸³, it laid the foundations of the Roman Catholic heresy. Roman Catholicism began when the Popes, instead of resisting the heresies of Charlemagne, adopted those heresies themselves - and then proclaimed themselves to be Emperors as well as Priests...

⁶⁸² Romanides, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Charlemagne's Capitulary on Saxony dating to about 785: "Anyone who, in contempt of Christianity, refuses to respect the holy fast of Lent and eats meat shall be put to death... Any unbaptized Saxon who tries to conceal the fact from his fellows and refuses to accept baptism shall be put to death..." (in Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 123). This despotic attitude drew a sharp rebuke from Alcuin, who said: "Converts must be drawn to the faith, not forced" (in Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 155).

46. THE GROWTH OF FEUDALISM

By the end of the ninth century, the serpent of papism lay bruised and wounded, but not completely scotched: a more permanent triumph could be hoped for only if a healthy antidote against its poison could be built up within the West. This depended, above all, on the strength of the other main pillar of Christian society in the West – the sacred monarchy. Here the picture was mixed. On the one hand, by the late ninth century the monarchy in West Francia, modern France, was collapsing into the paralytic condition known as *feudalism*. But on the other hand, at about the same time a remarkable resurrection of the monarchy was taking place in England in the person of King Alfred the Great, while in East Francia, modern Germany, Carolingian kinship survived and gained in strength under the tenth-century Ottonian dynasty.

The word “feudalism” comes from the Latin *feuda*, or “fief”, which means a piece of land held in exchange for service to a lord, usually a knight. “The fief,” writes Francis Fukuyama, “was a contractual agreement between lord and vassal by which the latter was given protection and a plot of land in return for serving the lord in a military capacity. The contract was solemnized in a ceremony in which the lord placed the vassal’s hands within his own and sealed the relationship with a kiss. The relationship of dependency entailed clear obligations on both sides and needed to be renewed annually. The vassal could then create subfiefs out of his lands and enter into relationships with his own vassals. The system generated its own complex set of ethical norms concerning honor, loyalty, and courtly love.

“From the standpoint of political development, the critical aspect of European feudalism was not the economic relationship between lord and vassal but the decentralization of power it implied. In the words of the historian Joseph Strayer, ‘Western European feudalism is essentially political – it is a form of government... in which political authority is monopolized by a small group of military leaders, but is rather evenly distributed among members of this group.’... The core of the institution was the grant of the fiefdom, benefice, or appanage, a delineated territory over which the vassal exerted some degree of political control. Despite the theoretical revocability of feudal contracts, European vassals over time turned their fiefdoms into patrimony, that is, property that they could hand down to their descendants. They acquired political rights over these territories to raise armies, tax residents, and administer justice free from interference of the nominal lord. They thus in no way the lord’s agent but rather lords in their own right...”⁶⁸⁴

Feudalism arose in many parts of continental Western Europe in the ninth to the eleventh centuries as a result of the disintegration of the unitary Carolingian empire. In the first phase, until the emergence of independent states in France, Germany and Northern Italy towards the end of the ninth

⁶⁸⁴ Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 106.

century, feudalism was both a cause and an effect of the weakening of royal power. It ate into the king's power in two ways: first, the king's peasants hardly counted as his subjects any more since their real masters were now their landowners; and secondly, the king's vassals tended to leave his service for that of the most powerful local feudal lord. The king did not always resist this process, but rather reinforced it, since he saw that the feudal lord was the only guarantee of law and order in the countryside. Thus in the capitulary of Meerssen in 847 King Charles the Bald ordered all free men to choose a lord, and likewise forbade them to leave their lord without just reason – which effectively made the bond of vassalage permanent in all normal cases. Again, in a capitulary issued at Thionville, he gave official recognition to the vassal's oath, which thereby replaced the oath of allegiance as the main glue holding society together. Finally, in the capitulary of Kiersy in 877, Charles sanctioned hereditary succession to counties and other fiefs, which meant that county administration became hereditary and passed out of the king's control.⁶⁸⁵

We have seen how, with the sixth-century Christianization of the Germanic tribes – Ostrogoths and Visigoths, Burgundians and Franks, Angles and Saxons, – the Church took over the functions of social security from the tribe. At the same time, Church laws, especially those relating to marriage, broke down the bonds of kinship and blood, and women became legal individuals and independent property-owners. We are therefore entitled to speak of the Church as promoting the growth of a certain kind of *individualism*, “in the sense that,” as Fukuyama explains, “individuals and not their families or kin groups could make important decisions about marriage, property, and other personal issues. Individualism in the family is the foundation of all other individualisms. Individualism did not wait for the emergence of a state declaring the legal rights of individuals and using the weight of its coercive power to enforce those rights. Rather, states were formed on top of societies in which individuals already enjoyed substantial freedom from social obligations to kindreds. In Europe, *social development* [set in motion by the Church] *preceded political development*.”⁶⁸⁶

The question arises: how did the breakdown of society in the ninth century, and the introduction of feudalism, influence or change this growth of individualism? The experience of other societies in similar periods of breakdown, such as the Middle East or China, would lead us to think that there would be a reversion to tribalism. However, in the West tribalism had been drastically weakened; it never really revived. Instead, people deprived of the protection that the Church had once offered them, and not yet able (except in England) to look to the State to restore the situation, created the vassalistic bonds that have been called feudalism.

⁶⁸⁵ Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Crucible of Europe*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, chapter five. The estates and the people living on them were granted to the vassal “so that he for all the days of his life, and his son after him, may hold and possess them in right of benefice and usufruct” (in Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 168).

⁶⁸⁶ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

Therefore, as Fukuyama, following Bloch, argues, “feudalism arose as an *alternative* to kinship... Feudalism was the voluntary submission of one individual to another, unrelated, individual, based on the exchange of protection for services: ‘Neither the State nor the family any longer provided adequate protection. The village community was barely strong enough to maintain order within its own boundaries; the urban community scarcely existed. Everywhere, the weak man felt the need to be sheltered by someone more powerful. The powerful man, in his turn, could not maintain his prestige or his fortune or even ensure his own safety except by securing for himself, by persuasion or execution, the support of subordinates bound to his service.’”⁶⁸⁷

But this support was secured through a contract; so the relative individualism of the early Christian period (6th-9th centuries) began to be modified, in the later ninth century, by a *contractual, legal* element that profoundly changed the nature of western society. And for the worse. For while the individualism of the early period came with a certain degree of *freedom* from the suffocating restraints of tribalism and paganism, feudal man’s “freedom” came with a feeling of naked insecurity. And so, in order to free himself from this “freedom”, he freely enslaved himself again, through the legal bonds of enfeoffment to his lord...

During the tenth century, a second phase of disintegration began in France. This led, as R. Van Caenegem writes, “to the break-up of that kingdom into a number of regional states, usually referred to as the territorial principalities, ruled by powerful families exercising the political authority which should normally have been in the king’s hands. Most of these principalities were founded by descendants of royal officials, the counts of the *pagi*, who had thrown off their subjection to the crown and taken power into their own hands. In the case of Normandy, however, an alien [Viking] war-leader had obtained a portion of French territory for himself and his followers and turned it into a separate dukedom. The main reason for this development, which set in about AD 900, was the weakness of the crown: it could not guarantee the safety of its subjects, who found protection (*inter alia* against the Vikings) in the leadership of a powerful local figure. Finally the kings of France themselves, although they always remained the nominal heads of the whole country and received the royal anointing from the Church, became in fact one regional dynasty among many others, ruling over the area around Paris and Orleans...

“Political decomposition did not stop there: a third and ultimate phase was to follow. The first phase had seen, in the ninth century, the break-up of the Frankish empire; the second, in the tenth, the division of the kingdom of France into territorial principalities. The third, mainly in the eleventh century, brought for several (though not all) of these regional states another, ultimate collapse. This resulted in the establishment of tiny castellanies as the basic

⁶⁸⁷ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

political units, each acting autonomously, with a castle as its centre, whence an area of a few miles around was controlled and ruled by the castellan and his small band of knightly vassals. Here the authority of the post-Carolingian counts and dukes underwent the collapse from which they themselves had profited a century before, and they became the helpless witnesses of the rise of independent castellans. Not all principalities suffered this fate – Flanders and, most notably Normandy were exceptions, where the old regional dynasties firmly held the reins of power in their respective ‘fatherlands’ (although even they went through some critical moments). However, the majority of the French principalities fell victim to the final phase of decomposition – which Bournazel has called *la poussée châtelaine*... At this stage political life had become amazingly small scale. The mass of the population lived in miniature states controlled by knightly castellans who recognised no authority above themselves but were kept in some kind of order by arbitration, by the balance of (vassalitic) allegiances and by the threat of excommunication and hell-fire if they broke their engagements to observe some truce or peace – most notably the Truce or Peace of God...

“In the early eleventh century the breakdown of public order had reached a point where only the peasant population was subjected to discipline, that of the lord and his manor. All others, the members of the free landowning class, all those who boasted of a castle of their own, behaved as they liked and recognised no power above them. They were the ‘masters of peace war’, ‘knights who lived without restraint, without knowing anyone in the world who might have punished them’. Sugar, a staunch supporter of the monarchy, called them ‘tyrants’ and was proud that the king neutralised their ‘audacity’. They were constantly involved in warfare, which corresponded to their knightly way of life...”⁶⁸⁸

The first result of the feudal system was *serfdom*: the lands which had belonged to the crown, the royal “fisc”, were given to local landowners, both ecclesiastical and lay, while the peasants who had cultivated the land, deprived of protection from the crown, threw themselves on the mercy of the local landowners, bartering their and their children’s labour in return for protection.

The second was *feudalism proper*: the freemen became vassals of lords, swearing to fight the lord’s battles in exchange for protection. A vassal was a knight – that is, he owned arms and a horse and was able to fight. Since this required money, he very likely owned land – either inherited, “allodial” land, or a “benefice” or “fief” granted temporarily, in the vassal’s lifetime only. A vassal might himself have vassals. Thus many of the king’s counts, or local officials, were at the same time both feudal lords and vassals of the king.

⁶⁸⁸ Van Caenegem, “Government, Law and Society”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 175-177, 179-180.

As a defensive system to preserve a minimum of order, feudalism undoubtedly had merits. But it was inferior not only to Byzantine-style autocracy, but also to the Carolingian system. Moreover, as the threat of invasion passed, and feudalism spread from Northern France to the rest of Western Europe in the eleventh century, it revealed a degrading and coarsening effect on general morality.

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 organization. “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.

“The feudal lord does not rule ‘in the name’ of the nation, the people, the peasants, or whoever else there might be. He rules only and exclusively in his own interests, which have been strengthened by such-and-such battles or parchments. For the feudal lord the monarch is not the bearer of definite moral ideals or even of the practical interests of the people or nation, but only ‘the first among equals’, who has had the luck to be stronger than the rest...

“The thirst for power is, of course, a property common to all humanity, and therefore the *tendency* to the development of feudalism will be to a greater or lesser degree characteristic of all countries and all peoples of the world.... But if we discard trivialities, then we must say that Rome, for example, had no knowledge *at all* of feudal relations. There were landowners and there were senators, there were proconsuls and there were emperors, but there were no barons. The sovereign power ‘of the people and senate of Rome’, engraved on the Roman eagles, remained the single indivisible source of all power – even the power of the Roman emperors. The civil wars of Rome bore no relation to the feudal wars of medieval Europe. Nor did Ancient Greece with its purely capitalist relations know feudalism. Yes, Greece was split up into a series of sovereign states, but, though tiny, these were nevertheless states – monarchies and republics, in principle having equal rights in relation to each other and by no means in relations of feudal submission or co-submission.”⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁹ Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, pp. 270-272.

The worst aspect of feudalism was the fact that the Church, too, was bound up in the feudal nexus. It reduced the Church's independence and made it an increasingly worldly, secular organization. For, as Jean Comby writes, "every holder of an ecclesiastical office had the use of a piece of land or a benefice which provided him with a living. The bishop was a lord and vassal in the same way as the laity. He held jurisdiction over his land and dispensed justice; he maintained an army. This helps us to understand the great desires people had to hold ecclesiastical office. The old rules of election by the clergy and people were forgotten. Not being hereditary titles, like other fiefdoms, bishoprics and abbeys were redistributed on the death of those who held their titles. Lords, the emperor, kings, dukes and so on disposed of them to whoever earned their favour. Since an Episcopal fiefdom involved both a spiritual and a temporal jurisdiction, it was granted by a kind of investiture ceremony: the lord bestowed the cross and ring on his candidate. This was lay investiture. Of course, the bishop was always consecrated by another bishop, generally the metropolitan (archbishop)." ⁶⁹⁰

As a result of this situation, writes Papadakis, "by the 900s most churchmen – both high and low – had lost nearly all their independence and sense of corporate identity, as their functions everywhere became identified with those belonging to lay vassals. Quite simply, as rulers came to regard all ecclesiastical organization under their effective control as a facet of the secular system, conventions governing one sphere were adjusted to fit the other. As a result, bishops and abbots were not exempt from the secular obligations and responsibilities attached to feudal tenure. As feudal dependents they, too, had to attend court, give advice and, when required, supply their lay superiors with military service... Characteristically, promotion to an episcopal see or a rich abbey was often the reward of previous dutiful service in the royal household. It is worth adding that ecclesiastical tenants were also preferred for many posts because their lands and their jurisdictions were not governed by inheritance [celibate priests had no (legal) children]. Whereas the heirs of a lay vassal holding of the king by hereditary right could occasionally create legal difficulties or foment rebellion, an heirless but enfeoffed celibate cleric was incapable of doing so. This was probably a decisive reason why so many high ecclesiastics, time and again, became essential associates in royal government everywhere." ⁶⁹¹

The ceremony of lay investiture was distinct from ecclesiastical ordination, but in practice it determined who should be ordained (and for how much). "The hastily ordained and 'invested' clerk was often altogether unworthy (if

⁶⁹⁰ Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1989, p. 131.

⁶⁹¹ Aristides Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, pp. 18-19. It is also one of the reasons, according to Christopher Tyerman (*God's War*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 6), why the church hierarchy encouraged clerical celibacy: "to protect church land from being inherited by non-clerical clergy children".

not also incompetent and untrained) of the priestly calling. Church assemblies and individual churchmen, it is true, routinely complained. All the same, neither the power of laymen to appoint and invest clergy, nor the encroachment and spoliation of Church property, was ever discontinued. As a matter of fact, lay nominations to vacant sees became so frequent that they were no longer regarded a radical departure from canonical tradition. The abuse was recognized as a perfectly acceptable practice. In 921 the archbishop of Cologne was thus solemnly admonished by the pope himself for attempting to block a royal appointment at Liège. Pope John X's letter informing the archbishop that no episcopal candidate was to be consecrated in any diocese without royal authorization still survives. As far as pope John was concerned, the right of the feudal power to interfere at the highest level in the internal affairs of the Church was 'ancient usage'. Ecclesial autonomy, to say nothing of ecclesial political and economic freedom, was apparently of little consequence. Canon law evidently had long given way to the feudal system..."⁶⁹²

The development of feudalism, according to Papadakis, was aided by the pressure of the German "so-called Eigenkirchentum, or proprietary church system, an arrangement by which the parish with all its appurtenances became the private property of its founder. In terms of ecclesiastical power, according to one investigator, the main result of this 'Germanization' or 'privatization' was complete revolution. Its overall effect on Latin ecclesiastical organization at any rate was profound as well as extensive.

"This becomes evident when traditional canon law is compared or contrasted with German land law. Plainly put, unlike the Church, early barbarian Europe did not understand the legal concept of corporate ecclesiastical ownership. The idea of an abiding corporation with legal rights simply did not exist in German customary law. Thus, the conviction that the Church could also simultaneously own land or real property, as a corporate personality or institution, was unknown. Rather, according to Germanic law, everything built on a plot of land, whether it was the local parish church or the monastery, was considered the exclusive 'property' of the landlord; the man who had built and endowed it was also its real owner. Control and rights of ownership of the foundation constructed on an estate, quite simply, continued to be in the hands of the proprietor. To be sure, the church could never actually be secularized. On the other hand, it could always be given, sold, traded, or exchanged if necessary. It was even possible to dispose of it as a sort of fief by leasing it to one's relatives or liegemen. In sum, the treatment of parishes was identical to the holding of ordinary pieces of real property... It is worth adding that the resident priest of the Eigenkirche (usually an ill-trained serf from the lord's own estate) was in practice appointed and dismissed by the proprietor. His status resembled a small quasi-feudal dependent. Almost invariably, if the incumbent was married or living in concubinage he was able to pass the parish on to his son or heir.

⁶⁹² Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

“...The practice of buying and selling rural parishes as a profitable investment was in time also applied to bishoprics and cathedrals. Although such sales were not a general phenomenon, it remains true that in some areas such as the Midi region, bishoprics were habitually sold or bequeathed as Eigenkirche. This was presumably still the practice in 1067 when the bishopric of Carcassone was sold to the count of Barcelona by the viscount of Albi....

“Everywhere the priest had really become essentially an estate servant. His private arrangement with the lord of the parish had in fact replaced the canonical bond uniting him to his bishop. It was this personalized local relationship that ultimately mattered, rather than the bishop’s potestas jurisdictionis. Throughout Europe, to put it another way, episcopal control enjoyed by all prelates was succeeded by a division of control among an unlimited number of owners. The diocese no longer actually functioned as a single administrative unit, but as a collection of private independent churches, in which the bishop’s pastoral and disciplinary powers were in practice relaxed or ignored altogether. Before long, given the moral and intellectual shortcomings of the priesthood, this diocesan centralization was to generate further serious pastoral and canonical problems. The confusion of authority and rights within the diocese just described was, in the main, also responsible for the ensuing simony and incontinence among the western clergy.

“It was undoubtedly lay control of ecclesiastical structure that made possible the purchase or sale of virtually every clerical grade the general rule by the tenth century. Simony became in fact unavoidable once clerical offices began to be treated like secular appointments. If a secular vassal could be taxed on inheriting his fief, so could every clerical candidate on his elevation to office. Besides, the offices in question were profitable, and to grant them out without any remuneration would have been pointless if not unusual in the agrarian world of the Middle Ages. In the event, the bishop who had received his position by canonical election (without paying for it) had before long become a great rarity...”⁶⁹³

However, a reaction to the evil consequences of feudalism was under way. It began in the Church. As Larry Siedentop writes, “In the eyes of its leaders, the threat to the church must have seemed even greater than that posed by the barbarian invasions. For the threat came from within, in what was ostensibly a Christian society. It was a threat of inward perversion, a threat to belief in the sovereignty of God.

“So it is hardly surprising that, in self-defence, churchmen gave ever more emphasis to a ‘moral law’ derived from the sovereignty of God, a law that applied to ‘all souls equally’. Hincmar had led the way in the previous century, invoking the sovereignty of God in order to set moral limits on the imperium of later Carolingian rulers and present the bishops as defenders of

⁶⁹³ Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 21-22, 23.

those limits: 'When it is said that the king is not subject to the laws or the judgement of anyone, if not that of God alone, that is true provided that he is king in the proper sense of the word. He is called king because he reigns and governs; if he governs himself according to the will of God, directs others to the right paths and corrects miscreants by leading them from the wrong to the right path, then he is king, and is not subject to the judgement of anyone, except that of God alone. For laws are instituted not against the just but against the unjust. But if the king is an adulterer, murderer, depraved, a rapist, then he must be judged... by the bishops, who sit on the thrones of God...' For Hincmar, not only was justice the final criterion of secular law, but the church was its spokesman. The sovereignty of God invested the church with overarching moral authority. And that, in turn, was preserved by and justified the 'liberty' of the church. The emerging issue, therefore, was the right of the church to govern itself – choosing and investing its own leaders – and to pronounce freely on moral issues..."⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁴ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.

47. THE ANGLO-SAXON MONARCHY

As we have seen, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims had hinted at future papist attempts to dominate the kings. However, he did not want to undermine their power; for with so many bishops compromised by their (involuntary) involvement in the feudal system, the power with the most realistic prospect of saving society from the morass of feudalism was the Orthodox monarchy. And the one country in Western Europe where the monarchy was still strong enough to ward off feudalism was *England*.

Before the Viking invasions, which began in 793, England was divided into seven independent kingdoms. Each had its own bishops, but all, from the time of St. Theodore the Greek, archbishop of Canterbury (+691), recognised the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury. In the eighth century the dominant English kingdom was Mercia under its powerful King Offa, whose son Egrith was anointed in 786 in the first royal anointing in Anglo-Saxon history. However, in 829 King Egbert of Wessex, conquered Mercia and soon had a precarious control over Northumbria, too. In the second half of the century the famous King Alfred the Great led the recovery against the Viking invaders, and Alfred's successors succeeded in uniting most of Britain in a single Orthodox kingdom until the Norman-Papist invasion of 1066-70.

King Alfred came to the throne of Wessex in 871, when English civilization was in the process of being wiped out by the pagan Danes. Almost single-handedly, he defeated the Danes in 878, baptized their king Guthrum (in baptism: Aethelstan) and laid the foundations for their conversion and integration into a truly Anglo-Danish kingdom.⁶⁹⁵ Moreover, he undertook the organization and education of the badly shattered Church, beginning by sending all his bishops a copy of his own translation of the *Pastoral Care* by Pope Gregory the Great - the Roman connection again! Indeed, re-establishing links with both Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church was a priority with Alfred. He corresponded with the Patriarch of Jerusalem and sent alms to the monks of India.

As Chris Wickham writes, Alfred "seems to have developed a large-scale military levy from the population, and he certainly established a dense network of public fortifications, burhs, throughout southern England, defended by public obligation, which was sufficiently effective to hold off a second large-scale Viking assault in 892-6. Alfred died 'king of the Anglo-Saxons', or, in the *Chronicle's* words, 'of the whole English people except that part which was under Danish rule'; he may have been the first king to see himself in 'English', not West Saxon or Mercian, terms... But it was the Vikings who made that choice possible for him."⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Julian D. Richards and Dawn Hadley, "The Great Viking Terror", *BBC History Magazine*, September, 2016, p. 39.

⁶⁹⁶ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, p. 457.

The stability of Alfred's dynasty and kingdom by comparison with the sub-Carolingian kingdoms on the continent was partly owing to the fact that, like the Roman missionaries in the early seventh century, this Romanizing monarch found a *tabula rasa* and was able to rebuild on relatively uncluttered, but firm foundations. In particular, the tensions between the monarchy and the local aristocracies which so weakened the West Frankish kingdom, hardly existed in England after 878 and surfaced again in a serious way only briefly in the reign of Edward the Martyr (975-978) and again in 1052. The English kings of the tenth century created a powerful landowning aristocracy; but its estates were scattered in different parts of the kingdom, so a powerful all-English king was in its interests.⁶⁹⁷

There are several indications that the English kingdom modeled itself on Byzantium. Thus early in the tenth century King Athelstan gave himself the Byzantine titles *basileus* and *curagulus*. Again, in 955, his brother and successor King Edred called himself "emperor of the Anglo-Saxons and Northumbrians, governor of the pagans, defender of the Britons". Unlike the Frankish or German kings, the English kings never aspired to the title of "Holy Roman Emperor". But their power was *de facto* greater than that of any western ruler until the rise of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany.

"The English were prospering" writes Robert Tombs, "through agriculture and trade in conditions of peace and prosperity unknown for centuries. In contrast with post-Carolingian Europe, England had no prolonged or general internal conflict in 200 years. Its kings ruled with an iron hand, punishing disobedient shires and nobles with hangings, ravaging, confiscation and exile. Enforcing law and custom was a job for the people themselves. Law, as was typical of lightly governed societies, aimed at compensation for injury ('If anyone strike another with his fist on the nose, iii shillings') and restraint of blood feuds, by regulating the 'wergild' ('man money') paid by a killer to a dead man's kin or master. Wergild differed according to status: one king issued a proclamation to 'all his people, whether men of a twelve-hundred wergild or of a two hundred' - meaning nobles and peasants respectively. One of the concessions Alfred had extracted from Guthrum was that the price for killing an Englishman in the Danelaw should be the same as that for killing a Dane. Men were divided into groups of men - tithings - to protect and police each other, and they bonded through eating and drinking. Ten tithings formed armed posses to ride after rustlers and escaped thralls (slaves) living as bandits, and if necessary attack their protectors. Thrall ringleaders were summarily hanged, and their followers were flogged, scalped and deprived of their little fingers - which marked them without destroying their ability to work. In the century before 1066 there was an increase in punishment (usually by death or savage mutilation) for crimes that were increasingly seen not merely as matters concerning individuals and families, but as offences against king and community by breaking 'the king's peace'.

⁶⁹⁷ Wickham, *op. cit.*, chapter 19.

There were what now seem oddities: taking the king's wheat led to arrest, but braining one's mother with a candlestick brought only a religious penance. Athelstan commanded that free women harbouring thieves should be thrown from a cliff or drowned, and delinquent slaves stoned to death by other slaves ('And if any one of them fails three times to hit him, he shall himself be scourged three times'). Such harshness was not the whole story. Slaves could be freed as a religious act, as in the following case in the late tenth century of people who had voluntarily entered bondage in time of famine, and which suggests that human feelings could exist even in savage times: 'Geatfleda has given freedom for the love of God and the for the sake of her soul [to] Eceard the smith, Aelstan and his wife and all their children born and unborn, and to Arkil, Cole, Ecfirth [and] Aldhun's daughter and all the people whose head she took for their food in those evil days.'

"The Angelcynn were becoming what we might recognize as an embryonic nation. Their boundaries were now broadly established. They had a distinct and fairly homogeneous system of customary law - even the 'Danelaw' was little different - with the king's law over all. There was an English Church with English saints, which prayed for 'the king of the English and his army', and which was beginning the long process of creating the hundreds of small parishes that would for a millennium provide the frame-work of English society. An opulent coinage was struck, millions of silverpennies bearing the king's head and title. An administrative system was gradually established over most of the country, based on the 'scir' (shire) generally centred on a river port, governed for the king by an ealdorman and his deputy, the 'scirgerefa' (sheriff), tax collector, judge and policeman. The shires would substantially retain their territories and names (such as Devenscire and Nordfulc) for over 1,000 years, with no major change until 1974. There was a regular system of participation in government. The warrior nobility, 'thegns', and free peasants, 'ceorls' ('churls'), met in shire courts and local monthly courts in every hundred (a subdivision of the shire). Tens of thousands of men took part in levying taxes enforcing the law, bearing royal commands, and when necessary taking up arms. At the age of twelve, every freeman took an oath of loyalty to the king and obedience to the law - a practice that continued for many centuries. To represent the whole kingdom, a gathering of thegns and prelates, the 'witan' ('the councillors'), was summoned by the king at various places, sometimes traditional open-air sites, to take part in ceremonies, give advice, settle disputes, try cases of treason, or endorse royal acts. It was crucial at times of danger and of disputed succession. From the 970s it was called the 'Angelcynnes witan', the council of the English people, and King Aethelred's 1008 law was issued 'on the decree of the English witan'. Though there were representative bodies in other parts of Europe, there were few if any national representative bodies like this. The ability of English rulers to raise taxation and manpower was unequallyed in Europe, and it required this unique degree of involvement and consent by local communities, including even relatively humble subjects..."⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁸ Tombs, *The English and their History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, pp. 35-36.

In the second half of the tenth century, England reached the peak of her glory as an Orthodox kingdom, founded on a strong monastic revival supported by a powerful king, Edgar, and a holy archbishop, Dunstan. The relationship between them was truly symphonic, with a particularly strong role assigned to the king: "I have in my hand the sword of Constantine; you hold that of Peter," wrote Edgar to Dunstan in 967. "Let us join our right hands sword to sword, so that the sanctuary of God may be cleansed."⁶⁹⁹

Ryan Lavelle writes: "A document from around 973, the *Regularis Concordia*,... was intended as a rulebook and liturgical guide for English monks and nuns, but it was also a bold statement of the relationship between God, the king and a Christian people. The king and queen were seen as protectors of monks and nuns in the temporal world, while, in return, the souls of the West Saxon royal family were protected with prayers by the same monks and nuns. The positions of the king and queen were therefore inextricably linked with the survival of Christianity in the kingdom. This was part of a process of legitimizing royal power to an extent that was hitherto unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon England. The king had become part of the ecclesiastical order in a coronation ceremony that made him God's representative on earth. The original meaning of Christ's name, *Christus* meant 'the anointed [king]', and the inauguration of Edgar used an *ordo* (an order of service) that put Edgar on a similar level – directly anointed by God. The monastic reform movement gave this a new impetus..."⁷⁰⁰

Edgar's first anointing had taken place in 960 or 961. For many years he was not allowed to wear his crown in penance for a sin he had committed. But in 973, the penance came to an end, and at the age of thirty (perhaps not coincidentally, the canonical age for episcopal ordination in the West) he was anointed again, this time as "Emperor of Britain" in the ancient Roman city of Bath. In the same year, again emphasizing the Roman imperial theme, he was rowed on the River Dee by six or eight sub-kings, include five Welsh and Scottish rulers and one ruler of the Western Isles.⁷⁰¹ "This was a move," writes Lavelle, "that recalled the actions of his great-uncle Athelstan, the successful ruler of Britain, but it was also an English parallel to the tenth-century

⁶⁹⁹ *Oratio Edgari regis*, P.L. 138, 515D-516A.

⁷⁰⁰ Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English 978-1016*, Stroud: Tempus, 1002, p. 29.

⁷⁰¹ Some see in this event less a submission of the northern kings to Edgar as a kind of peace treaty between them. Be that as it may, it is true to say that the power of the Anglo-Saxon kings never really extended into Scotland, where a native dynasty founded by Kenneth MacAlpin (840-858) "destroyed the last Pictish kings, and imposed Gaelic customs and the Gaelic language throughout the kingdom of Alba" (Ann Williams, "Britain AD 1000", *History Today*, vol. 50 (3), March, 2000, p. 34). One of these Scottish Orthodox kings was Macbeth (+1057), made famous by the hero of Shakespeare's play. He made a pilgrimage to Rome, where he "scattered money like seed among the poor".

coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto of Germany, in which the stem-dukes had undertaken the task of feeding the emperor.”⁷⁰²

Edgar’s claims to Romanitas were not without foundation. The economy was strong, the tax and legal systems were sophisticated, the coinage was secure (with an impressive system of monetary renewal whereby all coins issued from the royal mints had to be returned and reissued every five years). England was now a firmly Orthodox, multi-national state composed of three Christian peoples, Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Danes⁷⁰³, living in mutual amity. She was at peace at home and respected abroad, spreading her influence in a beneficial way through missions to the Norwegians and Swedes.

Edgar married twice, producing a son from each marriage. When he died in 975 (his relics were discovered to be incorrupt in 1052), the partisans of his second son, Aethelred, argued that he should be made king in preference to his elder half-brother Edward, on the grounds that Edgar had not been anointed when he begat Edward in 959 or 960, and that his first wife, Edward’s mother, had *never* been anointed, so that the throne should pass to the younger son, who had been born “in the purple” when both his parents were anointed sovereigns. The conflict was settled when the archbishop of Canterbury, St. Dunstan, seized the initiative and anointed St. Edward.⁷⁰⁴

In this way, through her stewardship of the sacrament of royal anointing, the Church came to play the decisive role in deciding the question of succession... However, the defeated party did not give up their opposition to God’s chosen one, and in 979 came the murder of the Lord’s anointed. “No worse deed for the English was ever done that this,” said the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. And while it was said that there was “great rejoicing” at the coronation of St. Edward’s half-brother, Aethelred, St. Dunstan sorrowfully prophesied great woes for the nation in the coming reign.

The prophecy was exact; for not only were the English successively defeated by Danish pagan invaders and forced to pay ever larger sums in “Danegeld”, but the king himself, betrayed by his leading men, was forced to flee abroad in 1013. The next year he was recalled by the English leaders, both spiritual and lay, who declared that “no lord was dearer to them than their rightful lord, if only he would govern his kingdom more justly than he had done in the past.” Aethelred promised that he “would be their faithful lord, would better each of those things that they disliked, and that each of the things would be forgiven which had been done or said against him. Then was

⁷⁰² Lavelle, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁷⁰³ Already in the middle of the tenth century one archbishop of Canterbury, St. Oda “the Good”, and one archbishop of York, Oskytel, were Danish by race. See V. Moss, *The Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1993, volume II, pp. 38-41.

⁷⁰⁴ “Passio et Miracula Sancti Edwardi Regis et Martyris”, in Christine Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, University of Leeds, 1971.

full friendship established in word and in deed and in compact on either side.”⁷⁰⁵

“Embedded here in the prose of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” writes David Starkey, “is the text, probably even the actual words, of a formal written agreement between the king and his people. It is the Anglo-Saxon *Magna Carta*. The circumstances in 1014, moreover, were very similar to those 200 years later. A political crisis and a foreign pretender brought the king, more or less naked, to the negotiating table. The throne would be his, but on conditions. The king agrees, since he has no choice. The terms and his consent to them are made public and the whole enshrined in a written document. The result is the first constitutional settlement in English history and it began a tradition which descends through *Magna Carta*, the Petition of Right and the Reform Acts, down to the present.”⁷⁰⁶

In another place, Starkey says that this agreement demonstrated the political maturity of the English people.⁷⁰⁷ But from an Orthodox point of view it would be better to characterize it as the beginning of the end of the English Orthodox Autocracy...

However, in 1016, after Aethelred had died and the Danish King Canute had conquered the land, full autocratic rule was restored. The king reassumed complete control in the political sphere, while the Church retained her supremacy in the spiritual (Canute was baptized).⁷⁰⁸ But in 1051-52, and again in 1065, the aristocracy raised its head against the king, which presaged the final fall of the English Autocracy in 1066...

The king for the Anglo-Saxons was the “warden of the holy temple”.⁷⁰⁹ Crimes against the Church or her servants were seen as crimes against the king, and were duly punished by him. His duty was to look after the Church and enforce her laws with secular penalties.

⁷⁰⁵ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E, 979, 1014.

⁷⁰⁶ Starkey, *The Monarchy of England*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2004, p. 83.

⁷⁰⁷ Starkey, in the second of his series of programmes entitled “Monarchy” and broadcast on October 25, 2004 on Channel 4 TV.

⁷⁰⁸ Canute was not the first Christian king of Denmark; the first was probably King Harald Bluetooth in the late tenth century. His conversion, we read in Wikipedia, is a contested bit of history, not least because medieval writers such as Widukind of Corvey and Adam of Bremen give conflicting accounts of how it came about. Widukind of Corvey, writing during the lives of King Harald and Otto I, claims that Harald was converted by a ‘cleric by the name of Poppa’ who, when asked by Harald to prove his faith in Christ, carried a ‘great weight’ of iron heated by a fire without being burned

“Adam of Bremen, writing 100 years after King Harald's death in *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, finished in 1076, describes Harald being forcibly converted by Otto I, after a defeat in battle. However, Widukind does not mention such an event in his contemporary *Res gestae saxonicae sive annalium libri tres* or *Deeds of the Saxons*. Four hundred years later, the *Heimskringla* says that Harald was converted by Emperor Otto II. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harald_Bluetooth)

⁷⁰⁹ Quoted in Chaney, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

“For a Christian king is Christ’s deputy among Christian people”, as King Aethelred’s laws put it. Both the king and the archbishop were “the Lord’s Anointed” – the archbishop so that he might minister the sacraments of salvation, and the king so that, as Bede wrote in his commentary on *Acts*, “he might by conquering all our enemies bring us to the immortal Kingdom”. The king was sometimes compared to God the Father and the bishop – to Christ. Thus in his letter to Charlemagne Cathwulf compared the king to the Father and the bishop to the Son. He was the shepherd and father of his people and would have to answer for them at the Last Judgement. Regicide and usurpation were the greatest of crimes; for, as Abbot Aelfric wrote in a Palm Sunday sermon, “no man may make himself a king, for the people have the option to choose him for king who is agreeable to them; but after that he has been hallowed as king, he has power over the people, and they may not shake his yoke from their necks.” And so, as Archbishop Wulfstan of York wrote in his *Institutes of Christian Polity*, “through what shall peace and support come to God’s servants and to God’s poor, save through Christ, and through a Christian king?”⁷¹⁰

And yet the relationship between Church and State in England was “symphonic”, not caesaropapist; for the kings did nothing without consulting their bishops and senior nobles – who were not afraid to disagree with the king, or remind him of his obligations.⁷¹¹ Thus, as Frank Barlow says, “a true theocratic government was created, yet one, despite the common charge of confusion against the Anglo-Saxon Church, remarkably free of confusion in theory. The duality of the two spheres was emphatically proclaimed. There were God’s rights and the king’s rights, Christ’s laws and the laws of the world. There was an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the control of the bishop, but there was also the helping hand of the secular power which the church had invoked and which it could use at its discretion.”⁷¹²

The success of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom can be attributed to a large extent to the respect for *the law*, both God’s law and the king’s law. As van Caenegem writes, “in this period the Anglo-Saxons founded the most solid and best administered kingdom of the western world. Their kings were great law-givers and this tradition was in no way diminished after legislation had lapsed on the Continent. On the contrary, the voluminous and numerous dooms (some of which are unfortunately lost) of Ine, Offa, Alfred the Great, Edward the Elder, Athelstan, Edmund, Edgar, Aethelred the Unready and Canute form a collection of texts unique in Europe, bearing witness to an equally unique tradition of royal, national law-giving in England right through the Anglo-Saxon period (Liebermann 1898-1916).

⁷¹⁰ Chaney, *op. cit.*, epilogue.

⁷¹¹ See, for example, St. Dunstan’s speech to King Aethelred at his coronation (Bishop W. Stubbs, *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, Rolls series, 1874, pp. 356-357).

⁷¹² Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066*, London: Longmans, 1979, p. 141.

“The nation-wide administration of justice was equally impressive. There was a network of hundred and shire courts, topped by the witenagemot and receiving decisive impulses from the crown, inter alia by means of the writs, which were often addressed to such local gatherings. There were also franchisal courts belonging to lords... Finally the comparative excellence of royal administration should be mentioned. England enjoyed a high measure of internal peace and order (staving off enemies from overseas was another matter): private warfare and adulterine castles (or which there were a few under the Confessor, built by Norman knights) were practically unheard of, and practices such as tithing and frankpledge guaranteed a measure of public safety that must have astounded people on the other side of the Channel. The efficiency of the royal writing-office has already been mentioned. Equally efficient was the new network of local royal officials, the sheriffs, who had no equals on the Continent. These ‘counts of the shire’ had nothing to do with hereditary regional princes, but were real appointees of the crown. The royal mint was also one of the wonders of Europe because of its monopolistic position, its efficiency and its enormous output. National defence was centrally directed and general military service, in the local and the national fyrð, was never abandoned in favour of the feudal formula of the army of professional knights: the disaster of October 1066 should not obscure the fact that English armies had successfully resisted the Danes in the ninth and tenth centuries and that King Harold had, a few weeks before Hastings, destroyed a powerful army led by the king of Norway. The foundation of a solid national monarchy was a notable Anglo-Saxon achievement and its consequences were far reaching. When in the twelfth century the rebirth of the state became a general European phenomenon, the existence of these Anglo-Saxon antecedents gave Norman and Angevin England an advantage which goes a long way towards explaining England’s pioneering role in this European development...”⁷¹³

⁷¹³ Van Caenegem, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

48. THE GERMAN OTTONIAN MONARCHY

Just as the English Orthodox autocracy arose out of the successful struggle with the Vikings, so the German Orthodox autocracy arose out of the successful struggle with the Magyars. King Alfred the Great's victory at Ethandune in 878 laid the foundations for the All-English kingdom that eventually encompassed three nations: the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes in the East and the Celts in the West. In the same way, King Otto the Great's victory over the Magyars at Lech in 955 laid the foundations for the German "Holy Roman" empire, which, while not as extensive as the Carolingian empire at its height, lasted much longer. However, Germany proved more difficult to weld into a single whole than England. It was only after a series of civil wars that Otto won the submission of the duchies of Lotharingia, Swabia, Bavaria and Franconia in addition to his native Saxony. And this even after he had been formally elected by "the whole people" of the Saxons and the Franks, and had been anointed to the kingdom in a double ceremony in Charlemagne's palace-chapel at Aachen.

After defeating the rebellious princes, Otto decided to remove the native ducal dynasties and distribute their lands to his relatives. But rebellions continued, so he resorted to a bold and fateful experiment: government, not through secular officials, dukes or counts, but through bishops and abbots. Thus Otto put Lotharingia, as Davis writes, "in charge of his young brother Bruno, who was a cleric and Archbishop of Cologne. The combination of an archbishopric and a duchy did not seem in any way incongruous to him, for he did not consider that there was any essential division between 'Church' and 'State'; they were merely different aspects of the same society."⁷¹⁴ As he wrote to Bruno, "you have both priestly religion and royal strength"⁷¹⁵.

This failure to see any essential division between Church and State was a consequence of the feudal Weltanschauung.

The system of government through bishops had the advantage that, since they could not marry, they could not found hereditary dynasties that might challenge his power. Moreover, the king founded imperial churches or abbeys with vast swathes of land to which he granted "immunity" from interference from the local dukes and counts. These abbots then became in effect the local judges and tax-collectors. Although this system of government through the clergy was clearly caesaropapist in essence, it was not opposed by the papacy. However, it had the weakness from the king's point of view that while the bishops and abbots could be appointed by him, they could be dismissed only by the Pope. Moreover, only the Pope could create new bishoprics. In the case of conflict with a bishop, therefore, - and such a conflict took place between Otto and Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, the Primate of Germany - the king would need the help of the Pope in order to impose his will.

⁷¹⁴ R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1988, pp. 212-213.

⁷¹⁵ R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

Otto hoped that the Pope could be persuaded to grant more “stavropegial” grants to abbeys, making them directly subject to the Pope and so “immune” from episcopal control. “What he wanted,” writes Davis, “and eventually got, was papal exemptions for abbeys such as Hersfeld, Quedlinburg, and Gernrode, which were to be the perfect examples of the Ottonian System. Their ‘royal immunities’ would exclude the power of counts and dukes, and their papal exemptions that of bishops and archbishops. In them the abbot would preside over all things; and over the abbot would stand the king.”⁷¹⁶

From the 880s the papacy entered a period of degradation unparalleled in its pre-schism history. Heather ascribes this to two interrelated causes. First, the papacy was now, not only a Church, but also a State, the Republic of St. Peter, with vast assets bequeathed to it by Charlemagne and his successors. With this came all the temptations of political power, and a consequent increase of violence as different factions, Italian and German, and different families, especially the Tusculani and the Crescentii families, struggled for control of the see, and through it, its material assets. Secondly, from the 880s the Carolingian empire entered a further period of disintegration, which meant that the papacy lost both a whip to keep its political factions within the bounds of decency, and the broader West European stage upon which the Carolingians had allowed it to play so important a role.⁷¹⁷

“The Popes had long since forgotten St. Paul’s injunction (2 Timothy 2:4) ‘not to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life.’ Their greediness of power was, naturally enough, not confined to ecclesiastical concerns; they strove also to become powerful political agents. Formosus was succeeded by Stephen VI (for Boniface the Sixth’s pontificate of fifteen days can scarcely be counted), who [in 897], being a fanatic partisan of the opposite political faction, had Formosus untombed, dressed in pontifical robes, arraigned, condemned, deposed, mutilated, and finally flung into the Tiber! This behaviour seems not exactly to be in accordance with the character of a ‘Vicar of Christ.’ However, the Papists have to settle this question. We prefer examining the Council convened by Stephen for the before-mentioned purpose. In this Council, Stephen declared all ordinations made by Formosus to be *invalid*, and acted accordingly. This was not a private, but an official *act*, attended by *official consequences*, and, what is more serious, it was an official act based on a *dogmatic error*; in fact, it was an anticipation of the *heresy of John Huss*. And the [Roman] Church continued for two years in this heresy! Yet the Romans are bound to believe that Stephen was an ‘infallible’ Pope. Pope John IX annulled, in 898, the decrees of Stephen, declared the ordinations made by Formosus to be valid, and reinstated the expelled clergy. The only difficulty is to come here to a decision which of the two ‘Infallibles’ is the genuine article, and even then the base article must be believed by the Romans to be *infallible*. Who is able to get out of this maze of contradictions?

⁷¹⁶ R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

⁷¹⁷ Heather, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-373.

“From 904-963, the *πορνοκρατία*, or ‘reign of prostitutes,’ disgraced the Papal throne. From Sergius III to John XII eleven monsters of lewdness and profligacy ruled the Church of God, persons utterly indifferent to religion and poisoning Christendom by their bad example. Sergius III had no scruple in sanctioning the sacrilegious marriage of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI, but the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus had vindicated the purity of the Church by excommunicating the Emperor, who, with the help of Pope Sergius, deposed the undaunted and faithful Patriarch. If the Roman Church was the true Church, and the Pope the factotum of this Church, where was the Holy Ghost governing the Church during these sixty years?

“Now let us cast a glance on the Patriarchs of Constantinople during the period of the Roman *πορνοκρατία*. *All of them, six in number, were men of an exemplary sanctity, with the solitary exception of Theophlyact, who was a creature of Pope John XII, and was installed by the Papal Legates.* He was the worst Patriarch that ever sat on the Constantinopolitan throne. Do these contrasts not convey any lesson to us? With which of the two parties was God?”⁷¹⁸

The real ruler of Rome in his period was the Tusculani clan member Marozia, an evil woman who made, unmade, lived with and begat a series of popes.⁷¹⁹ However, in 932 Marozia’s son Alberic imprisoned his mother, took over the government of Rome, reformed its monasteries and gave it a short period of peace and relative respectability. Alberic, writes Llewellyn, “who styled himself as ruler by the grace of the Lord and had such close contacts with the Byzantine world, may have seen himself as custodian of the imperial and Roman concept of Christian rulership that had been inherent in Pepin’s patriciate and Charlemagne’s imperial title – a title that could only validly be realized by denying all initiative to the clergy.”⁷²⁰

But in 955 he 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...”⁷²¹

⁷¹⁸ Overbeck, *op. cit.* See Alberto Reche Ontillera, “Vengeance at the Vatican: The Cadaver Synod”, *National Geographic History*, January/February, 2016, pp. 14-17.

⁷¹⁹ It has been suggested by J.N.D. Kelly that Marozia’s deeds were the origin of the legend of the female Pope Joan (*The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, quoted in Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 207).

⁷²⁰ Llewellyn, *The Dark Ages in Rome*, p. 310.

⁷²¹ Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 51.

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.

As Bishop Liutprand of Cremona relates, the Council elected Leo VIII in his place, who, however, was forced to flee and take refuge with Otto by John XII's supporters. John was eventually murdered by a jealous husband who caught him *in flagrante* with his wife. The Romans then made a deacon to be Pope Benedict V. But the emperor and the other bishops, who recognized Leo VIII, accused Benedict of various things, which Benedict admitted. He was allowed to return to his rank of deacon and exiled to a monastery outside Rome, while all his other ordinations (to priest and bishop) were declared invalid.

During the Council of Verzy in 991, Archbishop Arnulf of Orleans (+1003) drew conclusions from the behaviour of John XII and his successors that were by no means compatible with the later doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope: "Looking at the actual state of the papacy, what do we behold?... Are there, indeed, any bold enough to maintain that the priests of the Lord over all the world are to take their law from monsters of guilt like these - men branded with ignominy, illiterate men, and ignorant alike of things human and divine? If, holy fathers, we be bound to weigh in the balance the lives, the morals, and attainments of the meanest candidate for the sacerdotal office, how much more ought we to look to the fitness of him who aspires to be the lord and master of all priests! Yet how would it fare with us, if it should happen that the man the most deficient in all these virtues, one so subject as not to be worthy of the lowest place among the priesthood, should be chosen to fill the highest place of all? What would you say of such an one, when you behold him sitting upon the Throne glittering in purple and gold? Must he not be the Antichrist, 'sitting in the Temple of God, and showing himself as God'? Verily such an one lacketh both wisdom and charity; he standeth in the temple as an image, as an idol, from which as from dead marble you would seek counsel.

"But the Church of God is not subject to a wicked pope; nor even absolutely, and on all occasions, to a good one. Let us rather in our difficulties resort to our brethren of Belgium and Germany than to that city, where all things are venal, where judgment and justice are bartered for gold. Let us imitate the great Church of Africa, which, in reply to the pretensions of the Roman Pontiff, deemed it inconceivable that the Lord should have invested any one person with his own plenary prerogative of judicature, and yet have denied it to the great congregation of his priests assembled in Council in different parts of the world. If it be true, as we are informed by common report, that there is in Rome scarcely a man acquainted with letters, - without which, as it is written, one may scarcely be a doorkeeper in the House of God, - with what face may he who had himself learnt nothing set himself up for a teacher of others? In the simple priest ignorance is bad enough; but in the high priest of Rome, - in him to whom it is given to pass in review the faith, the lives, the morals, the discipline, of the whole body of the priesthood, yea, of the universal Church, ignorance is in nowise to be tolerated.... Why should he not be subject in judgment to those who, though lowest in place, are his superiors in virtue and in wisdom? Yea, not even he, the prince of the Apostles, declined the rebuke of Paul, though his inferior in place, and, saith the great Pope [St]. Gregory I [the Dialogist], 'if a bishop be in fault, I know not any one such who is not subject to the holy see; but if faultless, let every one understand that he is the equal of the Roman Pontiff himself, and as well qualified as he to give judgment in any matter.'⁷²²

Although Otto was crowned in Rome, he did not call himself "Emperor of the Romans", but preferred simply "emperor". This was probably because he did not wish to enter into a competition with the Byzantine emperor. It may also have been because he had little admiration for Old Rome, just as Old Rome had little time for him.⁷²³ Thus he instructed his sword-bearer to stand behind him as he kneeled at the tomb of the Apostle. "For I know," he said, "only too well what my ancestors have experienced from these faithless Romans."⁷²⁴

In spite of that, Otto and his dynasty were more closely linked to Old Rome than Charlemagne had been. Janet Nelson writes: "Bishop Liutprand of Cremona saw Otto in the line of Constantine and Justinian, appointed by God to establish peace in this world. Returning from an embassy to Constantinople in 968, Liutprand denounced the ritual technology of the 'Greeks' [i.e. the machines used to dazzle foreign visitors at the imperial court] as empty form: the substance of true Roman emperorship now lay in the West. Otto, legislating in Italy 'as a holy emperor' (*ut imperator sanctus*)

⁷²² Archbishop Arnulf, in Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, pp. 290-292.

⁷²³ See Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

⁷²⁴ Richard Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *History Today*, vol. 53 (11), November, 2003, p. 62.

gave colour to Liutprand's claim. In the *Ottonianum*, he confirmed the privileges of the Roman Church under his imperial protectorship."⁷²⁵

Otto gained the Byzantines' recognition of his imperial title, and in 972 married his son, Otto II, to Princess Theophanou, the niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, in Rome. Theophanou then introduced another Byzantine, John Philagathos, as godfather of her son, Otto III. He became head of the royal finances and then - Pope John XVI, which led to a sharp increase in Byzantine influence in the western empire.⁷²⁶ Also eclipsed - temporarily - was 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.⁷²⁷

In 991 Theophanou died and Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. Otto, as Tom Holland writes, "was nothing if not a Roman emperor. He lived on the Palatine Hill, just as Augustus had done a thousand years before him; he revived the titles of 'consul' and 'senator'. He had himself betrothed to a princess from the Second Rome, Constantinople. His death in 2002, before his marriage could serve to join the eastern and western empires, left hanging one of history's great 'what-ifs'. Otto III's ambition of reviving the Roman empire had been the great theme of his reign. Tantalising, then, to ponder what might have happened if he had succeeded in joining it to the eastern Roman empire - the empire that, unlike his own, could trace a direct line of descent from ancient Rome."⁷²⁸

Otto, writes Jean-Paul Allard, "dreamed of reuniting the two empires 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."⁷²⁹ And to signify that the *Renovatio Imperii Romani* 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

⁷²⁵ Nelson, "Kingship and Empire", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 - c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 245.

⁷²⁶ Tom Holland, *Millennium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, 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" (Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, p. 307).

⁷²⁷ "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.

⁷²⁸ Holland, "Rome Undead", *New Statesman*, May 16-22, 2014, p. 24.

⁷²⁹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 40

rediscovery of Roman law, and began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor for the hand of a daughter or niece of the basileus. This union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner...

The plan for union with Byzantium was foiled through the death of Otto's fiancée before her arrival in Rome. However, Otto sought and followed the advice of holy hermits such as Nilus of Rossano I Calabria and Romuald of Ravenna, as a result of which Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court. This did not mean, however, that conflicts between Church and State ceased altogether...

Thus in the Life of St. Nilus of Rossano (+1004) we read the following. When Archbishop John Philagathos expelled the Pope of Rome and made himself Pope John XVI in his place, St. Nilus criticized this action as lawless. However, when the Emperor Otto III arrived with Pope Gregory V in 998, and did great harm to Philagathos, cutting his tongue and nose off, and blinding him, St. Nilus interceded for Philagathos and secured his life. Then Emperor Otto III did great honour and obedience to St. Nilus. St. Nilus responded and upbraided the Emperor for his behavior, since Philagathos had been Otto's godfather in baptism: "For the sake of the Lord, forgive me, the most sinful of men, and an half-dead old man, because I am unworthy of such honour. Rather it is I who should prostrate myself at your honourable feet and revere your great dignities. Indeed, I have come to your glorious presence, not seeking glory, or gifts, or great rewards, but for the sake of the one who offered you great services, and was harshly treated by you. He sponsored you at Baptism, but now you have gouged out his eyes. I beseech your piety to give him to me, so that he may sit with me, and we both may weep for our sins."

The Life then says the Emperor wept for his evil deed, and granted St. Nilus the request, yet the wicked Pope Gregory V, contrary to St. Nilus' command, "not satisfied by the punishments he had already inflicted upon the aforementioned Philagathos, brought him out, tore off his priestly vestments, and paraded him all around Rome. When the holy old man heard this, he was sorely grieved and no longer made any plea to the emperor for the archbishop. When the Emperor Otto was informed about what had happened, he sent one of his archbishops, who was extremely eloquent, to entreat the old man. To this Archbishop the Holy Neilos said, 'Go and tell the Emperor and the Pope, "These are the words of a crazy old man: you gave me this blind man, neither out of fear of men, nor because of my great power, but only for the sake of God's love. Now all the injuries you have inflicted were not upon him, but upon me, and, even more, you have insulted God Himself. Therefore you should know that, just as you did not show compassion or mercy on the one delivered into your hands by God, so neither will your Father, Who is in Heaven, forgive your sins."⁷³⁰

⁷³⁰ *Life of St. Nilus of Rossano*, chapters 90-91. Quoted by Hieromonk Enoch on Facebook.

St. Nilus then returned to his own monastery and "kept propitiating God, by devoting himself to ceaseless prayer and meditation. A few days later, the pope [Gregory V] met a violent death, just like a tyrant." However, the Emperor Otto III fulfilled his penance and "walked on foot from Roman to the Sanctuary of the Incorporeal Archangel Michael at Gargano. His return was by way of the abode of the blessed father."

When the Emperor Otto III arrived and saw the monks' cells around the chapel he exclaimed: "Behold the tents of Israel in the desert; behold the citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. These men stay here not as residents, but as those passing by." The *Life* then says: "The blessed father ordered incense to be burned and went out to meet the Emperor with the entire brotherhood, and bowed [made proskynesis] before him with complete humility and reverence. The, Emperor, however, placed his hand under the old man's arms to support him, and together they entered into the chapel."

The *Life* then describes the conversations between the Emperor and St. Nilus. When after all this, the Emperor Otto asked St. Nilus what he could give to him, St. Nilus "extended his hand toward the Emperor's chest and said, 'I ask for nothing else from Your Majesty except for the salvation of your soul. Even if you happen to be an Emperor, nevertheless as a human being you have to die and stand for judgment and given an accounting for all your deeds, both wicked and good.' At these words the Emperor shed tears from his eyes." The Emperor then bent his head, was blessed by St. Nilus and returned to Rome.

It was under Otto III that Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999. He took the name Sylvester II and revived memories, in those brought up on the forged *Donation of Constantine*, of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.⁷³¹ However, Sylvester loved the true symphony, not the fake variety: in 1001 he persuaded Otto to issue an act demonstrating that the *Donation of Constantine* was a forgery.⁷³² Still more significantly, this very unpopulist 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."⁷³³

⁷³¹ R. Lacy & D. Danzinger, *The Year 1000*, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, p. 190.

⁷³² 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).

⁷³³ Pope Sylvester, *Letter 192*, in Fr. Andrew Phillips, "The Three Temptations of Christ and the Mystical Sense of English History", *Orthodox England*, vol. I, N 2, December, 1997, p. 6.

This must count as a formal abjuration of the papist heresy...

Unfortunately, Sylvester was not imitated by his successors. But the courage of his right confession deserves appreciation. Indeed, by the year 1000 there was little formal papism in the west: it was the Byzantine ideal of "symphonic" Church-State relations that had triumphed almost everywhere. Even in those parts of the West where normal government had broken down, such as France, the ideal was still alive. Paradoxically, the very breakdown of order appears to have stimulated a kind of nostalgia for the old forms, when emperors and patriarchs ordered the Christian world between them...

Otto and Sylvester imitated the Byzantine concept of a family of kings under one Christian Emperor. 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. "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..."⁷³⁴

The Ottonian period in the history of the papacy has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. Voltaire said that Pope John XII's summoning of the Germans to Rome was the source of all the subsequent woes.⁷³⁵ However, an unprejudiced view must accept that the intervention of the Ottonian monarchy in Roman affairs was not wholly unbeneficial. The rivalries between the Tusculani and Crescentii made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. *Someone* had to put a stop to the scandalous degeneration of the first see of Christendom. And if the Ottonians did not succeed in completely cleansing the Augean stables, it was hardly their fault alone. For the corruption in the Eternal City ran deep: in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, more or less accused Pope John XV of being the Antichrist...⁷³⁶

Sylvester wrote this when he was Archbishop of Ravenna, a see that had always shown independence in relation to Rome (and remained so until the death of Henry IV's anti-Pope Clement III (Guibert) in Ravenna in 1100). Thus at the hour of his death, Sylvester's predecessor, St. Maurus of Ravenna (+671), "called all his priests, and weeping before them, and seeking their forgiveness, he said to them: 'I am entering the path of death, I call to witness and warn you, do not place yourselves under the Roman yoke. Choose a pastor for yourselves, and let him be consecrated by his bishops. Seek the pallium from the emperor. For on whatever day you are subjugated to Rome, you will not be whole.' And with these words he died; and he was buried in the narthex of Blessed Apollinaris, in a wonderful tomb." (From *The Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna* by Andreas Agnellus [+846])

⁷³⁴ J.B. Morrall, "Otto III: an Imperial Ideal", *History Today*, 14 January, 2011.

⁷³⁵ Voltaire, *Essay on History and Customs*, chapter 36. See Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale* (The Fatal Mystification), Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987, pp. 59-60.

⁷³⁶ John Eadie, "The Man of Sin", in *Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.

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. Morrall⁷³⁷ – 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.”⁷³⁸

Sylvester survived his brilliant protégé by barely sixteen months (he died on May 12, 2003). 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.”⁷³⁹

“Otto transposed political and religious universalism. In his legislation he evoked Justinian. Denouncing the Donation of Constantine as the product of papal arrogance, Otto ‘slave of the Apostles’ stole the clothes of papal humility. Otto died young and his successor Henry II preferred to stay north of the Alps. But Otto’s imperial vision never entirely faded. His successors perpetuated it in their symbols of state. Henry II’s mantle, still to be seen at Bamberg, is embroidered with the stars of heaven in imitation of Byzantine imperial claims to cosmic authority. More importantly, Otto had forged the bond between the regnum and the empire so strongly that it would not be broken even by rulers like Henry II with little interest in a Roman power-base. Conrad I, once elected king, was already an emperor-elect and the East Frankish realm only one of the regna he would rule. His son Henry III immediately on Conrad’s death took the title, no longer of ‘king of the Franks’ but ‘king of the Romans’. When, later, there was a German kingdom, its ruler was never officially entitled ‘king of the Germans’. German kingship had become inseparable from Roman emperorship...”⁷⁴⁰

The Holy Roman Empire of the Ottonians and their German and Spanish successor dynasties survived, amazingly, until 1806. Voltaire famously said it was “neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire”. But under Otto III it had been, briefly, all three, a not unworthy consort to its greater eastern neighbour...

⁷³⁷ Morrall, *op. cit.*

⁷³⁸ He died of smallpox. See Richard Cavendish, “The Death of Emperor Otto III”, *History Today*, 13 December, 2001. (V.M.)

⁷³⁹ Chamberlin, “The Ideal of Unity”, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷⁴⁰ Nelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

49. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (2) FROM SERGIUS IV TO LEO

IX

With the death of Otto III, the last Western continental ruler sympathetic to Byzantium, both the "Holy Roman Empire" and the Roman papacy began to lose their last links with the Eastern Church. Their final decline began after the death of Pope Sylvester II in 1003, when "suddenly," according to Papadakis, "the papacy was turned 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."⁷⁴¹

This change, and the general decline in the papacy, did not escape the censure of the Western Orthodox bishops. Thus Archbishop Arnulf of Orleans (+1003) said concerning attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of the Church in Gaul (and other Churches in the West) by the Papacy: "The Church of Rome is for ever to be honoured in memory of St. Peter; and the decrees of the Popes are to be duly respected, saving always the Canons of Nicea and of other Councils, which must remain eternally in force. For we must take good heed that neither the silence nor the new constitutions of the Pope are allowed to prejudice the ancient Canons of the Church. If his silence is to prevail, it follows that all laws - all the decrees of antiquity - must be suspended so long as he remains mute. But if we are to be bound by his new constitutions, where is the use of enacting laws at all, since they may be rescinded at once by the will of a single individual? Do we, then, wish to detract from the just prerogatives of Rome? By no means. But, alas! how pitiable is the condition of Rome at present! The throne of the Leos and the Gregories, of Gelasius and of Innocent, is occupied by monsters of licentiousness, cruelty, and impiety. Let us pray for the conversion of our superiors; but, meanwhile, let us look for advice and direction to some other quarter than Rome, where all is corrupt, and justice is bartered for gold."

And, concerning statements of St. Gelasius, and others, which supposedly make it out to be that the Church of Rome cannot be judged, the Archbishop said: "If this be so, we have at least a right to demand that the Roman Pontiff shall be one capable of pronouncing an indisputable judgment; whereas it is reported that, at present, Rome is given up to the most barbarous ignorance. But, even supposing that the present Pope were a Damasus, what have we done to contravene his decree? We never attempted to decide this cause until no hope remained of our obtaining a decision from Rome. And as to holding a Council without his permission, the Council of Nicea, so specially revered by Rome herself, ordains that Councils shall be held in each province twice every year, without any mention of the authority of Rome. In short, to avoid further disputing, if the judgment of Rome be just, we will accept it willing;

⁷⁴¹ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, 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).

but, if unjust, let us obey the Apostle, and refuse to listen even to an angel from heaven, if he should command anything contrary to the Gospel. If Rome is silent, as in the present case, let us consult the laws of the Church. What other course is open to us, since Rome appears to be abandoned by all aid, divine and human, nay, even to have abandoned herself?"⁷⁴²

Nor was it only German Popes that had contributed to the decline. The ethnically Roman Popes, too, were hardly paragons of virtue, as they had clearly demonstrated in the previous century. But at least they were usually formally Orthodox.

However, in 1009, as Ranson and Motte write, "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."⁷⁴³

According to Sir Steven Runciman, the popes' addition of the Filioque was hateful to the Greeks for purely political reasons, since it represented the triumph of German influence in Rome.⁷⁴⁴ However, the purely *theological* zeal of the Byzantines must not be underestimated.

As for the native Romans, Fr. John Romanides has argued that they remained basically Orthodox (because they were actually Greek!) and only accepted the Filioque unwillingly, it being forced on them by the German emperors and the reformist popes they appointed. The cause of the West's falling away lay exclusively, according to Romanides, in the Franks... However, contrary to this (essentially racist) theory, the Roman aristocratic families bore their own share of responsibility for the catastrophe, having made the city virtually ungovernable through their rivalries. The fact is that the whole of the West, both Latin and German, formed a single body that fell away from the Church together...

Another point to remember is that while the German emperors may have appointed German popes in order to clean up the papacy, the papacy remained thoroughly unreformed until the middle of the century - that is, until the pontificate of Leo IX.

⁷⁴² W.H. Jervis, *The Gallican Church: A History of the Church of France*, pp. 40-42.

⁷⁴³ Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, introduction to Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987, p. 14.

⁷⁴⁴ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1955, p. 161.

Thus Lampryllos writes: "After the death of this pope [Benedict VIII], who was... the nephew of the Emperor Henry, another of his nephews, and brother of the last pope, was elevated by the imperialist party to the pontificate under the name of John XIX in 1024. Simple layman though he was, he ascended through all the degrees of the hierarchy in six days. He held the pontificate for nine years, but finally the national party, impatient with the excesses of his behaviour, expelled him from Rome. However, the Emperor Conrad II came down with an army into Italy and restored him; he died in the same year, and another Teuton, the nephew also of the Emperor Conrad, succeeded him under the name of Benedict IX. Henry III, then his son Henry IV, continued to get involved in successive elections of the popes, tipping the scales in favour of their candidates; almost until 1061 the popes were their creatures: they were those who go down in history under the name of the German Popes."⁷⁴⁵

The German ascendancy over the papacy came to a head in 1046, when there were no less than three men calling themselves the Pope of Rome. The Emperor Henry III summoned all three to Sutri, north of Rome, and deposed all of them, placing a fellow German, Clement II, in the Lateran. After his death the notorious Benedict IX returned for his third spell as Pope.

"Benedict IX was Pope from 1032 to 1044, again in 1045, and finally from 1047 to 1048, the only man to have served as Pope for three discontinuous periods. Benedict gave up his papacy for the first time in exchange for a large sum of money in 1044. He returned in 1045 to depose his replacement and reigned for one month, after which he left again, possibly to marry, and sold the papacy for a second time, to his Godfather (possibly for over 650 kg /1450 lb of gold). Two years later, Benedict retook Rome and reigned for an additional one year, until 1048. Poppo of Brixen (later to become Pope Damascus II) eventually forced him out of Rome. Benedict's place and date of death are unknown, but some speculate that he made further attempts to regain the Papal Throne. St. Peter Damian described him as 'feasting on immorality' and 'a demon from hell in the disguise of a priest' in the *Liber Gomorrhianus*, a treatise on papal corruption and sex that accused Benedict IX of routine homosexuality and bestiality."⁷⁴⁶

Emperor Henry replaced Benedict with another German, and then, when he died, with yet another, Leo IX. However, though a distant cousin of the Emperor, Leo was no pawn of the German Reich. Indeed, it was his policies "that would put an end to the Carolingian entente of church and empire essentially creating bitter conflicts between the two".⁷⁴⁷

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⁷⁴⁵ Lampryllos, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

⁷⁴⁶ http://www.oddee.com/item_96537.aspx.

⁷⁴⁷ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

It was Leo IX who turned German caesaropapism into German papocaesarism, a political empire with ecclesiastical pretensions into an ecclesiastical one with political ones... However, before discussing his fateful pontificate, we need to examine a monastic movement that had an enormous influence on the tenth- and eleventh-century Church in the West.

Now we have spoken little in this history about monasticism - in spite of the fact that Basilian monasticism in the East from the fourth century, and Benedictine monasticism in the West from the sixth century, undoubtedly greatly influenced the evolution of their respective societies. But they had little direct impact on government or Church-State relations... That could not, however, be said of the movement of Frankish monasticism that arose in the tenth century and which is known as the Cluniac movement after the Burgundian monastery of Cluny.

Cluny was founded by Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine in 910. Cluny and its dependencies were distinguished first of all by the fact that they were not Eigenkirchen, but "stavropegial" foundations independent of the control of any feudal lord. As such, they assumed the leadership of a powerful reform movement directed against the corruptions introduced into the Church by the feudal system, and had considerable success in this respect.

For example, the founder of the movement, Abbot Odo of Cluny, succeeded in being appointed archimandrite of Rome by Alberic with authority to reform all the monastic houses in the district.⁷⁴⁸

The Cluniacs, writes Jean Comby, "restored the main principles of the Benedictine Rule: the free election of the abbot, independence from princes and bishops. Moreover, the abbey affirmed its direct allegiance to the pope. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries it became the head of an Order which multiplied throughout Europe. In fact, unlike the old monasteries, all the new ones that were founded remained under the authority of the abbot of Cluny. In its heyday, the 'state of Cluny' comprised 50,000 monks."⁷⁴⁹

The determination of the Cluniacs to remain completely independent of secular control "led gradually," according to Siedentop, "to the recasting of relationships in government in terms of the requirements of 'souls' rather than the traditional claims of lordship (dominium) and paterfamilias.

"The new vision of how 'the Christian people' should be served would prove to be far more subversive than Charlemagne's vision. For it not longer combined ancient and Christian moral impulses. Where Charlemagne and his clerical advisers had relied on aristocratic subordination and personal ties to promote unity in the empire and church, tenth-century Frankish reformers engaged in 'purifying' monastic life developed attitudes that would, in the

⁷⁴⁸ Llewellyn, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

⁷⁴⁹ Comby, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

next century, lead Pope Gregory VII to put forward what was virtually a constitution for Europe. Monastic reform thus generated a more aggressive, uncompromising ambition in the church, a political ambition...

"[In this development] it would be difficult to exaggerate the influence, direct and indirect, of this Cluniac reform movement. The "direct influence can be found not only in the way many older monasteries rapidly submitted to the disciplines of Cluny, but also in the frequent election of monks from Cluny to bishoprics, where they began to defend the principle that the church should choose its own leaders. These bishops sought to restore order to their dioceses, attacking the sale of offices, rooting out clerical immorality and trying to recover church property that had been alienated. They met with fierce resistance from secular lords.

"The indirect influence of Cluny was perhaps even more important. It restored the prestige of monasticism as representing a truly Christian life, an ordered life of personal dignity, work and self-government. It laid emphasis on learning and prayer as well as physical labour. It offered, tacitly, a challenge to the church to exert itself in a society plagued by the warfare of minor aristocrats and knights, who were profiting from the disappearance of older forms of authority. Such knights went in for banditry and, in the words of one historian, 'organising protection rackets'. Altogether, the Cluniac reform movement raised the sights of the church, inciting it to defend moral authority in a world apparently given over to mere power.

"As the year 1000 approached, the fragmenting of secular power and castle-building by local lords in West Francia created an impression of anarchy - the 'dissolution of all things' - which some interpreted as the approach of the Antichrist. As a result, the Frankish church not only had an opportunity but felt an imperious need to stamp its own image on society. It alone now had a coherent conception of right rule. For the previous belief in an imperium - in an autocratic 'Roman' empire set over and regulating temporal lordships - no longer corresponded to social facts. It was up to the church to restore order. But how was it to begin?

"In fact, movements sprang up almost simultaneously in a number of places towards the end of the tenth century. Stimulated by the abbot of Cluny, the clergy encouraged the expression of a new sensibility. In 975 the bishop of Le Puy convened a meeting of the knights and peasants of his diocese, eliciting from them an oath to respect the property both of the church and of paupers or the 'powerless'. In 989 a church council in Burgundy went even further. It excommunicated 'those who attacked bishop, priests, deacon or clerk, while at home or travelling; those who robbed a church; those who stole a beast from the poor or the tillers of soil.' By the end of the century many other public meetings and church councils had extended this 'Peace of God', so that it included 'pilgrims, women and children, labourers and the instruments of their work, monasteries and cemeteries.' These were to be left 'undisturbed and in perpetual peace'.

“Such councils had first appeared in the south of France. But they soon spread to its northern regions as well. Indeed, the movement became an irresistibly popular one. ‘Peasants of every class, from the most prosperous, through the middling ranks, to the lowest of all’ flocked to the councils. The power of the movement was such that by 1017 it constrained the nobles and knights to accept a ‘truce of God’. They ‘swore to desist from all private warfare from noon on Saturday until prime on Monday.’ ‘This would allow due reverence to be paid to the Lord’s Day; those who broke this ‘truce of God’ would be cut off from the sacraments of the church and the society of the faithful in life; no priest might bury them, no man might pray for their soul. Those who swore to and observed the truce were assured of absolution from God.’

“The movement was at the same time religious and secular. Contemporaries greeted it with such wonder and delight, almost as if it were the Second Coming. They had a sense that they were witnessing something of fundamental importance, that Christian moral beliefs were finally shaping society at large. The church was defending the defenceless. ‘The movement... depended upon and encouraged an outburst of religious fervor such as had not appeared in the written sources since the sixth century, if then.’”⁷⁵⁰

The question that now arose was: “Could appeals to ‘God’s law’ be translated into practices more durable than the ‘Peace of God’ and ‘Truce of God’? If so, the monastic movement of reform would have to act outside the monasteries. And in order to do that, a fulcrum for action was required. There was only one fulcrum available: the papacy.

“Only Rome could offer a central agency for general reform. The history of Western Europe from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth century is the history of the papacy being recruited and transformed by the reform movement. Within a few decades the papacy became so central to the reform movement that some historians have doubted whether the Cluniac movement was as important as the ‘Gregorian’ reforms issuing from Rome. Cluny was not, indeed, the only source of pressure for reform. There were isolated movements for reform of the church in England, Flanders and Italy. But... it was from the new German empire that the first effective impetus for reform at the centre came. German emperors had renewed the Carolingian project of a ‘Christian empire’. A project of moral reform was embedded in their imperial system. So in the eleventh century German emperors began to prise the papacy away from the hold of Roman aristocratic families...”⁷⁵¹

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Let us briefly review the development of the papist heresy to this point...

⁷⁵⁰ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁷⁵¹ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

Until about 600, the development of Papism was inhibited by the fact that the Popes were subjects of the Byzantine Emperors, to whom they nourished feelings of loyalty, whose basic view of Church-State relations they shared, and whose confirmation they still required before they could be consecrated. In the seventh and eighth centuries, however, both the political and ecclesiastical bonds between the Popes and the Emperors became weaker as Byzantine power in Italy weakened and the Byzantine emperors fell into the heresies of Monothelitism and Iconoclasm. The estrangement from Byzantium was accompanied by a rapprochement with the new Carolingian empire in the north. This relationship was reinforced by the Pope's double anointing of the first Carolingian, Pepin, the crowning of Charlemagne in Rome and the double anointing of his son, Louis the Pious, in 814.

At the same time, the disintegration of the empire and the forgeries known as the *Donation of Constantine* and the *Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals* enabled the Popes to begin propagating the heresy of the unimpeachable power of the papacy over all bishops, and even over kings.⁷⁵² Consequently, in spite of the fact that the heresies of papal universal jurisdiction and the Filioque had been anathematized by the Council of Constantinople in 879-80, - which decisions were also signed by the legates of Pope John VIII, - the papacy went into a steep moral decline just as Byzantium reached its apogee.

There was some recovery towards the end of the tenth century, during the Ottonian dynasty, but then decline set in again. This decline was indicated, not only by the moral decline of the popes, but also by their domination by the secular authority. As Fukuyama writes: "Of the twenty-five popes who held office before 1059, twenty-one were appointed by emperors and five dismissed by them..."⁷⁵³

Now the theory of papal infallibility was not expressed in a fully explicit manner until the middle of the eleventh century. Before then we have an accumulation of grandiloquent epithets, which were seen as no more than rhetorical devices by the majority of Christians. That they were not taken literally is evident from the fact that some Popes were condemned as heretics.

Thus the Monothelite Pope Honorius I was anathematized by the Sixth Ecumenical Council⁷⁵⁴, and this anathematization was confirmed by later

⁷⁵² Not only the pope, but also the episcopate as a whole became more powerful in relation to the Carolingian kings in the ninth century. Thus in 859 the Council of Savonnières pronounced: "Bishops, according to their ministry and sacred authority, are to be united and by mutual aid and counsel are to rule and correct kings, the magnates of their kingdoms and the people committed to them" (in I.S. Robinson, "Church and Papacy", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 - c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 298).

⁷⁵³ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-264.

⁷⁵⁴ Session XIII: "The holy council said: After we had reconsidered, according to the promise which we had made to your highness, the doctrinal letters of Sergius, at one time patriarch of this royal God protected city to Cyrus, who was then bishop of Phasius and to Honorius some time Pope of Old Rome, as well as the letter of the latter to the same Sergius, we find

Popes.⁷⁵⁵ Moreover, towards the end of the sixth century Pope Gregory I forcefully rejected the title “universal bishop”. “Anyone who dares to call himself ‘universal bishop’,” he wrote to Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria, “is a forerunner of the Antichrist” (*Epistle 33*).

Although the heresies of universal jurisdiction and the *Filioque* were the earliest and most fundamental of the papist heresies, the final break between East and West was in fact elicited by two innovations in the Divine Liturgy: the replacement of leavened bread (*artos*) by unleavened bread (*azymes*), and the removal of the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, during the consecration.⁷⁵⁶ Although these liturgical innovations would at first sight appear to be of less than fundamental importance than the Trinitarian and ecclesiological innovations, their symbolical importance was very great.

First, since the leaven represented the soul of Christ, its removal by the Papists signified the replacement of the living Christ by a soulless corpse. And as the Monk Nicetas Stethatos, of the Studite monastery in Constantinople pointed out, the use of unleavened bread signified a return to the Old Testament: “Those who still participate in the feast of unleavened bread are under the shadow of the law and consume the feast of the Jews, not the spiritual and living food of God... How can you enter into communion with Christ, the living God, while eating the dead unleavened dough of the shadow of the law and not the yeast of the new covenant...?”⁷⁵⁷

Secondly, in removing the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the Popes invalidated their own sacrament. It was as if they were witnessing of themselves: “The Holy Spirit no longer descends upon our offerings, since we have presumed to speak in His name, and the Christ that lies on our altars is no longer the living Christ, since we have presumed to usurp his authority.”

that these documents are quite foreign to the apostolic dogmas, to the declarations of the holy Councils, and to all the accepted Fathers, and that they follow the false teachings of the heretics...And with these [Sergius, Pyrrhus, Cyrus, etc.] we define that there shall be expelled from the holy Church of God and anathematized Honorius who was some time Pope of Old Rome, because of what we found written by Honorius to Sergius, that in all respects Honorius followed Sergius' view and Honorius confirmed his impious doctrines." Session XVI: To Theodore of Pharan, the heretic, anathema! To Sergius, the heretic, anathema! To Cyrus, the heretic, anathema! To Honorius, the heretic, anathema!...

⁷⁵⁵ For example, Pope Leo II (+683), who wrote to Emperor Constantine VI: “We anathematize also even Honorius, who did not purify this Apostolic Church with the Doctrine of the Apostolic Tradition, but by wicked betrayal sought to subvert the Immaculate [Faith].” (*P.L.* 96, fol. 408). Again this is an excerpt from the Profession of Faith required upon the Consecration of a new Bishop of Old Rome, used from the late 7th century until sometime in the 11th century: “Also the authors of the new heretical dogmas: Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople, together with Honorius, who paid incentive to their depraved assertions.” (*P.L.* 105, fol. 52, *Liber Diurnus*).

⁷⁵⁶ As even the Roman Catholics admit, the *epiclesis* was present in all the ancient liturgies. See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05502a.htm>

⁷⁵⁷ Stethatos, in Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 132).

Early in his pontificate (1049-1054), writes Siedentop, "Pope Leo IX gathered around him a group of reform-minded clergy. Leo worked closely with the German emperor, Henry III, a friend of abbot Hugh of Cluny, to promote reform by appointing men of outstanding ability as cardinals and advisers in the curia. Hildebrand [the future Pope Gregory VII] was only one of the group – including minds as different as the legalistic Cardinal Humbert [of Candida Silva] and the moralizing Peter Damian – who developed in this monastically inspired reformist atmosphere. Each of these cardinals had been a monk, and all shared a discontent with the condition of the church. Their influence ushered in a period when the popes themselves would be drawn from a monastic background. Leo IX's pontificate thus saw a first crucial, if informal step towards what has been called the 'papal revolution', the creation of a clerical elite determined on systematic reform..."⁷⁵⁸

"From the outset," writes Papadakis, "the new pope was determined to make the papacy an instrument of spiritual and moral rejuvenation both in Rome itself and throughout Europe. To this end Pope Leo journeyed to central and south Italy, but also to France and Germany, crossing the Alps three times. Nearly four and a half years of his five-year pontificate were in fact spent on trips outside Rome. The numerous regional reforming synods held during these lengthy sojourns often had as their target the traffic in ecclesiastical offices and unchaste clergy. Their object above all was to rid the Church of these abuses by restoring canonical discipline. The need to reassert both the validity and binding power of canon law for all clergy was repeatedly emphasized. In addition to the decrees against simony and sexual laxity promulgated by these local synods, however, simoniacal and concubinary clergy were examined and, when required, suspended, deposed and, even excommunicated. The object, in short, was to punish the offenders as well. Even if the synods were not always successful, no one was in doubt that Leo IX and his team of like-minded assistants were serious. The immediate impact of this flurry of activity was often extraordinary..."

"Overall, the progress of the new papal program was not all smooth sailing. Widespread protest, often accompanied by violent protest, was to continue for decades. Yet, all in all, by the end of the century the popular defenders of simony, of clerical marriage, and of the evils of the proprietary church had by and large vanished. The champions of reform at any rate proved more unyielding than their often more numerous adversaries. This was particularly evident in the skilful drive of the reformers to make celibacy an absolute prerequisite to ordination. This part of the Gregorian platform was reinforced by the monastic ideal, since many of the reformers were actually monks and had already embraced a continent life. Some, like the ascetic Peter Damian, cardinal-bishop of Ostia, were even eager to treat the problem as heresy and

⁷⁵⁸ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

not as a matter of discipline. But the reformers were perhaps also uncompromising on this issue because they were convinced that compulsory clerical continence could advance the process of de-laicization – another more general item of their platform. A monasticized priesthood, quite simply, was viewed by reformers everywhere as a crucial corrective to clerical involvement in the world. If successful, the strategy, it was hoped, would provide the clergy with that sense of solidarity and corporate identity needed to distinguish them from the laity. In all essential respects, as one scholar has put it, the reforming initiatives of the popes were ‘an attempt by men trained in the monastic discipline to remodel Church and society according to monastic ideals... to train churchmen to rethink themselves as a distinct ‘order’ with a life-style totally different from that of laymen.’ Behind the campaign for celibacy, in sum, aside from the moral and canonical issues involved, was the desire to set all churchmen apart from and above the laity; the need to create a spiritual elite by the separation of the priest from the ordinary layman was an urgent priority. Doubtless, in the end, the Gregorian priesthood did achieve a certain *libertas* and even a sense of community, but only at the expense of a sharp opposition between itself and the rest of society.”⁷⁵⁹

Peter de Rosa agrees with this estimate: “The chief reason for maintaining the discipline [of clerical celibacy] was the one dearest to the heart of Gregory VII: a celibate priest owed total allegiance not to wife and children but to the institution. He was a creature of the institution. The Roman system was absolutist and hierarchical. For such a system to work, it needed operatives completely at the beck and call of superiors. The conservatives at Trent [the papist council of 1545] were quite frank about this. They actually said that without celibacy the pope be nothing more than the Bishop of Rome. In brief, the papal system would collapse without the unqualified allegiance of the clergy. Celibacy, on Trent’s own admission, was not and never was primarily a matter of chastity, but of *control*...”⁷⁶⁰

It sometimes happens that one important historical process going in one direction masks the presence of another going in precisely the opposite direction. The process of ecclesiastical reformation initiated by Pope Leo IX in 1049, which aimed at the liberation of the Church from secular control, was in many respects a laudable and necessary programme. But the increasing distance it placed between clergy and laity was fraught with danger. In particular, it threatened to undermine the traditional place in Christian society of *the anointed kings*, who occupied an intermediate position between the clergy and the laity. And in the hands of two ambitious northern clerics whom Leo brought with him to Rome, Bishop Humbert of Silva Candida and Archdeacon Hildebrand, it threatened simply to replace the caesaropapist variety of feudalism with a papocaesarist variety – that is, the subjection of the clergy to lay lords with the subjection of the laity, and even the kings, to

⁷⁵⁹ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 36-37.

⁷⁶⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

clerical lords – or rather, to just one clerical lord, the Pope. For, as Fr. Patric Ranson and Lauren Mott write, “in many respects, in its structure the papacy is nothing other than the religious form of feudalism...”⁷⁶¹

Indeed, on the eve of the papal revolution Church and State in the West were so deeply entangled with each other through feudalism that nobody could conceive of a return to the traditional system of the symphony of powers, which allowed for the relative independence of both powers within a single Christian society. The Church wished to be liberated from “lay investiture”; but she did not want to be deprived of the lands, vassals and political power that came with investiture. The only solution, therefore, from the Pope’s point of view, was to bring the whole of Christian society, including its kings and emperors, into vassalage to the papacy...

But before undertaking this assault on the whole structure of Western Christendom, the papacy needed to secure its rear in the East, in the south of Italy. There the Normans, had carved out a dominion for themselves that was independent both of the Byzantines and of the German Emperor. They had even encroached on some lands given to the papacy by the Emperor. Leo declared a holy war against the Normans, promising “an impunity for their crimes” to all who answered his call (those who died in the battle were declared to be martyrs), and set off with himself at the head of the papal army. But at Civitate he was roundly defeated and taken hostage. The Normans, remarkably, asked forgiveness of the captive Pope for having seized territory from him. But, less remarkably, they did not want to give back this territory and wanted the Pope to bless their rapacity. Since the German Emperor could not come south to help him, Leo had to give in to the “penitent” Normans. He legitimized the robbery in exchange for the Norman leaders Richard of Capua and Robert Guiscard becoming his feudal vassals and swearing to support the Papacy. In addition, Robert Guiscard specifically promised: “If you or your successors die before me, I will help to enforce the dominant wishes of the Cardinals and of the Roman clergy and laity in order that a pope may be chosen and established to the honour of St. Peter.”⁷⁶²

However, he now decided to try and forge an alliance with the Byzantines against the Normans, and sent Cardinal Humbert and two others to Constantinople as his envoys. This was always going to be a difficult mission, for there were tensions between Rome and Constantinople on ecclesiastical questions, especially that of the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. In 1053, Archbishop Leo of Ochrid, had criticized the Latins’ use of unleavened bread in a letter to Bishop John of Trania, and had asked the latter to convey his views to Pope Leo IX. In September the Pope replied⁷⁶³: “In prejudging the

⁷⁶¹ Ranson and Motte, in Lampryllos, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷⁶² Guiscard, in David C. Douglas, *The Norman Achievement, 1050-1100*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969, p. 132.

⁷⁶³ Some scholars, such as Anton Michel, believe on stylistic grounds that these letters of Leo IX were in fact written by Cardinal Humbert. However, we shall continue to ascribe them to

case of the highest See, the see on which no judgement may be passed by any man, you have received the anathema from all the Fathers of all the venerable Councils... You, beloved brother of ours, whom we still call in Christ and primate of Constantinople, with extraordinary presumption and unheard-of boldness have dared openly to condemn the apostolic and Latin Church – and for what? For the fact that she celebrates the commemoration of the sufferings of Christ on unleavened bread. That is your imprudent abuse, that is your unkind boasting, when you, supposing that your lips are in heaven, in actual fact with your tongue are crawling on the earth and striving by your human reasonings and thoughts to corrupt and shake the ancient faith. If you do not pull yourself together, you will be on the tail of the dragon [cf. Revelation 12], by which this dragon overthrew and cast to the earth a third of the stars of heaven. Almost 1200 years have passed since the Saviour suffered, and do you really think that only now must the Roman Church learn from you how to celebrate the Eucharist, as if it means nothing that here in Rome there lived, worked for a considerable period, taught and, finally, by his death glorified God he to whom the Lord said: ‘Blessed are thou, O Simon, son of Jonah’...”⁷⁶⁴

“Then,” continues A.P. Lebedev, “the Pope explained in detail why the Roman Church could not tolerate any instructions from other Churches, but remained the leader of all the rest. ‘Think how senseless it would be to admit that the heavenly Father should conceal the rite of the visible sacrifice [of the Eucharist] from the prince of the apostles, Peter, to whom He had completely revealed the most hidden Divinity of His Son. The Lord promised to Peter, not through an angel, nor through a prophet, but with His own lips: ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church’ (Matthew 16.16). But in the opinion of the Pope an important place in the question of the headship of the Roman high priest was occupied by the miracle-working power of Peter’s shadow. This argument of the Pope in his favour was so original that we cite it in full. ‘In Peter,’ said the Pope, ‘what is particularly remarkable is that the shadow of his body gave health to the infirm. Such power was given to none of the saints; even the Holy of holies Himself did not give the gift of healing from His own most holy body; but to His Peter alone He gave this privilege that the shadow from his body should heal the sick. Here is a great sign of the Church of the present and the future, that is, Peter has become the manager of both Churches and indicates their condition beforehand in himself: it is precisely the present Church which by the power of its visible sacraments and those that are still to come as it were by her shadow heals souls on earth, and presents to us an as yet invisible but firm image of truth and piety on earth.’ Or here is one more cunning papal interpretation of one saying with which the Lord addressed Peter, and interpretation whose aim was to prove the overwhelming significance of the Roman high priests among the other bishops of the whole Church. The Pope takes the saying of the Lord: ‘I have

the man in whose name they were written. See Mahlon Smith III, *And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyne Controversy*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, p. 81.

⁷⁶⁴ Henry Bettenson and Christopher Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: SPCK, 1999, p. 106.

prayed for thee, O Peter, that thy faith should not fail, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren' (Luke 22.32).

“By this the Lord showed,’ says the Pope, ‘that the faith of the other brethren will be subject to dangers, but the faith of Peter will remain unshaken. Nobody can deny that just as the whole door is ruled by the hinge, so by Peter and his successors is defined the order and structure of the whole Church. And as the hinge opens and closes the door, while remaining itself unmoved, so Peter and his successors have the right freely to pronounce sentence on every Church, and nobody must disturb or shake their condition; for the highest see is not judged by anybody (summa sedes a nemine judicatur).”⁷⁶⁵

Leo not only tried, as Gilbert Dagron writes, “to impose obedience [on the Eastern Church] by multiplying the expected scriptural quotations... He also added that the rebels of the East should content themselves with these witnesses ‘to the simultaneously earthly and heavenly power, or rather, to the royal priesthood of the Roman and apostolic see (de terreno et coelesti imperio, imo de regali sacerdotio romanae et apostolicae sedis).”⁷⁶⁶

Lebedev writes that “the very new papal ideas about his secular lordship... are developed by the Pope in his letter to Cerularius and... rely on a false document – the so-called *Donatio Constantini*. Setting out his superior position among the other hierarchs of the Church, the Pope, in order to humiliate the Church of Constantinople – the aim of the letter – he develops the thought that the Popes are immeasurably superior to the representatives of all the other Churches since they are at one and the same time both first priests and emperors. In the East, it would seem, nothing of the sort had ever been heard; and for that reason it is understandable how such a novelty would affect the Church of Constantinople!

“Since the time of Constantine the Great the Popes had become at the same time emperors, insinuated Leo to Cerularius. The Pope wrote: ‘So that there should remain no doubt about the earthly [secular] power of the Roman high priest, and so that nobody should think that the Roman Church is ascribing to herself an honour that does not belong to her, we shall cite the proofs of from that privileged deed which the Emperor Constantine with his own hands laid upon the holy tomb of the heavenly key-bearer [Peter], and that the truth should be manifest and vanity disappear.’ In this privileged deed Constantine, according to the words of the Pope, declared the following: ‘We have considered it necessary, we together with all our rulers, the Senate, the nobles and the people of Rome, that, just as St. Peter was the vicar of the Son of God on earth, so the high priests, the heirs of the prince of the apostles, should

⁷⁶⁵ Lebedev, “Vek odinnadstij – Okonchatelnoe razdelenie Tserkvej (1053-1054gg.)” (“The 11th Century – the Final Division of the Churches”), <http://portal-credo.ru/site/index.php?act=lib&id=378>, pp. 23.

⁷⁶⁶ Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 247.

retain the power to rule – and to an even more complete extent than is given to the earthly imperial dignity. That is, we are decreeing that reverent honour should be accorded both to our earthly imperial might, and in exactly the same way to the most holy Roman Church, and, so as more fully to exalt the see above our own earthly throne, we ascribe to her a royal power, dignity and honour. Moreover, we decree that the see of Peter should have the headship over the four sees of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople and also over all the Church in the inhabited world; the high priest of this Roman see must be considered for all time to be higher and more glorious than all the priest of the whole world, and in relations to questions of Divine service and faith his judgement should rule over all.’ Then Pope Leo describes what precisely Constantine bestowed upon his contemporary, Pope Sylvester, so as to exalt the papal altar. In the opinion of the Pope, it turns out that Constantine bestowed upon the Pope first of all the palace in Rome. The privileged deed, according to the letter of Pope Leo, said the following about this: ‘We cede to the holy apostles themselves, the most blessed Peter and Paul, and through them to our father Pope Sylvester and all his successors who will be on the see of St. Peter to the end of the ages the Lateran palace, which is superior to all the palaces in the world.’ Then the Emperor Constantine adorns, as the Pope puts it, the person of the Roman high priest with royal regalia. The deed, according to the words of Pope Leo, said this about that: ‘We transfer to the Pope of Rome the diadem, that is the crown, from our own head, the garland that adorns the imperial neck, the purple chlamys, the scarlet tunic and all the other royal vestments. We entrust to him the imperial sceptre and all the other marks of distinction and the shoulder-belt – in a word, all the appurtenances of royal majesty.’ The letter even informs us that the Emperor with his own hands wanted to place his crown on the Pope’s head, but ‘the Pope did not want to use a crown of gold, and for that reason the Emperor placed on him with his own hands his Phrygian wreath (*phrygium*), shining white and signifying the Resurrection of Christ.’ In the words of Pope Leo, the Emperor Constantine, having adorned the Pope with royal regalia, in correspondence with this wanted to put the clergy who constituted his suite on a level with the royal courtiers. The deed, in the words of the letter, made the following legal ruling: ‘We raise the most honourable clergy of every rank in the service of the Roman Church to the same height of power and brilliance as our Senate, and decree that they should be adorned as our patricians and consuls are adorned. In a word, just as there are various kinds of servants attached to the imperial dignity – bed-makers, doormen and guards, so must it be with the holy Roman Church. And more than that: for the sake of the greater brilliance of the papal dignity let the clergy travel on horses adorned with the whitest of materials, and let them wear exactly the same shoes as are worn by the senators. And in this way let the heavenly [papal] power be adorned like the earthly [imperial], to the glory of God.’ In his concern for the person of the Pope and those close to him, according to the words of the Pope’s letter, Constantine bestowed on Sylvester and his heirs a broad, *de facto* royal power over a whole half of the Roman kingdom: the Roman high priest became the Roman emperor. In the words of the Pope, the deed said the following on this score: ‘So that the high

priestly power should not decline, but should flourish more than the imperial power itself, we have decreed that besides the Lateran palace, the city of Rome, the provinces of Italy and all the western lands, and all the places and cities in them, should be transferred to our father Sylvester, so that he should have complete use of and dominion over them."⁷⁶⁷

In the letter Leo sent to the Patriarch with Cardinal Humbert he continued his assault: "We believe and firmly confess the following: the Roman Church is such that if any nation (Church) on earth should in its pride be in disagreement with her in anything, then such a Church ceases to be called and to be considered a Church – it is nothing. It will already be a conventicle of heretics, a collection of schismatics, a synagogue of Satan."⁷⁶⁸ Things were made worse when Humbert called them pimps and disciples of Mohammed! Humbert made it clear where the first loyalties of all Christians should lie when he told the Byzantines: "All men have such reverence for the holder of the apostolic office of Rome that they prefer the holy commandments and the traditions from the mouth of the head of the Church than from the Holy Scriptures and patristic writings. [Thus the Pope] makes almost the whole world run after God with delight and enthusiasm."⁷⁶⁹

As a consequence of these events, the Greeks refused to enter into negotiations with the papal legates about an alliance against the Normans... Humbert claimed that the Patriarch had closed the churches of the westerners which served the Eucharist on unleavened bread. However, as Smith writes, "it is doubtful that the patriarch had actually committed himself to suppressing the Latin rite even on a local basis. For Humbert admits that he is only repeating a rumor that he has learned from some unidentified source. And he does not appear to have repeated the charge as the controversy progressed. For the church closings are not mentioned in the second papal letter to [Patriarch Michael] Cerularius or the note to [Emperor] Constantine Monomachus, complaining about the patriarch's behavior. Nor was this made an issue in the debates with Nicetas [Stethatos] during his mission to Constantinople. Although Humbert does mention that before leaving the imperial city he brought the practice of certain churches – most likely those founded for Latins – into conformity with the standards of Rome, he does not claim that he found these churches actually closed. Therefore, it seems that the cardinal himself did not have certain evidence that Cerularius had actively persecuted Constantinople's Latins before his arrival. But, in developing his reasons for excommunicating his opponent, he included the earlier report, though without claiming to have personally verified it..."⁷⁷⁰

The climax came on July 16, 1054, when the papal legates marched into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and placed a bull of excommunication on the altar,

⁷⁶⁷ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

⁷⁶⁸ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷⁶⁹ Humbert, in Heather, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

⁷⁷⁰ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

anathematizing the Church of Constantinople and accusing her of every possible heresy in a "fantastically ignorant" document.⁷⁷¹ Four days later, the Patriarch convened a Council that excommunicated the legates. "O you who are Orthodox," he said, "flee the fellowship of those who have accepted the heretical Latins and who regard them as the first Christians in the Catholic and Holy Church of God!" For "the Pope is a heretic."⁷⁷²

Pope Leo IX had actually already died in April, 1054, so the papal anathema was technically invalid as not representing the will of a living Pope. In fact, the Byzantines seem to have regarded it as a forgery.⁷⁷³ However, although the next Pope, Stephen IX, wanted to send an embassy to Constantinople to repair the damage, he also died before the embassy could set off. "No further missions were sent. Already, in the space of a few years,

⁷⁷¹ Alexander Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 618. Humbert wrote: "May Michael the neophyte...and all those who follow him... fall under the anathema, Maranatha..." Comby (*op. cit.*, p. 133) supposes that "he did not know that Maranatha means 'Come, Lord', and is not a condemnation". But was he simply quoting I Corinthians 16.22?

⁷⁷² *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, p. 155.

⁷⁷³ The Byzantine decision read: "When Michael, our most holy ruler and Ecumenical Patriarch was presiding, certain impious and disrespectful men--what else could a pious man call them? -- came out of the darkness, because they were begotten of the West. They came to this pious and divinely protected city from which the springs of Orthodoxy flow as if from on high, disseminating the teachings of piety to the ends of the world. They came like a thunderbolt, or an earthquake, or a hail-storm, or to put it more directly, like wild wolves trying to defile the Orthodox belief by different doctrines..."

"We do not wish to tamper with the Sacred and Holy Creed...by wrongful arguments, improper reasoning and extreme boldness. Unlike them, we do not wish to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son -- What a devilish deceit! -- but we say that the Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father. We also declare that they do not follow the Scripture which says, 'Do not shave your beards.' (Leviticus 19:27).

"They do not want to understand that God created woman, and He decreed that it was improper for men to be alone. We continue to observe inviolate the ancient Canons of the Apostolic perfection and order, and affirm that the marriage of ordained men should not be dissolved. Neither should they be deprived of having sexual relations with their wives, which from time to time is appropriate. So if anyone is found to be worthy of the office of deacon or sub-deacon, he should not be kept from this office. He should be restored to his lawful wife in order that we not dishonor what God has Himself ordained and blessed, especially since the Gospel declares, "Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6) If someone then dares to act against the Apostolic Canons by removing anyone of the clergy who is a presbyter, deacon, or sub-deacon, depriving him of his lawful bond with his wife, let him be excommunicated....

"But they come against us and against the Orthodox Church of God... arriving before the most pious emperor. They intrigued against the faithful and even 'counterfeited' their arrival with the pretext that they came from Rome, and pretended that they were sent by the Pope.... They even produced fraudulent letters which allegedly had been given them by him. This fraud was detected, among other things, also from the seals which were clearly tampered with... The original of the impious document deposited on the Altar of the Great Church by these irreligious and accursed men was not burned, but was placed in the depository to bring the perpetual dishonour to those who have committed such blasphemies against us, and as permanent evidence of this condemnation." (From Readings in Christianity, by Robert Van Vorsts, pp. 129-130)

the mood in Rome had decisively shifted. What was at stake, many reformers had begun to accept, was nothing less than a fundamental point of principle. Cardinal Humbert had sounded out a trumpet blast on a truly decisive field of battle. The message that it sent to the rest of Christendom could hardly have been more ringing: no one, not even the Patriarch of the New Rome, could be permitted to defy the authority of the Pope...⁷⁷⁴

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The other Eastern Churches were informed of the decision, and accepted it. And so 1054 has conventionally been taken as the date of the severing of the branch, the moment when the Western Church finally fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. However, many have doubted that this was the real cut-off point. Thus a Byzantine council of 1089 acted as if the schism of 1054 had not taken place.⁷⁷⁵ Again, Dvorkin writes that “the popular consciousness of that time in no way accepted the schism as final: nobody pronounced a ban on mutual communion, and concelebrations of priests and hierarchs of the two halves of Christianity continued even after 1054. The name of the pope of Rome was commemorated in the diptychs of other Eastern Churches (at any rate, sometimes). In our [Russian] lists of saints there were western saints who died after 1054.”⁷⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the balance of evidence remains in favour of the traditional dating.⁷⁷⁷ For after 1054, there is a sharp and noticeable change in the papacy’s policies and attitudes to dissidents in Church and State. The bloody destruction of Orthodox England in 1066-70 completely transformed the character of English Christianity and statehood; it was followed by the less violent subjection of Churches throughout Western Europe.

Meanwhile, the “Gregorian Reform” introduced various heretical innovations: compulsory celibacy for the clergy, the universal jurisdiction and infallibility of the papacy; the subjection of all kings to papal rule. Then came the papal blessing of the Norman invasion of Greece in the 1080s and the first of the crusades – which did so much damage to Eastern Orthodox Christendom – in 1095. In 1098 the Pope presided over the pseudo-council of Bari, at which the Greeks of southern Italy were persuaded to accept the Filioque...

Ironically in view of Romanides’ semi-racist theory that it was the Germans who destroyed the papacy, the last powerful opponent of the new,

⁷⁷⁴ Tom Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, p. 280.

⁷⁷⁵ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁷⁶ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. O. Barmin, “Sovremennaiia istoriografia o datirovke tserkovnoj skhizmy mezhdou Zapadom i Vostokom khristianskoj ekumeny” (“Contemporary Historiography on the Dating of the Church Schism between the West and the East of the Christian Oikumene”), in D.E. Afinogenov, A.V. Muraviev, *Traditsii i Nasledie Khristianskogo Vostoka* (The Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East), Moscow: “Indrik”, 1996, pp. 117-126.

“Reformed” papacy was the German Emperor Henry IV, who was anathematized and deprived of his crown by Pope Gregory VII - an Italian Jew...

The momentous event of the Great Schism was heralded in the heavens by a huge explosion. “Arab and Chinese astronomers recorded the appearance of the bright Crab Supernova in [July] 1054. At X-ray and gamma-ray energies above 30 KeV, the Crab is generally the strongest persistent source in the sky today.”⁷⁷⁸ From now on, the whole of the West would be steadily sucked into the great black hole formed through the apostasy of the Roman papacy - the explosion of the first star in the firmament of the Church on earth.

⁷⁷⁸ Dr. Jerjis Alajaji, personal communication, March 22, 2010.

50. THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

In 1059 Pope Nicholas II sealed the political break with Constantinople when he entered into alliance at Melfi with the Normans, a recently Christianized people nation of Viking origin but French speech and culture that had recently seized a large swathe of German and Byzantine land in Southern Italy. This alliance was momentous because up to this moment the Popes had always turned for protection to the Christian Roman Emperor, whether of East Rome or of the "Holy Roman Empire" of the West. Indeed, the Pope had insisted on crowning the "Holy Roman Emperor" precisely because he was the papacy's official guardian. For it was unheard of that the Church of Rome should recognize as her official guardian any other power than the Roman Emperor, from whom, according to the forged *Donation of Constantine*⁷⁷⁹, she had herself received her quasi-imperial dignity and power. But just as, in the middle of the eighth century, the Papacy had rejected the Byzantines in favour of the Franks, so now it rejected the Germans in favour of the Normans, a

The alliance was remarkably successful from the point of view of both allies. Armed with the papal blessing, the Normans under Guiscard conquered southern Italy, seizing the last Byzantine outpost in the region, Bari, in 1071. The losers here were both the German Emperor and the Emperor of New Rome. Meanwhile, in 1061 Guiscard's younger brother Roger invaded Saracen Sicily, making sure to give a good share of the loot to the Pope. In exchange, Pope Alexander II granted Roger and his men "absolution for their sins".⁷⁸⁰ In 1072, Roger conquered Palermo and most of Sicily from the Arabs, completing the conquest in 1091. The Pope, meanwhile, extended his jurisdiction over the whole area...

"Thus after 1059," writes Professor Douglas, "the Norman conquests were made progressively to subserve the restoration of the Latin [as against the Byzantine] rite and the extension of papal jurisdiction in southern Italy."⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ In 1441, writes Yuval Noah Harari, "Lorenzo Valla - a Catholic priest and a pioneer linguist - published a scientific study proving that Constantine's Donation was a forgery. Valla analysed the style and grammar of the document, and the various words and terms it contained. He demonstrated that the document included words that were unknown in fourth-century Latin, and that it was probably forged about 400 years after Constantine's death. Moreover, the date appearing on the document is '30 March, in the year Constantine was consul for the fourth time, and Gallicanus was consul for the first time'. In the Roman Empire, two consuls were elected each year, and it was customary to date documents by their consulate years. Unfortunately, Constantine's fourth consulate was in 315, whereas Gallicanus was elected consul for the first time only in 317. If this all-important document was indeed composed in Constantine's days, it would never have contained such a blatant error. It is as if Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues had dated the American Declaration of Independence 34 July 1776." (*Homo Deus*, London: Vintage, 2017, p. 224).

⁷⁸⁰ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

⁷⁸¹ Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

Even before entering into alliance with the Normans in Italy, the Papacy had begun to forge close bonds with the Normans in their homeland in Northern France, where they were de jure subjects of the King of France but de facto formed an independent duchy. In 1054 Duke William (known as “the Bastard”) of Normandy seized effective control of the duchy by defeating a coalition led by his lord, King Henry I of France. In the next year, the old-fashioned (that is, Orthodox) Archbishop Mauger was deposed to make way for the more forward-looking Maurilius. He introduced “a new and extraneous element”⁷⁸² – that is, an element more in keeping with the ideals of the heretical, “reformed papacy” – into the Norman Church. Then, in 1059, papal sanction for the marriage between Duke William and Matilda of Flanders, which had been withheld by Leo IX at the Council of Rheims in 1049, was finally obtained. This opened the way for full cooperation between the Normans and the Pope. Finally, William supported the candidacy of Alexander II to the throne as against that of Honorius II, who was supported by the German Empress Agnes.⁷⁸³ The Pope now owed a debt of gratitude to the Normans which they were soon to call in...

By the 1060s there were only two powers in the West that stood in the way of the complete triumph of the crude, militaristic ethos of feudalism: the Orthodox autocracies of England and Germany. By the end of the century both powers had been brought low – England by military conquest and its transformation into a feudal state under Duke William “the Bastard” of Normandy, and Germany by cunning dialectic and the fear of excommunication by the Pope. In England, after a period of rule by Danish Christian kings (1017-1042), the Old English dynasty of Alfred the Great was restored in the person of King Ethelred’s son Edward, known to later generations as “the Confessor”. In January, 1066, King Edward died, and his brother-in-law Harold Godwineson was consecrated king in his place. Now two years earlier, Harold had been a prisoner at the court of William in Normandy, and in order to gain his freedom had sworn over a box of holy relics to uphold William’s claim to the English throne. So when he broke his oath and became king himself, William invaded – with the Pope’s blessing.

How could the Pope bless the armed invasion of a Christian country led by an anointed king who posed no threat to its neighbours? In order to answer this question, we have to examine the new theory of Church-State relations being developed in Rome. The critical question then was: in a society whose aims are defined by the Christian faith, are the jurisdictions of the clergy and secular ruler strictly parallel, or do the clergy have the power to depose a king who, in their judgement, is not ruling in accordance with these spiritual aims – whose nature, of course, can only be defined by the clergy?

⁷⁸² Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964, p. 121.

⁷⁸³ Jean-Paul Allard, “Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d’Albe” (“Byzantium and the Holy Empire: Theophano, Otto II and Benzon of Alba”), in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, *Regards sur l’Orthodoxie* (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997, p. 55.

Now up to the middle of the ninth century, no decisive test-case had yet appeared which would define whether the Church could, not simply *confirm* a royal deposition or change of dynasty, but actually *initiate* it. Pope Nicholas I was the first pope to take it upon himself to *initiate* the deposition of emperors and patriarchs as if all power in both Church and State were in his hands.⁷⁸⁴ However, as we have seen, in 865 Nicholas' efforts were thwarted by the firm opposition both of the Eastern Church under St. Photius the Great and of Western hierarchs such as Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims. It was not before another two hundred years had passed that the papacy once again felt strong enough to challenge the power of the anointed kings. Its chance came on the death of King Edward the Confessor, when Harold Godwinsson ascended the throne with the consent of the Witan but without the consent of the man to whom he had once sworn allegiance, Duke William of Normandy.

Douglas writes: "At some undetermined date within the first eight months of 1066 [Duke William] appealed to the papacy, and a mission was sent under the leadership of Gilbert, archdeacon of Lisieux, to ask for judgement in the duke's favour from Alexander II. No records of the case as it was heard in Rome have survived, nor is there any evidence that Harold Godwinsson was ever summoned to appear in his own defence. On the other hand, the arguments used by the duke's representatives may be confidently surmised.

⁷⁸⁴ The nearest parallels to Nicholas' action are the following: (i) as early as 633 the Fourth Council of Toledo had condemned the Visigothic King Suintila as unjust and faithless, and declared that he had already deprived himself of the kingship. However, the king had already been removed by a Frankish army, and the nobles had already elected a new king, Sisenand, before the convening of this Council, so it was not the clergy who deposed the king in this case. Moreover, the bishops then proceeded to condemn rebellions against kings with an extraordinarily powerful anathema! The Fathers of the Council, led by St. Isidore of Seville, "begged that there should be no usurpations in Spain, no attempts to stir up rebellion, no plots against the lives of the monarchs. In future, when a king died, his successor must be appointed by the magnates of the whole kingdom sitting along with the bishops in a common council. Three times the bishops repeated their awful anathema against anyone who should conspire to break his oath of allegiance, or make an attempt on the king's life, or try to usurp the throne. Three times the anathema was read out to the concourse with profound solemnity, and three times the notaries copied it into the minutes. All the clergy and laymen present shouted out their agreement. Then the bishops called upon Sisenand and his successors for ever to rule moderately and mildly, with justice and piety, over the peoples entrusted to them by God. Any successor of Sisenand's who ruled harshly or oppressively would be anathema. After this impressive scene the bishops condemned and sentenced Suintila and his family..." (E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp. 174, 175).

(ii) Again, in 750, when the last Merovingian king, Childeric, had been deposed, and the first Carolingian, Pippin, enthroned in his place, it was not Pope Zachariah who deposed Childeric: he only confirmed and blessed the change of dynasty, declaring that "it would be better for him to be called king who had the power of one, than him who remained without royal power", and then "commanded by apostolic authority that Pippin be made king lest order be disturbed".

(iii) Again, it was the chief men of the Carolingian empire who, in 833, removed their support from Louis the Pious. The bishops only confirmed the decision later by "declaring formally the divine judgement that he had been shown to be unfit to govern, and by then degrading him from his rank as ruler and imposing a penance on him." (Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 51. See the whole of chapter 2 for Carolingian ideas on kingship)

Foremost among them must have been an insistence on Harold's oath, and its violation when the earl seized the throne... Archdeacon Hildebrand... came vigorously to the support of Duke William, and Alexander II was led publicly to proclaim his approval of Duke William's enterprise."⁷⁸⁵

The Pope had his own reasons for supporting William. In 1052 Archbishop Robert of Canterbury, a Norman, had fled from England after the struggle between the English and Norman parties at the court had inclined in favour of the English. During his flight he forgot to take his pallium (omophorion), which with the agreement of the king was then handed over to Bishop Stigand of Winchester, who became archbishop of Canterbury in place of Robert. This elicited the wrath of the Pope, who labelled Stigand an anticanonical usurper. But the English refused to obey the Pope. And so, beginning from 1052 and continuing right up to the Stigand's deposition by the legates of the Pope at the false council of Winchester in 1070, England remained in schism from, and under the ban of, the Roman Pope - who himself, from 1054, was in schism from, and under the ban of, the Great Church of Constantinople. To make matters worse, in 1058 Archbishop Stigand had had his position regularized by the "antipope" (i.e. enemy of the Hildebrandine reformers) Benedict IX. Here was the perfect excuse for blessing William's invasion: the "schismatic" English had to be brought to heel and their Church purged of all secular influence. And if this "holy" aim was to be achieved by the most secular of means - armed invasion and the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent Christians - so be it!

According to Frank McLynn, it was Stigand's supposed uncanonicity "that most interested [Pope] Alexander. William pitched his appeal to the papacy largely on his putative role as the leader of the religious and ecclesiastical reform movement in Normandy and as a man who could clean the Augean stables of church corruption in England; this weighed heavily with Alexander, who, as his joust with Harald Hardrada in 1061 demonstrated, thought the churches of northern Europe far too remote from papal control. It was the abiding dream of the new 'reformist' papacy to be universally accepted as the arbiter of thrones and their succession; William's homage therefore constituted a valuable precedent. Not surprisingly, Alexander gave the proposed invasion of England his blessing. It has sometimes been queried why Harold did not send his own embassy to counter William's arguments. Almost certainly, the answer is that he thought it a waste of time on two grounds: the method of electing a king in England had nothing to do with the

⁷⁸⁵ Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, op. cit., p. 187. Hildebrand was almost certainly reminding William of his support for him at this point when he wrote, on April 24, 1080: "I believe it is known to you, most excellent son, how great was the love I ever bore you, even before I ascended the papal throne, and how active I have shown myself in your affairs; above all how diligently I laboured for your advancement to royal rank. In consequence I suffered dire calumny through certain brethren insinuating that by such partisanship I gave sanction for the perpetration of great slaughter. But God was witness to my conscience that I did so with a right mind, trusting in God's grace and, not in vain, in the virtues you possessed" (in Harriet Harvey Wood, *The Battle of Hastings*, London: Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 139).

pope and was not a proper area for his intervention; and, in any case, the pope was now the creature of the Normans in southern Italy and would ultimately do what they ordered him to do. Harold was right: Alexander II blessed all the Norman marauding expeditions of the 1060s.

“But although papal sanction for William’s ‘enterprise of England’ was morally worthless, it was both a great propaganda and diplomatic triumph for the Normans. It was a propaganda victory because it allowed William to pose as the leader of crusaders in a holy war, obfuscating and mystifying the base, materialistic motives of his followers and mercenaries. It also gave the Normans a great psychological boost, for they could perceive themselves as God’s elect, and it is significant that none of William’s inner circle entertained doubts about the ultimate success of the English venture. Normandy now seemed the spearhead of a confident Christianity, on the offensive for the first time in centuries, whereas earlier [Western] Christendom had been beleaguered by Vikings to the north, Hungarians to the east and Islam to the south. It was no accident that, with Hungary and Scandinavia recently Christianised, the Normans were the vanguard in the first Crusade, properly so called, against the Islamic heathens in the Holy Land.”⁷⁸⁶

This wider potential gain from an alliance with William seems to have been the pope’s main motive for his blessing of the invasion. Harold’s perjury and Stigand’s uncanonicity were useful excuses, but no more. After all, papal legates had sat with Stigand at a council in 1062, before the invasion, and again at Winchester, after the invasion, in 1070; and he had consecrated Remigius as Bishop of Dorchester in 1067. Alexander was clearly able to overlook these minor misdemeanours in the interests of Church politics. But the chance of gaining control over the Churches both of Normandy and England if William won, and of a fruitful long-term partnership with the Normans in the East – that was another matter.⁷⁸⁷

However, it is unlikely that William obtained the support of other major European powers for his invasion of England, as William of Poitiers claims. “It is highly unlikely, for example,” writes Ian Walker, “that Swein of Denmark gave his backing to William’s enterprise. He would be more likely to welcome Harold’s accession since the latter might favour aiding his Danish cousin against his Norwegian enemies, as had his father Earl Godwine. It should be noted here that Swein had just emerged from a long and bloody way with Norway and was fearful of further trouble. In this context, William of Poitiers contradicts himself when he later speaks of the Danes sending troops to assist Harold against the Normans. This contradiction somewhat undermines our confidence in the further claim made by Poitiers that the Emperor Henry IV provided his own endorsement for William’s claim. This seems unlikely. Henry IV or his regents, since he was still in his minority. Had many other concerns and the contemporary Annals of Corvey compiled

⁷⁸⁶ F. McLynn, *1066: The Year of the Three Battles* London: Jonathan Cape, 1998, pp. 182-183.

⁷⁸⁷ Walker, *Harold. The Last Anglo-Saxon King*, Sutton Publishing, 2006, pp. 167-169.

in that royal monastery in Saxony were to describe William in 1066 as removing the 'legitimate' King of England (Harold) and seizing his kingdom. What these diplomatic 'successes' described by Poitiers seem to represent is nothing more than the fact that neither Swein nor Henry IV were in a position to interfere directly in William's plans."⁷⁸⁸

As long as King Edward had been alive, Hildebrand's party had been restrained from attacking England both by the king's Europe-wide renown as a wonderworker and by the lack of a military force suitable for the task in hand. But now that Edward was dead⁷⁸⁹, William's suit presented Hildebrand with the opportunity for the "holy war" he had wanted for so long.

William's army invaded the south of England in September, 1066. Meanwhile, King Harald Hardrada of Norway had invaded the north. On September 20 the English King Harold defeated the Norwegian army in the last great victory of Orthodoxy over Viking paganism, and then marched south to meet the Normans with the minimum of rest and without waiting for reinforcements. The reason for this haste, David Howarth argues, is that Harold had now, for the first time, heard that he and his followers had been excommunicated by the Pope and that William was fighting with the pope's blessing and under a papal banner, with a tooth of St. Peter encrusted in gold around his neck. "This meant that he was not merely defying William, he was defying the Pope. It was doubtful whether the Church, the army and the people would support him in that defiance: at best, they would be bewildered and half-hearted. Therefore, since a battle had to be fought, it had to be at once, without a day's delay, before the news leaked out. After that, if the battle was won, would be time to debate the Pope's decision, explain that the trial had been a travesty, query it, appeal against it, or simply continue to defy it."⁷⁹⁰

On October 14/27, in a long, hard-fought battle in which both sides suffered heavy losses, the English defensive line was finally broken when King Harold was killed by an arrow in the eye, after which he was savagely mutilated by the Norman knights. In an act of unprecedented barbarity, when Harold's mother, Countess Gytha, pleaded for the body of her royal son from William, even offering him its weight in pure gold, the Bastard refused. It was thought that the monks had buried the body in the monastery Harold founded at Waltham. But the body was not found in spite of intensive searches... The mystery of its whereabouts was solved only in 1954, when a mutilated corpse answering to the description of the martyred king was discovered under an unmarked slab in his family's church of the Holy Trinity

⁷⁸⁸ Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁷⁸⁹ He prophesied on his deathbed that England was under God's curse and would soon be afflicted by fire and sword and be invaded by demons (Anonymous, *Vita Aedwardi Regis* (The Life of Edward the King), edited by Frank Barlow, Nelson's Medieval Texts, 1962). The prophecy was accurate.

⁷⁹⁰ David Howarth, *1066: The Year of the Conquest*, Milton Keynes: Robin Clark, 1977, p. 164.

“At first,” writes François Neveux, “the new king hoped that he could win round his former adversaries. He considered that he had been quite within his rights to conquer the country, since he had been promised the throne by the previous king, Edward. ‘God’s judgement’ having favoured him, he assumed that the English would all rally to him without any problem. We know of one English reaction from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (version D). The anonymous author, who seems to be resigned to the inevitable, asserts that the English were punished for their sins. At first, William presented himself as the successor of the Anglo-Saxon kings, not only Edward, but Harold also. He drafted a number of documents in Old English, and made an effort to learn the language of his new people. Some this attitude may be glimpsed in the Bayeux Tapestry, which is one of the first testimonies we possess of these events. In it, Harold is referred to as ‘king’, just as he is in a number of charters. He is even singled out and praised for his bravery. The Latin commentary is very neutral, and may be read in both a pro-English and a pro-Norman light. This early line only lasted a few years, until it came up against the harsh reality of Anglo-Saxon rebellions.

“The first rebellion broke out in Exeter, in the south-west of the kingdom, in 1067-8: it was easily quelled. The most serious rebellion took place in the north, in several stages, during 1069-70. It was harshly put down by the king, who systematically ravaged the region. The Fens, around the Isle of Ely, were the scene of a final rebellion, in 1070-1...”⁷⁹²

During these rebellions, according to *Domesday Book* (1086) the North was made a wasteland for a generation after the Conquest. So terrible was the slaughter, and the destruction of holy churches and relics, that the Norman bishops who took part in the campaign were required to do penance when they returned home. But the Pope who had blessed this unholy slaughter did no penance. Rather, he sent his legates to England, who, at the false council of Winchester in 1070, deposed Archbishop Stigand and most of the English bishops, thereby integrating the “rebellious” land into his religious empire. For the Norman Conquest was, in effect, the first crusade of the “reformed” Papacy against Orthodox Christendom. As Professor Douglas writes: “It is beyond doubt that the latter half of the eleventh century witnessed a turning-point in the history of Western Christendom, and beyond doubt Normandy and the Normans played a dominant part in the transformation which then occurred... They assisted the papacy to rise to a new political domination, and they became closely associated with the reforming movement in the Church which the papacy came to direct. They contributed also to a radical modification of the relations between Eastern and Western Europe with

⁷⁹¹ John Pollock, *Haroldus Rex*, Bosham: Penny Royal Publications, 1996.

⁷⁹² Neveux, *The Normans*, Philadelphia: Running Press, 2008, p. 139.

results that still survive. The Norman Conquest of England may thus in one sense be regarded as but part of a far-flung endeavour..."⁷⁹³

It follows that if William had lost, then, as John Hudson writes, "the reformers in the papacy, who had backed William in his quest for the English throne, might have lost their momentum. Normandy would have been greatly weakened..."⁷⁹⁴ In other words, the whole course of European history might have been changed...

All William's barons and bishops owned their land as his vassals; and when, on August 1, 1086, William summoned all the free tenants of England to an assembly at Salisbury and imposed upon them an oath of loyalty directly to himself, he became in effect the sole landowner of England - that is, the owner of all its land.

Thus was born *the feudal monarchy*, a new kind of despotism. As R.H.C. Davis explains, this feudal monarchy was in fact "a New Leviathan, the medieval equivalent of a socialist state. In a socialist state, the community owns, or should own, the means of production. In a feudal monarchy, the king did own all the land - which in the terms of medieval economy might fairly be equated with the means of production.

"The best and simplest example of a feudal monarchy is to be found in England after the Norman Conquest. When William the Conqueror defeated Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings (1066), he claimed to have established his legitimate right to succeed Edward the Confessor as King of England, but, owing to Harold's resistance, he was also able to claim that he had won the whole country by right of conquest. Henceforward, every inch of land was to be his, and he would dispose of it as he thought fit."⁷⁹⁵

As we have seen, William had conquered England with the blessing of Archdeacon Hildebrand. And shortly after his bloody pacification of the country he imposed the new canon law of the reformed papacy upon the English Church. This pleased Hildebrand, now Pope Gregory VII, who was therefore prepared to overlook the fact that William considered that he owed his kingdom to his sword and God alone: "The king of the English, although in certain matters he does not comport himself as devoutly as we might hope, nevertheless in that he has neither destroyed nor sold the Churches of God [!]; that he has taken pains to govern his subjects in peace and justice [!!]; that he has refused his assent to anything detrimental to the apostolic see, even when solicited by certain enemies of the cross of Christ; and that he has compelled priests on oath to put away their wives and laity to forward the tithes they were withholding from us - in all these respects he has shown himself more worthy of approbation and honour than other kings..."

⁷⁹³ Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹⁴ Hudson, "The Norman Conquest", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 4, N 1, January, 2003, p. 23.

⁷⁹⁵ R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, pp. 284, 285.

The "other kings" Gregory was referring to included, first of all, the Emperor Henry IV of Germany, who, unlike William, did not support the Pope's "reforms". If William had acted like Henry, then there is no doubt that Pope Gregory would have excommunicated him, too. And if William had refused to co-operate with the papacy, then there is equally no doubt that the Pope would have incited his subjects to wage a "holy war" against him, as he did against Henry.

But William, by dint of brute force within and subtle diplomacy without, managed to achieve complete control over both Church and State, while at the same time paradoxically managing to remain on relatively good terms with the most autocratic Pope in history. For totalitarian rulers only respect rivals of the same spirit. Thus did the papocaesarist totalitarianism of Hildebrand beget the caesaropapist totalitarianism of William the Bastard...

William's control of the Church was described by Edmer of Canterbury: "Now, it was the policy of King William to maintain in England the usages and laws which he and his fathers before him were accustomed to have in Normandy. Accordingly he made bishops, abbots and other nobles throughout the whole country of persons of whom (since everyone knew who they were, from what estate they had been raised and to what they had been promoted) it would be considered shameful ingratitude if they did not implicitly obey his laws, subordinating to this every other consideration; or if any one of them presuming upon the power conferred by any temporal dignity dared raise his head against him. Consequently, all things, spiritual and temporal alike, waited upon the nod of the King... He would not, for instance, allow anyone in all his dominion, except on his instructions, to recognize the established Pontiff of the City of Rome or under any circumstance to accept any letter from him, if it had not first been submitted to the King himself. Also he would not let the primate of his kingdom, by which I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, otherwise Dobernia, if he were presiding over a general council of bishops, lay down any ordinance or prohibition unless these were agreeable to the King's wishes and had been first settled by him. Then again he would not allow any one of his bishops, except on his express instructions, to proceed against or excommunicate one of his barons or officers for incest or adultery or any other cardinal offence, even when notoriously guilty, or to lay upon him any punishment of ecclesiastical discipline."⁷⁹⁶

Again, in a letter to the Pope in reply to the latter's demand for fealty, William wrote: "I have not consented to pay fealty, nor will I now, because I never promised it, nor do I find that any of my predecessors ever paid it to your predecessors."⁷⁹⁷ In the same letter he pointedly called Archbishop

⁷⁹⁶ Edmer, *Istoria Novorum in Anglia* (A History of the New Things in England); translated by Geoffrey Bosanquet, London: Cresset Press.

⁷⁹⁷ Quoted in Douglas & Greenway, *English Historical Documents*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, p. 647.

Lanfranc "my vassal" – that is, not the Pope's! Here we see the way in which the language of feudalism, of the mutual rights and obligations of lords and vassals, had crept into the language of Church-State relations at the highest level...

The Popes therefore had to wait until William's death before gradually asserting their personal control over the English Church... Nevertheless, the early Plantagenet kings of England inherited a power that was unique in Western Europe, and they took care to retain it, especially through the institution of the courts. As Francis Fukuyama writes, "of all European polities, the English state was by far the most centralized and powerful. This state grew out of the king's court and its ability to offer justice across the whole realm. Already by the year 1200 it boasted permanent institutions staffed by professional or semiprofessional officials; it issued a rule saying that no case concerning the possession of land could be initiated without a writ from the king's court; and it was able to tax the entire realm."⁷⁹⁸

Many have believed that the Norman Conquest was good for England; for it was from that time that the country began her slow ascent to prominence and power in European and world affairs. However, "as Scripture points out, it is bastards who are spoiled, the legitimate sons, who are able to carry on the family tradition, are punished (Hebrews 12.8)."⁷⁹⁹ As an Orthodox nation, England had been constantly stretched on the rack of suffering by successive waves of pagan invaders; but as a fallen and heretical nation, while suffering that which all men suffer through living in a fallen world, the English did not suffer what the great Messianic Christian nations – the Jews of the Old Testament, the Greeks of the Byzantine Empire and under the Turkish yoke, the Russians to the present day – have suffered in bearing the cross of the true confession of faith. There were no more catastrophic defeats, no more successful invasions from abroad to rouse the people from their spiritual sleep. For "why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint..." (Isaiah 1.5).

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The scene towards the end of William's reign in 1087 is one of almost unrelieved gloom. As Edmer writes: "How many of the human race have fallen on evil days! The sons of kings and dukes and the proud ones of the land are fettered with manacles and irons, and in prison and in gaol. How many have lost their limbs by the sword or disease, have been deprived of their eyes, so that when released from prison the common light of the world is a prison for them! They are the living dead for whom the sun - mankind's greatest pleasure - now has set. Blessed are those who are consoled by eternal hope; and afflicted are the unbelieving, for, deprived of all their goods and

⁷⁹⁸ Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 272.

⁷⁹⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*, New York: Touchstone, 1996, p. 38.

also cut off from heaven, their punishment has now begun..."⁸⁰⁰

For some time, the more sensitive of the English felt that they were indeed "cut off from heaven", having lost their inheritance in the Orthodox Church and kingdom. Thus an anonymous English poet wrote in the early twelfth century: "The teachers are lost, and many of the people, too."⁸⁰¹ Later, less religious generations of English have also felt that much was lost as a result of "1066 and all that". As Harriet Harvey Wood writes, "one fact is undisputed: it wiped out overnight a civilisation that, for its wealth, its political arrangements, its arts, its literature and its longevity, was unique in Dark Age Europe, and deserves celebration. In the general instability, lawlessness and savagery of the times, Anglo-Saxon England stood out as a beacon."⁸⁰²

This civilization was a variant of *Orthodox Autocracy* – otherwise known as Romanity or Byzantinism. It was replaced by a *feudal monarchy*. As R.H.C. Davies explains, feudal monarchy was "a New Leviathan, the medieval equivalent of a socialist state. In a socialist state, the community owns, or should own, the means of production. In a feudal monarchy, the king did own all the land – which in the terms of medieval economy might fairly be equated with the means of production.

"The best and simplest example of a feudal monarchy is to be found in England after the Norman Conquest. When William the Conqueror defeated Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings (1066), he claimed to have established his legitimate right to succeed Edward the Confessor as King of England, but, owing to Harold's resistance, he was also able to claim that he had won the whole country by right of conquest. Henceforward, every inch of land was to be his, and he would dispose of it as he thought fit. As is well known, he distributed most of it to his Norman followers, but he did not give it to them in absolute right...

"Apparently as the result of one day's fighting (14 October, 1066), England received a new royal dynasty, a new aristocracy, a virtually new Church, a new art, a new architecture and a new language."⁸⁰³

The Conqueror's ownership of the land was established in *Domesday Book*, which thereby became the record of the day of doom of the Orthodox Christian autocracy in the West. As Professor Neveux writes, "Like Christ on the Day of Judgement examining the actions of all men, the King of England would know all the inhabitants and all the properties in his kingdom... No other document of this kind has been preserved in Western Europe, nor was

⁸⁰⁰ *Liber Confortarius*; translated in Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066*, p. 29.

⁸⁰¹ At about the same time the famous scholar Abelard of Paris noted: "The Fathers were guided by the Holy Spirit, but we are not" (quoted by Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, p. 19).

⁸⁰² Wood, *The Battle of Hastings*, London; Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁰³ R.H.C. Davies, *The Normans and their Myth*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, p. 103.

any ever made..."⁸⁰⁴

"Domesday was a good word for it," writes Melvyn Bragg. "Twenty years after the Battle of Hastings, William sent out his officers to take stock of his kingdom. The monks of Peterborough were still recording the events of history in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and they noted, disapprovingly, that not one piece of land escaped the survey, 'not even an ox or a cow or a pig'. William claimed all.

"There are two volumes of the Domesday Book (one called Little Domesday, the return from East Anglia) and they show how complete the Norman takeover of English land was and how widespread their influence and their language. Half the country was in the hands of just one hundred and ninety men. Half of that was held by just eleven men."⁸⁰⁵

"By the time the date for Domesday Book was compiled in 1086," writes Marc Morris, "the elite had been almost completely wiped out: of the 500 or so top individuals listed in the survey as tenants of the king, only 13 had English names, and of 7,000 or so subtenants, no more than 10 percent were natives. The aristocracy of Anglo-Saxon England had been almost completely swept away - killed in battle, driven into exile or forced to exist in suppressed circumstances."⁸⁰⁶

Harriet Harvey Wood writes: "We have the testimony of Domesday Book that by 1086 only 8 per cent of English land remained in the hands of those who had owned it in 1066. William of Malmesbury in the following century confirmed that England had become 'the residence of foreigners and the property of strangers; at the present time there is no Englishmen who is either earl, bishop, or abbot; strangers all, they prey upon the riches and vitals of England...'"⁸⁰⁷

Robert Tombs has summed up the new, in essence totalitarian, system as follows: "Social, economic and political control of the land and its people - what in the eighteenth century would retrospectively be termed the 'feudal system' - was given a more centralized and rigorous form after the Conquest swept away many existing rights and eliminated the English thegns. The Conqueror at once granted land - 'fiefs', or 'fees' - to his barons in return for their services, military and political, symbolized by the ceremony of homage, a public oath of allegiance. They in turn granted it to their own followers, for similar allegiance and services: England's 50,000 square miles could supply about 7,500 knights' fees of on average six or seven square miles. At the lowest level, 'natives', 'Anglici', 'rustics', 'serfs', 'villeins' (the words

⁸⁰⁴ Neveux, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁸⁰⁵ Bragg, *The Adventure of English*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003, pp. 38-39. For comparison's sake, we may note that about one-third of modern Russia's wealth is in the hands of 110 billionaires.

⁸⁰⁶ Morris, "What the Normans did for Us", *BBC History Magazine*, November, 2016, p. 34.

⁸⁰⁷ Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

overlapped) were allotted land and protection in return for rent, labour and other services. Many thousands of previously free English landholders became legally subject to the new lords. Recalled an early historian, 'it was even disgraceful to be called English.' Over 70 percent of tenants were villeins, holding 15-40 acres or 'cottagers', with five acres or less; and many of the former employed paid labourers or slaves.

"All land and all men were now legally part of this hierarchy, which was buttressed by an ideology of lordship, duty and loyalty, of which the cult of chivalry and the Arthurian romances would later be the most idealized example. In theory, it gave rights as well as duties to all (even, to a limited extent, to villeins). 'Glanvill' (the 1180s treatise on law traditionally attributed to Henry II's Chief Justice, Ranulf Glanvill) stated that 'the bond of trust in lordship should be mutual'. However unequal the relationship, it did give some protection to dependants, and established a principle of reciprocity. The most unpopular landlords were not barons but monks: the monasteries were efficient and impersonal exploiters with long memories and clear consciences. The military foundation on which feudalism was supposedly based – service in arms was the prime duty owed – was never fully applied, and money was always a substitute. Towns and their inhabitants were always partly outside it.

"The English version of this 'feudal system' was unlike that elsewhere in Europe. The post-Conquest Crown recognized no powers or rights independent of the king. Nor did barons possess large continuous territories, but only scattered holdings. England escaped the trend that tormented the Continent: central authority did not fragment, but was strengthened. Great barons could never create autonomous and warring principalities. They had no jurisdiction over their vassals higher than that of the king's judges. A French historian comments that 'the great success of medieval England was to combine an early centralization of justice with recognition of local liberties, buttressed by popular juries.'

"What about the majority of the population? Pre-Conquest society was later idealized as embodying 'Anglo-Saxon liberties',⁸⁰⁸ but it was nevertheless... subject to heavy taxation and compulsory labour, and about 12 percent of the people were slaves – a status that the Normans gradually abolished in England, then in Wales and later in Ireland. It was also exposed to invasion and internal conflict. Even so the Conquest was disastrous for English peasants as a whole, through the direct effects of war, greater impositions, and the subjection of many thousands of freemen to serfdom. The luckier ones managed to remain as free tenants (14 percent of those listed in Domesday Book), or held subordinate positions as estate managers, foresters, huntsmen and minor royal officers. The Conquest may have increased a common sense of Englishness among the subject population: the

⁸⁰⁸ The Anglo-Saxon liberties were were invoked at the time of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, and again by Edmund Burke during the French Revolution. (V.M.)

old divide between Dane and Saxon seems to have disappeared. Many must have realized that their personal fate was linked with that of the country. When testifying about local affairs, jurors in the twelfth century sometimes spoke of 'the Conquest of England' or referred to the time 'before the Normans conquered England'. In some places, the customary rights of Anglo-Saxon days were successfully claimed, and long after 1066 peasants appealed to privileges granted by the Confessor, Canute or even Offa.

"There were two groups of Englishmen, and some women, who retained power, wealth or status. The first group were townspeople. Although the Conquest led to an influx of urban immigrants, the English remained a strong presence, including among the most prominent groups - moneyers, goldsmiths, moneylenders (among them there were also Jewish communities), merchants and royal officers. They were the only significant English group whose wealth and influence could approach that of the French landed magnates, with whom some of them mixed even at the level of the royal court. There were occupational hazards, however: in the 1120s many moneyers were castrated and had their right hands cut off by Henry I for debasing the currency. The second group were churchmen. As we have noted, the highest ranks of the clergy - commanding immense economic and political as well as spiritual power - were close to Englishmen. But the lower levels - parish clergy, cathedral canons, archdeacons, monks, nuns, hermits and anchoresses - remained strongly and sometimes predominantly English in background and culture. Their oral teaching (mostly in English) and writings (in English, Latin and French) maintained English religious and cultural traditions. Some, notably William of Malmesbury (c. 1090 - c. 1142), librarian of Malmesbury Abbey, and Henry of Huntingdon (c. 1088- c. 1157), hereditary clergyman-squire of Little Stokely and archdeacon of Huntingdon, both of mixed French and English parentage, were responsible... for writing a new English history which helped to define the post-Conquest nation...

"The Normans built the grandest, the most experimental, the most expensive buildings in a variety of styles, surpassing the greatest on the Continent. The new Winchester Cathedral (begun in 1079) was the longest in western Europe; London's White Tower (c. 1080) was the biggest keep in western Europe; Westminster Great Hall (1097) was the largest secular covered space; Norwich castle (c. 1100) was the most ambitious secular building in northern Europe; Christ Church priory, Canterbury, possessed the greatest glass windows in all Europe. Probably more cut stone than in the Pyramids was used in this, the most concentrated construction effort in England between the Romans and the Victorians, amounting to the greatest per capita investment ever seen in England until the Industrial Revolution. Quite a lot, built in haste, fell down... But what remained was stupendous, matched then only by Rome itself, Constantinople and Kiev..."⁸⁰⁹

And yet these vast stone structures, so different from the much humbler

⁸⁰⁹ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

and cosier structures of the Anglo-Saxons, symbolized as nothing else the complete subjection of the native population. Perhaps the most striking of all is Durham cathedral (c. 1093-1140), built as if to crush England's greatest saint, who had forced even William the Conqueror to flee. This was truly the English equivalent of the pyramids, which could only have been built by a horrendous use of slave labour and the impoverishment of England's northernmost and poorest province.

Tombs continues: "Buildings and lands came to embody new family identities. Wealthy Anglo-Saxons had spread bequests widely among relatives to maintain the cohesion of an extended clan, very conscious of far-flung degrees of kinship. Norman wealth went into stones and mortar: according to William of Malmesbury, the Saxons had lived richly in 'mean and despicable' houses, while the Normans lived frugally 'in noble and splendid mansions'. The practice grew of transmitting land where possible to a single male heir by primogeniture - a social revolution. The family became smaller and more vertical, and attached to a particular place. Names and titles reflected this change. Unlike in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian societies, which used Christian names and patronymics (e.g. Harold Godwinson) or identifying names based on characteristics or occupation (Thorkell the Tall, Eadric the Steersman), the Norman elite adopted permanent family names derived from land, castle or ancestor (Hubert de Vaux, Roger de Chateaufort, Richard Fitzerald). For the rest, individual nicknames (from place, job, physique - John Wood, Robert Smith, Thomas Becket) in time became permanent family surnames.

"There was no greater cultural conquest than in language. Working shortly before 1066, a thousand writers and copyists of English have been identified. This may sound few, but it is several times the number writing Italian texts in Renaissance Italy. The Normans eradicated written English as the language of government and undermined it as the language of literature, and spoken English ceased to be the language of elite society. This change was confirmed by England's attachment to the Angevin empire in 1154. It was long believed that English largely disappeared except as a peasant dialect. Walter Scott, in *Ivanhoe* (1819), made the famous point that English became the language of the farmyard (swine, ox, calf) and French that of the table (pork, beef, veal). But this does not mean that English was crude, and French sophisticated. As we have seen, Old English and Irish were the most developed of Europe's vernaculars. English had a standardized writing from the late tenth century, whereas French had no written literature at all until - ironically - it was pioneered in post-Conquest England..., perhaps in imitation of Anglo-Saxon literature. Replacing English required two languages: Latin, for legal, administrative, ecclesiastical, commercial and intellectual contexts; French for verbal communication among the new elites. The sophistication of English government drove a high level of lay literacy. 'Unless a man knows French he is little thought of,' wrote the chronicler Robert of Gloucester in about 1290; 'but low-born men keep to English and to their own speech still'.

“Spoken English thus survived. Moreover, it soon predominated in everyday speech: the Normans needed it to communicate with the great majority of the population. Often within a generation, smaller landlords not only became bilingual in French and English – except among the highest nobility and at court – probably became their first language. Knowledge of French remained an essential social attribute, but noble children had to be sent to France to learn it properly. Bilingualism became a mark of ‘English’ identity among the descendants of the Normans. Trilingualism (with Latin) was the norm for the educated. In practice, there was a hybridization, or ‘creolization’, with the languages being mixed together, creating huge changes in vocabulary and grammar. French and Latin words were imported into English, though more slowly than Scott’s example might suggest. For example, in the popular verse history of Britain, Layamon’s *Brut* (c. 1200), a rare example of non-religious literature in English, there were only 250 French loan-words in 30,000 lines.

“So written English too survived. It retained certain grass-roots legal functions. In important monastic outposts, notably Worcester, Hereford, Winchester, Canterbury, Peterborough and Exeter, which we can properly call patriotic, it was propagated as the way of teaching the people. The monks of Peterborough Abbey were the last who continued to write the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, until 1154; but they stopped using formal English in 1121, when it was replaced by a local dialect – a sign of how quickly the old formal language was forgotten. By the end of the century, very few could still read it. In 1230, a monk at Worcester was trying to learn it – the West Midlands seem to have maintained a tradition – but by 1300 Old English had become an ‘ydioma incognita’. Yet English, in older and newer forms, continued to be written in religious centres such as Worcester and Hereford. Even after the Conquest, the production and use of vernacular texts was rarely paralleled anywhere in medieval Europe. These were not luxury products, but were for everyday use in prayer, preaching and ritual, and hence for the mass of the people English remained the intimate language of belief and salvation. This is one of the things that prevented it, changing though it inevitably was, from becoming a dying peasant dialect. The French-speaking elite often mocked it as uncouth, and so using and writing it was somewhat subversive. One Worcester scribe left a list of the notable churchmen who ‘taught our people in English’; and he added, ‘not dim, their light: it fair glowed’.

“English continued in place-names, though little in personal names. There is perhaps nothing that distances us more instinctively from the pre-Conquest English than names: Ealdgyth, Aelfgifu, Colswein, Eadric, Waltheof (even if a few were revived during the Romantic period – Karl Marx called one of his sons Edgar). Our names since the 1100s have been overwhelmingly Norman, a personal form of cultural conquest through snobbery: William (which became the most common), John, Richard, Robert, Margaret, Mary, Emma. In a significant conciliatory gesture, the sons of Henry III were christened Edward and Edmund, signaling a link with the

pre-Conquest monarchy; and the former became King Edward I in 1272.”⁸¹⁰

However, the very fact that this King Edward was called “the first” when in fact there were at least three King Edwards before him shows how the Normans sought to blot out the pre-Conquest history of England as if it had never existed...

Tombs concludes: “The Conquest thus began to transform much of English culture. But it is likely that Latin, the common language of [Western] Christendom, would in any case have been increasingly used in legal, devotional and intellectual matters, as was happening across Europe: even before 1066, despite the prominence of the vernacular, there was more writing in Latin than in English. Choices of names would also probably have changed, as elsewhere in Europe, as the Church encouraged more uniform devotions. French would have come into greater use among the educated and the fashionable, especially in courtly and chivalric literature. This was not only because of the Conquest; the peak of borrowing from French came three centuries after 1066, a consequence of the cultural magnetism of Paris and the other great French cities, which affected all of western Europe.

“There was a dazzling literary revival in England in the century following the Conquest – but in Latin and French. It was probably the English tradition of vernacular writing that encouraged the development of writing in French. Some of the earliest works of French literature came from England or had English connections. The famous *Chanson de Roland*, an epic poem of Charlemagne’s battles against the Saracens, was first written down in England in the early twelfth century.⁸¹¹ The first historical work in French was Geoffrey Gaimar’s history of the English, the *Estoire des Engleis* (c. 1136-37), an accessible work in fashionable French verse based on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. English authors – or authors in England, often of mixed Anglo-Norman families – attained a European influence greater than ever before, and rarely equaled since.

“Their most important works were histories or historical romances in Latin – the first major works of English history since Bede 400 years before. William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1126) was a continuous history of England from the arrival of the Saxons to Henry I, and Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum* went from the mythical arrival of the Trojan hero Brutus to 1154, just before the author’s death. The most extraordinary of these works went beyond English history, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), ‘one of the supreme achievements of the historical imagination’, which transformed English visions of the past. As noted earlier, Geoffrey and his emulators plunged into legend and fantasy to create a

⁸¹⁰ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56.

⁸¹¹ It was written between 1040 and 1115. There is a single extant manuscript of the *Song of Roland* in Old French held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This copy dates between 1129 and 1165 and was written in Anglo-Norman. (V.M.)

prestigious new common Anglo-British epic. It became one of the most popular historical works in the European Middle Ages, far more widely read even than Bede, and is the only historical work known to have been in the possession of great nobles. It also produced popular spin-offs. The Jerseyman Wace, a monk in Caen, produced in 1155 a popular French version of the sage, called the *Roman de Brut* (Brutus), which, among other things, added the story of Arthur's Round Table. Significantly, he often translated *Britannia* as *Engleterre*. Layman ('Lawman') prepared his English translation of *Brut* in the early 1200s – an oddity, as even patriotic writings (such as the *Roman de Waldef* – about Earl Waltheof) were usually in French. Walter Map, a Herefordshire priest at Henry II's court, wrote a French version of the Grail and Lancelot stories (c. 1180). A later prose version of *Brut* was very widely read in Latin, French and above all English – more copies survive than of any other medieval manuscript, and it was repeatedly printed by Caxton after 1480.

“Thus for more than two centuries English after 1066 almost ceased to be the language of secular literary culture, as the elite no longer commissioned major works in English. A rare exception, such as Layamon's *Brut*, was perhaps an early sign of a new appetite for literature in English. But especially in the religious sphere English writing – sermons, psalms, saints' lives, poetry, songs – continued as one element of a bilingual or trilingual culture. One of the most famous pieces of early music – ‘Sumer is icumen in / Lhude sing cuccu’ – is a song written down in Reading Abbey in about 1250, using the same tune as a hymn. English did not therefore decline into a merely spoken range of peasant dialects, as was traditionally thought...”⁸¹²

Indeed, Englishness survived. “By 1200 at the latest,” continues Tombs, “the descendants of the victors of Hastings (with the exception of a small number of cosmopolitan aristocrats with land in several countries) had become English, by speaking English, describing themselves generally as English, adopting what were thought of as English manner (including drinking), and expressing pride in their English lineage, gilded with the glories of Brutus and King Arthur. When the [French-born] chancellor Thomas Becket was sent on an embassy to Paris in 1158, he was determined ‘to show and demonstrate the opulence of English luxury’: this included bringing lavish presents, a choir singing English songs, and two wagonloads of ale, ‘that clear, salubrious drink, better in taste and colour than wine’ ...

“[However,] the Englishness of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century elite was... very different from Englishness before 1066, whose culture there was no effort to rehabilitate or revive. Sir Lancelot replaced Beowulf as a literary hero. Relations with the outside world were transformed. England before 1066 had been on the defensive, and relations with island neighbours (despite their regular raids or invasions) had been generally cautious. The Norman Conquest made a crucial change. Before 1066 the kingdom served principally

⁸¹² Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

to defend the country, the eard. After 1066, England served to support largely absentee king in their pursuit of external power. The Normans extended their conquest to the Celtic lands and entangled England in endless conflicts on the Continent. This was the real 'Norman Yoke'.

"Its burden created the embryo of a national polity: the *communitas regni* appealed to the Magna Carta and then again in the barons' revolt of 1258. This 'community of the realm' - ultimately everyone - united in asserting rights against their rulers, especially when those rulers treated England's interests as secondary. As the barons protested to the Pope in 1258, 'a prince owes all his duty to God, very much to his country [*patria*], much to his family and neighbours, and nothing whatsoever to aliens.' Loyalty to the country could conflict with loyalty to the king, and a sense of foreign oppression became a feature of English identity.

"What was unique about England lies in the realm of politics: the early development, in response to Viking invasions, of a powerful kingdom occupying a defined territory, with a system of government in which a large part of the population participated, whether they liked it or not - through courts and juries, through tithings, through labour, taxation and military service, through the use of royal coins, and, for the powerful, through royal councils and parliaments. Some historians have suggested that this made England the prototype of the nation-state. Similar institutions to those in England had existed at times in other parts of Europe, particularly under the empire of Charlemagne, but they were swept away. In England they survived. Being a powerful and yet vulnerable kingdom, able to raise taxes and impose law and order, and yet, subject to disputed royal succession and foreign invasion, its kings needed the support of their people, and the people high and low needed to control the actions of their kings. Anglo-Saxon institutions, some of very ancient origin, were preserved and developed by the post-Conquest monarchy, which extended royal justice and created a Common Law. The country of Bede's *gens Anglorum* was never divided up into autonomous and warring feudal territories. Instead, the 'community of the realm' imposed the rule of law on its powerful and rapacious post-Conquest monarchs to a degree unique in Europe."⁸¹³

So much that was English survived after 1066, especially in the cultural and political spheres. But we must be clear about what was lost: the Orthodox Autocracy and the Orthodox Church. Autocracy was replaced by Despotism, albeit one tempered by the embryonic Democratism of Magna Carta and the belief that the king was not above the law - England's law, the Common Law. Orthodoxy was replaced by Roman Catholicism - that is, subjection in the spiritual realm, not to Christ, but to the Pope.

In later centuries, occasional appeals were made to what was thought to be

⁸¹³ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

the faith of the Anglo-Saxon Church.⁸¹⁴ But there was little consciousness of the fact that the Norman Conquest marked an ecclesiastical, as well as a political, revolution. For England was now part of the great pseudo-Christian empire of the papacy, which, theoretically at least, had the power to depose her kings, close her churches (which it did in King John's reign) and enroll her soldiers in crusades against the Muslims and Orthodox Christians around the world. Little was said or done about returning to union with the Orthodox of the East - except for those thousand who actually emigrated there. Even the visit, in the early fifteenth century, of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel to England to enlist English help in the defense of Constantinople against the Turks failed to arouse interest in the ancestral faith and Church. For, as Edward Freeman wrote in his massive nineteenth-century history of the Norman Conquest, "so far from being the beginning of our national history, the Norman Conquest was the temporary *overthrow* of our national being..."⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁴ See Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke", in *Puritanism and the Revolution*, London: Penguin Books, 1958, 1990, pp. 58-125.

⁸¹⁵ Freeman, E.A., *A History of the Norman Conquest of England*, Oxford, 1870-1879, p. 1.

51. THE ENGLISH ORTHODOX DIASPORA

Fr. Andrew Phillips describes how ripples from the Norman Conquest spread through Continental Europe. Thus "Alsin, Abbot of St. Augustine's at Canterbury, took refuge in Norway. Sweden, where English missionaries had long been at work was another destination and perhaps Finland too. It was, however, Denmark which proved to be the most popular destination. It was from here that King Swein had thought to mount invasions in 1070 and 1075. These were supported in England, especially in the North and the East where Danish sympathies were strong...

"Many churchmen also fled abroad, their places taken by the feudal warrior-bishops and clergy of the Normans, such as Odo of Bayeux, who fought at Hastings. Scandinavia seems to have been their main destination.

"Other exiles went to the Continent, to Flanders, France and Italy. King Harold's daughter, Gytha, moved further still. She was to marry the Grand-Prince of Kiev, Vladimir, and lived in Kiev, then a great centre of Christian civilization. Here, having been made welcome, she gave birth to several children, of whom the eldest son was named Harold like his grandfather, but also received the Slavic name, Mstislav.⁸¹⁶

"Possibly the greatest emigration, however, was elsewhere; the Old English were attracted above all by the almost mystical name of Constantinople, fixed they believed, as Constantine had believed before them, at the middle of the Earth, joining East and West (which Kipling wrongly said would never meet). It is certain that from the Conquest on, and especially during the 1070's but right on into the middle of the twelfth century, huge numbers of English emigrated to the New Rome. Moreover, this emigration was an emigration of the elite of the country. The great scholar Sir Frank Stenton has discovered that several noble families simply disappeared after the Conquest and they were not all killed at Hastings - they emigrated. It was particularly the young who left to seek a better future elsewhere. In historical terms this emigration is comparable only to the emigration of the Russian elite and nobility in 1917 when confronted by the Bolshevik terror. So great was this emigration, especially it seems from the West Country, the Fens and East Anglia, and so long did it continue, that we must assume that it occurred with the approval of William I and his successors. It seems almost certain that it was their method of ridding themselves of the rebellious Old English ruling class and their supporters among the people. Exile, organised by the State, was after all a bloodless elimination of those who opposed William and the new order. It is no coincidence that the exodus continued right into the

⁸¹⁶ Harold Mstislav became Great Prince of Kiev in succession to his father (1126-1132). He was given the title "the Great" for the excellence of his rule, and is counted among the saints. See N.M. Karamzin, *Predania Vekov*, Moscow: Pravda, 1989, pp. 177-179. The *Patericon* of St Pantaleon Cloister in [Cologne](#) says that "Gytha the Queen" died as a nun on 10 March. A year later Vladimir Monomakh married another woman (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gytha_of_Wessex) (V.M.)

twelfth century. Why did they choose Constantinople? First, because probably already in the Confessor's reign (let us not forget that he was also half-Norman) discontented elements seem already to have left for Constantinople where the Emperor needed men to fight in his armies, especially against the Turks, who posed a threat in the East. Secondly, many Danes and other Scandinavians (such as Harold Hardrada) had formed the elite 'Varangian Guard' there and found fame and fortune; news of this had certainly reached England. Thirdly, what was the future for a young English noble in Norman England? We know that in 1070 a certain Ioannis Rafailis, an Imperial agent or 'prospatharios' came to England recruiting for the Imperial Army. Young Englishmen and Anglo-Danes, especially those of noble birth, would certainly have been attracted. All the more so, since though the Emperor faced the Turks in the East, in the West, especially in Southern Italy, Sicily and Dalmatia, he faced the hated Normans; what better way for an Englishman of avenging himself? Fourthly, there were those who did not like the new order in the Church or in the State under the Normans. Spiritually they could find refuge in Constantinople and the freedom to continue to live in the ritual and the spirit of the Old English Church in the imperial Capital. Perhaps unconsciously their instincts and feelings drew them to that City which symbolised the unity of Christendom through the Old English period and which had had so many connections with the Apostles of the English, Gregory and Augustine..."⁸¹⁷

The contribution of the English exiles was immediately felt. Thus Stephen Lowe writes: "Nikephoros Bryennios, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, describes a palace coup in 1071. Emperor Romanos Diogenes owed his position to being stepfather to the legitimate Emperor Michael VII Doukas. After Romanos was defeated and captured by Seljuk Turks at the disastrous battle of Manzikert, Michael seized the throne on his own account. Varangian guards were used as bullyboys to over-awe the opposition, and Bryennios implies that these palace guards were Englishmen 'loyal from of old to the Emperor of the Romans'."⁸¹⁸

In 1075, continues Phillips, "a fleet of 350 ships (according to another

⁸¹⁷ Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, pp. 29-30. A.A. Vasiliev (*History of the Byzantine Empire*, Madison, Milwaukee and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, vol. II, p. 484) writes: "In the eighties of the eleventh century, at the beginning of the rule of Alexius Comnenus, as the English historian Freeman emphasized in his very well-known work on the conquest of England by the Normans, some convincing indications of the Anglo-Saxon emigration into the Greek Empire were already evident. A western chronicler of the first half of the twelfth century [Ordericus Vitalis] wrote: 'After having lost their liberty the Anglians were deeply afflicted... Some of them shining with the blossom of beautiful youth went to distant countries and boldly offered themselves for the military service of the Constantinopolitan Emperor Alexius.' This was the beginning of the 'Varangian-English bodyguard' which, in the history of Byzantium of the twelfth century, played an important part, such as the 'Varangian-Russian Druzhina' (Company) had played in the tenth and eleventh centuries."

⁸¹⁸ Lowe, "Ancestral Trust: The English in the Eastern Roman Empire", *Medieval History Magazine*, № 13, September, 2004, p. 11.

source 235) left England for exile in 'Micklegarth', the Great City, Constantinople. The commander of this fleet was one Siward (or Sigurd), called Earl of Gloucester. It is not impossible that he is identical with Siward Barn who had taken part in the Fenland uprising of 1071 with Hereward. With him sailed two other earls and eight high-ranking nobles. If, at a conservative estimate, we accept the figure of 235 ships and place forty people in each ship, this would indicate an exodus of nearly 10,000 people, and this was only one group - albeit by far the largest - which left these shores after 1066... When they arrived in Constantinople they found the city under siege and, we are told, thereupon relieved the inhabitants, scattering the Turks before them. This 'relief', and it occurred, earned the gratitude of the Emperor and the English were granted lodging and places in the Imperial Army. The English were particularly valued since they were mostly young, many were of noble birth and they all loathed the Normans. The elite showed such loyalty that they entered the Imperial Household and formed the Emperor's bodyguard. Their exemplary loyalty to the Emperor of the Romans echoed the loyalty of the Old English to the Pre-Conquest Papacy, to St. Gregory the Great, Pope of the Romans.

"We read of English troops fighting at Dyrrachium (Durazzo) in 1081, where they suffered heavy losses against the Normans. Again in the 1080's the Emperor granted the English land on the Gulf of Nicomedia, near Nicaea to build a fortified town known as Civotus.⁸¹⁹ We are told that from the great fleet of 1075 some 4,300 English settled in the City itself, which at that time was the most populous, advanced and cosmopolitan city in the world. Further we read that the English sent priests to Hungary, which was then in close contact with Constantinople, for them to be consecrated bishops, since the English preferred the Latin rite to the Greek rite of 'St. Paul'. According to the sources, far more English than the 4,300 who settled in the city went further still. With the blessing of Emperor Alexis, these went on to recolonise territories lost by the Empire. It is said that they sailed on from the city to the North and the East for six days. Then they arrived at 'the beginning of the Scythian country'. Here they found a land called 'Domapia', which they renamed New England. Here they founded towns and having driven out the invaders, they reclaimed them for the Empire. Moreover, they renamed the towns 'London', 'York' and called others after the towns where they had come from...

"After painstaking research it has been discovered that medieval maps... list no fewer than six towns with names suggesting English settlements. These settlements on maps of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries are located along the northern coast of the Black Sea. One of the names appears as 'Susaco', possibly from 'Saxon'. Another town, situated some 110 miles to the east of the straits of Kerch near the Sea of Azov appears variously as 'Londia', 'Londin' and 'Londina'. On the twelfth century Syrian map the Sea of Azov

⁸¹⁹ Called "Chevetogne" in the West. According to Ordericus Vitalis, the English were given lands in Ionia, where a town was built for them (Thierry, *op. cit.*, p. 230).

itself is called the 'Varang' Sea, the Sea of the Varangians, a name used for the English in Constantinople at this period. It is known that in the thirteenth century a Christian people called the 'Saxi' and speaking a language very similar to Old English inhabited this area, and that troops of the 'Saxi' served in the Georgian army in the twelfth century. There seem to be too many coincidences for us to think that the Sea of Azov was not then the first 'New England'." ⁸²⁰

Concerning this expedition of 1075, Lowe writes: "They sailed to Gibraltar, captured Minorca and Majorca, and then went on to Sicily. They sailed to Miklagard (Constantinople) ruled at that time by Kirjalax (Alexios I), and arrived in the nick of time to save the City from a seaborne invasion by heathens. In gratitude the Emperor gave them permission to re-take a land to the north across the sea, taken from him by the heathens. If they could win it back, it would be theirs. Some stayed in the Emperor's service, most went to this land, and re-took it. They called it England, and gave English names such as London and York to cities they captured and to new ones they built... The land in question is possibly the Crimea, which the Empire had lost not long before." ⁸²¹

Phillips continues: "As for those thousands of Old English who settled in the Great City itself, they may have lived in a quarter known as 'Vlanga' [from 'Varangian'], near the Sea of Marmara..." ⁸²²

In the thirteenth-century *Edwardsaga* we read that Earl Sigurd of Gloucester and his men reached Constantinople "and set the realm of the Greek King free from strife. King Alexius the Tall [Comnenus, 1081-1118) offered them to abide there and guard his body as was the wont of the Varangians... but it seemed to earl Sigurd that it was too small a career to grow old there... They begged the king for some towns of their own... [The Emperor assigned some unnamed lands in the north, if they could re-conquer them. Some stayed behind and took service in Constantinople] but Sigurd and his men came to this land and had many battles there and they took possession and gave it a name and called it England and they gave names to the towns that were there and called them London and York." ⁸²³

Lowe continues: "Joscelyn's *Miracula Sancti Augustini Episcopi Cantuariensis* tells of an Englishman of high rank from Canterbury who 'obtained such favour with the emperor and empress... that he received a dukedom over

⁸²⁰ Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32.

⁸²¹ Lowe, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Other researches indicate that the English conquered land further on the southern shore of the Sea of Azov, and held it for centuries against Tatar onslaughts. Caitlin Green, "The Medieval 'New England'", <http://www.caitlingreen.org/2015/05/medieval-new-england-black-sea.html>. See also A. A. Vasiliev, "The Opening Stages of the Anglo Saxon Immigration to Byzantium in the Eleventh Century," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 9 (1937).

⁸²² Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁸²³ *Edwardsaga*, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassel, 2004, p. 108).

wise soldiers and a large part of the auxiliaries'. He married a rich woman of high family, and had a church built in Constantinople dedicated to Saints Nicholas and Augustine of Canterbury. This church was popular with the English in Byzantium and became the chapel of the Varangians.⁸²⁴ Another report tells of a monk of Canterbury named Joseph, who visited Constantinople in about 1090, on his return from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He found there a number of his own countrymen, and recognised friends of his own among them. They were now in the Imperial household, and were friends of the officer in charge of guarding holy relics. The *Historia Monasterii de Abingdon* records that in the reign of Henry I, an Englishman named Ulfric (from Lincoln in the Danelaw) arrived on a mission from Emperor Alexios - the purpose is not stated, but it may have been a further attempt to hire mercenaries.

"The Byzantine chronicler Kinnamos, writing about 1180-3 of the actions of Emperor John II at the battle of Beroe of 1122, describes 'the axe-bearers who stood around him (they are a Brittanic people who of old served the Roman Emperors)...' *Inglinoi* [English] were present at the disastrous battle of Myriokephalon in 1185 (?). However, by this late stage these Englishmen, whom Emperor Manuel describes as 'some of the leading men of the nobility of England' were more likely to have been Anglo-Normans than Saxon exiles.

"In 1204 the Frankish army of the Fourth Crusade, diverted from its

⁸²⁴ V.G. Vasilevsky (*Works*, St. Petersburg, volume 1, p. 275) has described the history of another church dedicated to the Mother of God: "The saga links a miracle of St. Olaf, who appeared in support of his brother [Harald Hardrada], with the story about the building of a church in honour of this Norwegian king in Constantinople. Immediately after they returned to Micklegarth, the Varangians carried out the vow they had made to build a large church, but the Emperor put obstacles in the way of its consecration and Harald had to devote considerable labour to overcome this stubbornness, etc. It goes without saying that neither in the Byzantine nor in any other sources do we find a trace of evidence that there ever existed in Tsargrad a church dedicated to the Norwegian Olaf, as the saga affirms. Other Scandinavian sources - the saga of Olaf in its shortest edition and the homily on the day of the holy martyr-king both belong to the second half of the 12th century - do not say that the church built in honour of Olaf was called by his name. They represent the event in a somewhat different light. The Byzantine emperor himself, being threatened by pagan enemies, turned in prayer to St. Olaf for protection and gave a vow to build a church in Constantinople 'in the name of the saint and in honour of the Holy Virgin'. But when it came to carrying out his vow it turned out that the Greek emperor did not consider himself or his Church bound to accept the definition of the Norwegian assembly which in 1031 recognised King Olaf, who had been slain in battle, as a saint. The church was built in honour and in the name of the Holy Virgin... The Varangians only helped in its construction and adornment. In this form the story seems much more probably, if not with regard to the reason, at any rate with regard to the consequence, that is, the construction of a Varangian church of St. Mary. It is here that we learn of the 'Varangian Theotokos'."

Phillips (*op. cit.*) writes: "We also know of a convent dedicated to the Mother of God, called Panagia Varangiotissa. This was recorded until at least 1361 and from its name it may well have been founded by an Englishwoman. One of the English exiles, probably a certain Coleman, 'vir sanctus', a holy man educated at St. Augustine's in Canterbury, founded a basilica in the City and had it dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Augustine of Canterbury, his patron." (V.M.)

original aim to attack Muslim Egypt, instead besieged and captured Christian Constantinople. Niketas Choniates was a Roman chronicler of the fighting that led to the City's fall. He writes that an attempted landing near the Palace of Vlachernai was repulsed by Pisan mercenaries and 'the axe-bearing barbarians'.

"The Frankish eyewitness and chronicler Robert de Clari describing the battle tells of the 'English, Danish and Greeks' defending the towers 'with axes and swords'. The Frankish Crusader de Villehardouin reports the walls being manned by English and Danes - and that the fighting was very violent with axes and swords. One of the negotiators sent to the Emperor, de Villehardouin describes walking past Englishmen and Danes, fully armed with their axes, posted at the gate of the city and all the way along to the Palace.⁸²⁵

"There are few mentions of the Varangian Guard after the City's fall, and it is thought they dwindled to a shadow of their former glory. However, traces of the English Varangians still remained. Emperor Michael VIII (1261-1282) who recaptured Constantinople after the Frankish 'Empire' collapsed, refers to the active and repeated use of his 'Englinovarangoi' in defending his reduced Byzantine realm.

"The fourteenth-century De Officiis of Pseudo-Codinus, states that English was used in the acclamation to the Emperor at the Imperial banquet at Christmas - after the Genoese, Pisans and Venetians, came the Inglinisti, clashing their weapons with a loud noise..."⁸²⁶

Perhaps the most lasting image of the English Orthodox in exile is Anna Comnena's description of their last stand against the Normans at the Battle of Durazzo (present-day Albania) in 1081. This was truly the last stand of the English Orthodox, fighting, as was appropriate, in the ranks of the Byzantine Emperor against the Roman Catholic invaders: "The axe-bearing barbarians from the Isle of Thule", as Anna called them, thrust back an attack on their part of the line, and then pursued the Normans into the sea up to their necks. But they had advanced too far, and a Norman cavalry attack threw them back again. "It seems that in their tired condition they were less strong than the Kelts [Normans]. At any rate the barbarian force was massacred there, except for survivors who fled for safety to the sanctuary of the Archangel Michael; all who could went inside the building: the rest climbed to the roof and stood

⁸²⁵ John Godfrey writes of the battle for the city in 1204: "The Franks put up two ladders against a seawall barbican near Blachernae, and two knights and two sergeants, followed by fifteen men-at-arms, managed to get on top of the wall. They found themselves opposed by 'the English and Danes, and the fight which followed was hard and ferocious', says Villehardouin; and the courage of the Anglo- Danes put heart into the hesitant troops inside the barbican, who now threw themselves into the fray" (1204: *The Unholy Crusade*, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 107). Phillips (*op. cit.*) notes that, according to de Clari, these English soldiers had their own priests in Constantinople. (V.M.)

⁸²⁶ Lowe, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

there, thinking that would save their lives. The Latins merely set fire to them and burned the lot, together with the sanctuary...⁸²⁷

Thus did the chant of the English Orthodox warriors, "Holy Cross! Holy Cross!" fall silent on earth. And thus did the Lord accept their sacrifice as a whole-burnt offering to Himself in heaven. "May Michael the standard-bearer lead them into the holy Light, which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed."⁸²⁸

⁸²⁷ *Alexiad*, II, 11, 9; IV, 6; translated by E.R.A. Sewter, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 100, 96, 147-8.

⁸²⁸ *Old Roman Liturgy for the dead*, offertory antiphon.

52. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (3) FROM NICHOLAS II TO GREGORY VII

One of the aims of the papal reform programme, as we have seen, was the enforcement of celibacy on the priesthood. In 1057 street fights broke out between the supporters of Archbishop Guy of Milan, who allowed married priests, and the so-called "Patarenes", who threatened them with death. The papacy sent legates to investigate the matter: Cardinal Peter Damian and Bishop Alexander, the future Pope Alexander II, both advocates of priestly celibacy.⁸²⁹

Hieromonk Enoch writes: "Four years after the Schism of Old Rome and Constantinople (New Rome), we find the increased activity on the part of the Vatican to consolidate its influence.

"In this year, representatives of Pope Stephen IX were sent to the Church of Milan to instruct its Bishop, clergy, and all dependents that it was to be subject completely to Rome in all matters. Caesar Baronius, the well-known Ultramontanist writers, states the clergy and people rose up in great discord against such a suggestion, with the clergy of Milan saying, 'that the Ambrosian Church ought not to be subject to the laws of Rome; that the Pope had no power of judging or ordering matters in that See; and that it would be a great indignity if that Church, which under their ancestors had been always free, should now, to their extreme reproach (which God forbid), become subject to another Church.'

"So great was the anger at what was trying to be done that Baronius states: 'the clamour increased; the people grew into a higher ferment; the bells were rung; the episcopal palace beset; the legate threatened with death.' (Annals, t. xi., p. 262, A.D. 1059, n. 43)."⁸³⁰

In 1059 a quasi-royal *coronation* was introduced into the rite of the inauguration of the new Pope, Nicholas II. Then he decreed that the Popes should be elected by the cardinal-bishops alone, without the participation of the people – or the emperor. "The role of the Roman clergy and people," writes Canning, "was reduced to one of mere assent to the choice. The historical participation of the emperor was by-passed with the formula 'saving the honour and reverence due to our beloved son Henry [IV] who is

⁸²⁹ The matter was complicated by the fact that Archbishop Guy had been invested by Emperor Henry III. Another complication was the fact that Milan was a see with very unpapist attitudes. This could be traced back to its most famous incumbent, St. Ambrose, who had declared that Rome had only "a primacy of confession, not of honour" (*Liber de incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento* (Book on the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord), 4, 32). St. Ambrose, like the medieval popes, was very bold in relation to the secular authorities, having excommunicated the Emperor Theodosius I. However, unlike the papal reformers from Gregory VII onwards, he did not attempt to remove the authorities from power, nor exalt the role of the Roman papacy.

⁸³⁰ Hieromonk Enoch, facebook communication, September, 2015.

for the present regarded as king and who, it is hoped, is going to be emperor with God's grace, inasmuch as we have now conceded this to him and to his successors who shall personally obtain this right from the apostolic see'.⁸³¹

This new method of election, having strengthened the reformers against the Emperor, now encouraged them to return to the struggle against his appointee in Milan. In 1065 Archdeacon Hildebrand, the real power behind the papal throne, gave a knight called Erlembald a papal banner, "the battle-flag of St. Peter", under which he was to renew the struggle against the married priests in Milan. "Whether as a consequence of this or not, victory marked all his efforts. 'He subdued the city by the sword and also by gold, and by many and diverse oaths; none of the nobles could withstand him.' Indeed, by 1071, such was the scale of Erlembald's success that the wretched Archbishop Guy, holed up in his cathedral, and in increasingly poor health, had resolved on clandestine resignation..."⁸³²

Also in 1071, Byzantine Bari in South Italy fell to the Normans, who soon created another absolutist kingdom "of Sicily and Italy" that served as the launch-pad for several invasions of the Byzantine Empire. In the same year the Byzantines suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert, as a result of which most of Anatolia was conceded to the Turks. As Orthodoxy reeled under these hammer blows, - the loss of England, of Southern Italy and of Eastern Anatolia - the worst hammer blow of all, the implosion of the Western Patriarchate, was about to take place...

By 1072 there were two archbishops of Milan - Godfrey, chosen by the Emperor, and Atto, chosen by the reformers. But Godfrey was under siege by Patarene thugs, and Atto, after a beating up himself, had sworn not to interfere in the affairs of the bishopric. "A shocking state of affairs, to be sure - and yet barely hinting at the full scale of the crisis yet to come. In the summer of 1072, Pope Alexander II, at a formal synod of the Roman Church, pronounced that Atto was not bound by the oath he had given his assailants - and was therefore the rightful Archbishop of Milan. A few months later, in early 1073, Henry IV leaned on the bishops of Lombardy to stand as Godfrey's patrons at his consecration. Alexander's response was to excommunicate not only Godfrey himself, not only the Lombard bishops, but,

⁸³¹ Canning, *A History of Western Political Thought, 300-1450*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 86-87. "The decree of 1059 was thus, in the words of an eminent medievalist, a 'declaration of independence'" (Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 202).

⁸³² Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 345. A similar campaign against married priests was being waged at this time in Norman-conquered England by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester: "The sin of incontinence he abhorred, and approved continence in all men, and especially in clerks in holy orders. If he found one wholly given to chastity he took him to himself and loved him as a son. Wedded priests he brought under one edict, commanding them to renounce their fleshly desires or their churches. If they loved chastity, they would remain and be welcome: if they were the servants of bodily pleasures, they must go forth in disgrace. Some there were who chose rather to go without their churches than their women: and of these some wandered about till they starved; others sought and at last found some other provision..." (William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*)

just for good measure, some of Henry's own closest advisers. Only once they had all been dismissed, the Pope declared, would he re-establish contact with the king; until that moment, he was to be regarded as 'outside the communion of the Church'. Almost without anyone quite understanding how it had happened, papacy and empire, those twin pillars of Christendom, were at open loggerheads..."⁸³³

Late in 1072 Peter Damian died, and with him, reformer though he was, there died in the West that symphonic ideal of Church-State relations that he had described thus: "The heads of the world shall live in union of perfect charity, and shall prevent all discord among their lower members. These institutions, which are two for men, but one for God, shall be enflamed by the divine mysteries; the two persons who represent them shall be so closely united by the grace of mutual charity, that it will be possible to find the king in the Roman pontiff, and the Roman pontiff in the king."⁸³⁴

⁸³³ Holland, *op. cit.* p. 347.

⁸³⁴ Peter Damian had also opposed the new tendency in Roman canon law to protect local bishops from local opposition. As he wrote, "The statement, 'It is not permissible for a son of the church to bring charges against his own bishop... before a greater church' is too incongruous and utterly contrary to ecclesiastical discipline... See what is claimed: 'I am a bishop, a pastor of the Church, and I must not suffer the annoyance of accusations from the flock committed to me: for the sake of the faith it is right that I should be borne with equanimity, even if I am of evil character.'... Let this cunning subterfuge be abolished, so that... [no one] may enjoy immunity for the sins which he has committed. Let free access be permitted to just grievances and complaints made at the primatial see." (*Epistolae* 1.12).

However, we cannot say that Peter Damian was truly Orthodox. As Hieromonk Enoch writes: "I've always found it interesting, that Peter Damian's letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople on the Filioque, which he wrote to support, he says, 'First of all, therefore, let me explain the source of this ignorance that allows almost all the Greeks and some Latins to maintain that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son but only from that Father.'

"Peter Damian then goes onward, in point 8 of his letter, to give what should be the clearest reasons not to support the Filioque. He says, 'Citing these texts, therefore, and the like, not only from the Gospels but from other scriptural evidence as well, they assert that the Holy Spirit in no way proceeds from the Son, but only from the Father. Some such statement which seems to agree with this opinion is often found even in the doctors who use the Latin language. Clearly blessed Jerome, in his explanation of the faith sent to the bishops Alippius and Augustine, says among other things, "We believe also in the Holy Spirit, true God, Who Proceeds from the Father, equal in all things to the Father and to the Son." Augustine also, inveighing against Maximus the heretic, says, "The Son is from the Father, the Holy Spirit is from the Father." Even Pope St. Leo, on the silver plaque erected before the most sacred body of St. Paul the Apostle, says among other formulations of his faith, "And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who Proceeds from the Father--with the Father and the Son to be jointly adored and glorified." In the Creed of the Council of Nicea, moreover, it says, "We also believe in the Holy Spirit, Who Proceeds properly from the Father, and who just as the Son is true God"; and a littler further on, "And that the Holy Spirit is also true God we find in Scripture, and that He Proceeds properly from the Father, and that He always exists with the Father and the Son." And again it says, "The Son is from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds properly and truly from the Father."

"Nevertheless, Damian tries to defend the Filioque by saying that just because it says this, it doesn't mean it excludes something else. However, many find it interesting that there were enough 'some Latins' that Peter Damian had to mention them." (<http://westernorthodoxchristian.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/and-some-latins.html>)

In April, 1073, Pope Alexander II also 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."⁸³⁵ So a democratic revolution in the Church brought to power one of the greatest despots in history, Hildebrand - *Hölllenbrand*, or "Hellfire", as Luther called him, or "my holy Satan", in the words of one of his associates.⁸³⁶ He 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" 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. For, as Peter de Rosa writes, "he had seen an emperor dethrone a pope; he would dethrone an emperor *regardless*."

"Had he put an emperor in his place, he would have been beyond reproach. He did far more. By introducing a mischievous and heretical doctrine [of Church-State relations], he put himself in place of the emperor... He claimed to be not only Bishop of bishops but King of kings. In a parody of the gospels, the devil took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and Gregory VII exclaimed: These are all mine."

"As that most objective of historians, 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.'

"... The Bishop of Trier saw the danger. He charged Gregory with destroying the unity of the Church. The Bishop of Verdun said that the pope was mistaken in his unheard-of arrogance. Belief belongs to one's church, the heart belongs to one's country. The pope, he said, must not filch the heart's allegiance. This was precisely what Gregory did. He wanted all; he left emperors and princes nothing. The papacy, as he fashioned it, by undermining patriotism, undermined the authority of secular rulers; they felt threatened by the Altar. At the Reformation, in England and elsewhere, rulers felt obliged to exclude Catholicism from their lands *in order to feel secure*...

"The changes Gregory brought about were reflected in language. Before him, the pope's traditional title was Vicar of St. Peter. After him, it was Vicar of Christ. Only 'Vicar of Christ' could justify his absolutist pretensions, which his successors inherited in reality not from Peter or from Jesus but from him."⁸³⁷

⁸³⁵ Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-349.

⁸³⁶ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁸³⁷ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 66.

Canning writes: "The impact of Gregory VII's pontificate was enormous: for the church nothing was to be the same again. From his active lifetime can be traced the settling of the church in its long-term direction as a body of power and coercion; the character of the papacy as a jurisdictional and governmental institution... There arises the intrusive thought, out of bounds for the historian: this was the moment of the great wrong direction taken by the papacy, one which was to outlast the Middle Ages and survive into our own day. From the time of Gregory can be dated the deliberate clericalisation of the church based on the notion that the clergy, being morally purer, were superior to the laity and constituted a church which was catholic, chaste and free. There was a deep connection between power and a celibacy which helped distinguish the clergy as a separate and superior caste, distanced in the most profound psychological sense from the family concerns of the laity beneath them. At the time of the reform papacy the church became stamped with characteristics which have remained those of the Roman Catholic church: it became papally centred, legalistic, coercive and clerical. The Roman church was, in Gregory's words, the 'mother and mistress' (*mater et magistra*) of all churches."⁸³⁸

Gregory's position was based on a forged collection of canons and a false interpretation of two Gospel passages: Matthew 16.18-19 and John 21.15-17. According to the first passage, in Gregory's interpretation, he was the successor of Peter, upon whom the Church had been founded, and had plenary power to bind and to loose. And according to the second, the flock of Peter over which he had jurisdiction included all Christians, not excluding emperors. As he wrote: "Perhaps [the supporters of the emperor] imagine that when God commended His Church to Peter three times, saying, 'Feed My sheep', He made an exception of kings? Why do they not consider, or rather confess with shame that when God gave Peter, as the ruler, the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth, he excepted no-one and withheld nothing from his power?"

For "who could doubt that the priests of Christ are considered the fathers and masters of kings, princes and all the faithful?" This meant that he had power both to excommunicate and depose the emperor. Nor did the emperor's anointing give him any authority in Gregory's eyes. For "greater power is conceded to an exorcist, when he is made a spiritual emperor for expelling demons, than could be given to any layman for secular domination". Indeed, "who would not know that kings and dukes took their origin from those who, ignorant of God, through pride, rapine, perfidy, murders and, finally, almost any kind of crime, at the instigation of the devil, the prince of this world, sought with blind desire and unbearable presumption to dominate their equals, namely other men?"⁸³⁹

⁸³⁸ Canning, *op. cit.*, pp. 96, 97.

⁸³⁹ Gregory VII, in Canning, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-93.

Hildebrand's attitude to political power was Manichaeic in its negative intensity. It was Manichaeic insofar as it saw the relationship between the Church and the State as a dualistic struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. Just as the Manichaeans (like all heresies of the Gnostic type) tried to free themselves from the flesh and physical nature as from something defiling in essence, so the Gregorians tried to free themselves from the state as from something evil in essence. For them there could be no really good king: kingship should be in the hands of the only good ones, the priests. Indeed, as de Rosa writes of a later Pope who faithfully followed Hildebrand's teaching, "this was Manichaeism applied to relations between church and state. The church, spiritual, was good; the state, material, was essentially the work of the devil. This naked political absolutism undermined the authority of kings. Taken seriously, his theories would lead to anarchy".⁸⁴⁰

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 Holy 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 recognized as reigning".⁸⁴¹ 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 it them*.

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?" Thus to the Spanish kings Gregory wrote in 1077 that the kingdom of Spain belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church "in rightful ownership". "The Spanish Church, according to Hieromonk Enoch, "had its entire ecclesiastical hierarchy (both the episcopate, the archpriests [deans], and canons of cathedrals, and many abbacies] replaced by Cluniac French prelates who were loyal to the 'Reform', especially those of Gregory VII in the late 11th century; the move in Spain was supported by the rulers, such as Alfonso VI, it also came along with the suppression of the native Iberian liturgical ritual in a brutal fashion."⁸⁴² Again, to the secular rulers of Sardinia Gregory wrote in 1073 that the Roman Church exerted "a special and individual care" over them - which meant, as a later letter of 1080 demonstrated, that they would face armed invasion if they did not submit to the pope's terms. Again, 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,

⁸⁴⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁸⁴¹ Peter Damian, *Letter 8*, 2, P.L. 144, 436.

⁸⁴² Hieromonk Enoch, Facebook communication, 26 September, 2016.

make every possible effort to snatch the kingdom of France from his possession."⁸⁴³ 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...

The Gregorians had an amazing ability to twist Scripture to their purpose. One of the main passages supporting the inviolability of the king's power was Romans 13.1-7, which declares that political authorities, being from God, are ministers of God and do not wield the sword in vain. As I.S. Robinson writes, "Early medieval commentators underlined the apostle's insistence on the Christian's duty of submission to the divinely ordained secular power, placing particular emphasis on St. Paul's warning: 'those who resist [the political power] incur damnation'. So, for example, Atto of Vercelli wrote c. 940 that it was sacrilegious to resist the regnum, even if the ruler was an enemy of the Christian faith. A mala potestas was imposed by God 'so that the good may be tested in the virtue of patience': hence the word of Job 34.30, 'He makes the hypocrite reign because of the sins of the people'. The eleventh-century reformers concentrated in their interpretation of the Pauline text not on the impossibility of resistance to the king, but rather on the description of kingship as ministerium. From the king's role of minister they were able to deduce that a mala potestas could after all be resisted. The argument is first found in a letter of Peter Damian of 1065, instructing Henry IV of Germany in his duties. The king 'bears the sword in vain' if he does not punish those who resist God; he is not 'the servant of God to execute his wrath on the evildoer' if he does not punish the enemies of the Church. A king who shows by his protection of the Church that he reveres God must be obeyed: a king who opposes the divine commandments is no minister Dei and is held in contempt by his subjects.

"This was the attitude to kingship which determined the actions of Gregory VII. He would countenance only 'a suitable king for the honour of holy church', 'a fitting defender and ruler': 'unless he is obedient, humbly devoted and useful to holy Church, as a Christian king ought to be... then without a doubt holy Church will not only not favour him, but will oppose him'. Ideally the king should be the vassal (fidelis) of St. Peter and of his vicar, the pope. Gregory VII gave lectures on Christian kingship to the rulers of the 'new' kingdoms on the edge of Christendom; he sat in judgement on the conduct of the rulers of the older kingdoms, summoning their vassals to enforce his decisions. If a king did not prove to be 'useful to holy Church', he was to be excommunicated and deposed, and replaced by a more suitable candidate. The removal of the last Merovingian and the installation of the Arnulfing major of the palace as king of the Franks in 751 provided Gregory VII with his most important exemplum."⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴³ I.S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ", *History*, vol. 58, N 193, June, 1973, pp. 174-175.

⁸⁴⁴ Robinson, "Church and Papacy", pp. 300-301.

All this came to a head in his famous dispute with Emperor Henry IV. It began, as we have seen, 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. The likelier alternative, that the king might be stringing him along and playing for time, appeared not to have crossed the papal mind..."⁸⁴⁵

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 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.'"⁸⁴⁶

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".

⁸⁴⁵ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

⁸⁴⁶ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

In January, 1076, Henry convened a Synod of Bishops at Worms. First he defended the legitimacy of his own kingship: "Henry, King not by usurpation, but by the pious ordination of God, to Hildebrand, now not Pope, but false monk". Henry asserted that he could be "judged by God alone, and am not to be deposed for any crime unless – may it never happen! – I should deviate from the faith."

Then the bishops, addressing 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".⁸⁴⁷ The bishops said that 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."⁸⁴⁸

Gregory retaliated in a truly 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."⁸⁴⁹

By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory "effectively," as Robinson writes, "sanctioned rebellion against the royal power..."⁸⁵⁰

Such a step was truly unprecedented. For "it is new and unheard-of throughout the centuries," wrote Wenrich of Trier, "that the popes should wish... to change the Lord's anointed by popular vote as often as they choose, as though kings were village-bailiffs."⁸⁵¹

Anonymous of Hersfeld wrote: "See how Hildebrand and his bishops.... resisting God's ordination, uproot and bring to nothing these two principal powers [regnum and sacerdotium] by which the world is ruled, desiring all other bishops to be like themselves, who are not truly bishops, and desiring to have kings whom they themselves can command with royal licence."⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁷ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁸⁴⁸ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

⁸⁴⁹ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁸⁵⁰ Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ", p. 175.

⁸⁵¹ Wenrich of Trier, *Epistola Hilthebrando papae* (1081).

⁸⁵² Anonymous of Hersfeld, *Liber de unitate ecclesiae conservanda*, II, 15.

In effect, this was power politics in the guise of the execution of the priestly office. Or rather, it was the Church assuming to herself the role of a State – the “empire within the empire” had become the “empire *above* the empire”. As Fyodor Dostoyevsky put it many centuries later, “The Western Church distorted the image of Christ, changing herself from a Church into a Roman State, and again incarnating the State in the form of the Papacy.”⁸⁵³

Gregory 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.”⁸⁵⁴

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...”⁸⁵⁵

Henry began to lose support, and in the summer 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... On March 13, in Franconia, some of the German nobles elected Rudolf of Swabia as king. However, the next month Henry had returned from Italy, and civil war erupted in Germany. The rebels considered that they had

⁸⁵³ F.M. Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer* (August, 1880).

⁸⁵⁴ R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, London: Penguin, 1970, p. 102.

⁸⁵⁵ Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, pp. 177, 178.

heaven on their side, that those who died in their cause were martyrs for Christ and that Henry himself was “a limb of the Antichrist”.⁸⁵⁶

For some years, Gregory hesitated to come down completely against the anti-king. But then, at Pascha, 1080, he definitely deposed Henry, freed his subjects from their allegiance to him and declared that the kingship was conceded to Rudolf. From that time, as an anonymous monk of Hersfeld wrote, the Gregorians said that “it is a matter of the faith and it is the duty of the faithful in the Church to kill and to persecute those who communicate with, or support the excommunicated King Henry and refuse to promote the efforts of [the Gregorian] party.”⁸⁵⁷ However, Henry recovered, convened a Synod of bishops that declared Gregory deposed and then convened another Synod that elected an anti-pope, Wibert of Ravenna. In October, 1080, Rudolf died in battle. Then in 1083 Henry and Wibert marched on Rome; the next year Wibert was consecrated Pope Clement III and in turn crowned Henry as emperor.

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It looked as if Gregory had failed, but his ideas endured - as did the conflict between papacy and empire, which rumbled on for centuries. Both sides in the conflict adopted extreme positions, showing that the balanced Orthodox understanding of the symphony of powers had been lost in the West. Thus Joseph Canning writes: “Consideration of the issues which the Investiture Contest raised concerning the relationship between temporal and spiritual power was not confined to Germany and Italy, but was evident in France from the 1090s and in England from the turn of the century. Indeed, the most radical treatment was contained in a tract produced in the Anglo-Norman lands. The writer, who was originally known to modern scholars as the Anonymous of York, but following the research of George H. Williams, is now commonly called *The Norman Anonymous*, produced in his work on the Continent, perhaps at Rouen in c. 1100. He expressed the traditional view that royal and sacerdotal powers were combined in Christ; but the author’s independence of mind was revealed in his development of his argument. He held that Christ was king by virtue of his divine nature and priest by that of his human, with the result that kingship was superior to priesthood within both Christ and his vicar, the king. Whereas, however, Christ was divine by nature, the king was God and Christ through grace, that is through unction: the king, therefore, had a dual personality - ‘in one by nature an individual man, in the other by grace a christus, that is a God-man’. The anointed king as the ‘figure and image of Christ and God (figura et imago Christi et Dei) reigned together with Christ. As a result, ‘It is clear that kings have the sacred power of ecclesiastical rule even over the priests of God themselves and dominion over them, so that they too may themselves rule holy church in piety and faith.’ The priesthood was subject to the king, as to Christ. The king

⁸⁵⁶ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

⁸⁵⁷ Quoted in Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, p. 177.

could in consequence appoint and invest bishops. Behind the Anonymous's statements lay the view that jurisdiction was superior to sacramental power, a notion common both to Gregorians and their royalist opponents. But he reversed the papalist position by denying governmental powers to the priesthood and reserving them solely to the king. He did not consider, incidentally, that the fact that bishops consecrated kings made them in any sense superior, because there were many examples of lesser powers elevating superior ones to office.

“Of all the issues treated in the publicistic literature of the Investiture Contest the crux was clearly whether the pope in fact had the authority to free subjects from their oaths of allegiance and depose kings. The papacy was here on its most insecure ground and its claims most shocking, indeed no less than a sign of contradiction to the presuppositions of lay society. Fundamental questions concerning obedience to authority and the justifiability of rebellion were at issue. Both sides accepted that kingship was an office in the tradition of the ideas of Gregory I and thus limited by its function; but whereas the Henricians followed that pope in leaving an errant king solely to God's judgement, the followers of Gregory VII interpreted the notion of royal office as justifying human action to remove a ruler who was perceived to have failed in his duties; they thereby contributed further to the desacralisation of kingship. Their main focus was on the pope's role in this respect. Manegold of Lautenbach, however, went further by saying that a king (a name not of nature, but of office), who was unjust or tyrannical had broken the pact (*pactum*) with his people by which he had been constituted, and that as a result of his severing the bond of faith his people were already free from its oath of allegiance...”⁸⁵⁸

In 1122, at Worms, the papacy and the empire worked out a concordat in which “the emperor largely gave up the right of investiture, while the church recognized the emperor's authority in a range of temporal matters”.⁸⁵⁹ This was a compromise, not a solution, and the conflict between the two parties still had a long time to run. The problem was that they could not agree on the ultimate authority in Christian society.

The solution, if they only had known it, lay in the Emperor Justinian's doctrine of the harmony or “symphony of powers” between Church and State that still existed in the Orthodox East, and which had existed in the monarchies of the West until the schism, but which the papacy under Gregory

⁸⁵⁸ Canning, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105. “For the people,” wrote Manegold, “do not exalt him above themselves so as to concede to him an unlimited power of tyrannizing over them, but to defend themselves against the tyranny and wickedness of others. However, when he who is chosen to repress evil doers and defend the just begins to cherish evil in himself, to oppress good men, to exercise over his subjects the cruel tyranny that he ought to ward off from them, is it not clear that he deservedly falls from his lordship and from subjection to him since it is evident that he first broke the compact by virtue of which he was appointed” (in Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual*, London: Penguin, 2014, p. 249).

⁸⁵⁹ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

VII had destroyed. According to this doctrine, both Church and State owed their origin to God; each was autonomous in its own sphere – the Church in the spiritual sphere, the State in the political; and both were subject ultimately to the Law of God as incarnate in the whole of the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church. However, the papacy did not see God’s Law as above itself, to which it was itself subject, but rather as something that the papacy itself discovered - or rather, invented - in a creative manner over time. As a result, it sought to subject the State to itself in a totalitarian manner, to which the State reacted by assigning to itself – not so much in the medieval period (if we exclude the Norman kings) but certainly in the early modern period - quasi-totalitarian, absolutist powers.

It can easily be seen how the ideas raised by the Gregorian revolution and the Investiture Contest could lead, in Siedentop’s words, to “the emergence of constitutionalism in Europe” and of “the idea of the state endowed with a ‘sovereign’ authority”⁸⁶⁰. The Russian poet and diplomat F.I. Tiutchev went further. In 1849 he linked the Gregorian revolution with the whole further revolutionary development of Western civilization: “The revolution, which is nothing other than the apotheosis of that same human I having attained its fullest flowering, was not slow to 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...”⁸⁶¹

Indeed, it was at Canossa, as Tom Holland writes, that “the foundations of the modern Western state were laid, foundations largely bled 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...”⁸⁶²

⁸⁶⁰ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁸⁶¹ Tiutchev, “Papstvo i Rimskij Vopros” (“The Papacy and the Roman Question”), in *Politicheskije Stat’i* (Political Articles), Paris: YMCA Press, 1976, pp. 57-58.

⁸⁶² Holland, *op. cit.*, p. xxii.

53. THE CRUSADES AND THE THEORY OF THE JUST WAR

Gregory fled from Rome with his Norman allies and died in Salerno in 1085. When he was lying on his death-bed, he said: "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile." But a monk who waited on him replied: "In exile thou canst not be, for God hath given thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (Psalm 2.8)."

The papist claim to lordship over the whole world, including the heathen, was demonstrated especially during the Crusades, which were the manifestation to the Orthodox Christian and Muslim worlds, of the mystery of iniquity that was taking place within the Western world. The West - especially England, Germany and Italy - had already felt the mailed fist of the Pope. Now it was the turn of the North (the Baltic lands), the South (Spain) and the East (Byzantium, the Levant and the Holy Land).

First, the Pope's vassals, the Normans, having conquered Sicily and Bari, invaded Greece; Emperor Alexis I only just succeeded in containing them with the help of English warrior-exiles. Then, in 1085, King Alfonso VI of Castile-Leon captured the Muslim city of Toledo for the Pope; within a few years, his champion, the famous El Cid, had entered Valencia. Most importantly, in 1095, at a synod in Clermont, Pope Urban II, a Cluny monk, appealed to all Christians to free Jerusalem from the Saracens, and placed his own legate, a bishop, at the head of the Christian forces.

Urban's main motivation was to shore up his own position in his struggle with the Holy Roman Empire in the Investiture Contest. As Christopher Tyerman writes, "The background to the First Crusade lay in this conflict, as Urban II sought to use the mobilization of the expedition as a cover to reclaim the pope's position in Italy and demonstrate his practical leadership of Christendom, independent of secular monarchs. The slogan of the papal reformers was 'libertas ecclesiae', 'church freedom/liberty/rights'. This provided the central appeal of Urban II's summons of 1095, when called on the faithful to go to 'liberate' the churches of the east and Jerusalem. The crusade is impossible to understand outside the context of more general church and papal reform."⁸⁶³

At the same time, the pope saw the crusades as a "Christian" solution to problems thrown up by the new feudal, militaristic pattern of life in the West. He made it clear, writes Barbara Ehrenreich, "that a major purpose of the crusade was to deflect the knights' predatory impulses away from Europe itself:

⁸⁶³ Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 7.

“‘Oh race of the Franks, we learn that in some of your provinces no one can venture on the road by day or by night without injury or attack by highwaymen, and no one is secure even at home.’

“We know he is not talking about common, or lowborn, criminals because it emerges in the next sentence that the solution to this problem is a re-enactment of the ‘Truce of God’, meaning voluntary restraint on the part of the knights, whose energies are now to be directed outward towards the infidels:

“‘Let all hatred depart from among you, all quarrels end, all wars cease. Start upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre to wrest that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves.’

“Militarily, the Crusades were largely a disaster for the Christians, but they did serve to cement the fusion of the cross and the sword. The church’s concept of the ‘just war’ had always been something of a grudging concession to reality. Here, though, was a war that was not only ‘just’ but necessary and holy in the eyes of God, Christendom’s first jihad. Those who participated in Europe’s internal wars were often required to do penance for the sin of killing; but participation in a crusade had the opposite effect, cleansing a man from prior sin and guaranteeing his admission to heaven. It was the Crusades, too, that led to the emergence of a new kind of warrior: the warrior-monk, pledged to lifelong chastity as well as to war. In the military monastic orders of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitalers, any lingering Christian hesitations about violence were dissolved. The way of the knight – or at least of the chaste and chivalrous knight – became every bit as holy as that of the cloistered monk.”⁸⁶⁴

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Let us look more closely at the new Roman Catholic concept of the just war that was emerging here. Now it is claimed that this concept goes back to St. Augustine. “From Augustine’s diffuse comments on war,” writes Tyerman, “could be identified four essential characteristics of a just war that were to underpin most subsequent discussions of the subject. A just war requires a just cause; its aim must be defensive or for the recovery of rightful possession; legitimate authority must sanction it; those who fight must be motivated by right intent. Thus war, by nature sinful, could be a vehicle for the promotion of righteousness; war that is violent could, as some later medieval apologists maintained, act as a form of charitable love, to help victims of injustice. From Augustine’s categories developed the basis of Christian just war theory, for example, by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.”⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶⁴ Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, London: Virago Press, 1998, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁶⁵ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Cf. St. Augustine in *The City of God*: “They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to

However, between Augustine and Aquinas came the crusades; and the crusades added other elements that are completely lacking in Augustine – the authority of the pope, and the positive holiness of a war proclaimed by the pope. For Augustine, the only authority that could justly proclaim a war was the Roman emperor – and he was more than a little sceptical that all wars proclaimed by the emperor were holy or just. But for the crusader, as Jonathan Riley-Smith writes, “A crusade was a holy war fought against those perceived to be the external or internal foes of Christendom for the recovery of Christian property or in defence of the Church or Christian people. As far as the crusaders were concerned, the Muslims in the East and in Spain had occupied Christian territory, including land sanctified and made his very own by the presence of Christ himself, and they had imposed infidel tyranny on the Christians who lived there. The pagans in the Baltic region threatened new Christian settlements. The [Albigensian] heretics in Languedoc or Bohemia were rebels against their mother the Church and were denying the responsibility for teaching entrusted to her by Christ; they and the Church’s political opponents in Italy disturbed rightful order. These people all menaced Christians and the Church, and their actions provided crusaders with the opportunity of expressing love for their oppressed or threatened brothers in a just cause, which was always related to that of Christendom as a whole. A crusading army was therefore considered to be international even when it was actually composed of men from only one region... The war it fought was believed to be directly authorized by Christ himself, the incarnate God, through his mouthpiece, the pope. Being Christ’s own enterprise it was regarded as positively holy...”⁸⁶⁶

The crusades were a new kind of “just” war with a more exalted, religious pathos. Those who incited them were popes rather than kings (Gregory VII in 1074, Urban II in 1095); plenary remission of sins and penances, even eternal salvation, was touted as the reward – “by a transitory labour you can win an eternal reward”, said Gregory VII. They were holy wars blessed by the Pope and directed against Muslims (in Spain and Palestine), pagans (the Slavic Wends and Balts), and even other Christians (the “schismatics” of Anglo-Saxon England, the Albigensians of Southern France, the Orthodox of Novgorodian Russia).

They were not strictly defensive wars any longer, but wars of *reconquest* of formerly Christian lands – the word *reconquista* was used to describe the wars against the Moors in Spain blessed by Pope Alexander II in 1064. To this was added a passionate and sinful element, the desire for *revenge*, albeit on God’s behalf. Thus the Norman leader Robert Guiscard declared his wish to free Christians from Muslim rule and to “avenge the injury done to God”⁸⁶⁷...

death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”

⁸⁶⁶ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, London: Athlone Press, 1987, pp. xxviii-xxix.

⁸⁶⁷ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

The Lord said: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay". But for the brave new world of Roman Catholic Christendom born in the second half of the eleventh century, vengeance became once again a human obligation...

It may be argued that the crusades borrowed some of their characteristics from their main opponents, the Muslims. And indeed, they could be compared with the Muslim *jihads*, with the Pope taking the place of the Caliph. Now *Jihad* is "the sixth pillar of Islam, the perpetual collective and sometimes individual obligation on all the faithful to struggle (*jihad*) spiritually against unbelief in themselves (*al-jihad al-akbar*, the greater *jihad*) and physically against unbelievers (*al-jihad al-asghar*, the lesser *jihad*)."⁸⁶⁸ In the era of the Crusades, we see the lesser *jihad*, the physical struggle against unbelievers, becoming increasingly important in the thought and practice of the Catholic West, which in turn stimulated its revival among the Muslims. Traditional peaceful missionary work had no place in this Christian *jihad*; the aim was not the conversion of the infidel enemy, but his extermination...

The evil consequences were not slow to reveal themselves. First, the Crusades were wars of sadistic *cruelty* that often revelled in the cruelty. It has been observed that when a Christian people falls away from the true faith, during the first two or three generations after their apostasy they display a cruelty that would not have seemed possible before the apostasy. We can say that of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and of the Russians after 1917. It now became true of the Western European peoples after the fall of the Roman Church in 1054, being displayed most clearly in the First Crusade of 1098-99. For in the course of recapturing Jerusalem, the crusaders exterminated most of the Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of the Holy City in a terrible and wholly unjustified bloodbath. "In the Temple," wrote an eye-witness, "[the Crusaders] rode in blood up to their bridles. Indeed it was a just and splendid judgement of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers."⁸⁶⁹ Again, in a later crusade King Richard "the Lionheart" of England "massacred thousands of Muslim prisoners in cold blood outside Acre and, on another occasion, arranged the heads of executed Muslims around his tent..."⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁸ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁸⁶⁹ Raymond of Aguilers, the Count of Toulouse's chaplain, in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, London: Phoenix, 2012, p. 253. Montefiore writes: "The massacre of Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem was a terrible crime but it was certainly vastly exaggerated: Muslim historians claimed that 70,000 or even 100,000 died in the slaughter but it is likely that there were not more than 30,000 inside the city and the latest research from contemporary Arab source el-Arabi suggests the number may be closer to between 3,000 and 10,000. Crusader brutality demonstrates the evil of intolerance but the Christians were scarcely alone in this: when the crusader cities of Edessa and Acre later fell, the slaughter by Muslim conquerors was much greater" (*Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 126).

However, it should be pointed out that the Arab chroniclers of the time paradoxically make no mention of Crusader cruelty. Perhaps the western chroniclers exaggerated the atrocities because they thought that they were praiseworthy!

⁸⁷⁰ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, p. 135.

Now the terrible events that took place during the First Crusade, and the enthronement of a Latin king, Baldwin, in Jerusalem itself, did not prevent the recurrence of the best-known miracle in the Orthodox Christian world, the descent of the Holy Fire on Holy Saturday. Concerning this, we have the witness of the Russian Abbot Daniel: "The following is a description of the Holy Light, which descends upon the Holy Sepulchre, as the Lord vouchsafed to show it to me, his wicked and unworthy servant. For in very truth I have seen with my own sinful eyes how that Holy Light descends upon the redeeming Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many pilgrims relate incorrectly the details about the descent of that Holy Light. Some say that the Holy Ghost descends upon the [Holy Sepulchre](#) in the form of a dove, others that it is lightning from heaven which kindles the lamps above the Sepulchre of the Lord. This is all untrue, for neither dove nor lightning is to be seen at that moment; but the Divine grace comes down unseen from heaven, and lights the lamps of the Sepulchre of our Lord. I will only describe it in perfect truth as I have seen it.

"On Holy Friday, after Vespers, they clean the Holy Sepulchre and wash all the lamps that are there; they fill the lamps with pure oil without water and after having put in the wicks, leave them unlighted they affix the seals to the Tomb at the second hour of the night. At the same time they extinguish all the lamps and wax candles in every church in Jerusalem. Upon that same Friday, at the first hour of the day, I, the unworthy, entered the presence of Prince Baldwin, and bowed myself to the ground before him. Seeing me, as I bowed, he bade me, in a friendly manner, come to him, and said, "What dost thou want, Russian abbot?" for he knew me and liked me, being a man of great kindness and humility and not given to pride. I said to him, "My prince and my lord! for the love of God, and out of regard for the Russian princes, allow me to place my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre in the name of the whole Russian country." Then with peculiar kindness and attention he gave me permission to place my lamp on the Sepulchre of the Lord, and sent one of his chief retainers with me to the custodian of the Resurrection, and to the keeper of the keys of the Holy Sepulchre. The custodian and the keeper of the keys directed me to bring my lamp filled with oil. I thanked them, and hastened, with much joy, to purchase a very large glass lamp; having filled it with pure oil, I carried it to the Holy Sepulchre towards evening, and was conducted to the afore-mentioned keeper, who was alone in the chapel of the Tomb. Opening the sacred portal for me, he ordered me to take off my shoes; and then, having admitted me barefooted to the Holy Sepulchre, with the lamp that I bore, he directed me to place it on the Tomb of the Lord. I placed it, with my sinful hands, on the spot occupied by the sacred feet of our Lord Jesus Christ; the lamp of the Greeks being where the head lay, and that of St. Sabbas and all the monasteries in the position of the breast; for it is the custom of the Greeks and of the Monastery of St. Sabbas to place their lamps there each year. By God's grace these three lamps kindled on that occasion, but not

one of those belonging to the Franks, which hung above, received the light. After having placed my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre, and after having adored and kissed, with penitence and pious tears, the sacred place upon which the body of our Lord Jesus Christ lay, I left the Holy Tomb filled with joy, and retired to my cell.

“On the morrow, Holy Saturday, at the sixth hour of the day, everyone assembles in front of the Church of the Holy Resurrection; foreigners and natives people from all countries, from Babylon, from [Egypt](#), and from every part of the world, come together on that day in countless numbers; the crowd fills the open space round the church and round the place of the [Crucifixion](#). The crush is terrible, and the turmoil so great that many persons are suffocated in the dense crowd of people who stand, unlighted tapers in hand, waiting for the opening of the church doors. The priests alone are inside the church, and priests and crowd alike wait for the arrival of the Prince and his suite; then, the doors being opened, the people rush in, pushing and jostling each other, and fill the church and the galleries, for the church alone could not contain such a multitude. A large portion of the crowd has to remain outside round Golgotha and the place of the skull, and as far as the spot where the crosses were set up; every place is filled with an innumerable multitude. All the people, within and without the church, cry ceaselessly, “Kyrie Eleison” (Lord, have mercy upon us); and this cry is so loud that the whole building resounds and vibrates with it. The faithful shed torrents of tears; even he who has a heart of stone cannot refrain from weeping; each one, searching the innermost depths of his soul, thinks of his sins, and says secretly to himself, “Will my sins prevent the descent of the Holy Light?” The faithful remain thus weeping with heavy heart; Prince Baldwin himself looks contrite and greatly humbled; torrents of tears stream from his eyes; and his suite stand pensively around him near the high altar, opposite the Tomb.

“Saturday, about the seventh hour, Prince Baldwin, with his suite, left his house, and, proceeding on foot towards the Sepulchre of our Lord, sent to the hospice of St. Sabbas for the abbot and monks of St. Sabbas; the abbot, followed by the monks, thereupon set out for the Holy Sepulchre, and I, unworthy, went with them. When we reached the Prince we all saluted him; he returned our salute and directed the abbot and me, the lowly one, to walk by his side, whilst the other abbots and the monks went in front, and the suite followed behind. We thus reached the western door of the Church of the Resurrection, but such a dense crowd obstructed the entrance that we could not get in. Prince Baldwin thereupon ordered his soldiers to disperse the crowd and open a way for us; this they did by clearing a lane to the Tomb, and we were able in this manner to pass through the crowd. We reached the eastern door of the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord, and the Prince, who came after us, took his post to the right, near the railing of the high altar, in front of the eastern door of the Tomb; at that spot there is a raised place for the Prince. The Prince ordered the Abbot of St. Sabbas to take up a position beyond the Tomb, with his monks and the orthodox priests; as for me, the lowly one, he directed me to place myself higher up, above the doors of the Holy Sepulchre,

in front of the high altar, so that I could see through the doors of the Tomb; these doors, three in number, were sealed up with the royal seal. The Latin priests stood by the high altar.

“At the eighth hour the Orthodox priests, who were over the Holy Sepulchre, with the clergy, monks, and hermits, commenced chanting the Vespers; and the Latins, by the high altar, began to mumble after their manner. Whilst all were thus singing I kept my place and attentively watched the doors of the Tomb. When they commenced reading the paramia for Holy Saturday during the reading of the first lesson, the bishop, followed by the deacon, left the high altar, and going to the doors of the Tomb, looked through the grille, but, seeing no light, returned. When they commenced reading the sixth lesson of the paramia, the same bishop returned to the door of the Holy Sepulchre, but saw no change. All the people, weeping, then cried out “Kyrie Eleison” which means, “Lord, have mercy upon us!” At the end of the ninth hour, when they commenced chanting the Canticle of the passage (of the Red Sea), “Cantabo Domino,” a small cloud, coming suddenly from the east, rested above the open dome of the church; fine rain fell on the Holy Sepulchre, and wet us and all those who were above the Tomb. It was at this moment that the Holy Light suddenly illuminated the Holy Sepulchre, shining with an awe-inspiring and splendid brightness. The bishop, who was followed by four deacons, then opened the doors of the Tomb, and entered with the taper of Prince Baldwin so as to light it first at the Holy Light; he afterwards returned it to the Prince, who resumed his place, holding, with great joy, the taper in his hands. We lighted our tapers from that of the Prince, and so passed on the flame to everyone in the church.

“This Holy Light is like no ordinary flame, for it burns in a marvelous way with indescribable brightness, and a ruddy color like that of cinnabar. All the people remain standing with lighted tapers, and repeat in a loud voice with intense joy and eagerness: “Lord, have mercy upon us!” Man can experience no joy like that which every Christian feels at the moment when he sees the Holy Light of God. He who has not taken part in the glory of that day will not believe the record of all that I have seen. It is only wise, believing men who will place complete trust in the truth of this narrative, and who will hear with delight all the details concerning the holy places. He who is faithful in little will also be faithful in much; but to the wicked and incredulous the truth seems always a lie. God and the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord bear witness to my stories and to my humble person; so do my companions from Russia, Novgorod, and Kiev: Iziaslav Ivanovitch, Gorodislav Mikhailovitch, the two Kashkitch, and many others who were there the same day.”⁸⁷¹

The Miracle of the Descent of the Holy Fire has continued in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem every Holy Saturday to the present day and year (2018).

⁸⁷¹ Abbot Danile, in C.W. Wilson, *The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land 1106-1107*: A. D., London, 1888.

Now the cruelty of the crusaders was to the Eastern Mediterranean. Those against the pagan Slavs and Balts of the Baltic Sea coast were similarly savage. Thus Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg colonized the lands of the Slavic Wends in the mid-twelfth century as follows: "Because God gave plentiful aid and victory to our leader and the other princes, the Slavs have been everywhere crushed and driven out. A people strong and without number have come from the bounds of the ocean and taken possession of the territories of the Slavs. They have built cities and churches and have grown in riches beyond all estimation."⁸⁷²

Again, Bernard of Clairvaux said about the Wendish crusade of 1147: "We expressly forbid that for any reason whatsoever they should make a truce with those peoples, whether for money or for tribute, until such time as, with God's help, either their religion or their nation be destroyed."⁸⁷³ For "the knight of Christ need fear no sin in killing the foe, he is a minister of God for the punishment of the wicked. In the death of a pagan a Christian is glorified, because Christ is glorified... [He] who kills for religion commits no evil but rather does good, for his people and himself. If he dies in battle, he gains heaven; if he kills his opponents, he avenges Christ. Either way, God is pleased."⁸⁷⁴

Even the Orthodox Russians were considered to be in need of forcible conversion. Thus Bishop Matthew of Crakow wrote to Bernard in 1150, asking him to "exterminate the godless rites and customs of the Ruthenians".⁸⁷⁵

A vivid witness to the destructiveness and anti-Orthodoxy of these Crusaders in the Baltic is provided by the city of Vineta on the Oder, whose under-sea remains are now being excavated by German archaeologists. Tony Paterson writes: "Medieval chroniclers such as Adam of Bremen, a German monk, referred to Vineta as 'the biggest city in all of Europe'. He wrote: 'It is filled with the wares of all the peoples of the north. Nothing desirable or rare is missing.' He remarked that the city's inhabitants, including Saxons, Slavs and 'Greeks and Barbarians' were so wealthy that its church bells were made of silver and mothers wiped their babies' bottoms with bread rolls....

"A century later, another German chronicler, Helmold von Bosau, referred to Vineta, but this time in the past tense. He said it had been destroyed: 'A Danish king with a very big fleet of ships is said to have attacked and completely destroyed this most wealthy place. The remains are still there,' he wrote in 1170... Vineta was most likely inhabited by resident Slavs and

⁸⁷² Helmold of Bosau, in Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 484.

⁸⁷³ Bernard, in Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 487-488.

⁸⁷⁴ Bernard, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi*.

⁸⁷⁵ Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 125.

Saxons as well as 'Greeks and Barbarian' merchants from Byzantium who plied a trade between the Baltic and the Black Sea via the rivers of western Russia. Dr. Goldmann said that the majority of Vineta's estimated 20,000 to 30,000 population were probably Greek Orthodox Christians... 'After the great schism of 1054, the Orthodox believers were regarded as threat by the Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire. Vineta was almost certainly a victim of a campaign to crush the Orthodox faith,' he said. Its demise is therefore likely to have occurred when the chronicler von Bosau said it did: towards the end of the 12th century when the Crusaders launched a never fully explained campaign in northern Europe..."⁸⁷⁶

Secondly, in the long run the Crusades *failed* in their aim, the reconquest of the Holy Land from the Muslims. Most of the Crusader kingdoms carved out of Syria and Palestine had been reconquered by the Muslims by the late thirteenth century. So if that, too, was the "just and splendid judgement of God", it did not speak well for the justice or holiness of the Crusader wars.

And thirdly, while at first claiming to help "liberate" the Eastern Churches, the Crusades ended up by *destroying Orthodoxy* in large parts of the Balkans and Middle East. Already before the Second Crusade Bernard of Clairvaux had expressed "bloodthirsty anti-Greek fulminations", in Sir Steven Runciman's phrase.⁸⁷⁷ But the climax of the anti-Greek campaign was undoubtedly the Fourth Crusade of 1204, as a result of which Constantinople was sacked in a frenzy of barbarism, and a Latin emperor and patriarch were placed on the thrones of Hagia Sophia. And so the project that had begun as a mission to liberate the Eastern Churches at the request of the Byzantine emperor ended up by destroying the empire (temporarily) and attempting to subject all the Orthodox Churches to Rome. Even Pope Innocent III disapproved. The Greek Church, he said, "now, and with reason, detests the Latins more than dogs".⁸⁷⁸

This did not prevent the Pope from profiting from the crusaders' evil. Latin kingdoms with Latin patriarchs were established over Orthodox populations in Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus and Constantinople. In general, therefore, the thirteenth century represented a nadir for Orthodoxy and the zenith of Papism. Nevertheless, the Orthodox held out in these conquered lands. In Cyprus, for example, which had been conquered by King Richard of England and then handed over to the Knights Templar, the local population refused to adopt the faith of their Latin metropolitan. They were instructed and inspired by the great hermit St. Neophytus the Enclosed of Cyprus (+1219), who once said of a Latin attempt to reconquer Jerusalem: "*It is similar to the wolves coming to chase away the dogs...*"⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁶ Paterson, "Sonar ship homes in on Atlantis of North", *Sunday Telegraph* (London), September 26, 1999, p. 39.

⁸⁷⁷ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1955, p. 100.

⁸⁷⁸ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

⁸⁷⁹ Fr. Panagiotes Carras, "Saint Neophytos of Cyprus and the Crusades", <http://orthodoxyinfo.org/Saints/StNeophytos.htm>.

The crusades were with reason called “the Roman war” because they were waged by the Pope of Rome. Although the actual fighting was undertaken by emperors and kings, who sometimes displayed megalomaniac tendencies on a par with the Pope’s – as when Emperor Frederick Barbarossa once wrote to Saladin claiming, like the most powerful Roman emperors, to have dominion over the whole of the Middle East and Africa as far as Ethiopia!⁸⁸⁰, - it was the Popes who propelled the crusaders eastward; and they frequently excommunicated rulers who were tardy in fulfilling their vows to take up the cross. Thus the crusades completed the transformation of the papacy from a spiritual power into a worldly, political and military one, placing an ineluctably expansionist and violent seal on western civilization.

The most successful of the crusades was that led by the German Emperor Frederick II in 1228-1229. Paradoxically, he “‘alone of all the Crusaders was not blessed, but cursed by the Pope’. But he alone succeeded in securing freedom for Jerusalem and the Holy Land for a full fifteen years by a treaty with the Arabian Sultan, without shedding a drop of human blood. And this was the only bloodless Crusade...”⁸⁸¹

The Crusades demonstrate how quickly and easily apparently good intentions can pave the way to hell. The problem is that violence, even violence that is blessed by lawful authorities, can so easily unleash hatred and cruelty. And this in turn leads to false, heretical justifications of that hatred and cruelty; for “the sinner praiseth himself in the lusts of his soul” (Psalm 19.24).

In the West, consciousness of the evil that lurks even in the justest of wars remained strong in the Orthodox period, as we see in the Truce of God movement. And even after the schism this consciousness lingered for a time, as when the Norman knights who had participated in their barbaric Conquest of England in 1066-70 were put on penance when they returned home. But by the end of the century this Orthodox consciousness was waning in the West, while by the thirteenth it had disappeared completely... In the East, by contrast, war was not glorified, but seen as a necessary evil. The Eastern Orthodox have never preached pacifism; and even those Eastern writers with pacifist tendencies, such as Origen, admitted the concept of the just war.⁸⁸²

Nevertheless, there has always been an awareness in the East of the strong temptation to sin inherent in all warfare, an awareness expressed thus in St. Basil’s *Canon 13*: “Our fathers did not consider killing on the field of battle as murder, pardoning, as it seems to me, defenders of chastity and piety. But it

⁸⁸⁰ R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

⁸⁸¹ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, “The Life of St. Sava”, *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), vol. 12, Khimelstir, 1984, p. 589.

⁸⁸² “Christians wrestle,” Origen wrote, “in prayers to God on behalf of those fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king who reigns righteously, that whatever is opposed to those who act righteously may be destroyed” (*Against Celsius*, 8.73).

might be good that they refrain from Communion only in the Holy Mysteries for three years as people who have unclean hands...”

54. ROMAN LAW, COMMON LAW AND THE PAPACY

The Gregorian revolution, if it was to be permanent, required a legal underpinning. The impetus towards this was given by Gregory himself, who, as Siedentop writes, “may have encouraged the Countess Matilda of Tuscany to establish law lectures at Bologna, in order to promote the study of Roman law. Within a few decades this school of law acquired a remarkable reputation. It began to attract students from across Europe. By the end of the century a jurist, Irnerius, was lecturing at Bologna on the body of Roman law, the Corpus Juris Civilis of Justinian [which had been discovered in a library in Northern Italy, together with important works from pre-Christian antiquity, such as Aristotle’s *Politics*⁸⁸³]. Imerius and other jurists did not merely discover in Roman law a rich, sophisticated collection of rules relating to different conditions of life and society. Their encounter with Roman law stimulated reflections on the nature and requirements of a legal system, a kind of jurisprudence. For them, Roman law conjured up the vision of an autonomous, self-contained legal system.

“Such a vision inevitably prompted comparison with the rules or canons supposedly governing the life of the church. These seemed painfully inadequate when compared to the elaborate, articulated structure of Justinian’s Corpus. There had, it is true, been earlier collections of canons that brought together the decisions of ‘universal’ church councils, papal decrees and the opinions of church Fathers such as Augustine and Gregory the Great. But these collections were centuries-old and incomplete, often incoherent or inconclusive. The new Roman lawyers or ‘civilians’ viewed them with some contempt.

“What was needed to introduce order and unity into the laws of the church? What were the legal and practical prerequisites of a legal system? Justinian’s Corpus Juris Civilis suggested a clear answer: ‘The emperor is not bound by statutes’. Supreme authority had to be invested in a single agency that would itself be above the law. Just as the emperor’s imperium had become the final source of Roman law, the laws of the church required a source that was not itself bound by law and so was able to prevent contradictions or anomalies developing within the system. Such a source for law provided the means of abrogating undesirable customs.”⁸⁸⁴

What was needed, therefore, was a new body of law in which the final source of legislative authority would be the pope, not the emperor. However, the new law would have to be very wide-ranging, with major inroads into what, in Byzantine and Western Orthodox times, had been within the secular ruler’s jurisdiction. For this was the whole essence of the Gregorian revolution: the invasion of Caesar’s domain by God’s (i.e. the Pope’s).

⁸⁸³ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

⁸⁸⁴ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

This meant pillaging Justinian's *Corpus* for what was compatible with the Gregorian project while discarding all the rest (together, of course, with the whole spirit of Byzantine jurisprudence). "As Ivo of Chartres insisted at the end of the eleventh century, only those parts of Roman law acceptable to the church should be adopted. Yet before long the areas invaded by canon lawyers included important parts of both private and communal law, for the church took a close interest in matters such as marriage, testaments, adultery, divorce, perjury, usury and homicide. Little wonder that at times civil lawyers felt their domain was under threat..."⁸⁸⁵

The result was the publication, in about 1140, of Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*, "Concord of Discordant Canons", later called simply the *Decretum*, in which much of Justinian's *Corpus* was collated, compared and commented on. It quickly became the standard compilation of church law, so much so that, as Bernard of Clairvaux complained, "Every day the papal palace resounds to the laws of Justinian and not those of the Lord."⁸⁸⁶

Gratian's *Decretum* was particularly important in its influence on the justifications that preachers used for the crusades. "A long section, Causa XXIII, was devoted to warfare and violence. Although on the surface Gratian did not deal with crusading – the Causa's process of argument started with the issue of the suppression of heresy by force – consciousness of it lay behind the armoury of justifications for the Church's authorization of violence provided to clerical readers, who were led inescapably through a panoply of authorities, to the conclusions that war need not be sinful, could be just, and could be authorized by God, and, on God's behalf, by the pope..."⁸⁸⁷

"Gratian," writes K. Pennington, "made a general statement about law at the beginning of the *Decretum*: 'The human race is ruled by two things: natural law and custom.'"⁸⁸⁸ It is, or should be, the aim of human legislators to make their acts correspond as closely as possible to the higher or "natural" law, or "Law" with a capital "L". If they succeed in doing this, then they may be said to be following "the rule of law".

As Fukuyama writes, "Early European states dispensed justice but not necessarily law. Law was rooted elsewhere, either in religion (as in the edicts regulating marriage and the family...) or in the customs of tribes or other local communities. Early European states occasionally legislated – that is, created new laws – but their authority and legitimacy rested more on their ability to impartially enforce laws not necessarily of their own making.

⁸⁸⁵ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁸⁸⁶ Comby, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁸⁸⁷ Riley-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁸⁸⁸ Pennington, "1. Law, legislative authority, and theories of government, 1150-1300", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 424.

“This distinction between law and legislation is critical to understanding the meaning of the rule of law itself. As with a term like ‘democracy’, it sometimes seems as if there are as many definitions of ‘rule of law’ as there are legal scholars. I use it in the following sense, which corresponds to several important currents in thinking about the phenomenon in the West. The law is a body of abstract rules of justice that bind a community together. In premodern societies, the law was believed to be fixed by an authority higher than any human legislator, either by a divine authority, by immemorial custom, or by nature. *Legislation*, on the other hand, corresponds to what is now called positive law and is a function of political power, that is, the ability of a king, baron, president, legislature, or warlord to make and enforce new rules based ultimately on some combination of power and authority. The rule of law can be said to exist only where the preexisting body of law is sovereign over legislation, meaning that the individual holding political power feels bound by the law. But if they are to function within the rule of law, they must legislate according to the rules set by the preexisting law and not according to their own volition...

“The rule of law in its deepest sense means that there is a social consensus within a society that its laws are just and that they preexist and should constrain the behavior of whoever happens to be the ruler at a given time. The ruler is not sovereign; the law is sovereign, and the ruler gains legitimacy only insofar as he derives his just powers from the law.”⁸⁸⁹

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During the reign of King Henry II of England, Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine (1154-1189) a specifically English institution known as the Common Law came into being.

“Under the Anglo-Saxons,” writes Robert Tombs, “law had been fairly uniform in its main lines, and decentralized in its enforcement, through sheriffs, shire courts and collective self-policing through tithings, oath-taking and sworn local juries who identified criminals. After 1066 the Normans introduced complication – different laws for French and English, now forest law, Church courts using canon law, courts under the jurisdiction of local lords, and trial by combat. The Anglo-Saxon system continued too, including the sheriffs and county courts, the tithings, and the use of ordeals (by ducking in water or by carrying a hot iron) by which God signaled who was in the right. As before the Conquest, if locals could not cope, the king’s men might intervene in a brief flurry of savagery: in Leicestershire, in 1124, ‘they hanged... more thieves than had ever been hanged before... in all forty-four men in that little time; and six men were blinded and castrated.’ Usually, however, locals literally did it themselves: in one recorded case from the 1170s a Bedfordshire man got his next-door neighbour convicted (wrongfully) of stealing from his house, and did the blinding and castrating in person.

⁸⁸⁹ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

“Henry II’s drive for law and order saw the introduction in the 1160s of travelling royal judges, who were increasingly professional lawyers, on ‘eyres’ (journeys) to hear some case involving the Crown, and in the 1170s permanent royal courts began to sit at Westminster, developing standardized ‘writs’ (court orders in the king’s name) to initiate a range of procedures before royal judges. Writs were the basis of the system, and could be purchased for a modest sum by any plaintiff to summon an adversary before a royal court. Thus originated in practice as well as in theory the universal primacy of royal justice: the Common Law. It was gradually extended to cover every place and every free layman within the kingdom, irrespective of ethnicity. The unfree (serfs or villeins) did not have equal access to royal courts, particularly as concerned land tenure; but royal courts decided in disputed cases whether a man was free or serf. In serious criminal matters, moreover, royal justice extended even to the unfree, because Henry extended ‘the King’s Peace’ to cover ‘all times, the whole realm, all men’. This contrasted with much of Europe, where what is commonly called the ‘feudal revolution’ fragmented jurisdiction. A long-term divergence also began between English and Continental legal principles. In Europe, law would either remain local, a patchwork of differing customs, or become transnational by borrowing Roman law enshrined in the Code of Justinian (AD 530). The English Common Law was the first national system of law in Europe. It was a hybrid of Anglo-Saxon and Norman customs and Roman theories, using French terms and concepts – debt, contract, heir, trespass, court, judge, jury – and (until 1731) keeping records in Latin. It was primarily concerned with land rights, based on the careful recording of precedents set by the decisions of judges who, to a large extent, laid down the law as they went along. This practice was formalized in the first great book of law in use for at least three centuries: ‘Bracton’, traditionally attributed to one of Henry III’s judges, Henry of Bratton (d. 1268), and based on the compilation of precedents. Thus the Common Law evolved over time, rather than deriving from a single code, as Roman law did.

“Henry’s policy of asserting the legal rights of the Crown did not make him popular. Eyres were sudden, frightening descents that not only tried legal cases, but generally asserted royal power, including by aggressive imposition of higher taxes and feudal exactions. Mere suspicion brought ordeal by water or hot iron. Royal justice also led to a clash with the Church, when in the Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) Henry legislated for political control over the Church, including royal jurisdiction over those clergy (and bogus clergy) who committed crimes. This caused an angry breach with his close friend and trusted chancellor, Thomas Becket, whom he had made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, and who had unexpectedly become an intransigent defender of ecclesiastical privilege. Their trial of strength culminated in Becket’s murder on 29 December 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral.

“... The murder caused international outrage, from which the French court naturally tried to profit, urging the Pope to draw ‘the sword of St. Peter’. But

moderation prevailed: Henry was allowed to perform seemingly heartfelt acts of repentance in 1174, including being flogged by the monks of Canterbury. The capture the very next day of the king of Scots, who had invaded England, proved divine approval: William I 'the Lion' was taken 'shackled under the belly of a horse' to make formal submission to Henry. The dispute between king and clergy ended in a compromise that Becket's unbending sanctity had prevented: the clergy (and those claiming to be such) won certain legal immunities until the Reformation and vestiges remained even until 1827."⁸⁹⁰

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The murder of Becket raised the question: what was the relationship of the king to the Church and to the law... "Classical Roman law," writes Pennington, "was not particularly helpful for understanding the limitations of legislative authority. The passages in Roman law touching upon the emperor's right to legislate were open to contradictory interpretations. A text from Justinian's Code, *Digna Vox* (*Cod.* 1.14.4) stated that although the emperor is the source of all law, he should conduct his actions according to the law. This was repeated at *Cod.* 6.23.3. These two texts seem to sustain the idea of a limited, constitutional monarch whose actions must conform to the rules of the legal system. In contrast, other texts in the *Digest* stressed the illimitability of the emperor's authority and his absolute power. In *Dig.* 1.4.1, the Roman jurist Ulpian declared that 'what pleases the prince has the force of law', which underlined a similar point he made in another text, 'the prince is not bound by the law' (*Dig.* 1.3.31)."

However, the idea of a limited, constitutional monarchy did not really come into being before Magna Carta (1215). The contrast in antiquity was between the absolutist ruler, who recognized no authority above himself, and the Orthodox ruler, who recognized that he was subject to the Law of God, even if he was the source of all human legislation. But the canonists could manipulate the Law of God to suit their master, the anti-Orthodox pope. For, as Pennington writes, "these texts were not intractable. In the hands of skilled lawyers, they could be used to fashion systems of constitutional or of absolute monarchy. In the beginning the lawyers had difficulty assimilating these texts of Roman law into their thought because they did not always have a clear understanding of the complex issues underlying them. Further, their assumptions about monarchical authority were taken primarily from Germanic law and feudal customs, which emphasised the contractual relationship between the people and the monarch and which laid down the king's sacred duty to defend the laws and customs of the land. In this system of thought, law must be reasonable and just. A prince could not exercise his office arbitrarily. A monarch could legislate, but his authority was circumscribed by a restrictive web of ideas which demanded that there be a

⁸⁹⁰ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

need for new law and that the people consent to new law, either by approving it formally or by accepting it through use..."⁸⁹¹

In other words, in Orthodox times rulers had not been absolute. There had been "a restrictive web of ideas" that they were required to conform to if their legislation was to be accepted as lawful. This higher law was Orthodox Tradition, which was not to be identified with the decrees of the Pope or any Church hierarchy... The innovation introduced by the Gregorian revolution consisted in the usurpation of this higher law by the Pope, whose "plenitude of power" brooked no contradiction or appeal to a higher court. Moreover, it extended not only over kings and bishops, but also over every Christian soul, cutting through and across all other loyalties of race, class or feudal status.

"In this way," writes Siedentop, "canon law developed around a new theory of justice, a theory resting on the assumption of moral equality. To find it, we have only to look at the opening words of Gratian's Decretum: 'Natural law [jus] is what is contained in the Law and the Gospel by which each is to do to another what he wants done to himself and forbidden to do to another what he does not want done to himself.' Here the biblical 'golden rule' has been imposed on the ancient theory of natural law, so that equality and reciprocity are made the mainsprings of justice. Without, perhaps, fully realizing the novelty of his move, Gratian fused Christian moral intuitions with a concept inherited from Greek philosophy and Roman law. Relations of equality and reciprocity are now understood as antecedent to both positive and customary law. They provide ultimate standards for judging the contents of each. By identifying natural law with biblical revelation and Christian morality, Gratian gave it an egalitarian basis - and a subversive potential - utterly foreign to the ancient world's understanding of natural law as 'everything in its place'."

At first sight, there would seem to be nothing wrong with placing the Gospel commandments at the foundation of justice. However, the rub came in the principle's application, its "subversive potential" in the hands of the Pope. Or of certain of his subjects...

"This new theory of justice, developing within canon law, would have far-reaching consequences. For it marked a departure from the assumptions about status embedded in Roman law since antiquity. For example, the second-century jurist Gaius had relied on three tests to establish personal status:

Is the person free or unfree?

Is the person a citizen or foreign born?

Is the person a paterfamilias or in the power of an ancestor?

⁸⁹¹ Pennington, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-427.

Evidently, Gaius did not assume an underlying equality of moral status. His use of 'person' was purely descriptive and physical. It carried no moral implications. The church, following Constantine's conversion, had accepted much Roman private law, modeling its courts and procedures on that law. But when knowledge and practice of Roman law declined after the fall of the Western empire, the overriding concern of the clergy was to save as much as possible, by helping Germanic rulers to create law codes for their new kingdoms and trying to protect their Romanized subjects. The understanding of Roman legal terms became fragile. For centuries there was neither leisure nor the ability to review basic assumptions about status in Roman law.

"Gratian's interpretation of the requirements of natural law amounted, however, to just such a review. It amounted to a reversal of assumptions in favour of human equality. For, in effect, it stipulated that all 'persons' should be considered as 'individuals', in that they share an underlying equality of status as the children of God. Instead of traditional social inequalities being deemed natural - and therefore not needing justification - an underlying moral equality was now deemed natural. This reversal of assumptions meant that paterfamilias and lordship were no longer 'brute' facts that stood outside and constrained the claims of justice. They too were now subject to the scrutiny of justice...

"Of course, the canonists did not foresee all the implications of this reversal of moral presumptions. They were not social revolutionaries. But the fact remains that they laid the foundation for a move away from an aristocratic society to a 'democratic' society. Such a reversal of assumptions not only foreshadowed a fundamental change in the structure of society. It also freed the human mind, giving a far wider scope and a more critical edge to the role of analysis. It made possible what might be called the 'take-off' of the Western mind...

"We can see the impact of this intellectual revolution on thinking about political authority. The canonists were greatly influenced by the notion of imperium in Roman law. Yet their translation of imperium into the papal claim of sovereignty changed its meaning. Individuals rather than established social categories or classes became the focus of legal jurisdiction. Individuals or 'souls' provided the underlying unit of subjection in the eyes of the church, the unit that counted for more than anything else. In effect, canon lawyers purged Roman law of hierarchical assumptions surviving from the social structure of the ancient world..."⁸⁹²

Siedentop makes a valid and important point here. Nevertheless, he exaggerates the role that the Gregorian revolution played in the emergence of the concept of the individual. That concept did not emerge as a consequence of the idea of the papal sovereignty over all Christians. The idea that God will judge all men impartially in accordance with His commandments and

⁸⁹² Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217, 218, 219.

regardless of their social status was introduced at the beginning, not at the end of the first Christian millennium. Moreover, the Byzantine Autocracy and all her children in the East and the West fully understood that the individual person is the unit of moral evaluation, and that kings and paupers, clergy and laity – all will be judged according to the same criterion. The difference with the epoch that begins with Gregory VII was that the early Church, following St. Paul's words: "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called" (I Corinthians 7.20), believed that the race, sex, wealth, calling and social status of each individual were not accidental or "brute" facts about them, but providential – that is, decreed by God for the sake of that individual's salvation. It followed that social mobility, still less social revolution and the overthrowing of hierarchies and social structures, were not Christian aims; even slavery – notoriously, according to liberal thinkers – remained virtually untouched as an institution, although Christians were encouraged to liberate their slaves and in any case treat them well, as brothers in Christ. At most, the "anointed of God", the Orthodox emperor or king, could make some minor changes around the edges to the social structure. But Orthodox Christian society remained consciously conservative, traditional and hierarchical.

The Gregorian revolution retained the hierarchical aspect of pre-Gregorian society, while being profoundly radical and anti-traditional. Moreover, the hierarchy was now quite different in kind. Now it was a despotism of a strictness and universality that had never yet been seen in human history since Nimrod. The Pope was the despot, and all men, if they wanted to be saved, had to be his subjects. Too late the Christians of the West learned that the complex, aristocratic structure of pre-Gregorian (and especially pre-feudal) Christian society had been designed by God, not in order to enslave them, but in order to keep them free from despotism and heresy...

The other important and valid point made by Siedentop, that the canonists laid the foundations for a move towards a more democratic society, sounds paradoxical in view of the fact that they were working for the papist absolutism. However, it was confirmed in Rome herself, where from the 1140s the Roman commune was looking for support *against* absolutism. Thus from Justinian's *Digest* lawyers extracted the *lex regia*, according to which "every right and every power of the Roman people" was transferred to the emperor.

This, as Charles Davis writes, "could be interpreted in a popular as well as an imperial sense. There was an ongoing debate among those 'priests of justice', the legists, as to whether the Roman people by means of the *lex regia* had made a permanent or merely a temporal grant of their power and authority to the emperor. Did the grant have to be renewed on the emperor's death? If so, was the acclamation of the Roman people necessary to create the emperor, as had apparently been the case at the coronation of Charles the Great?

“This question was answered in the affirmative in the middle of the twelfth century by the newly created Roman commune, which rebelled against the pope in 1143 and again in 1144. The commune reconstituted the Senate and asserted its right to create the emperor. As Robert Brenson has said, ‘From 1144 to 1155, far from having concrete limited goals, the Romans relied on Antiquity as a political model, and claimed to exercise in the present the undiminished prerogatives of the ancient Roman Senate and people.’

“Their model seems to have been the pre-Carolingian empire, primarily that of Constantine and Justinian, without any room in it for the pope. They were much influenced by the religious leader Arnold of Brescia (d. 1155), who believed that clerics should be stripped of their property. A partisan of his named Wezel had the temerity to write to [the German Emperor] Frederick [Barbarossa] that the *Donation* [of Constantine], ‘that lie and heretical fable’, was not believed even by ‘servants and little women’ in Rome, and that the Pope therefore had no right to summon him there for a coronation...

“... When [Frederick] was approaching Rome in order to be crowned by the pope, he was met by emissaries of the commune who, according to Helmold, told him that he ought to ‘honour the City, which is head of the world and mother of the empire’.”⁸⁹³

But Frederick had little time for democratism... Nor, of course, did the Popes, who, however much they might wish to overthrow the power of the emperors and kings, did not want to replace it with the vague but potentially very powerful force of the mob. However, already in this twelfth century, John of Salisbury floated the idea that the assassination of a tyrant in certain circumstances – that is, if he acted against the holy faith or disregarded the interests of the Church hierarchy – was allowed: “It is not only permitted, but is equitable and just, to kill tyrants. For he who receives the sword deserves to perish by the sword...”⁸⁹⁴

Political revolution had found its justification...

⁸⁹³ Charles Davis, *op. cit.* pp. 87-88, 88-89.

⁸⁹⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*.

55. THE NORMAN KINGDOM OF SICILY

Now the canon lawyers faced two special problems. One we have already encountered frequently: the relationship of the king to the papal monarchy. The other would become increasingly important: the relationship of the Holy Roman Emperor to the other kingdoms of Western Europe.

“According to classical Roman law,” writes Pennington, “the emperor’s sovereignty encompassed all lesser kings, princes, and magistrates. As Johannes Teutonicus wrote in his gloss that was incorporated later into the Ordinary Gloss to the *Decretals of Gregory VII*: ‘The emperor is over all kings... and all nations are under him... He is the lord of the world... and no king may gain an exemption from his authority, because no prescription can run against him in this case.’ By the high Middle Ages, Johannes’ gloss no longer described the reality of Europe’s political system. In his famous decretal, *Per venerabilem* (1202), Pope Innocent III stated that the king of France recognised no superior in temporal affairs. After this decretal had been included in collections of canon law, lawyers gave juridical precision to Innocent’s assertion. Some said that national kings were not subject to the emperor *de facto*, but were so *de iure*, while others insisted that kings were also completely independent of imperial authority. By the mid-thirteenth century jurists commonly defined the kings’ untrammelled sovereignty with the maxim ‘rex in regno suo imperator est’ (a king is emperor in his kingdom). Legally, therefore, kings exercised the same sovereignty as the emperor.”⁸⁹⁵

So *de facto*, and perhaps also *de jure*, the authority of the German “Holy Roman Emperor” over the states of Western Europe in the later (Catholic) Middle Ages was as tenuous as the authority of the Eastern Byzantine Emperor had been over the same areas in the earlier (Orthodox) Middle Ages. Therefore as England under the Normans and Plantagenets, and France under the Capetians, increased in strength, they paid little attention to the claims of the German Emperor. (In any case, England had never been subject to Charlemagne or his successors).

However, England and France could not ignore the competing claims of another kingdom - that of the papacy; and from the twelfth century the relations of both states with Rome were complex and troubled. But it was not only as a power-rival that the papacy influenced the rising nation-states. They were impressed by the scope and efficiency of papal rule, founded on its new system of canon law and a vast net of agents and legates throughout Europe. And so, as Siedentop writes, “despite their continuing struggle against papal pretensions, secular rulers carried two things away from the conflict. The first was papal acceptance that secular jurisdictions had their own origin and validity. The second was a gradual disengagement from a corporate conception of society. This made the relationships one of emulation as well as competition...

⁸⁹⁵ Pennington, *op. cit.*, pp. 432-433.

“... A distinct pattern emerged. Feudal kingship gave way to a new form of kingship, a form involving centralization of authority and the growth of bureaucracy. Royal councils, traditionally composed of tribal chiefs or feudal magnates, were reformed along the model of the papal curia. The names given to new, separate agencies varied. But the pattern involved separating legislative, administrative and judicial functions, and giving each into the hands of people with some appropriate training. Often these were ‘new’ men rather than leading feudatories. In this way a wider pool of talent became available, men whose modest origins also made them more amenable to discipline...”

“These changes can be observed in southern Italy and in Sicily, the principality put together by Norman invaders from the later eleventh century. Two things may help to explain why its rulers created the ‘first modern system of royal law’. The first was the fact of proximity to Rome and constant contact with papal government. But the second and more important was their need for a legitimacy that the papacy could bestow. These Norman ‘intruders’ wished to become kings properly so called (a wish which also led Duke William of Normandy to cultivate relations with the papacy, before invading England in 1066).

“What institutions did the Norman rulers create? They created a system of civil service examinations’ which provided officials to staff new central agencies, a chancery which prepared and issued royal decrees, a treasury (the *dogana*) which organized and directed an efficient system of taxation, and a high court claiming direct jurisdiction over the most serious cases and providing itinerant judges to deal with lesser cases outside the capital of Palermo. Altogether, the pattern strongly resembled that of the reformed Roman curia.

“But Norman innovations did not stop there. These rulers inherited a peculiarly complex set of ‘legal’ traditions, the result of Sicily and southern Italy having been subject, at various times, to Byzantine, papal and Arab rule...”⁸⁹⁶

King Roger II of Sicily was the most striking innovator. He made use of the discovery of Justinian’s *Digest* in order to strengthen his authority vis-à-vis the pope. He was an absolutist ruler who tried to obtain complete control, not only of political matters, but also of ecclesiastical matters within his kingdom – hence his rejection of papal claims to feudal overlordship of the island, and his promotion of his claim to be the apostolic legate to Sicily. So he was less interested in those parts of Roman law that regulated relations with the Church on a symphonic basis, such as Justinian’s famous *Sixth Novella*, than in the more absolutist elements, which went back to old, pagan Rome.

⁸⁹⁶ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 259, 260-261.

David Abulafia writes: "Roger II was several decades ahead of the German emperors in making use of Roman law codes, and it can be argued that he grasped their principles more quickly and firmly than did the emperors: 'no one should dispute about the judgement, plans and undertakings of the king. For to dispute about his decisions, deeds, constitutions, plans and whether he whom the king has chosen is worthy is comparable to sacrilege.' The king stood above the law: this was pure Justinian, cited by Roger, with the substitution of the term rex for princeps. In other words, it was a law which was intended exactly to apply to Roger's kingdom. The idea of the crime of maiestas, or treason, was developed on Roman lines, and was extended to heretics as well, for by questioning the parameters of religion they questioned implicitly the divine election of the ruler.

"Thus the Sicilian monarchy was not entirely a novelty. The ideas that inspired Roger were late-Roman legal ideas, transmitted through Byzantine Italy, but applied to a new set of conditions: a territorial monarchy whose ruler saw himself as detached from the higher jurisdiction of western or eastern emperor, even of pope. Old legislation was seen to confirm the rights and powers of a new institution, the Sicilian monarchy; what was revolutionary was the transformation of the idea of monarchy from the universalism of the late-Roman codes into the regional autonomy of the Sicilian kingdom...

"Roger II's attitude to his monarchy has nowhere been so misunderstood as in his dealings with the Byzantine emperors. Much of his reign was taken up with open or threatened conflict with Byzantium; but in 1141 and 1143 he sent embassies to the emperors John and Manuel Comnenus, demanding recognition of his status as basileus. This is just the moment when his minister George of Antioch commissioned the mosaic of the king being crowned by Christ, and when his relations with the pope were once again difficult over the apostolic legateship. What did Roger mean? The term basileus gave rise to problems. Westerners knew that it was the core title of a long list of titles held by the Byzantine emperor... In ancient Greek, basileus was the word for 'king'. Western rulers who wished to irritate the Byzantines would send letters to Constantinople addressed to the 'king of the Greeks'; but the Byzantines saw their ruler as 'emperor of the Romans', that is, universal emperor, appointed by God, successor to Constantine. Roger's idea of a territorial monarchy, separated out of the universal Christian community, was not easy for Byzantium to accept; there was a tendency in Byzantium to... treat the kingdoms of the west as petty provinces 'allowed' to function under a system of self-government (though southern Italy and Sicily were a different case - they had been 'stolen' from Byzantium by the Normans). What Roger wanted from Constantinople was recognition of the new reality; when he asked to be treated as a basileus he was not cheekily asking to be reckoned as the emperor's equal, or as the western emperor (in lieu of the German ruler), but as a territorial monarch possessing the plenitude of monarchical authority, described in Justinian's law-codes. Nevertheless, the

Byzantines regarded even this as the height of impudence; the Sicilian ambassador was imprisoned, and relations became even worse than before.

“A sidelight on these events is perhaps cast by a book written at Roger’s court by a Byzantine scholar just at this time: Neilos Doxopatrios’ *History of the Five Patriarchates*. This book rebukes the Normans for seizing the lands of the Roman emperor – an extraordinary statement in a work dedicated to a Norman king – but it also argues that Sicily and southern Italy belong to the patriarchate of Constantinople, and are not under the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop of Rome. Roger may have seized on this idea, already exploited in his dealings with the Church, to approach the Byzantine emperor and to offer to re-enter the Orthodox fold. It would be, at the very least, a deft way to put pressure on the pope when he was making difficulties over the apostolic legateship.”⁸⁹⁷

Re-entry into the Orthodox fold was indeed the only way for a Western ruler of the time, not only to escape from the coils of the papist absolutism, but also to aspire to the ideal of Christian Statehood. For that ideal was not “faith-free”: it critically depended on the acceptance of the Orthodox faith as the pillar and foundation of the Christian State, the source of the rule of law. Unfortunately, however, Roger was almost the last western ruler who even contemplated returning to the Orthodox faith⁸⁹⁸, and he himself ruled less like an Orthodox ruler and more like a modern multi-faith and multi-cultural ecumenist. In fact, he embraced ecumenism as a solution to the problems of multi-culturalism, portraying himself in art as both a Latin king, a Greek emperor and a Muslim caliph. Thus Jeremy Johns writes that on Christmas Day 1130, the “had himself crowned King of Sicily and announced that the different communities of his kingdom – Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Muslim and Jewish – now all belonged to a single ‘three-tongued’ Sicilian people. Arabic, Greek and Latin were all employed by the administration of the new kingdom, but the linguistic complexities of Sicily were not triple but legion: a handful of Normans spoke Norse; many Muslims came from North Africa and spoke Berber; the Jews spoke Arabic for day-to-day matters (writing it in Hebrew script), but worshipped and studied in Hebrew; the ‘Latins’ spoke not with one tongue, but in French, Spanish and a babel of more or less mutually incomprehensible ‘Italian’ dialects. Few were able to communicate in all three official languages, so that, for example, a Latin lord had to issue orders in Romance dialect to a Greek interpreter for translation into Arabic so that they could be understood by his Berber-speaking peasants. In what language was King Roger to convey to his subjects the royal message that they were now a single Sicilian people?”

⁸⁹⁷ Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, London: Pimlico, 2002, pp. 33, 34-35. In support of this last thought, Richard Cavendish writes: “Whether out of genuine feeling, or as a tactical device against Rome, [Roger] flirted with Greek Orthodoxy” (“The Death of Roger II of Sicily”, *History Today*, vol. 54 (2), February, 2003, p. 49).

⁸⁹⁸ Early in the thirteenth century the Hungarian King Andreas II was converted to Orthodoxy by St. Savva of Serbia. And in the fourteenth century the Swedish King Magnus became a monk after being washed up at the Russian monastery of Valaam during a storm.

“His solution was to develop art, architecture and material culture as a new *visual* language of Sicilian unity. Roger was depicted in the robes of a Latin king, a Byzantine emperor and an Islamic caliph; his coins, documents and inscriptions used all three languages, irrespective of their audience; his palaces and churches combined Byzantine, Islamic and Latin forms and decoration. In all cases, the tri-culturalism of the medium, not the original meaning of the constituents, was the message.

“The image of Roger in royal garb conveyed ‘king’ to all his subjects in an immediate way that the words basileios, malik or rex did not, but the image of the king conveyed a very different meaning to the loyal Greek minister, the fervent Muslim who rejected Christian rule, and the backwoods Latin baron who despised the sophisticated culture of the court.”⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁹ Johns, “The Language of Islamic Art”, *Oxford Today*. Vol. 17, N 3, Trinity, 2005, p. 13. For a fulsome tribute to the extraordinary mixed culture that Roger produced in Sicily, see John Julius Norwich, *Sicily*, London: John Murray, 2015, chapter 4.

56. HERETICS AND JEWS

It was not only secular kings that felt compelled to resist the exorbitant claims of the “reformed” papacy: the peasants also began to rebel. At first, the rebellions were relatively inchoate, and were directed against abuses of church authority rather than the authority itself. But in time these developed into clearly heretical movements with a Proto-Protestant character.

Thus in 1116, writes Siedentop, a former monk called Henry arrived in Le Mans. “‘Preceded’ by his disciples, he was at first tolerated by the local bishop. But when the bishop left for Rome, Henry’s real message emerged. With a powerful voice and wearing only a hair shirt, he denounced the corruption of the local clergy. ‘After a short course of Henry’s preaching the populace was beating priests in the streets and rolling them in the mud. When Henry later moved into the countryside of southern France and Italy, his message became more extreme: ‘Baptism, he taught, should be given only as an external sign of belief. Church buildings and all the trappings of official religion were useless; a man could pray anywhere as well as he could in a church. The true church consisted of those who followed the apostolic life, in poverty and simplicity; love of one’s neighbour was the essence of true religion.’”⁹⁰⁰

Again, “in the mid-twelfth century a Breton called Eon... led a movement that challenged the established church in Brittany. Although a layman, he celebrated mass for his followers and, apparently, claimed to be the son of God. ‘In the end he organized his followers in a new church, with archbishops and bishops whom he called by such names as Wisdom, Knowledge, Judgement and by the names of the original apostles.’”⁹⁰¹

More lasting in its impact, and less openly heretical was the movement founded by Francis of Assisi. (However, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov characterized Francis’ behavior and visions as “madness”⁹⁰²). His emphasis on voluntary poverty and charity struck a powerful chord, and he soon had thousands of followers across Europe.

The most powerful heretical movement of this period was that of the Cathars or Albigensians of southern France. And their appearance elicited a very fierce response from the papacy. In 1209 Pope Innocent III gave an expedition against the heretics the legal status of a crusade. At Muret in 1213 the crusaders from northern France overcame the heretics of southern France, which was followed by a terrible inquisition and bloodletting carried out by “Saint” Dominic, the real founder of the Inquisition.

Indeed, according to Ehrenreich, “the crusades against the European heretics represented the ultimate fusion of church and military... In return for

⁹⁰⁰ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-284.

⁹⁰¹ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁹⁰² Brianchaninov, “Christians, you must know Christ!”

an offer of indulgences, northern French knights 'flayed Provence [home of the Cathars], hanging, beheading, and burning 'with unspeakable joy.' When the city of Béziers was taken [at the cost of twenty thousand lives] and the papal legate was asked how to distinguish between the Cathars and the regular Catholics, he gave the famous reply: 'Kill them all; God will know which are His...'"⁹⁰³

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However, before discussing the Albigensians in more detail we need to examine the internal enemies par excellence of Medieval Europe, the Jews, whose influence on the Albigensians was extensive...

The Jews of the West, the "Ashkenaz", began to become influential during the reign of Charlemagne, who protected them and gave them the freedom of the empire, much to the dismay of the bishops. With the decline of the Carolingian empire, Jewish merchants made Rouen, the capital of Normandy, their own capital in the West (excluding Spain, which was called "Sepharad", literally "the East"), and they were also well-established in Mainz and other Rhineland towns. After the Norman conquest of England, the Jews penetrated there as well, and the Norman kings of England came to rely on them financially...⁹⁰⁴

The Jews were propelled westward by two disasters they suffered in the East: the destruction of the Jewish Khazar kingdom by the Russians under Great Prince Sviatoslav in the tenth century, which was followed by their being banned from Russia by Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh in the twelfth century, and their expulsion from Mesopotamia by the Muslims in 1040. Mesopotamia had been their homeland for many generations, the seat of their government-in-exile and the place where the Babylonian Talmud received its finished form.

But in the West, no less than in the East, the Jews were an "alien, apparently indigestible element in society"; they were "always and everywhere *in* society and in the state, but never properly *of* either one or the other".⁹⁰⁵

The reasons given for this alienation of the Jews in the course of history have basically been of two diametrically opposing kinds. According to the Christians and those who are called by the Jews "anti-semites", the Jews were alien because they *wanted* to be alien, because their law, the Talmud, which has only the most strained and tangential relationship to God's revelation in the Old Testament, *ordered* them to be alien and hostile to all non-Jews, whom

⁹⁰³ Ehrenreich, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁹⁰⁴ Norman Cantor, *The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1995, chapter six.

⁹⁰⁵ David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 32.

they exploited through their money-lending activities and against whose political authorities they very often rebelled. In other words, Christian anti-semitism was the regrettable but fully understandable consequence of Jewish anti-Gentilism.

According to the Jewish and pro-semitic view, on the other hand, it was the Christians who imposed this alienation upon the Jews, forcing them to live in ghettos, to take up money-lending as a profession, and to rebel out of self-defence.

In fact, as L.A. Tikhomorov writes, “the Jews were well organized in every country, and Jewish organizations in all countries were in constant contact with each other, warning about dangers, preparing refuges in case of persecution and helping each other internationally in respect of trade and industry. This gave Jewry an exceptional power. Wherever a Jew went with a view to practising trade and industry, he found ready support. But the dominance that flowed from this in trade and industry placed a heavy burden on the non-Jewish population. The rulers of the countries – kings, dukes, landowning princes – greatly valued the Jews for their ability to get for them money and think up all kinds of financial operations. Even during times of persecution of the Jews generally, people with property and even town magistrates each wanted ‘to have his own Jew’ for himself, as a consequence of which the persecutions lost their systematic character. But for the population their financial talents were very burdensome, and dissatisfaction and hatred continued to grow against the Jews. This was felt everywhere. In Portugal, for example, where there prevailed the firmest and most exceptional goodwill towards the Jews, the masses of the people hated them. Also, the Jews’ disdain for Christianity could not fail to irritate the Christians. This disdain the Jews did not try to hide in the least. The most broad-minded Jews, such as Judah Halevy [1075-1140] who, of course, had the most superficial understanding of Christianity, and of Islam too, put the one and the other on a level with paganism. Judah Halevy said that although Christianity and Islam ‘in their original form’ were institutions for the purification and ennoblement of the non-Jews (their preparation for Judaism), nevertheless they had turned into paganism: the Christians worshipped the Cross, and the Muslims – the stone of the Kaaba.⁹⁰⁶ The Jews expressed their criticisms wherever they could. Undermining Christianity became part of their mission. And meanwhile they occupied the most prominent position in such dark sciences as alchemy, astrology and every kind of theurgy. Their mysticism and kabbalistic theories had a great influence on Christian society. All kinds of magic and witchcraft, to which the superstitious Middle Ages was avidly drawn, were closely linked with Jewish elements. An example of the degree to which Jewish influence could go is presented by the south of France, which was called French Judaea. The Jews exhibited constant close links with all the enemies of Christianity, with the Arabs, with the heretics of the most

⁹⁰⁶ Halevy is also considered a great medieval forerunner of twentieth-century Zionism (Cantor, *op. cit.*, p. 143). (V.M.)

disgusting sects, such as Manichaeism. Michelet, in evaluating the Albigensians [the Cathari, or Manichaeans, of Southern France], says: 'The southern nobility was overflowing with the children of Jews and Saracens [*Histoire de France (A History of France)*, vol. II, p. 159].' They were more developed people, in Michelet's opinion, than the northern nobility. However it was here that there developed a terrible opposition to religion, and a collapse of morality. The more eminent women were just as debauched as their husbands and fathers, and the poetry of the troubadours was completely filled with blasphemies against God and the stories of lovers. 'This French Judaea, as Languedoc was called, was reminiscent of the Judaea in the East not only because of its olive groves and aromas: *it had its own Sodom and Gomorrha...* The local scholars openly taught the philosophy of Aristotle, while the Arabs and Jews in secret taught the pantheism of Averroes and the subtleties of the Cabala.' [Michelet, *op. cit.*, pp. 393-404].

"The Jewish historian G. Graetz confirms the essence of this characterization. 'The Albigensians,' he says, 'especially energetically protested against the papacy, and their opposition was partly owing to their *relations with the educated Jews and knowledge of Jewish works.* Amidst the Albigensians there existed a sect that directly said that *the Jewish Law is better than the Christian.* Those princes who protected the Albigensians also protected the Jews.'

"We can see what a socially demoralizing influence this was from the same Albigensians. We are accustomed to speak only about the persecutions against the Albigensians. But we must also remember what was being done in those levels of the population which are labelled by the general name of 'Albigensians'. They were overflowing with people having no social restraint. 'The heroes of the great highways,' writes Michelet, 'together with the peasants... dressed their wives in sacred vestments, beat up the priests and mockingly forced them to sing mass. One of their entertainments consisted in disfiguring representations of the Saviour, cutting out the hands and legs. These trouble-makers were dear to the landowning princes precisely for their godlessness. Unbelievers, like our contemporaries, and as savage as barbarians, they lay as a heavy burden on the country, stealing, blackmailing and killing whoever came to hand, carrying out a terrible war' ...

"From the ninth century in France children began to disappear, and rumour began to accuse the Jews of stealing them. First they said it was for selling into slavery, then there appeared rumours that the Jews were killing them. In the twelfth century the Jews were accused of crucifying Christians. It appears that at that time they were not talking about the Jews' use of Christian blood for ritualistic ends. This accusation appeared only in the thirteenth century. The constant friendship of the Jews with the Saracens elicited suspicion and hatred that was the stronger the more intense became the struggle with Islam.

“So the era of the crusades elicited stormy pogroms of the Jews. Before the crusades themselves, in 1014, in France, killing of Jews for such reasons took place everywhere. The Jews of Orleans sent an ambassador to Sultan Hakim in Jerusalem, advising him to destroy the Church of Sepulchre of the Lord. Hakim (Fatimid) did indeed destroy the Church. But for that Jews were killed throughout France, while their ambassador, on his return from Jerusalem, was burned in Orleans.

“The first crusade began in 1096, and if the correct crusading armies did not touch the Jews, the motley crowds of people drawn to the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre beat up Jews along the way and forced them to be baptized against their will. Against this there sounded the voices of the Roman popes, but they remained powerless in face of the excited masses. Pogroms began to become a common phenomenon. Even in England, where nobody had touched the Jews before, in 1189 the first pogrom broke out, while one hundred years later, in 1290, the kings decided to expel them completely from England.⁹⁰⁷ Thus the Jews had no access to England for 350 years until Cromwell, who again allowed them to live in the country. On the continent a terrible pogrom broke out in Fulda, where on the occasion of the killing of some Christian children a crowd burned several tens of Jews, although it remained unclear who had killed the children. In the fourteenth century Europe began to be devastated by the so-called ‘Black Death’ (the plague), and the general voice of the peoples accused the Jews of poisoning the water and supplies set aside for the use of the Christians. The year 1348 was a fatal date for the Jews. In 1453 the Jews suffered universal extinction in Silesia. It goes without saying that the persecuted Jews everywhere sought salvation in new emigrations to such places where they were not killing them at the given moment, although after a certain time the refugees perhaps had to seek a new refuge. During this period there were countless accusations that they had committed ritual killings. Moreover, in a majority of processes – even, perhaps, in all of them – there were Jews who confessed to the crime, and even described the details of how they did it. But the trials of the time took place with the help of tortures, whose horrors we can hardly imagine. In the same period there were many trials of magicians and witches, who were compelled to make confessions by the same tortures. Looking objectively, there is no possibility of reaching an exact conclusion about what these magicians and witches were, and in exactly the same way whether there were cases of ritual killings among the Jews.

“In the interesting collection of I.O. Kuzmin [*Materialy k voprosu ob obvineniakh evreev v ritual'nykh ubijstvakh (Materials on the question of the accusations against Jews of ritual murders)*, St. Petersburg, 1913] there is a long list of trials (mainly Polish) on ritual killings. And it is impossible even to

⁹⁰⁷ In 1306 they were expelled from France, in 1349 from Saxony, in 1360 from Hungary, in 1370 from Belgium, in 1380 from Bohemia, in 1480 from Austria, in 1444 from the Netherlands; in 1492 from Spain, in 1495 from Lithuania, in 1497 from Portugal, in 1498 from Salzburg, Wurtemberg and Nuremberg, in 1540 from Sardinia and Naples, and in 1551 from Bavaria. (V.M.)

understand what amount of truth there could be in the depositions and confessions extracted by tortures, which make one's hair stand on end. Dr. Frank [*Ritual'nie ubijstva pered sudom istiny i spravedlivosti (Ritual murders before the court of truth and justice)*, Kiev, 1912, p. 50] cites the conclusion of the Jesuit Friedrich von Sprey, who said: 'I swear that amidst the many women sentenced to burning for supposed sorcery, whom I accompanied to the fire, there was not one whose guilt was established. Apply this kind of tortures to judges, to spiritual fathers, to me - and you would recognize all of us to be sorcerers.' We could say the same about the confessions of ritual murders. But on the other hand the centuries we are talking about did indeed constitute the peak of various kinds of sorcery and 'black magic', combined with the most disgusting crimes. Moreover, blood was considered to be one of the most important materials used in magic. It is said that the sacrifice of a child and the drinking of his blood was part of the so-called 'black mass' [S. Tukholk, *Okkul'tizm i magia (Occultism and Magic)*, St. Petersburg, 1911, p. 92]. The translator of the Russian edition of the book of the Monk Neophytus [*O tajne krovi u evreev (On the Mystery of Blood among the Jews)*, St. Petersburg, 1914] adduces in the foreword examples of the murder of children with the aim of making incantations among people belonging by blood and birth-certificate to the Christians. Thus in 1440 the Marshal of France Giles de Laval was condemned and burned; he tortured and killed many children to find the philosopher's stone. The remains of the tortured children were found in a cellar. 'From their blood, brains and bones,' says the translator, 'they prepared some kind of magical liquid.'

"Since among the Jews various kinds of sorcery and magic were as well developed as among the Christian peoples, and in this respect the Jews were even rather the teachers of the others since the time of the Babylonian captivity, then one can, of course, imagine that some among them were capable of such evils. But the accusers among the people spread this slander on the whole of Jewry.

"On these grounds, besides tortures and court burnings, a number of pogroms were stirred up against the Jews by crowds in all countries. In exactly the same way terrible persecutions were raised against the Jews during the so-called 'Black Death', which ravaged Europe. The people shouted that the Jews were preparing destructive concoctions out of poisonous plants, human blood and urine, etc., and sorcerers were poisoning people with this mixture. Excited crowds destroyed the homes of the Jews, plundered their property, and killed them. It goes without saying that it is easy to imagine there were people who deliberately stirred up the people against the unfortunate Jews in order to profit from their inheritance. This was perhaps the most difficult era in the life of the Jewish people."⁹⁰⁸

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⁹⁰⁸ Tikhomirov, *Religioznie-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History)*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 348-353.

The main heretical books of the Jews were the Talmud and the Kabbala (or Cabala). "The Byzantine emperors," writes Oleg Platonov, "were unconditional opponents of the Talmud, forbidding it on their territory. In this policy the Russian sovereigns followed the Byzantine emperors. Right until the end of the 17th century the import of the Talmud into Russia was forbidden under pain of death.

"The tradition of the non-allowance of the Talmud onto the territory of Christian states was broken after the falling away of the Western church from Orthodoxy and the strengthening of papism. The mercenary Roman popes and cardinals for the sake of gain often entered into agreements with the Jews and looked through their fingers at the widespread distribution of the Talmud in Europe. Nevertheless, amidst the Roman popes there were found those who tried to fight with this 'book worthy of being cursed', from the reading of which 'every kind of evil flows'.

"Popes Gregory IX in 1230 and Innocent IV in 1244 ordered all Talmudic books to be burned. In England in 1272 during the expulsion of the Jews searches for copies of the Talmud were carried out in their homes and they were handed over to be burned..."⁹⁰⁹

A new Jewish "holy" book now appeared, the Cabala. Nesta Webster writes: "The modern Jewish Cabala presents a dual aspect – theoretical and practical; the former concerned with theosophical speculations, the latter with magical practices. It would be impossible here to give an idea of Cabalistic theosophy with its extraordinary imaginings on the Sephiroths, the attributes and functions of good and bad angels, dissertations on the nature of demons, and minute details on the appearance of God under the name of the Ancient of Ancients, from whose head 400,000 worlds receive the light. 'The length of this face from the top of the head is three hundred and seventy times ten thousand worlds. It is called the "Long Face", for such is the name of the Ancient of Ancients.' The description of the hair and beard alone belonging to this gigantic countenance occupies a large place in the Zoharic treatise, *Idra Raba*.

"According to the Cabala, every letter in the Scriptures contains a mystery only to be solved by the initiated. By means of this system of interpretation passages of the Old Testament are shown to bear meanings totally unapparent to the ordinary reader. Thus the Zohar explains that Noah was lamed for life by the bite of a lion whilst he was in the ark, the adventures of Jonah inside the whale are related with an extraordinary wealth of imagination, whilst the beautiful story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman is travestied in the most grotesque manner.

⁹⁰⁹ Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, p. 137.

“In the practical Cabala this method of ‘decoding’ is reduced to a theurgic or magical system in which the healing of diseases plays an important part and is effected by means of the mystical arrangement of numbers and letters, by the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, by the use of amulets and talismans, or by compounds supposed to contain certain occult properties.

“All these ideas derived from very ancient cults; even the art of working miracles by the use of the Divine Name, which after the appropriation of the Cabala by the Jews became the particular practice of Jewish miracle-workers, appears to have originated in Chaldea...”⁹¹⁰

How could this paganism ever have entered the rigorously anti-pagan religion of Judaism? The pro-semitic author Paul Johnson writes: “The sages were both fascinated and repelled by this egregious superstition. The anthropomorphism of God’s bodily measurements went against basic Judaic teaching that God is non-created and unknowable. The sages advised Jews to keep their eyes firmly fixed on the law and not to probe dangerous mysteries... But they then proceeded to do just that themselves; and, being elitists, they tended to fall in with the idea of special knowledge conveyed to the elect: ‘The story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, and the chapter on the chariot [Ezekiel 1] before even one person, unless he is a sage, and already has an independent understanding of the matter.’ That was the Talmud; indeed the Talmud and other holy writings contained a good deal of this suspect material...”⁹¹¹

L.A. Tikhomirov writes that the mysticism of the Cabala “was based on the idea of the self-sufficiency of nature, on the substitution of nature for the idea of God the Creator, the Personal God Whose essence was beyond the whole of creation created by Him.

“Therefore the Cabala undermined both the Mosaic faith and the Christian.

“In social relations it also undermined that order which was based on the law given by God, for it made *man* the independent orderer of his own social relations. This side of the Cabala aroused alarm in Jewish society, too, exciting it sometimes to struggle against Cabalism by force. And indeed, in, for example, its newest manifestation, Hassidism, the Kabbalistic idea undermined the authority both of the rabbis and of Jewish society itself and opposed to it the ‘Tsadiks’ – a power that was, so to speak, independent by dint of the mystical link it presupposed with the Divine principle. The Jews therefore found in Cabalism a kinship with Christianity, where, as they supposed, ‘Christ made himself God’. In exactly the same way in the triads of

⁹¹⁰ Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, The Christian Book Club of America, 1924, pp. 12-13. Further evidence for paganism in modern Judaism is the adoption of the Babylonian Fast of Tammuz as one of the two main fasts of the synagogue year, though condemned by the Prophet Ezekiel (Elizabeth Dilling, *The Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today*, The Noontide Press, 1963).

⁹¹¹ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 196.

the Sephiroth they saw a similarity with the Christian idea of the consubstantial Trinity. But if Cabalism excited the alarm of the Jewish world, they still were able to deal with it there, since the Cabalists in general were also penetrated by Jewish national patriotism, and, in all probability, it was precisely Cabalist influences that served as the basis for that original form of messianism which sees in the Messiah not a special ambassador of God, but the Jewish people itself, and understands the coming kingdom of the Messiah as the universal kingdom of the people of Israel.

“But the Cabala had a more destructive impact on Christian society.

“In the Christian world Cabalism was also supposed to be closer to Christianity than Talmudism, so that the Cabalists were sometimes protected even by the Roman popes. But if there were cases of the conversion of Cabalists to Christianity, in general Cabalism has the same relationship to Christianity as Gnosticism, that is, it can give birth only to heretical teachings. And that is how it worked in history, undermining Christian ideas about God, Christ, the Church and, finally, the whole order of Christian society through its ability to join up with all and sundry. The survivals of Gnosticism and the heresies went hand in hand with Cabalism right from the Middle Ages. It undermined the same things, and first of all the Church; and it gave birth to the same ideals of public life.

“This does not mean that Cabalism whenever it appeared put forward political or social programmes. It had nothing of the kind, as there was nothing of the kind in occultism. Like occultism, Cabalism was always only a well-known *religio-philosophical* world-view. If it had politico-social consequences, then only because this world-view undermined the Christian-ecclesiastical world-view, and through it also the order founded upon it, and those forms of discipline which it held to.

“That intellectual-social movement, a constituent part of which in its religio-philosophical aspect was Cabalism, together with occultism and Gnosticism undermined the bases of the Christian order confirmed in the middle ages. It was in fact reformist, emancipatory and revolutionary, since it opposed to the social discipline of old Europe the democratic idea. The democratic idea in itself, through its internal logic, was put forward in opposition to the hierarchical idea, when the idea of submission to the will of God was substituted by the idea of human autonomy. It was for that reason that the secret societies and tendencies, in whose world-view the Cabala found its place, played, together with Gnosticism and occultism, a reformist and revolutionary role. Such, especially, was the role of Freemasonry.

“But we must not conclude from this that the Cabalistic idea was in essence ‘emancipatory’ and democratic. Quite the opposite. If Cabalism, like occultism, will at any time begin to introduce into the ordering of society *its own ideas*, they will give birth to a society that is in an idiosyncratic way aristocratic and very despotic. We see this in part in the social order of

Cabalistic Hasidism, in which the Tsadiks are absolute masters to whom the whole of their community submits unconditionally. And that is understandable.

“According to the idea of Cabalism, people have by no means equal rights, they are not identical. Over humanity *in general* there is no authority higher than human authority, and human authority goes back even to the heavens. But people are not all identical, authority does not belong to all of them, because they are not equally powerful. Some people are rich in occult abilities, whose power can be developed by exercise to an infinite degree. But other people are weak in this respect or even nothing. And these weak people must naturally be in the hands of the strong, receive directions from them and be under their administration. This power of the mystical aristocracy is incomparably more powerful than the power of hereditary aristocracy, because the latter is not united with great personal power, while the mystical aristocracy has an invincible *personal power*. It possesses the ability to rule over the whole of nature, over the angelic powers, over the souls of men, not because such a rule was given to it by some human law or ‘constitution’, but because these higher men are incomparably more powerful than others, while the weak cannot oppose them. Moreover, there is no need to oppose them, because the higher nature will be able to construct a life that is much better for the weak than they can build themselves.

“On this basis heredity can arise. Among the Tsadik hassidim there soon arose ‘dynasties’ in which power was passed down by inheritance.

“And so in itself the Cabalistic idea by no means leads to democracy...

“As is well-known, in Freemasonry, too, in spite of the external democratism and elective nature of its institutions, in actual fact the secret power of the ‘higher degrees’ is exceptionally great. It is noteworthy that a man of the ‘higher degrees’, when placed among people of the lower degrees, does not receive any external power. He seems to be equal to all his co-members, but is obliged to direct them in the direction indicated to him from above. He must do this by means of influence. What kind of influence is this? In all probability, as they say, he must possess the ability of a hypnotist and magnetist. It is also thought that reception into the higher degrees of Masonry takes place on the basis of the degree to which these ‘occult’ abilities are revealed and proved in a man.

“Concerning Cabalism, we must further note the possibility of its *national* role. From ancient times there has existed in Jewry the conviction that the ‘Godchosenness’ of Israel is defined by special ‘prophetic abilities’ of the descendants of Abraham. One can well imagine that the special abilities necessary for Cabalism belong in the highest degree only to the Jews. With this presupposition we can understand why ‘the Jewish Cabala’ stands separate from ‘the European’, and if the time for the influence of the Cabalists were ever to come, it would probably coincide with the world influence of

Jewry. We can also suppose that this is linked to the preponderance of Jewry in the highest centre of Freemasonry, about which the investigators of the latter speak. But so little is known both about the Cabalistic organizations and about the higher organizations of Freemasonry, and all ideas about them have so little basis in fact, that one should not attach any serious significance to hypotheses of this sort..."⁹¹²

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a conflict arose between the rationalists, led by Maimonides, who rejected the paganism of the Cabala, and the "mystics", led by Nahmanides, who accepted it. The work of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) is to Judaism what the Spanish Arab philosopher Averroës is to Islam and Thomas Aquinas is to Christianity – the first to attempt to reconcile the faith of his fathers with scientific knowledge, and in particular the science of Aristotle which was becoming known again in Spain and Western Europe. For this rationalist project Maimonides was criticized by many of the rabbis of his time. But in his opposition to the Cabala he showed himself faithful to the monotheistic roots of Judaism.

"Nahmanides," however, as Johnson writes, "made it possible for kabbalists to pose as the conservatives, tracing the origin of their ideas back to the Bible and Talmud, and upholding the best and most ancient Jewish traditions. It was the rationalists who were the innovators, bringing to the study of the Torah the pagan ideas of the ancient Greeks. In this respect, the campaign against the works of Maimonides could be described as the last squeak of the anti-Hellenists.

"Nahmanides himself never joined the witch-hunt against rationalism – on the contrary, he opposed it – but he made it possible for the kabbalists to escape similar charges of heresy, which in fact would have been much better grounded. For Cabalah not only introduced gnostic concepts which were totally alien to the ethical monotheism of the Bible, it was in a sense a completely different religion: pantheism. Both its cosmogony – its account of how creation was conceived in God's words – and its theory of divine emanations led to the logical deduction that all things contain a divine element. In the 1280s, a leading Spanish kabbalist, Moses ben Shem Tov of Guadalajara, produced a summa of kabbalistic lore, the *Sefer-ha-Zohar*, generally known as the *Zohar*, which became the best-known treatise on the subject. Much of this work is explicitly pantheist: it insists repeatedly that God 'is everything' and everything is united in Him, 'as is known to the mystics'. But if God is everything, and everything is in God, how can God be a single, specific being, non-created and absolutely separate from creation, as orthodox Judaism has always emphatically insisted? There is no answer to this question, except the plain one that *Zohar-Cabalah* is heresy of the most pernicious kind..."⁹¹³

⁹¹² Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-243.

⁹¹³ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

“Heresy of the most pernicious kind...” And yet, during the Renaissance this heresy was to penetrate the intellectual life of Western Europe, undermining what was left of its Christian faith...

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Perhaps the most famous movement accused of heresy in the Middle Ages were the Knights Templar, a monastic-military sect founded under the protection of the papacy in 1118 in order to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land. In exchange for their military service, in 1139 Pope Innocent II allowed them “to retain all the spoils from the Saracens, with no one else having any right to demand a portion”. After a distinguished beginning to their history during which they displayed great courage in support of the crusaders in the Holy Land, - indeed, they became “the most important defenders of European interests” there⁹¹⁴. However, they were corrupted by the vast wealth they acquired both through donations and through rapine, and began to betray the Christian cause through deals with the Saracens.

Worst of all, according to their enemies, they accepted dualistic, Manichaeic-Albigensian doctrines and began to worship an idol called “Baphomet”, accompanied by the renunciation of Christ and homosexual orgies.⁹¹⁵

These “facts” were established during trials of their members by King Philip the Fair of France, who wanted their money, and Pope Clement V, who was coerced by Philip. The head of the Order, Jacques de Molay, and one other Templar, refused to admit their guilt even under torture. They were finally burned at the stake in Paris in 1314, and all their property was confiscated...

Many authorities assert that the Templars were completely innocent;⁹¹⁶ certainly, the use of torture in the earlier trial, in 1307, by King Philip, makes the use of that evidence unsafe by modern standards of proof.⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁴ Jose Luis Corral Lafuente, “Swords in the Holy Land”, *National Geographic History*, June/July, 2015, p. 72.

⁹¹⁵ This “idol” may in fact have been what we now know as the Shroud of Turin. See Ian Wilson, *The Shroud: the 2000-Year-Old Mystery Solved*, London: Bantam Press, 2010.

⁹¹⁶ According to Bertrand Russell (*op. cit.*, p. 503), “the best account of this proceeding is in Henry C. Lea’s *History of the Inquisition*, where, after full investigation, the conclusion is reached that the charges against the Templars were wholly without foundation”. However, some authorities, and in particular Tikhomirov (*op. cit.*, chapters 50, 51), think the evidence of their guilt is overwhelming, and take seriously the claim that the Templars are the link between ancient paganism and modern Freemasonry.

⁹¹⁷ See, for example, Piers Paul Read, *The Templars*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002.

57. MAGNA CARTA AND THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE

In 1172, as we have seen, King Henry II of England had ordered the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket. The resultant canonization of the archbishop raised the prestige of the Church in its perennial struggle with the State, and the papacy was not slow to press its advantage. In 1198 another opportunity came with the election of a new Pope and a new "Holy Roman Emperor".

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) was probably the most powerful and imperialist pope in history. Applying Jeremiah 1.10, "I have set thee over the nations and kingdoms" to himself, he declared that the Pope was "truly the vicar of Jesus Christ, anointed of the Lord... set between God and man, lower than God but higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no one".⁹¹⁸ His ambitions had been apparent already at his enthronement: "Take this tiara," intoned the Archdeacon, "and know that thou art Father of princes and kings, ruler of the world, the vicar on earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose honour and glory shall endure through all eternity."⁹¹⁹

Nor did Innocent in private soften the force of these public claims. For "we are the successor of the Prince of the Apostles," he said, "but we are not his vicar, nor the vicar of any man or Apostle, but the vicar of Jesus Christ Himself before whom every knee shall bow."⁹²⁰ But was it before Christ or the Pope that the Scripture said every knee shall bow? It made little difference to the papists. For by now the Pope had taken the place, not just of Peter, but of Christ in the Roman Church.

Innocent invented an original doctrine, the "by reason of sin" (ratione peccati) theory, which enabled him to interfere in secular affairs, and make judgements in disputes between secular rulers, where he judged sin to be involved. Whether or not sin was involved in a given case was up to the Pope to decide; he was the expert on sin, though he was not yet acknowledged to be sinless himself. And since, as is generally acknowledged, sin is everywhere, Innocent intervened vigorously in every part of Christendom.

Naturally, the Innocent considered that the emperor was subject to him; for, "just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority..." On this basis Innocent intervened vigorously in the election of the emperor and chose Otto IV because he promised to do whatever he ordered him. So Otto was crowned "king of the Romans, elect by the grace of God and of the Pope" (God's grace was evidently considered not enough: it had to be supplemented by the Pope's). But within a year he had excommunicated him...

⁹¹⁸ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, p. 48.

⁹¹⁹ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 67.

⁹²⁰ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 68.

Innocent's next target was England, where the extraordinarily despotic behaviour of King John seemed to provide the papacy with a perfect excuse for what we would now call "regime change". According to Montefiore, John "lost most of his empire, broke every promise he ever made, dropped his royal seal in the sea, impoverished England, murdered his nephew, seduced the wives of his friends, betrayed his father, brothers and country, foamed at the mouth when angry, starved and tortured his enemies to death, lost virtually every battle he fought, fled any responsibility whenever possible and died of eating too many peaches."⁹²¹

However, the ultimate outcome of the pope's intervention did not go quite according to his plan...

*

In 1207 Innocent consecrated Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury against the will of King John. John retaliated by plundering the revenues of the English Church. Innocent then placed the whole kingdom under interdict for six years. He excommunicated John, deposed him from the throne and suggested to King Philip Augustus of France that he invade and conquer England! We may recall that Pope Alexander II had done something similar when he blessed William of Normandy to invade England in 1066...

John appealed to papal mediation to save him from Philip. He received it, but at a price - full restitution of church funds and lands, perpetual infeudation of England and Ireland⁹²² to the papacy, and the payment of an annual rent of a thousand marks. Only when all the money had been paid was the interdict lifted "and," as De Rosa puts it acidly: "by kind permission of Pope Innocent III, Christ was able to enter England again".⁹²³

This enraged King Philip, however; for he was now ordered to abandon his preparations for war, in that England was now *papal* soil. Moreover, the abject surrender of John to the Pope, and the oath of fealty he had made to him, aroused the fears of the English barons. These fears, combined with John's despotic rule, led to the baron's imposing upon the king the famous *Magna Carta* of 1215.

⁹²¹ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, p. 137.

⁹²² In 1152 the English Pope Adrian IV by his bull *Laudabiliter* had reminded the English King Henry II that Ireland, like all islands, belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church in accordance with the Donation of Constantine. He therefore blessed Henry to invade Ireland in order to extend the boundaries of the Church, extirpate vice and instill virtue. As John of Salisbury wrote in his *Metalogicus* of 1156 of Adrian: "At my solicitation he granted Ireland to Henry II, the illustrious King of England, to hold by hereditary right, as his letter to this day testifies. For all Ireland of ancient right, according to the *Donation of Constantine*, was said to belong to the Roman Church which he founded. Henry duly obliged in 1172 by invading Ireland and beginning the fateful "Irish question". See Michael Richter, "The First Century of Anglo-Irish Relations", *History*, 59, N 196, June, 1974, pp. 195-210.

⁹²³ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Magna Carta is famous for setting out the rights of the “free man” as follows: “No free man is to be arrested, or imprisoned, or disseised, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed... save by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land”. It “promised the protection of church rights, protection from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and, most importantly, limitations on taxation and other feudal payments to the Crown, with certain forms of feudal taxation requiring baronial consent. It focused on the rights of free men – in particular the barons – and not serfs and unfree labour.”⁹²⁴

Magna Carta, writes Tombs, “has been called the first written national constitution in European history, though charters between rulers and ruled were not uncommon at the time in France, Catalonia, Germany, Normandy and indeed England. In important ways *Magna Carta* was unique, however. Its restraints on the Crown (though later claimed to be the ‘gode olde law’ of the Anglo-Saxons) were unprecedented and profound. It took the form of a contract between the monarch and the ‘community of the realm’ – ‘everyone in our kingdom’ – and it ascribed permanent rights and powers to that community, even its humblest members. It made clear that the king was under the law, and it planned a system (a council of twenty-five barons) to force him to obey it, with the whole community being bound by oath to help them. Consent by ‘the common council of our realm’ was required for taxation. *Magna Carta* was not, of course, egalitarian, but it was inclusive, granted to ‘all free men’, and also giving to every man and woman without distinction the right to justice, protection from arbitrary demands for money, goods or labour, and protecting against forced marriage. It was permanent, applying ‘in all things and places for ever’.”⁹²⁵

If the barons had succeeded in binding the king to all its measures, writes David Starkey, “it would have created a neo-republican government. It began as a thoroughly extremist programme before being edited and reaching common ground...”⁹²⁶

But it had the further profound effect of undermining *papal* power also. For although *Magna Carta* was a limitation of royal, not *papal* power, it set a dangerous, revolutionary precedent which might be used against the Pope himself. And indeed, it was so used: in 1366 the English parliament abolished the feudal subjection of England to the papacy...⁹²⁷ Foreseeing this, the Pope “from the plenitude of his unlimited power” condemned the charter as “contrary to moral law”, “null and void of all validity forever”, absolved the

⁹²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta.

⁹²⁵ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁹²⁶ Starkey, “*Magna Carta* of 1215 was designed to create a revolutionary regime”, *History Today*, May, 2015, p. 64.

⁹²⁷ J.A. Watt, “Spiritual and Temporal Powers”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 393.

king from having to observe it and excommunicated “anyone who should continue to maintain such treasonable and iniquitous pretensions”.

So the Pope, a spiritual despot, was defending the rights of John, a secular despot, against the growing power of a latent democratism represented in Magna Carta... However, at this point something unexpected happened. Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury – who, we may remember, was the pope’s, not the king’s appointee – refused to publish Innocent’s sentence against the charter. And the reason he gave was very significant: “Natural law is binding on popes and princes and bishops alike: there is no escape from it. It is beyond the reach of the pope himself.”⁹²⁸

We shall return to this concept of natural law, which presented a challenge to the papacy’s claims of the greatest significance...

So *Magna Carta* undermined one-man rule both in the Church and the State; it set kings against their subjects, and kings against popes, and bishops against popes; it was, in short, a recipe for civil war.

And civil war was the consequence.

In 1232 Henry III ascended the throne of England. “He had great visions,” writes Tombs, “and wanted a government of his own men. He aimed to restore the personal power of the Crown and play a great role in Europe...”

“In 1258 seven leading barons secretly took an oath to bring the king under control. Their leader was Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, originally one of Henry’s French entourage and his former governor of Aquitaine. He was the son of another Simon de Montfort, leader of the terrible Albigensian Crusade, which fifty years earlier had taken fire and sword to the Cathar heresy of southern France. Like his father, Simon II was a frightening figure: a great but impecunious and greedy *seigneur*, a man simultaneously racked by unbending religious fervor and rapacious personal ambition. Henry is supposed to have said to him, ‘I fear thunder and lightning terribly, but by God’s head I fear you more than all the thunder and lightning in the world.’ The conspirators confronted the king at Oxford on 9 June to reform the state of the realm. From our viewpoint, both sides represent different mixtures of tradition and modernity. Henry stood for an ancient idea of absolute monarchy going back to the Romans – the barons consequently banned the teaching of Roman law. But his methods were ‘modern’ – using a professional bureaucracy. The barons demanded to exercise their traditional duty of advising the king; but in doing so they adopted radical ideas of communal rights. Their motives of course were complex and diverse – from resisting tax increases to restoring the peace of Christendom – but all agreed that the king must be restrained by his subjects. Magna Carta had said this, but Henry ignored it. Now the terms were to be tightened.

⁹²⁸ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

“Those who came to the Oxford parliament in June 1258 were asked to take an oath in the name of ‘le commun de Engleterre’. Communal oath-taking was an ancient practice. It had been done in 1205, when all males over twelve were ordered to take an oath to defend the kingdom against a possible French invasion, and in 1215, when an oath was taken to uphold Magna Carta. So *le commun* implied everyone, for all had a right and duty to take part in public affairs, at least in an emergency. This had sweeping consequences: the Provisions of Oxford, which Henry swore to accept, provided for elected committees to supervise the royal government, and for regular public ‘parlemenz’ Moreover, Henry, as ‘king on Engleneloande’, promised this in English to his ‘loandes folk’, the people of the land – the first document issued in the king’s name in English since the Conquest.

“But in 1261 Henry, supported by the Pope and Louis IX of France, renounced the agreement. Armed conflict began in 1263, and at the battle of Lewes on 14 May 1264 Henry was taken prisoner. The *Song of Lewes* (a long Latin poem) asserted that ‘the community of the realm [*communitas regni*] should advise and let it be known what everyone [*universitas*] feels, for their own laws are most familiar to them... the customs of the realm passed down from father to son.’ The king’s son Edward escaped and raised an army. Montfort found support in London, among the clergy, lesser knights and landowners, and even among peasants. But clashes of interest and political complexities wore down rebel support. The two sides finally fought it out at Evesham on 4 August 1265, and the rebel army was crushed...

“Our understanding of the importance of the drama of the 1260s turns upon the interpretation of words. Later generations saw it as a landmark in the history of Parliament, a high point in the history of English freedom. Was ‘le commun de Engleterre’ the beginning of ‘the Commons’, a summoning or representatives of the people to take part in government? Many French and Italian towns had *communes*, which were civic governments. But this one concerned the whole of England. The nearest English expression was ‘loandes folk’. However translated or interpreted, the sense was that everyone had some right and duty... Perhaps we could take this as another birth of England, as a formally recognized, if embryonic, political community. Or perhaps a rebirth. The Conquest distorted what has been called a constitutional tradition begun with the ‘Angelecynnes witan’: after 1066, when councils or parliaments met, they did so as the vassals of a foreign lord, not the representatives of a free nation. But after 1200, these councils took tentative steps towards identifying themselves as representatives of the whole community, in opposing the European priorities of their rules and the heavy taxes required to finance them. After a gap of 200 years, a common English political identity began to re-emerge...”⁹²⁹

⁹²⁹ Tombs, *op. cit.* pp. 76, 78-79.

58. THE INQUISITION

Also in this fateful year of 1215 Innocent convened the Fourth Lateran council, which assembled 400 bishops and 800 abbots from every country in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. It represents the high-water mark of the papist despotism. For in it every decree of the Pope was passed without the slightest debate in accordance with Innocent's word: "Every cleric must obey the Pope, even if he commands what is evil; for no one may judge the Pope..."⁹³⁰

Coming shortly after the crusade against the Albigensians, the council legalized their slaughter, declaring it right, even obligatory to kill heretics: "If a temporal Lord neglects to fulfil the demand of the Church that he shall purge his land of this contamination of heresy, he shall be excommunicated by the metropolitan and other bishops of the province. If he fails to make amends within a year, it shall be reported to the Supreme Pontiff, who shall pronounce his vassals absolved from fealty to him and offer his land to Catholics. The latter shall exterminate the heretics, possess the land without dispute and preserve it in the true faith... Catholics who assume the cross and devote themselves to the extermination of heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence and privilege as those who go to the Holy Land..."⁹³¹

It was Thomas Aquinas who provided a theological justification for the killing of heretics: "There is a sin, whereby they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be shut off from the world by death. For it is a much more serious matter to corrupt faith, through which comes the soul's life, than to forge money, through which temporal life is supported. Hence if forgers of money or other malefactors are straightway justly put to death by secular princes, with much more justice can heretics, immediately upon conviction, be not only excommunicated but also put to death."⁹³²

Such ferocious words compare badly with those of the Orthodox Bishop Wason of Liège written to the Bishop of Châlons in about 1045: "We have not received power to cut off from this life by the secular sword those whom our Creator and Redeemer wills to live so that they may extricate themselves from the snares of the devil... Those who today are our adversaries in the way of the Lord can, by the grace of God, become our betters in the heavenly country... We who are called bishops did not receive unction from the Lord to give death but to bring life."⁹³³ The Church in both East and West always considered heresy to be the most serious of sins, in accordance with Holy Scripture. However, the execution of heretics precisely for heresy had been extremely rare. That was now to change...

⁹³⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁹³¹ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁹³² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ii. Q. xi; in Bettenson & Maunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-148.

⁹³³ Bishop Wason, in Comby, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

The Inquisition was officially founded by Pope Gregory IX in 1233. The Dominicans were entrusted with the task of eradicating heresy, calling in the secular authorities if necessary.⁹³⁴ Only one verdict was possible: guilty. For according to the *Libro Negro* of the inquisitors, "if, notwithstanding all the means [of torture] employed, the unfortunate wretch still denies his guilt, he is to be considered as a victim of the devil: and, as such, deserves no compassion...: he is a son of perdition. Let him perish among the damned."⁹³⁵

The Inquisition became especially notorious in Spain, where, as "Llorente, Secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid from 1790 to 1792, estimated in his *History of the Inquisition...* up to his time thirty thousand had been put to death... During the reign of Philip II, Bloody Mary's Spanish husband, it is reckoned that the victims of the Inquisition exceeded by many thousands all the Christians who had suffered under the Roman emperors."⁹³⁶

It had not always been like that. Orthodox Spain before its conquest by the Moors in 717 had already replaced "the oath of *compurgatores*, or the judicial combat" by "the proof by witnesses, and a rational investigation of the matter in question, such as might be expected in a civilised society."⁹³⁷ Truly, as de Rosa writes, "the Inquisition was not only evil compared with the twentieth century, it was evil compared with the tenth and eleventh century when torture was outlawed and men and women were guaranteed a fair trial. It was evil compared with the age of Diocletian, for no one was then tortured and killed *in the name of Jesus crucified*."⁹³⁸

Five centuries later, Cardinal Bellarmine, in his book *De Romano Pontifice*, was preaching the same doctrine: "The Pope is the supreme judge in deciding questions of faith and morals... If the Pope were to err by imposing sins and forbidding virtues, the Church would still have to consider sins as good and virtues as vices, or else she would sin against conscience."⁹³⁹ Thus did the Roman Church consciously and openly declare that truth is not truth, or goodness goodness - if the Pope so decrees. *This is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.*

But the papacy's enemies were not finished yet. The popes continued to be defied by that most avant-garde outpost of medieval kingship, the kings of Sicily, who continued to break the mould of medieval kingship. Their most famous and powerful representative was Frederick II Hofenstaufen (1194-1250); he was also Holy Roman Emperor and wanted to extend his territories beyond Germany and Sicily into the Italian lands in between.

⁹³⁴ Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Inquisition*, London: Penguin, 1999, pp. 20-21.

⁹³⁵ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁹³⁶ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁹³⁷ François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 60.

⁹³⁸ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁹³⁹ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

“He was raised in Sicily,” writes Montefiore, “a court that blended Christian and Islamic, Arab and Norman culture. If his upbringing – speaking Arabic, and at home with Jews and Muslims – made him seem exotic, his eccentricity was his own. He travelled with Arab bodyguards, a Scottish magician, Jewish and Arab scholars, fifty falconers, a zoo and a sultanic harem of odalisques. He was said to be an atheistic scientist who joked that Jesus, Muhammed and Moses were frauds and was portrayed as a proto-Dr Frankenstein who sealed a dying man in a barrel to see if he would escape.

“Yet he was actually an effective and ruthless politician with a clear vision of his own role as universal Christian emperor...”⁹⁴⁰

This inevitably brought him into conflict with that other universal Christian emperor, the Pope, who excommunicated him in 1227 for his supposed dilatoriness in going on crusade. In spite of that (perhaps because of it?), he succeeded where previous, papally sponsored crusaders had failed. For he occupied Jerusalem without bloodshed for ten years!

At the heart of this bitter conflict lay the question of who would dominate Christendom: pope or emperor. With each side buoyed up by a messianic belief in his cause, Italy became the battleground of papal bulls, and insults flew across Europe. Frederick was again excommunicated. If he was the Wonder of the World to his admirers, he was henceforth the Beast of the Apocalypse to his enemies. Two different popes, Gregory IX and Innocent IV, fled Rome, the former dying in exile. In 1245 Innocent IV fired the papacy’s ultimate salvo: he announced that the emperor was deposed. For the next five years it was all-out war. In the end it was death, not the papacy, that defeated Frederick. Fighting on against the almost insurmountable twin obstacles of excommunication and deposition, Frederick was regaining ground in both Italy and Germany when he died suddenly in 1250...”⁹⁴¹

⁹⁴⁰ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, p. 144.

⁹⁴¹ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, pp. 145-146. For more on this extraordinary man, see John Julius Norwich, *Sicily*, London: John Murray, 2015, chapter 6.

59. THOMAS AQUINAS ON NATURAL LAW

By this time, Empire and papacy were about equally matched. But now there entered into the equation a philosophical idea that was to sap at the foundations of both – natural law. As we have seen, the twelfth century saw a revival of the study of certain Byzantine legal texts, especially Justinian’s *Digest*; and one of the ideas that the medieval jurists extracted from the *Digest* posed a serious threat to the papist world-view. This was the idea that *everyone* – even the pope and the emperor – is subject to the rule of law. Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury used this idea to defend Magna Carta. Thus the *Digest* declared that law was “something *all* men ought to obey for many reasons, and chiefly because every law is devised and given by God, but resolved on by intelligent men, a means of correcting offences both intentional and unintentional, a general agreement on the part of the community by which all those living therein ought to order their lives. We may add that Chrysippus [said]: ‘Law is the king of all things, both divine and human; it ought to be the controller, ruler and commander of both the good and the bad’.”⁹⁴²

But what kind of law was meant? There was scope for confusion and contradiction here. For it was another principle of Roman-Byzantine law that the prince was above the law, or freed from human laws (legibus solutus), insofar as “what pleases the prince has the power of law”. For if he broke his own laws, who was to judge him and who was to prevent him passing other laws to make his previous transgression of the law lawful? The pope was similarly considered to be above the law – that is, canon law. This was a consequence of his “absolute power” (potestas absoluta), for if he sinned against canon law, or became a heretic, who was to judge him if not the supreme expert on the subject, the pope himself? And who could judge him if he refused to judge himself? So a monarch might be freed from the laws of the State, and the pope might be freed from the canon law of the Church. But they were both theoretically subject to another kind of law. This higher law was called by medieval theorists *natural law*.

Gratian, as we have seen, distinguished between natural law and customary law.⁹⁴³ Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the concept of natural law was formulated with greater precision by Thomas Aquinas, the most famous of the medieval Catholic theologians, who practiced that corruption of Christian theology by Greek pagan philosophy, especially Aristotelianism, known as *scholasticism*. However, in his general political theory Aquinas remained more Christian than Aristotelian, and closer to the Orthodox concept of the two powers than to the papist theory of the complete subordination of the State to the Church.

⁹⁴² Quoted in R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

⁹⁴³ In fact, according to Fukuyama, he “established a hierarchy among divine, natural, positive, and customary law” (*op. cit.*, p. 269).

Thus, as the Jesuit Fr. Frederick Copleston interprets his thought: "The end of the Church, a supernatural end, is higher than that of the State, so that the Church is a society superior to the State, which must subordinate itself to the Church in matters bearing upon the supernatural life; but that does not alter the fact that the State is a 'perfect society', autonomous within its own sphere. In terms of later theology, then, St. Thomas must be reckoned as an upholder of the *indirect power* of the Church over the State... St. Thomas does not say that man has, as it were, two final ends, a temporal end which is catered for by the State and a supernatural, eternal end which is catered for by the State: he says that man has one final end, a supernatural end, and that the business of the monarch, in his direction of earthly affairs, is to facilitate the attainment of that end. The power of the Church over the State is not a *potesta directa*, since it is the business of the State, not the Church, to care for economic concerns and the preservation of peace; but the State must care for these concerns with an eye on the supernatural end of man. In other words, the State may be a 'perfect society' [*pace* Aristotle], but the elevation of man to the supernatural order means that the State is very much a handmaid of the Church. This point of view is based not so much on medieval practice as on the Christian faith, and it is, needless to say, not the view of Aristotle who knew nothing of man's eternal and supernatural end."⁹⁴⁴

So far so good. However, the revolutionary concept of "natural law" goes back to the early Greek philosophers and is not equivalent to any Scriptural or patristic concept of law. Fr. Copleston defines it as "the totality of the universal dictates of right reason concerning that good of nature which is to be pursued and that evil of man's nature which is to be shunned."⁹⁴⁵ But how do we know what is "right reason" and "the good of nature"?

Another interpreter of Aquinas, J.S. McClelland, explains: "For a maxim of morality or a maxim of good government to be part of natural law, it has to be consistent with scripture, with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, with papal pronouncement, with what the philosophers say, and it must also be consistent with the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian."⁹⁴⁶ But "papal pronouncement" often contradicts "the writings of the Fathers of the Church", "what the philosophers say" takes us still further away from the Fathers, and "the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian" encourages complete license of interpretation.

Aquinas defined the relationship of natural law to man-made laws as follows: "Every law framed by man bears the character of a law exactly to that extent to which it is derived from the law of nature. But if on any point it is in conflict with the law of nature, it at once ceases to be a law; it is a mere

⁹⁴⁴ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, vol. 2, part II, pp. 135-136.

⁹⁴⁵ Copleston, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁹⁴⁶ McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, Routledge: London and New York, 1996, p. 123.

perversion of the law.”⁹⁴⁷ If this concept could be made precise, it could provide a basis on which to justify rebellion against the powers that be, whether in Church or State. However, Aquinas was not trying to find reasons for rebellion against either the ecclesiastical or the secular authorities. “Like Aristotle and Augustine,” writes McClelland, “Thomas always makes a presumption in favour of obedience. Good government carries its own rationale with it, and this is definitely strengthened by the Aristotelian ends which Thomas embeds in secular authority. The effects of good government are certainly pleasing to God. Thomas assumes that there will be a substantial natural law content in nearly all positive law (and even in the positive law of Muslim kingdoms ruling over Christian subjects). Obedience to positive law is therefore to an extent obedience to God’s law...”

“Thomas ends by claiming that most secular law is binding on Christian conscience, including most of what might appear at first sight to be the doubtful cases. No Christian had ever doubted that unjust law – that is, law which flies in the face of the direct commands of the Scriptures – is invalid; and law that is obviously in keeping with God’s commands is good law by definition. But what about law that is somehow ‘in between’, law which is neither very good nor very bad? Aristotelianism enables him to establish a presumption in favour of obedience in conscience to this ‘in between’ kind of law. The question of obedience to a particular command of the positive law cannot be divorced from consideration of the ends for which positive law is in general established, and one of these ends is the secular peace on which the realisation of all other strictly human ends depends. A rational conscience is therefore obliged to consider the question of obedience to an ‘in between’ law very carefully. Disobedience is only justified if two criteria can be met. First, the law must be bad in itself, though not necessarily very wicked; and second, disobedience must not threaten the earthly peace to the extent that the ends for which earthly peace in general established become more difficult to realise. The second criterion is obviously more difficult to meet than the first. It is not a blanket cover for obedience in conscience to every nasty law, but it comes close. The implication is that law bad enough to satisfy both criteria is only going to appear very infrequently, because no case is easier to make out than the case which argues that disobedience in this case of bad law is unjustified because disobedience might either cause social disturbance or indirectly encourage other kinds of law-breaking.”⁹⁴⁸

Copleston puts the matter as follows: “The function of the human legislator is primarily to apply the natural law and to support the law by sanctions. For example, murder is forbidden by the natural law, but reason shows the desirability of positive enactments whereby murder is clearly defined and whereby sanctions are added, since the natural law does not of itself clearly define murder in detail or provide immediate sanctions. The legislator’s primary function is, therefore, that of defining or making explicit the natural

⁹⁴⁷ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, p. 648.

⁹⁴⁸ McClelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

law, of applying it to particular cases and of making it effective. It follows that... every human law is a true law only in so far as it is derived from the natural law. 'But if it disagrees with the natural law in something, it will not be a law, but the perversion of law.' The ruler is not entitled to promulgate laws which go counter to or are incompatible with the natural law (or, of course, the divine law): he has his legislative power ultimately from God, since all authority comes from God, and he is responsible for his use of that power: he is himself subject to the natural law and is not entitled to transgress it himself or to order his subjects to do anything incompatible with it. Just human laws bind in conscience in virtue of the eternal law from which they are ultimately derived; but unjust laws do not bind in conscience. Now, a law may be unjust because it is contrary to the common good or because it is enacted simply for the selfish and private ends of the legislator, thus imposing an unjustifiable burden on the subjects, or because it imposes burdens on the subjects in an unjustifiably unequal manner, and such laws, being more acts of violence than laws, do not bind in conscience, unless perhaps on occasion their non-observance would produce a greater evil. As for laws which are contrary to the divine law, it is never licit to obey them, since we ought to obey God rather than men."⁹⁴⁹

"The ruler possesses his sovereignty only for the good of the whole people, not for his private good, and if he abuses his power, he becomes a tyrant. Assassination of a tyrant was condemned by St. Thomas and he speaks at some length of the evils which may attend rebellions against a tyrant. For example, the tyrant may become more tyrannical, if the rebellion fails, while if it is successful, it may simply result in the substitution of one tyranny for another. But deposition of a tyrant is legitimate, especially if the people have the right of providing for themselves with a king. (Presumably St. Thomas is referring to an elective monarchy.) In such a case the people do no wrong in deposing the tyrant, even if they had subjected themselves to him without any time limit, for he has deserved deposition by not keeping faith with his subjects. Nevertheless, in view of the evils which may attend rebellion, it is far preferable to make provision beforehand to prevent a monarchy turning into a tyranny than to have to put up with or to rebel against tyranny once established. If feasible, no one should be made ruler if he is likely to turn himself into a tyrant; but in any case the power of the monarch should be so tempered that his rule cannot easily be turned into a tyranny. The best constitution will in fact be a 'mixed' constitution, in which some place is given to aristocracy and also to democracy, in the sense that the election of certain magistrates should be in the hands of the people."⁹⁵⁰

Aquinas also, writes Canning, "accepted government by the people as a valid form for cities. This provision underlay his general theory of legislation: 'Making law belongs either to the whole multitude or to the public person who has care of the whole multitude', as also did the power of legal coercion.

⁹⁴⁹ Copleston, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

⁹⁵⁰ Copleston, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

Indeed, 'if it is a free multitude, which could make law for itself, the multitude's consent, manifested by custom, has more weight in observing something than the authority of the prince, who only has the power to make law, in so far as he bears the person of the multitude.'"⁹⁵¹

The revolutionary potential of this doctrine is obvious; and, having made every allowance for Aquinas' essential conservatism, it has to be said that he opened a chink in the wall of social stability that more determined people would make wider. The problem was that the concept of natural law was so vague that it could be used to justify almost any act of disobedience provided it had mass support. Since natural law, in his understanding, was a kind of self-evident truth to which all men had access, it followed that it was the people as a whole - and "people" here could mean Muslims and pagans as well as Christians - who were the ultimate arbiters of justice and truth. True, Aquinas stipulated that natural law should be consistent, in McClelland's words, "with scripture, with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, with papal pronouncement" as well as "with the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian". But it was the latter part of the definition that was seized upon by political theorists and reformers, who knew little or nothing about the Scriptures or the Fathers, but claimed that their own beliefs coincided completely with the common practices and beliefs of mankind.

According to Aquinas, all men know naturally, without the need for grace, what is politically right and just. Here he shows the influence of Aristotle, for whom man was a political animal, and political life - the most natural thing in the world, having no relation to any supernatural or supra-political, religious goals. This was subtly different from the Orthodox view, which is that the truly natural is that which is grace-filled: without grace, nature degenerates into that which is unnatural, contrary to nature. According to the Holy Fathers, therefore, the will and law of God is not apprehended in a "natural" way, if by "natural" we mean the fallen human mind, but by grace. While there is "a light that enlightens every man that comes into the world" (John 1.9), this natural light of grace, this "eye of God in the soul of man", has been so darkened by the fall that it is folly to entrust the most important decisions of political and social life to the people as a whole. According to Orthodoxy, there is no safety in numbers; the multitude can, and very often are, wrong. Only by personal purification of the mind, and the ascent of the whole person to God, can the will of God be known.

In the eighth century Deacon Alcuin of York had expressed this principle in its political application in a letter to Charlemagne: "The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained... Those who say, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God,' are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness."⁹⁵²

⁹⁵¹ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁹⁵² Alcuin of York, *Letter to Charlemagne*, M.G.H., 4, letter 132.

The difference between Alcuin and Aquinas is the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Orthodoxy presents the apostolic teaching of obedience to secular authorities on the basis of a profound understanding of the fall of man, from which the intellect of man, whether as an individual or *en masse*, is not immune. Catholicism exempts the intellect from the fall, thereby undermining the basis of obedience to all authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical.

Aquinas represents a point of transition between the eleventh- and twelfth-century doctrine of the absolute papal monarchy and the conciliarist teaching of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On the one hand, he upheld the doctrine that the pope “occupies the summit of both powers, spiritual and secular”, and that secular rulers, while having a certain autonomy, “should be subject to him who cares for the ultimate end, and be directed by his command”.⁹⁵³ On the other hand, Aquinas’ doctrine of natural law opened the way for the people to judge and depose both popes and kings.

Aquinas does recognize that the king is the Lord’s anointed.⁹⁵⁴ And yet there is little place in his system for recognition of the sacred character of Christian kingship. The reason for this lack is not far to find: the Popes had destroyed such faith in the course of nearly two centuries of incessant propaganda against kingship and the sacrament of royal anointing, violently undermining every authority except their own. All reasonable men rebelled instinctively against this tyranny, but their lack of a truly Orthodox faith prevented them from understanding its cause and fighting against it effectively. And so, failing to understand the root of the tyranny that oppressed him, western man could turn from the extreme of tyranny to the other, equally barren and destructive extreme of *democracy* - rule by everyman rather than rule by one.

⁹⁵³ Canning, *op. cit.*, pp. 132, 133.

⁹⁵⁴ Aquinas, *On Kingship*, VII.61.

60. UNAM SANCTAM AND DE MONARCHIA

“By the fourteenth century,” write Siedentop, “an increasing number of voices were calling for something like representative government in the church. Calls for reform focused on the role of general councils. Was not a general council of the church the supreme authority in matters concerning the faith and well being of the church? Did not the authority of such a council constrain even the pope’s ordinary jurisdiction, his claim to be the final judge and legislator of the church?”

“The struggle between Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair [King of France], which began in 1297, gave these questions a new urgency. The French king – urged on by many cardinals and Franciscans – appealed to a general council, contending that Boniface was a usurper (that is, that the resignation of his predecessor, Celestine V, was ‘forced’ and invalid) and a heretic... The relationship between the papacy and church authorities – as well as papal relations with secular rulers asserting their sovereignty – came under unprecedented critical scrutiny...”⁹⁵⁵

If Pope Innocent III represented the apotheosis of papal power, Boniface VIII represented a second megalomaniac peak. For as Fr. Seraphim Rose writes, he “seated himself on the throne of Constantine, arrayed himself in a sword, crown and sceptre, and shouted aloud: ‘I am Caesar – I am Emperor.’ This was not just an act but an indication of something extremely deep in the whole of modern thought: the search for a universal monarch, who will be Antichrist.”⁹⁵⁶

In his struggle against the king, Boniface VIII made special use of the two swords metaphor, the last great metaphor of papal power, which had originally been developed in the eleventh century in an *anti*-papal spirit by Gottschalk of Aachen, a chaplain of the Emperor Henry IV. Hildebrand, claimed Gottschalk, “without God’s knowledge has usurped the regnum and sacerdotium for himself. In so doing he has despised God’s pious Arrangement which He wished principally to consist not in one, but in two: that is the regnum and sacerdotium, as the Saviour in His passion had intimated should be understood by the figurative sufficiency of the two swords. When it was said to Him, ‘Lord, behold here are two swords’, he replied, ‘It is enough’ (Luke 22.48), signifying by this sufficient duality that there were to be borne in the Church a spiritual and a carnal sword, by which every harmful thing would be cut off: the sacerdotal sword would be used to encourage obedience to the king on God’s behalf, whereas the royal sword would be employed for expelling the enemies of Christ without, and for enforcing obedience to the sacerdotium within.”⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁹⁵⁶ Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993, p. 592.

⁹⁵⁷ Gottschalk, in Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

However, the papists turned the allegory on its head by claiming that both the secular and the spiritual swords were in the hands of the Pope. They also pointed out that the Apostle Peter had, almost immediately after these words of Christ, used the secular sword to cut off Malchus' ear (Luke 22.50).

To which the riposte from the monarchist side was that the Lord had then ordered Peter to put up his sword, saying: "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matthew 26.5)...

Prince Roman Mstislavich of Galicia gave a similar answer to a papal legate who came to him after the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204, "declaring that the Pope would soon subdue all peoples with the sword of Peter and make him king. Roman took his sword and said: 'Is Peter's sword that the Pope has like this? If so, then with it he can take cities and give them to others. But this is against the Word of God: for the Lord forbade Peter to have such a sword and fight with it. But I have a sword given to me by God'.⁹⁵⁸

The papists were able to get round even this objection. "The sword is yours to be drawn," wrote Bernard of Clairvaux to the Pope, "perhaps at your command, if not by your hand. Otherwise, if it in no way belonged to you, when the apostles said, 'Behold, there are two swords here', the Lord would not have replied to them, 'It is enough', but 'It is too much'. Both belong to the Church, that is the spiritual sword and the material, but the one is to be drawn for the Church, and the other also by the Church: the one by the priest's hand, the other by the soldier's, but, to be sure, at the priest's command and the emperor's order."⁹⁵⁹

In 1302, in his famous bull, Unam Sanctam, Boniface declared that submission to the Pope was a necessary condition of salvation for every creature. And he returned to the image of the sword: "He who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter wrongly interprets the Lord's words, 'Put up thy sword into its scabbard'. Both swords, the spiritual and the material, are in the power of the Church. The spiritual is wielded *by* the Church; the material *for* the Church. The one by the hand of the priest; the other by the hand of kings and knights at the will and sufferance of the priest. One sword has to be under the other; the material under the spiritual, as the temporal authority in general is under the spiritual."⁹⁶⁰

Unam Sanctam was followed by the appointment of Albert of Hapsburg as Emperor with authority over all kings, including Philip the Fair.⁹⁶¹ But an aide of the King of France noted: "The Pope's sword is merely made of words; my

⁹⁵⁸ Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi* (History of the Russian Church), 1993, p 140.

⁹⁵⁹ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁹⁶⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁹⁶¹ Richard Cavendish, "Boniface VIII's Bull Unam Sanctam", *History Today*, vol. 52 (11), November, 2002, p. 63.

master's is of steel."⁹⁶² So when French soldiers burst into Boniface's palace at Anagni, and a sword made of steel pressed onto his neck, the "spiritual" sword had to beg for mercy...

Papadakis concludes: "This earliest confrontation between the newly emerging monarchical nation-state and the late medieval papacy was to result in the collapse of the old Gregorian system of government..."⁹⁶³

For now the papacy came under the domination of the French⁹⁶⁴, and in 1309 the Pope and his court moved to the French city of Avignon. The luxuries and corruption of the Avignon papacy earned it the title of "the second Babylon" from its contemporaries. Nor could the monastic orders, which were the traditional mainstay of the medieval papacy but had now lost their ascetic character, restore the authority of the Church...

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The humiliation of the papacy was clearly an opportunity for the empire. Could it revive in order to take over the leadership of the western world? That was the dream of many. But, as Richard Chamberlin writes: "Looking down through the long perspective of the Holy Roman Empire is a melancholy experience of watching the dream fall apart. The Italians fought endless civil wars under the banner of Guelph or Ghibelline, Pope or Empire, but they were little more than pretexts for strife. Yet as the actual power of the emperor waned, the *ideal* of the universal monarch increased so that the imperial nadir coincided with its most able apologia, Dante's De Monarchia."⁹⁶⁵

Dante's work was written as if in reply to Boniface VIII's Unam Sanctam and on a wave of hope occasioned by the arrival in Italy of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII in 1311. Not that Dante was anti-papist; he believed that the Pope should govern spiritual affairs as the Emperor governed political affairs. But his De Monarchia was Ghibelline, inasmuch as it denied to the Church supreme authority in temporal things; and his great dream of universal peace could only be achieved, he believed, through the universal monarchy.

"Dante's view of Empire," writes Watt, "hinged on three fundamental theses, each in the treatise the subject of a book. The first argued that the only guarantee of peace and justice for the Christian world lay in the establishment

⁹⁶² De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁹⁶³ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 358. We recall that Pope Gregory VII had come into conflict with King Philip of France - and won. Now a later King Philip avenged his ancestor's defeat.

⁹⁶⁴ This was most clearly evident, as we have seen, in Pope Clement V's full cooperation with - or rather, subjection to - King Philip in the affair of the trial and execution of the Templars.

⁹⁶⁵ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *op. cit.*, p. 63.

of unity under one single ruler.⁹⁶⁶ The second argued that under God's providence this role had been assigned to the Roman Emperor, even from its origins in pre-Christian times, and given special confirmation of it after the Messiah in sign of its right to rule the world had chosen to live, work and died under its sovereignty. The third thesis postulated that this single universal rulership was given by God directly to each emperor, without mediation by way of the papacy and was exercised independently of any jurisdictional control by the head of the Church...⁹⁶⁷

In this way Dante comes close to returning to the Byzantine idea of the symphony of powers. For while he argues that the Emperor should rule over temporal matters as the Pope rules over spiritual ones, he rules out the complete separation of Church and State in the modern sense. They must work together as equals in common obedience to the One God.

"Wherefore," he concludes, "let Caesar honor Peter as a first-born son should honor his father, so that, refulgent with the light of paternal grace, he may illumine with greater radiance the earthly sphere over which he has been set by Him who alone is Ruler of all things spiritual and temporal..."⁹⁶⁸

It was a noble ideal, perhaps the last expression of the Orthodox understanding of politics in the Western world. But the ideal did not survive: Henry VII arrived in Italy in response to Dante's summons; but by 1313 he was dead, and with him died the dominion of the Empire in Italy.⁹⁶⁹ And so "Dante's call for the risen majesty of empire became its requiem."⁹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the decline of the papacy meant that the empire could now once again defy the Pope's claims to appoint the Emperor. Thus Harold Nicolson writes: "When Pope Clement VI demanded that the Emperor Louis should admit that the Empire was a fief of the Holy See, the Diet of Frankfurt replied by issuing a declaration in 1337 to the effect that the Empire was held from God alone, and that an Emperor, once he had been duly elected by the Princes, needed no confirmation or approval from the Bishop of Rome."⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁶ For "the human race is at its best and most perfect when, so far as its capacity allows, it is most like to God. But mankind is most like to God when it enjoys the highest degree of unity... All concord depends upon the unity of wills; mankind is at its best in a state of concord; for as man is at his best in body and soul when he is in a state of concord, the same is true of a house, a city and a kingdom, and of mankind as a whole. Therefore mankind at its best depends upon unity in the wills of its members. But this is impossible unless there is one will which dominates all others and holds them in unity, for the wills of mortals influenced by their adolescent and seductive delights, are in need of a director." (Dante, *De Monarchia*). (V.M.)

⁹⁶⁷ Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

⁹⁶⁸ Dante, *De Monarchia*, book III, XVI, 9.

⁹⁶⁹ Aurelia Henry, *The De Monarchia of Dante Alighieri*, introduction, edited with translation and notes by Aurelia Henry, Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2196>.

⁹⁷⁰ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁹⁷¹ Nicolson, *Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, pp. 179-180.

However, while independent of the Pope, the Emperor was tied by his contracts with the Electors, who included both bishops and princes, and who invariably demanded various concessions in exchange for their support. This guaranteed the Emperor's (and Germany's) continued political weakness...

61. PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (1) WILLIAM OF OCKHAM AND MARSILIUS OF PADUA

In the fourteenth century not only anti-papist but also democratic ideas based on the concept of natural law were in the air of philosophical discourse. Thus as early as 1315 the French King Louis le Hutin proclaimed an end to feudal servitude : « As according to the law of nature each must be born free, and that by some usages and customs, which of great antiquity have been introduced and hitherto preserved in our kingdom... many of our common people have fallen into servitude and diverse conditions which very much displease us; we, considering that our kingdom is called... the kingdom of the Franks [free men], and wishing that the fact should be truly accordant with the name... upon deliberation of our great council, have ordered and order that generally through our kingdom... such servitudes be brought back to freedom and that to all those who from origin or recently from marriage or from residence in places of servile condition are fallen... into bonds of servitude, freedom be given... »⁹⁷²

A further impetus to the democratic movement, as we can now call it, was provided by the second Avignon Pope, John XXII (1316-1334), when he entered into a particularly arcane (from an Orthodox point of view) argument with the Franciscan order about the poverty of Christ and His apostles.⁹⁷³ This had two important consequences, one political and the other theological. The political consequence was that the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV took the side of the Franciscans, invaded Italy, deposed John XXII and set up an anti-pope, Nicholas V.

Still more serious was the theological consequence. This arose from the fact that in declaring as "erroneous and heretical" the view that Christ and His Apostles had no property whatsoever (for that would have put in question the Church's right to own property), John came into conflict with an earlier papal bull that had supported the Franciscan championship of absolute poverty. The Franciscans countered by claiming that "what the Roman Pontiffs have once defined in faith and morals through the key of knowledge is immutable because the Roman Church is unerring... what is once defined through the key of knowledge by the supreme pontiffs, the vicars of God, to be the truth of faith cannot be called into doubt by any successor, nor can the contrary to what is defined be affirmed without the one doing this being adjudged a heretic... what is once defined in faith and morals is true for all eternity and unchangeable by anyone."

In fact, many popes had reversed the decisions of their predecessors. And the early Church had even known heretical popes, such as Liberius, Vigilius and Honorius. So this new Franciscan doctrine on the infallibility and irreversibility of papal judgements was itself heretical – as John XXII himself

⁹⁷² Louis, in Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

⁹⁷³ For details of the controversy, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_XXII.

was soon to declare: “In *Quia Quorundum*, given on November 10, 1324, Pope John XXII confronted the errors of the dissident Franciscans and their false assertions regarding the irreformability of prior papal pronouncements even if they dealt with matters of faith or morals. John chastised and condemned those who would dare to teach such heresy. John obviously recognized, among other things, the potential handcuffing of successor popes, and consistently insisted that he was not and could not be bound by any previous pope’s declarations, no matter if they were disciplinary or supposedly binding in the realm of faith or morals. These assertions of papal irreformability John XXII rejected outright. So while Pope John in his dispute with the Franciscans was pressed by them to recognize the infallibility of a previous occupant of that See pronouncing on faith or morals, he resisted it as false and condemned those who dared to hold such opinions...”⁹⁷⁴

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One of the Franciscans, who had gone to Rome and been imprisoned by the Pope, was William of Ockham. Together with his friend, Marsilius of Padua, he fled to the emperor’s protection in Munich, from where he declared that Pope was a heretic and the papal throne vacant. And he proceeded to work out a democratic method for the electing of a General Council that could judge him.

Ockham is important in the history of philosophy for his nominalism⁹⁷⁵ and for his insistence on the natural right to freedom of conscience.⁹⁷⁶ He developed the theory of natural law further than Aquinas in an individualist and anti-papist direction. For Ockham, writes Siedentop, “freedom became a birthright, a right founded on the nature of human agency. For two hundred years canon lawyers had been converting the ancient doctrine of natural law into a theory of natural rights. They had come close to asserting a general right to freedom. But it was left to Ockham and his followers to take that final step. That is why the ‘poverty’ debate, which involved the Franciscan order in repeated conflicts with the papacy, became so important. It was the

⁹⁷⁴ Kirwan, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

⁹⁷⁵ Daniel Lattier writes: “Ockham denied the real existence of universal natures. In Ockham’s view, the universe is inhabited by a number of individual things that have no necessary connection with each other. We can call human beings “human” based on their sharing a certain resemblance with each other, but we can’t infer anything about them based on their common name. We can know that one thing can cause another thing to happen only based on repeated experience, not on some abstract knowledge of a thing’s nature (thus laying the groundwork for modern science). Anything theological—such as the existence of God or his attributes—can be known by faith alone (thus, apparently, laying the groundwork for the Reformation)” (“William of Ockham: The Man Who Started the Decline of the West”, *Intellectual Takeout*, January 10, 2018, [http://www.intellectualtakeout.org/article/william-ockham-man-who-started-decline-west?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9899070&utm_content=newsletter\(9899070\)&utm_term=newsletter](http://www.intellectualtakeout.org/article/william-ockham-man-who-started-decline-west?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9899070&utm_content=newsletter(9899070)&utm_term=newsletter))

⁹⁷⁶ That is why, “of all the schoolmen, Occam was the one Luther preferred” (Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 493).

Franciscan emphasis on a natural right to freedom, justifying their claim to renounce property of any kind, that finally led to Ockham's excommunication.

"Freedom was central to Ockham's understanding of rational agency. He defined it as the power 'by which I can indifferently and contingently produce an effect in such a way that I can cause or not cause that effect, without any difference in that power having been made.' Knowledge of freedom comes not from a priori reasoning but from experience of ourselves as agents. That knowledge, in turn, underpins our sense of moral responsibility. 'No act is blameworthy unless it is in our power. For no one blames a man born blind, for he is blind by sense [*caecus sensu*]. But if he is blind by his own act, then he is blameworthy.' The human will does not will anything *necessarily* - not the pursuit of happiness or even the enjoyment of God for those with faith! For Ockham, the radical character of freedom makes it both possible and important to distinguish between acting out of conviction and mere conformity of behavior...

"In order to protect the sphere of conscience, Ockham argues that allowance must be made for well-intentioned conduct, even if it conflicts with a dictate of 'right reason' or justice... By insisting that intentions formed in a 'conscientious' way deserve respect, Ockham implies that in the absence of freedom, the notion of moral conduct itself becomes incoherent. 'Enforced' morality becomes a contradiction in terms.

"That does not mean that there are no enforceable moral limits to choice. Ockham makes it clear that some actions remain 'blameworthy', providing grounds for social intervention and punishment. Thus, acting in good faith involves accepting constraints imposed by equality and reciprocity. But if society is to encourage acting in good faith, without making the mistake of assuming that morality can be enforced, a system of individual rights - allowing considerable freedom of judgement and conduct - becomes indispensable. For only a system of rights can protect the role of conscience and foster self-respect."⁹⁷⁷

One kind of natural rights "are those which free and equal individuals carry into any association, but which they can modify by express or tacit agreement. Thus, the right to choose rulers in church and state can be lodged in some intermediate body, such as the college of cardinals or the electors of the German empire. But 'the people' can always claim back their residual rights if that body fails to act appropriately..."⁹⁷⁸

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⁹⁷⁷ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 313-314, 315.

⁹⁷⁸ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, pp. 315-316.

We can see that William of Ockham's theory of natural law and natural rights, and his emphasis on human autonomy and freedom of conscience, was leading towards a democratic understanding both of Church and State. His friend, Marsilius of Padua, went still further.

Marsilius had also worked for Emperor Louis IV and had witnessed the terribly damaging effects of that emperor's struggle with Pope John XXII. This impressed upon him the need for a single unambiguous authority or legislator. That legislator, according to Marsilius, had to be "the totality of those who believe in and call on the name of Christ", not the pope; unlike Dante, Marsilius did not believe that the pope was divinely appointed as head of the Church.

"Christ said, 'Tell it to the Church', and not, 'To the apostle or the bishop or the priest or to one of their colleagues'. By this he meant the Church as the multitude of the faithful, judged to be constituted to this end under his authority... Judicially to declare someone guilty, to cite, enquire, judge, acquit or condemn... is the role of the whole of the faithful forming the community where a judgement must be given, or for the General Council.

"It appertains to the authority of the sole human legislator - who has no superior - either to him or to those on whom this power has been conferred by him, to convoke the General Council, to designate the persons who must form part of it.

"If with the aim of temporal utility it is for the legislator to designate people who are to be promoted to diverse offices in the city... it seems all the more right that the same human legislator, namely the totality of the faithful, should decide on both the promotion of the priestly office and the institution of priests in their functions."⁹⁷⁹

Joseph Canning writes: "Marsilius confronted papal power head-on: in the Defensor Pacis [1324] he focused on what he considered to be the true cause of the most real problem of his time - the disruption of the peace of Italy and Europe. He sought both to demonstrate that the papacy's claim to plenitude of power was the source of strife, and to destroy the theoretical basis of that claim....

"Marsilius' technique was to argue from first principles; in the process he drew considerably on Aristotle, but interpreted him in his own way. In order to demonstrate what powers the clergy could not possess, Marsilius began by examining the origin, purpose and structure of the civil community. In so doing he produced a model of general application on a naturalistic basis. The purpose of the community was the sufficient life; for this end, tranquillity was necessary, which was found when the parts of the community worked in harmony like the members of the body of an animal, a biological image

⁹⁷⁹ Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, 1324; in Comby, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

reflecting Marsilius' medical training. The structure of government rested on the ultimate authority of the whole corporation of citizens (universitas civium) which was identified with the human legislator (legislator humanus), which in turn elected the executive or ruling part (pars principans) and could depose it. The ruling part in turn established the other parts and offices of the community. This theoretical structure was very flexible and capable of being applied to a wide range of possible political communities. The pars principans could be one, few or more in number. Marsilius also habitually referred, unspecifically, to the corporation of citizens or its 'weightier part' (valentior pars), thereby raising the possibility that the legislator could be very restricted in number. Furthermore, the legislator could always delegate its law-creating powers to one or more persons. The essence of Marsilius' approach was to concentrate on the efficient cause – the will of the citizen body."⁹⁸⁰

Indeed, according to Jeannine Quillet, it was only with the work of Marsilius "that the idea of representation came to occupy a prominent place in political thought... Not that Marsilius was entirely innovatory in this respect, as thinkers and theologians had found the theoretical foundations of popular sovereignty in Aristotle's *Politics* from the time his political ideas began to spread, while the Roman *Lex Regia* stated that the prince held his authority by delegation or concession of the people, the ultimate source of sovereignty. Yet although Marsilius is not strictly an innovator in this area, he is the first to coin the phrase legislator humanus...

"... The very definition of the principle of representation is bound up with the notion of the human legislator. 'The legislator, or the primary and efficient cause of the law, is the people or the whole body of the citizens, or the weightier part thereof, through its election of will expressed by words in the general assembly of the citizens, commanding or determining that something be done or omitted with regard to human civil acts, under a temporal pain or punishment.'"⁹⁸¹

An important part of Marsilius' argument was his concept of law, which he identified with the command of the legislator, not with Divine or natural law. While he was confident that human law was generally conducive to justice and the common good, he nevertheless disjoined the two concepts in such a way as to raise the possibility, in McClelland's words, "that law can exist without justice... The ruler or legislator is no longer to be seen as someone well enough qualified to understand the nature of justice. The legislator (we would say sovereign) is now defined as that man or group of men who possess the authority to make laws and the power to make them effective.

"This was anathema to the whole system of papal politics. The papacy's case for universal hegemony, that kings were the pope's vice-regents, rested

⁹⁸⁰ Canning, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 155.

⁹⁸¹ Quillet, "Community, counsel and representation" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 558-559.

on the claim that popes had privileged access to knowledge of divine law. The pope was always the first to know the latest news from God and had the unique duty of passing it on to the faithful. News direct from God was always... news about justice, which the rulers of the earth were then supposed to put into law under papal tutelage. Now that law was defined as legislation and punishment, special knowledge of the divine will no longer constitute a valid claim for papal interference in the law-making and law-enforcing of secular states. These were, in the most precise sense possible, none of the pope's business. Peace, the end of the law, was still, of course, a good and godly end, but it was now possible to see senses in which papal pretensions to interfere in the mechanisms of peace-keeping were actually pernicious. For Marsilius, the efficient cause of peace was law as the command of the law-giver, with the stress on the word 'command'. It is the merest commonplace that for orders to be effective they have to be unambiguous: order, counter-order, disorder is the oldest military maxim. Anything which interferes with the clarity of commands is to be avoided at all cost. Nothing could be worse than two commanders giving different and contradictory orders. This would reduce an army to a shambles in no time at all. This is how Marsilius sees papal claims to hegemony. If the papal claims were to be upheld, there would always be two commanders in every state. People would always be uncertain which commander to obey and the result might well be chaos, the opposite of that earthly peace which it is the state's job to provide."⁹⁸²

It was an important consequence of Marsilius' approach that "the human legislator had jurisdiction, including powers of appointment, over bishops, priests and clergy, and indeed, control over all the externals of religion relating to the good of the community."⁹⁸³

His system may therefore be called caesaropapist with a democratic bias, insofar as the will of the people is the ultimate sovereign. He therefore looks forward both to the powerful princes of the Protestant Reformation and to the democratic revolutions that followed. Of course, he was aiming, not to undermine, but to strengthen the authority of the princely ruler: "In Marsilius the concept of popular sovereignty is meant only to strengthen secular rulers at the expense of the temporal jurisdiction of the princes of the Church."⁹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the democratic and revolutionary potential of his ideas is self-evident...

⁹⁸² McClelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

⁹⁸³ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁹⁸⁴ McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

62. PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (2) PEASANTS, LOLLARDS AND TABORITES

These ideas did not remain without practical fruit. There were several proto-democratic revolutions in Europe in this period. Thus in 1327 the English King Edward II was deposed by parliament, before being murdered. In December, 1341, his son, Edward III, « sailed up the Thames and carried out a near coup d'état against his own government. Parliament and the 'community of the realm' united against him, and there was deadlock. »⁹⁸⁵

Then Rome rebelled against the Pope. « Under Clement VI (1342-52), » writes Bertrand Russell, « Rome, for a time, sought to free itself from the absentee Pope under the leadership of a remarkable man, Cola di Rienzi. Rome suffered not only for the rule of the popes, but also from the local aristocracy, which continued the turbulence that had degraded the papacy in the tenth century. Indeed it was partly to escape from the lawless Roman nobles that the popes had fled to Avignon. At first Rienzi, who was the son of a tavern-keeper, rebelled only against the nobles, and in this he had the support of the Pope. He roused so much popular enthusiasm that the nobles fled (1347). Petrarch, who admired him and wrote an ode to him, urged him to continue his great and noble work. He took the title of tribune, and proclaimed the sovereignty of the Roman people over the Empire. He seems to have conceived this sovereignty democratically, for he called representatives from the Italian cities to a sort of parliament. Success, however, gave him delusions of grandeur. At this time, as at many others, there were rival claimants to the Empire. Rienzi summoned both of them, and the Electors, to come before him to have the issue decided. This naturally turned both imperial candidates against him, and also the Pope, who considered that it was for him to pronounce judgement in such matters. Rienzi was captured by the Pope (1352), and kept in prison until Clement VI died. Then he was released, and returned to Rome, where he acquired power again for a few months. On this second occasion, however, his popularity was brief, and in the end he was murdered by the mob.»⁹⁸⁶

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Meanwhile, the Hundred Years war and the Black Death were devastating Western Europe. About half the population died across Europe; between 75 and 200 million are thought to have died between 1347 and 1351, while outbreaks continued into the nineteenth century⁹⁸⁷. About 80% of those contracting the disease in England died; the poor were particularly

⁹⁸⁵ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁹⁸⁶ Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 504-505.

⁹⁸⁷ Sophie Gallacher, "The Black Death was always blamed on rats, but we were wrong", *Huffpost*, January 16, 2018, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/black-death-has-always-been-blamed-on-rats-this-was-a-mistake_uk_5a5dd5b9e4b04f3c55a59756?ncid=webmail.

vulnerable. It was a time for apocalyptic pessimism - and an opportunity for repentance.

However, the papacy had undermined the very idea of repentance by its abuses; so the spiritual opportunity was lost, and the West moved still further towards revolution. In England, writes Tombs, "the population had been reduced by famine and plague from about 6 million in 1300 to about 2.5 million in 1350. The pressure that had forced up rents and prices and depressed wages had gone. Surviving tenants threatened to leave unless rents were reduced and feudal obligations dropped. The new laws, though vigorously applied by local landowners as Justices of the Peace, were defied or evaded. There was an immediate leap in real wages as food prices fell. Employers had to supplement fixed wages with bonuses, free food, lodgings and allotments of land. Food traditionally given to harvest workers improved - even the poor refused 'bread that had beans therein, but asked for the best white, made of clean wheat, nor none halfpenny ale, in no wise would drink, but of the best and brownest.' Those who were denied better terms simply went elsewhere..."⁹⁸⁸

Invasions of the south coast by the French and Castilians, a Welsh uprising and a Scottish invasion increased the people's anger, leading in the end of the Peasants' Revolt of June, 1381. Charles George writes: "Although the pretext for revolt was a tax grievance against the government of Richard II's minority, and was linked therefore to the heavy and unpopular burden of the Hundred Years' War, the motives of the insurgents went deeper. Their anger, like that of the German peasants one hundred and fifty years later, was directed against primary mechanisms within the social system: the customary manorial services to the lord, the restrictive aristocratic forest laws, the wealth of the Church. These demands for the freer sharing of the land and game of England, for greater security and opportunity for the farmer in the village through fixed rents, and the animus expressed against institutional Christianity represented more than a temporary disaffection resulting from the fortuitous bad luck with nature and disease and the stupid wars of the century. The English historian, G.M. Trevelyan, puts the case strongly, perhaps, but interestingly:

"Nothing is more remarkable than the change in the temper and mental activity of the lower orders during the fourteenth century. Professor Davis has summed up the reign of Henry III with the words: "Of all the contrasts which strike us in medieval life, none is so acute as that between the intellectual ferment in the upper class and the oriental passivity of their inferiors." But in the reign of Edward III the peasants could no longer be accused of "oriental passivity", and the "intellectual ferment" in their ranks reminds us of a modern labor movement. Village unions strike for higher wages, villains demand freedom in return for 4d. an acre rent, and men ask each other in every field that deep-probing question -

⁹⁸⁸ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

*When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?"*⁹⁸⁹

These words were spoken by John Ball, "the crazy priest", as Froissart calls him, in his address to the rebels at Blackheath. He went on, using amazingly modern, almost socialist language: "From the beginning all men by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men. For if God would have had any bondmen from the beginning, he would have appointed who should be bond, and who free. And therefore I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may (if ye will) cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty. I counsel you therefore well to bethink yourselves, and to take good hearts unto you, that after the manner of a good husband that tilleth his ground, and riddeth out thereof such evil weeds as choke and destroy the good corn, you may destroy first the great lords of the realm, and after, the judges and lawyers, and questmongers, and all other who have undertaken to be against the commons. For so shall you procure peace and surety to yourselves in time to come; and by dispatching out of the way the great men, there shall be an equality in liberty, and no difference in degrees of nobility; but a like dignity and equal authority in all things..."⁹⁹⁰

At his first meeting with the rebels the fourteen-year-old King Richard II agreed to abolish serfdom, "whose breakdown the Black Death accelerated, making those still constrained by it all the more aggrieved"⁹⁹¹, and set a flat-rent rate of four pence an acre. The rebels appeared to have won; nor did the king succeed in saving the Archbishop of Canterbury Sudbury, who was executed on Tower Hill. However, he agreed to a second face-to-face meeting with the peasants at Smithfield on June 15.

"Before he left," writes Simon Schama, "he went to the great shrine that Henry III had built at Westminster and prayed to the king whom the Plantagenets had made their guardian saint, Edward the Confessor. When he reached Smithfield, he saw that the rebel leaders were on the west side of the field, the royal party on the east. Wat Tyler rode over to Richard, dismounted, briefly and unconvincingly bent his knees, but then rose, shook the king's hand and called him 'brother'. 'Why will you not go home?' Richard asked. Tyler is said to have responded with a curse and a demand for a new Magna Carta, this time for the common people, formally ending serfdom, pardoning all outlaws, liquidating the property of the Church and declaring the equality of all men below the king. As revolutionary as all this sounds (and undoubtedly was), all the demands, other than the pardon for outlaws, would, in fact, return as elements of English royal policy in the centuries to come. But

⁹⁸⁹ George, *500 Years of Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin*, Chicago, 1998, pp. 13-14.

⁹⁹⁰ Brian Macarthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 37.

⁹⁹¹ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

that was for the future. When Richard replied in the affirmative (with the crucial loophole, 'saving only the regality of his crown'), it was hard to know who was more flabbergasted – the rebels or the royals.

“Perhaps taken aback by the unexpected concession, for a moment no one did anything. A silence fell over the field, broken by Wat Tyler, calling for a flagon of ale, emptying it, then climbing back on his mount, a big man on a little horse. And it was at that moment that history changed.

“Someone on the royal side was evidently unable to take the humiliation a moment longer. It was a royal esquire, a young man of the king’s own age, who shouted that Tyler was a thief. Tyler turned his horse, drew his dagger and rounded on the boy. The spell was broken. A *mêlée* broke out, and [the Mayor of London] Walworth, who must have been beside himself with mortification, attempted to arrest Tyler. There was fighting, Tyler striking the mayor with his dagger, Walworth cutting Tyler through the shoulder and neck. He rode his horse a little way back, blood pouring from him, then fell to the ground where the king’s men were on him, finishing him off.

“It was the moment of truth. Once they had discovered Tyler’s fate, the rebel side might have attacked then and there. But before they could, Richard himself pre-empted the action with a show of astonishing courage and resourcefulness, riding straight to them shouting, famously, ‘You shall have no captain but me.’ The words were carefully chosen and deliberately ambiguous. To the rebels it seemed that Richard was now their leader just as they had always hoped. But the phrase could just as easily have been meant as the first, decisive reassertion of royal authority. In any event, it bought time for Walworth to speed back to London and mobilize an army that, just the day before, had been much too scared to show itself. At Smithfield the process of breaking the now leaderless army began cautiously and gently, with promises of pardons and mercy. Once back in London and Westminster, though, the king and council acted with implacable resolution. On 18 June, just three days after Smithfield, orders were sent to the disturbed counties, commanding the sheriffs to do whatever it took to restore the peace...”⁹⁹²

The mystique of the anointed king had saved the day. As Shakespeare’s Richard II put it in his play of the same name (III, ii, 54-57):

*Not all the water in the wide rough sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.*

⁹⁹² Schama, *A History of Britain*, vol. 1, pp. 217-218.

In any case, the real target of the rebels had been the landowners, not the king. "Their watchword was: 'Wyth kynge Richarde and with the trew communes'."⁹⁹³

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"This brief uprising," writes Tombs, "had been more than just another rural disturbance. It had been a mass demand for rights and freedom, and had shown a striking degree of political sophistication on the part of the 'trew communes'. It was the first time that popular political and social ideas had been recorded in writing – England had an unusually high level of literacy thanks to its developed commercial activity. Political messages were transmitted in English through rhymes, sermons, handbills, posters, prophecies – and ministers of the Crown were killed by angry mobs because of them..."⁹⁹⁴

Indeed, the literacy of the English was to be an increasingly important factor in the country's life. For it was precisely in this, the second half of the fourteenth century, that were produced Wycliffe's translation of the Vulgate and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, constituting the real beginnings of English literature as the world knows it. But the English we are talking about here is known as "Middle English" to distinguish it from the (to modern ears) largely incomprehensible Old English of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods. "This 'Middle English'," writes Tombs, "was very different from 'Old English'. The influx of a ruling class of non-native speakers after 1066 had led to simplification of the language, which lost much of its grammatical complexity – three genders, four cases, two conjugations. The alphabet too became simpler, and more Latin-based. There was no common spelling, and there were differences of dialect and accent, though grammar was largely uniform. Alone of the Germanic tongues, it had received a massive influx of words from Latin and French, which doubled its vocabulary. Between 1250 and 1450, of 17,000 new words identified, 22 percent were derived from French, and most others from Latin. English often acquired several words for the same concept. They were sometimes used in tandem to make meaning sure, or just for rhetorical purposes, as in 'aiding and abetting', 'fit and proper', 'peace and quiet'. In due course they could acquire nuances of meaning, as with 'kingly', 'royal' and 'regal', or 'loving', 'amorous' and 'charitable', from English, French and Latin respectively. Linguistic flexibility was greatly enhanced by bolting together grammatical elements from each language. Prefixes and suffixes made word creation easy: for example, the Old English 'ful' added to French nouns (beautiful, graceful); or French suffixes with Old English verbs (knowable, findable). It has been argued that this made it really a new language. But the basics remained, and remain,

⁹⁹³ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁹⁹⁴ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

Anglo-Saxon: in modern written English, the hundred most frequently used words are all derived from Old English."⁹⁹⁵

Although the peasants seemed to have lost their battle, their ideas continued to spread. But to the rescue of the monarchy came the charismatic theologian and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, John Wycliffe (ca. 1320-84). Motivated by his love for the poor and disgust at the behaviour of rich churchmen, Wycliffe became a champion of royal power.

In his *Tractatus de Officio Regis*, he argued that God favoured kingship, since three kings had visited the manger at Bethlehem. The king was the vicar of God. He should study theology and suppress heresy and have full jurisdiction over the clergy. If the Pope tried to diminish his authority, he should be denounced as the Antichrist... For "however unjust, the king was vicar of God and above all human laws. If necessary he was obliged to reform the church, correcting the worldly pursuit of the clergy for honours and offices, punish their simony and remove them from temporal dominion. The clergy were to live in an apostolic manner surviving on tithes and alms offered by the faithful."⁹⁹⁶

"Wycliff," writes Nicolson, "advanced the difficult idea that the king was superior to the Church since he reflected the godhead of Christ, where the priest reflected his manhood only. He argued that the king was above the law (*solutus legibus*) and that it was the moral duty of the citizen to obey the authority of the crown in every circumstance... Richard II was deeply imbued with Wycliff's teaching and asserted that 'the laws were in his mouth or in his breast and he alone could change the statutes of the realm'."⁹⁹⁷

Wycliffe founded an order of "poor priests", the Lollards (literally "mumblers"), that preached to the poor. He called the Pope the Antichrist, and said that all popes that had accepted the Donation of Constantine were apostates. Most controversially, he asserted that the doctrine of transubstantiation was a deceit and a blasphemous folly. This led John of Gaunt, who held power during the minority of Richard II, and befriended him as long as possible, to order him to be silent. Moreover, Wycliffe also had socialist tendencies - Pope Gregory XI condemned eighteen of his theses in his Oxford lectures, saying that they were derived from Marsilius.

⁹⁹⁵ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁹⁹⁶ Janet Coleman, "Property and poverty", *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 - c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 647.

⁹⁹⁷ Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193. Another influence on Richard was, according to Nigel Saul, "the ideas of the Roman - in other words, the civil - lawyers. In general terms, civilian thought emphasised the scope of the King's will. To the civilian, a King's power should be unlimited because his rule was just. At a number of points, correspondences are to be observed between Richard's governance and a popular civilian-influenced tract, Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum* (c. 1277-9)" ("Richard II: Author of his own Downfall?", *History Today*, vol. 49 (9), September, 1999, pp. 40-41). (V.M.)

“The Peasants’ Revolt,” writes Bertrand Russell, “made matters more difficult for Wycliffe. There is no evidence that he actively encouraged it, but, unlike Luther in similar circumstances, he refrained from condemning it. John Ball, the Socialist unfrocked priest who was one of the leaders, admired Wycliffe, which was embarrassing. But as he had been excommunicated in 1366, when Wycliffe was still orthodox, he must have arrived independently at his opinions. Wycliffe’s communistic opinions, though no doubt the ‘poor priests’ disseminated them, were, by him, only stated in Latin, so that at first hand they were inaccessible to peasants.

“It is surprising that Wycliffe did not suffer more than he did for his opinions and his democratic activities. The University of Oxford defended him against the bishops as long as possible. When the House of Lords condemned his itinerant preachers, the House of Commons refused to concur. No doubt trouble would have accumulated if he had lived longer, but when he died in 1384 he had not yet been formally excommunicated...”⁹⁹⁸

Richard II, meanwhile, entered into conflict with parliament, who as Tombs writes, “were forced to swear that all acts to restrain royal power were illegal – a renunciation of Magna Carta... He insisted on the sacred nature of kinship – courtiers had to prostrate themselves, and he may have planned a re-coronation using the newly ‘discovered’ holy chrism given by the Virgin Mary to Thomas Becket. He even dreamed of becoming Holy Roman Emperor.” In 1399, however, he was deposed by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke. This “changed the basis of kingship, for Henry, though Richard’s cousin, was not his heir. He therefore claimed the throne by God’s grace (proved by having succeeded), by necessity, and, in Chaucer’s words, ‘by free election’...”⁹⁹⁹

The epitaph Richard chose for his tomb at Westminster sounds impressive:

He threw down all who violated the royal prerogative; he destroyed heretics and scattered their friends.

But the truth is that by his fickleness and injustice he tarnished the royal name. He betrayed his promises to the peasants, and turned out to be a real tyrant. The foundations of the monarchy continued to be undermined – “the world is changed and overthrown,” lamented the poet Gower.

Nevertheless, “when Parliament recognized Bolingbroke as Henry IV they were careful to maintain the fiction of Divine Right by asserting that he had succeeded ‘through the right God had given him by conquest’.”¹⁰⁰⁰ “Right of conquest” is a much weaker argument than “right by royal anointing”. But the Divine right of kings had to be maintained somehow...

⁹⁹⁸ Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 508-509.

⁹⁹⁹ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

The problem for the late medieval kings was that in opposing (with justification) the overweening power of the heretical papacy, they had deprived themselves of ecclesiastical sanction, which made the people less inhibited from rebelling against them. Secularist defences of royal as opposed to papal power, like that of Marsilius, only made the problem worse in the long run. For even if mixed with theological arguments, they could only convince the listeners that papal authority was less than the kings', not that the kings' power was holy in itself. The problem derived from the loss of the concept of the symphony of powers in western society. Unlike in the East, where Church and State were both considered holy and supported each other, in the West since the eleventh century there was always a *competition* between the two powers that ultimately discredited both.

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But let us look more closely at Wycliffe's most influential idea, anticipating the Protestant Reformation by more than a century: his undermining of the authority of the Church by exalting that of the Bible, of which he became the first major translator into English since Bede.

"His main argument," writes Melvyn Bragg, "was to distinguish the eternal, ideal Church of God from the material one in Rome. In short, he maintained that if something is not in the Bible there is no truth in it whatever the Pope says – and, incidentally, the Bible says nothing at all about a Pope. When men speak of the Church, he said, they usually mean priests, monks, canons and friars. But it should not be so. 'Were there a hundred popes,' he wrote, 'and all the friars turned to cardinals, their opinions on faith should not be accepted except in so far as they are founded on scripture itself.

"This was inflammatory and cut away the roots of all established authority, especially as he and his followers like John Ball coupled this with a demand that the Church give away all its worldly wealth to the poor. The Church saw no option but to crush him. For Wycliffe went even further. He and his followers attacked transubstantiation, the belief that, administered by the clergy, the wine and bread turn miraculously into the blood and body of Christ; he attacked clerical celibacy, which he thought of as an institutional control system over the army of the clergy; he attacked enforced confession, the method, Wycliffe argued, by which the clergy could trap dissidents and check errors in thought; and indulgences, the purchase of which were said to bring relief from purgatory but also brought wealth to the Church; pilgrimages, as a form of idolatry; and mystery plays, because they were not the word of God. Wycliffe took no prisoners.

"His prime and revolutionary argument, one which, if accepted in any shape or form would have toppled the Church entirely, was that the Bible was the sole authority for religious faith and practice and that everyone had the right to read and interpret scripture for himself. This would have changed the world and those who ruled the world knew it. He was to become their prime

enemy. It is ironic that his main arguments had to be written in Latin – the international language of scholarship and theology – though there are English sermons by him and his followers.”¹⁰⁰¹

It is ironic, too, that his main argument on the private interpretation of Scripture is refuted by Scripture itself. For St. Peter says: “No prophecy is of any private interpretation” (II Peter 1.20). And St. Paul says that it is the Church that is the ultimate authority, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3.15). This is in no way to diminish the authority and truth of Holy Scripture. The point is: Holy Scripture is written by and for the Church, which precedes it in time and is the witness to its truth, rather than the other way round. But of course, the *true* Church is meant here, not Roman Catholicism...

In spite of the riskiness of his challenge to the Church, Wycliffe gained support from other scholars. “What sustained them,” opines Bragg, “was the state of the Church as they saw it every day. It was intolerable to these Christian scholars. It was often lazy and corrupt. Bible reading even among the clergy appears to have been surprisingly rare, for often they did not have the Latin. When, for example, the Bishop of Gloucester surveyed three hundred and eleven deacons, archdeacons and priests in his diocese, he discovered that a hundred and sixty-eight were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments, thirty-one did not know where to find these Commandments in the Bible and forty could not repeat the Lord’s Prayer. To men of true conscience, integrity and faith, men like Wycliffe and his followers, this state of decay and lack of care in what mattered most, this debilitated belief and betrayal of vocation, had to be got rid of and defeated. The chief weapon, the natural weapon for a scholar, was a book, the Bible, in English.

“A full Bible in English was unauthorized by the Church and potentially heretical, even seditious, with all the savage penalties including death which such crimes against the one true Church exacted. Any translation was very high risk and had to be done in secrecy.

“Wycliffe inspired two Biblical translations and rightly they bear his name. Both versions are made from the [fourth-century] Latin Vulgate version and follow it so closely that it can be incomprehensible. Wycliffe prepared the first translation but the burden of it was undertaken by Nicholas Hereford of Queens College, Oxford. He would have needed the help of many friends as well as recourse to a great number of books. It was not only the translation itself, a mammoth task, which faced them: the Bible had to be disseminated too. Rooms in quiet Oxford colleges were turned into revolutionary cells, scriptoria, production lines were established turning out these holy manuscripts and from the number that remain we can tell that a great many were made. One hundred and seventy survive, a huge number for a six-hundred-year-old manuscript, which tells us that there must have been

¹⁰⁰¹ Bragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

effective groups of people secretly translating it, copying it, passing it on. Later, hundreds would be martyred, dying the most horrible deaths, for their part in creating and distributing to the people the first English Bible.

“It is difficult to appreciate the extent and the audacity of this enterprise. Wycliffe was leading them into the cannon’s mouth. All of them knew it and yet behind the obedient honey-coloured Latinate walls of Oxford colleges, the medieval equivalent of the subversive samizdat press which bypassed Stalin’s controls in Russia was organized, and effectively...

“By the standards of the day it was a bestseller and at first the Church merely condemned Wycliffe. They complained that he had made the scriptures ‘more open to the teachings of laymen and wowed. Thus the jewel of the clerics is turned to the sport of the laity and the pearl of the Gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine...

“The Bible, through English, now called out directly to the people. This could not be tolerated. On 17 May 1382, in Blackfriars in London,... a synod of the Church met to examine Wycliffe’s works. There were eight bishops, various masters of theology, doctors of common and civil law and fifteen friars.

“It was a show trial.

“Their conclusions were preordained and on the second day of their meeting they drafted a statement condemning Wycliffe’s pronouncements as outright heresies. Wycliffe’s followers were also condemned. The synod ordered the arrest and prosecution of itinerant preachers throughout the land. Many those caught were tortured and killed.

“Perhaps most significantly of all as far as the English language is concerned, the synod led, later, to a parliamentary ban on all English-language Bibles and they had the power to make this effective.

“Wycliffe’s great effort was routed. He had taken on the power of the Church and he had been defeated. His Bibles were outlawed. The doors of the Church, from the greatest cathedrals to the lowliest parish churches, were still the monopoly of Latin.

“On 30 May, every diocese in the land was instructed to publish the verdict. Wycliffe became ill. He was paralysed by a stroke. Two years later he died on the last day of 1384...”¹⁰⁰²

In 1412 the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered all Wycliffe’s works to be burned, and sent a list of 267 heresies “worthy of the fire” to the Pope. Then, in 1415, at the Council of Constance, he was condemned as a heretic, and in

¹⁰⁰² Bragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86, 87, 89.

1428 it was ordered that his bones be exhumed and removed from consecrated ground. His remains were burned and his ashes scattered into the River Swith.

Now some of Wycliffe's ideas - particularly his denial of Transubstantiation (contrary to the clear witness of Holy Scripture) - were indeed heretical. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to admire, not only the scholarship, but also the courage and zeal of this mighty contender for the people's right to read the Word of God. Moreover, in 1383, just before his death, he displayed an insight into the truth of Eastern Orthodoxy over Roman Catholicism that appears to have been lost completely in the West since the twelfth century: "The pride of the Pope," he said, "is the reason why the Greeks are divided from the so-called faithful... It is we westerners, too fanatical by far, who have been divided from the faithful Greeks and the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ..."¹⁰⁰³

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In Bohemia another revolution broke out under the leadership of the Czech cleric Jan Hus, a follower of Wycliffe (Richard II's queen was Bohemian and had supported Wycliffe at Oxford). "Like his English inspiration," writes Bridget Healy writes, he "attacked indulgences and condemned the vices and failings of the clergy... Hus advocated communion in both kinds - that the communion wine, Christ's blood, should be given to the laity as well as the clergy - and emphasized the importance of preaching the Gospel. From the perspective of Czech history, locating the start of the Reformation in Wittenburg in 1517 is a provocative act, for it was not Luther but Hus who achieved the first lasting religious reform of the early modern era."¹⁰⁰⁴

Hus was excommunicated and burned at the Council of Constance in 1415, the same Council that ordered Wycliffe's bones to be dug up and burnt. However, the Czech Hussite rebellion continued, and was put down only with the greatest difficulty and after much bloodshed.

On two occasions (in 1418 and 1452) the Hussites applied to join the Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, as Bishop Milan Gavriilo Kucera writes, "not only Constantinople never accepted them, but the Patriarchate was so horrified of the depth of heresy in their letter describing the Hussite Articles of Faith, that they decided to pretend they never got the letter. The letter, however, just like the letter by Philip Melancthon, are part of the Patriarchal Archives."¹⁰⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰³ Wyclif, *De Christo et Suo Adversario Antichristo* (On Christ and His Adversary, the Antichrist), 8; in R. Buddensig (ed.), *John Wiclif's Polemical Works in Latin*, London: The Wiclif Society, 1883, volume II, p. 672.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Healy, "Martin Luther and the German Reformation", *History Today*, March, 2017, 30-31.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Kucera, Facebook communication, December 29, 2016.

The more radical Hussites were called Taborites. They recognized no ruler except God: "All must be brothers to each other and no one must be subject to another." And so taxation and royal power had to be eliminated, along with every mark of inequality.¹⁰⁰⁶

"The Taborites," writes T.L. Frazier, "set about constructing a theocratic society in their territory in southern Bohemia. In theory, there was to be no human authority, for all were brothers and sisters. Of course, the theory was 'modified' somewhat to allow for the necessity of government. The older brothers obviously needed to look after their younger siblings. It was also supposed to be a classless society, and a primitive version of communism was attempted. Private property, rents, taxes, and dues were abolished. Peasants from all over Bohemia and Moravia sold all their worldly possessions to contribute to the common purse. In the first part of 1420, chests were set up by the Taborite clergy in which the people were expected to deposit all their money. But here, too, reality didn't always conform to theory. The leadership concentrated so much on common ownership that they took no thought of motivating people to produce anything.

"Rather than construct a functioning economy for their newly established Kingdom of God, the Taborites turned to simple banditry whenever the communal chests were empty. As the people of God, they reasoned, they had a right to all of God's wealth found on the earth. Conversely, those who were not of the people of God, that is, all who were not Taborites, had no claim to the resources of the earth. Thus raids on the property of non-Taborites were rationalized and became common.

"According to Taborite plans, after all of Bohemia was subjected to Taborite control, the purification of the rest of the world would follow through conquest and domination. This belief was deeply engrained in the Taborite movement. Norman Cohn writes: 'As late as 1434 we find a speaker at a Taborite assembly declaring that, however unfavorable the circumstances might be at present, the moment would soon come when the Elect must arise and exterminate their enemies - the lords in the first place, and then any of their own people who were of doubtful loyalty or usefulness.'"¹⁰⁰⁷

Taborism is a form of the ancient heresy of *chiliasm* or *millenarianism*, - the idea that the Kingdom of heaven will be achieved here on earth, by the efforts of men and in the conditions of the fall. In the opinion of some, this is the heart of the revolutionary movement and modern secularism in general. Certainly, there is a red thread of utopian, millenarian thought connecting the rebellions of 1381 in England, of 1415-1437 in Bohemia, of the 1520s in Germany, of the Levellers in England in the 1640s, of the Jacobites in France in the 1790s, of many nineteenth-century revolutions, and of the Russian

¹⁰⁰⁶ N.N. Alexeev, "Idea 'Zemnago Grada' v Khristianskom Verouchenii" ("The Idea of the 'Earthly City' in Christian Doctrine"), *Put' (The Way)*, N 5, October-November, 1926, p. 566.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Frazier, *A Second Look at the Second Coming*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 1999, pp. 61-62.

revolution in the twentieth-century, not to speak of our own, twenty-first century rebellion against all the foundations of Christian society.

63. PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (3) THE CONCILIAR MOVEMENT

“The conciliar movement of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries,” writes Antony Black, “was an attempt to modify and limit papal control over the Church by means of general councils. It was sparked off by the disputed papal election of 1378, when, following the return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome, French cardinals rejected the election of the Italian Urban VI, on canonical grounds, and elected Clement VII as anti-pope. The movement was also a response to growing centralisation of church administration and justice, to perceived abused of power by the (in fact rather weak) papacy in exile at Avignon (1305-77) and to the widespread desire for church reform. There was, further, a latent contradiction in church tradition between the doctrinal authority of councils and the jurisdictional primacy of Rome. The movement was led mostly by Frenchmen and Germans; it evoked little response in Italy. Conciliarism was a moderate programme in comparison with the aspirations of men like Marsilius, Wyclif or Hus, who wanted national or state churches, and who saw whole aspects of Catholic tradition, especially papal authority, as fundamentally opposed to scripture or to reason. But it also reflected a shift in religious sentiment from universality to nationality, and a sense that religious matters could legitimately be debated, at least by all educated clergy. In the event, the pope-council conflict affected considerably the structure of medieval Christendom. What emerged as the practical alternative to papal centralisation was devolution of power to secular rulers and nation-states. During the schisms of 1378-1417 and 1437-49, ecclesiastical policy and the allegiance of clergy and peoples were to a great extent determined by princes, foreshadowing cuius regio, eius religio. In 1418, and again in 1447-50, matters were settled by concordats between the papacy and the various secular powers. The ‘Christian republic’ had become a very loose confederation.

“In arguing that the council is above the pope, conciliarists relied principally on scripture, the early fathers and canon law; they drew extensively upon church history, especially the ecumenical councils. Like Wyclif and the Hussites, they appealed to the practice of the apostles and the primitive church, and sometimes from canon law to scripture. Scripture and history showed that the position of Peter and of his successors was that of primus inter pares, that doctrinal disputes were settled by councils, that popes had erred and that the Church ought to be governed by fraternal consultation...”¹⁰⁰⁸

At first sight the conciliarist movement appears to have had much in common with Orthodox ideas on the importance of Councils. It must be remembered, however, as Fr. John Meyendorff pointed out, that conciliarism took place within the context of certain western presuppositions that are

¹⁰⁰⁸ Black, “The Conciliar Movement”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 573-574.

foreign to Orthodoxy. One such presupposition was that all forms of power should be defined primarily “*in legal terms*, whether one spoke of the power of kings, the ‘apostolic’ power of the pope, or the collective power of councils.”¹⁰⁰⁹

This involved a new attitude towards authority in both Church and State...

As regards the State, write Thompson and Johnson, the conciliarists “approached the whole question of the purpose, organization and functioning of civil society without giving to God, heaven and immortality a predominant place. The purpose of the state was to obtain peace, prosperity, and security, immediate and earthly ends, and not to prepare mortals for their heavenly home... The will of the people [exercised in a representative assembly of the wealthier citizens] should determine what is law, to which the prince himself should be obedient. The prince is the servant and not the maker of the laws, and must act always in the interest of all. A state so organized is quite self-sufficient in itself, with absolutely no need of or use for the Church.”¹⁰¹⁰

As regards the Church, the Conciliarists considered it to be “composed of the community of the faithful (*universitas fidelium*), of all believing Christians. Final authority in this Church rests not with pope and clergy but with the representatives of all believers gathered together in a general council. The laity as well as the clergy should be represented in this council. Ockham recommends that even women should be included. The council has authority to deal with any questions concerning the spiritual affairs of the Church. As the prince is the instrument of the legislator, so the pope is the mere instrument of the will of a general council. Councils should be summoned by the secular prince and not by the pope. The ultimate authority in the Church should be the Scriptures, not as interpreted by the pope or clergy, but as interpreted by a group of reasonable and learned men. The Petrine theory is a falsehood, and the present papacy an accident of history.”¹⁰¹¹

Pure Protestantism! And the origin of their doctrine was, according to Thomson and Johnson, “what they regarded as the principles of natural law which guaranteed the equality of men. If there arose differences in power and influence within the hierarchy of the Church they must have originally arisen with the consent of the Church. Papal power therefore rested on the consent of the Church; it had no inherent rights of its own. As a delegated power, it must, when abused as it was obviously being abused, be subject to the control and limitation of the Church, from which it got its power. This Church was, as had been argued by Marsiglio [Marsilius] and Ockham, the whole body of the faithful, or, as some argued, the body of the clergy. The institution best qualified to represent its interests was the council. If the pope were not subject

¹⁰⁰⁹ 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. 99.

¹⁰¹⁰ Thompson, J.W., Johnson, E.N., *An Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1500*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 966.

¹⁰¹¹ Thomson & Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 967.

to the supervision and control of a council it was possible for the Church to become the slave and the tool of the pope in the pursuit of goals that had no relation to the needs of the Church at large. The pope must therefore be the minister of the Church, i.e., of a council, and not an autocrat. As one historian has put it, he must be the Vicar of the Church, not of Christ..."¹⁰¹²

Even some cardinals sympathized with these ideas. Thus Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly wanted to see the cardinals as a kind of elected parliament above the Pope. However, papist doctrine decreed that a general council could be convened only by the Pope. The problem was: there were now *two* Popes, Clement and Urban...

Nevertheless, the cardinals convened a council at Pisa in 1409 which deposed both existing popes and elected another, Alexander V. But since this council had no ecumenical or papal authority, it did not solve the problem. France, Scotland and Castile continued to recognize Urban, while England, Flanders, most of the Italian states and Emperor Wenceslaus recognized Clement.

In May, 1410 Alexander died; and at the council of Constance, John XXII, one of the most scandalous Popes in history, was elected. "On 29 May 1415," writes John Julius Norwich, "he was arraigned before another General Council, which had been in session since the previous November at Constance. As Gibbon summed up: 'The most scandalous charges were suppressed: the Vicar of Christ on earth was only accused of piracy, murder, rape, sodomy and incest.' Predictably, he was found guilty on all counts - the council, benefiting from the lesson learnt at Pisa, requiring him to ratify the sentence himself"¹⁰¹³

By Haec sancta (1415) and Frequens (1417) it was declared that in matters of the faith the supreme authority was a general council, which should be convened at intervals of not more than ten years. The Haec sancta decreed: "The sacred synod of Constance... declares that it is lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, that it has its power immediately from Christ, and that all men, of every rank and position, including the pope himself, are bound to obey it in those matters that pertain to the faith, the extirpation of the said schism, and to the reformation of the Church in head and members. It declares also that anyone, of any rank, condition or office - even the papal - who was contumaciously refuse to obey the mandates, statutes, decrees or institutions made by this holy synod or by any other lawfully assembled council on the matters aforesaid or on things pertaining to them, shall, unless he recovers his senses, be subjected to fitting penance and punished as is appropriate."¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰¹² Thomson & Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 976-977.

¹⁰¹³ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 380.

¹⁰¹⁴ Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 149; Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

Nicholas of Cusa summed it up in his *De concordantia catholica* (1433): “The council is superior to the pope... since the representation of the Church in the general council is surer and more infallible than the pope alone.”

Needless to say, the official Roman Catholic Church condemned *Haec Sancta* as heretical. Thus on July 6, 1439, during the Council of Florence between the Orthodox and the Catholics, “it promulgated the decree *Laetentur Coeli et exultet terra...* principally because it condemned conciliarism definitively, by confirming the doctrine of the Pope’s supreme authority over the Church. On September 4th 1439, Eugene IV, defined solemnly: ‘We likewise define that the holy Apostolic See, and the Roman Pontiff, hold the primacy throughout the entire world; and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church, as is attested also in the acts of ecumenical councils and the holy canons.’”¹⁰¹⁵

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Another western presupposition of the conciliar movement was that the papacy was a political, quasi-imperial power as much as an ecclesiastical one.

“In this context,” writes Meyendorff, “ecclesiological and canonical thought in the West began systematically to define papal *jurisdictional and administrative power, as clearly distinct from his sacramental functions as bishop of Rome...*

“The idea that the pope’s ‘power of jurisdiction’ was independent of his ‘power of ordination’ (possessed by any bishop) was greatly enhanced in the fourteenth century when the actual residence of the pope was not Rome – of which he was bishop – but Avignon. Canonists began to debate the question: who possesses the ‘power of jurisdiction’ during a vacancy of the papal throne, and some answered: the college of cardinals. Understandably, the cardinals liked the idea of exercising such powers, as extensively as they could, and this led to long vacancies... Furthermore, it was admitted that a pope, from the moment of his election, was already fully empowered jurisdictionally, even if he was not yet a bishop. He would rule the church even if his Episcopal consecration was postponed for months. From these approaches, John of Paris could conclude that ‘the power of jurisdiction could be conferred solely by human election and consent’. It is understandable therefore that those who in the West were opposed to papal power, appalled by its abuses and confident in the ‘will of the people’, would end up with a ‘conciliar theory’, affirming that the pope in his jurisdictional, administrative

¹⁰¹⁵ Roberto de Mattei, “Haec Sancta (1415): A Conciliar Document Condemned by the Church”, July 20, 2016, <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/haec-sancta-1415-conciliar-document.html?m=1>.

and magisterial powers, is responsible before a general council, since those powers are granted to him by election. It is this theory which was endorsed at Constance and Basel, following the 'Great Schism', setting up a system of church government, also rather secular (or relatively speaking 'democratic'), and rejecting papal monarchy..."¹⁰¹⁶

However, while conciliarism might limit the power of the pope as a constitution limits the power of an absolute monarch, it neither diagnosed nor healed the root ecclesiological heresy of papism – the idea that the Roman pope is in some way the reincarnation of the Apostle Peter on earth, possessing all his authority – and more. (The Hildebrandine development of papism, whereby the pope was the Vicar of Christ and possessed all power in both Church and State went even further than this. But by the late middle ages, after all the humiliations of the papacy, nobody believed this any more.)

The papists paid no heed to the Byzantine argument against the papacy, which consisted, as Meyendorff says, "in denying that the apostle Peter belongs *only* to Rome, not only because he had been in Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 1-10, 15, etc.) before coming to the imperial capital, but because Peter is the model of *every bishop* within his community. This early Christian idea was formulated most clearly by Cyprian in the third century: every bishop, presiding over his diocese, occupies the 'chair of Peter'. It recurs in most unexpected contexts, including hagiography. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, Christ 'through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors', and even Pseudo-Dionysius refers to the image of Peter, when he describes his ecclesiastical 'hierarchy'. Actually, this view of the ministry of Peter, perpetuated in all bishops, inherited from Cyprian, was prevailing in the West as well, as shown by the numerous texts patiently collected by Y. Congar. The idea that there was a 'Petrine' power independent of and separable from the sacramental perpetuation of the episcopate is totally foreign to this early Christian ecclesiology.

"Whenever the Byzantines discussed directly the succession of Peter in the Church, they emphasized the *universal* ministry of all the apostles, including Peter; the distinctive, and always *local* and sacramental ministry of the bishops, inseparable from each bishop's community; the fact that Rome cannot claim the succession of Peter for itself alone, and that such a succession, in Rome as elsewhere, is conditioned by the confession of Peter's faith; and finally, that every bishop orthodox in faith, possesses 'the power of the keys' conferred by Christ to Peter."¹⁰¹⁷

In spite of these deficiencies in the conciliarist movement, the idea that the problems of Christian society could be resolved by a general council similar in principle to the Seven Ecumenical Councils, rather than by papal *fiat*, was an important breakthrough that *could* have led to a fundamental rethinking of

¹⁰¹⁶ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰¹⁷ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

the bases of western society. With both ecclesiastical and political authority weak and divided, and with the people as a whole sobered by the terrible calamity of the Black Death (which killed perhaps a third of Western Christendom), it was time for the West to reject the absolute monarchy of the Pope and turn back to its former leader and the creator of its own pre-schism civilization – Byzantium.

Moreover, it was at this time that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel visited France and England, and made a considerable impression (but without receiving any help). Thus at precisely the time that the West was, for the first time in centuries, looking to the East for spiritual support, the East was looking to the West for military support. But the East saw help as coming from the papist West rather than the proto-Protestant conciliar movement. And so Manuel's successors sought ecclesiastical unity with the Pope rather than with his conciliarist opponents. And the invitation offered to the Greeks to attend the Council of Basle (1431-1438) was rejected...

Nevertheless, the bishops at Basle were in earnest. "From now on," they said, "all ecclesiastical appointments shall be made according to the canons of the Church; all simony shall cease. From now on, all priests whether of the highest or lowest rank, shall put away their concubines, and whoever within two months of this decree neglects its demands shall be deprived of his office, though he be the Bishop of Rome. From now on, the ecclesiastical administration of each country shall cease to depend on papal caprice... The abuse of ban and anathema by the popes shall cease... From now on, the Roman Curia, that is, the popes shall neither demand nor receive any fees for ecclesiastical offices. From now on, a pope should think not of this world's treasures but only of those of the world to come."¹⁰¹⁸

Pope Eugene IV rejected the Council's demand that he attend it. He called the Basle delegates "a beggarly mob, mere vulgar fellows from the lowest dregs of the clergy, apostates, blaspheming rebels, men guilty of sacrilege, gaolbirds, men who without exception deserve only to be hunted back to the devil whence they came."¹⁰¹⁹ Instead, he convened another council at Ferrara (they later moved to Florence), which was joined by the Greeks and the more pro-papal delegates from Basle. It was at this "robber council" that the Greeks signed the infamous unia with the Pope in 1439.

The Pope quickly took advantage of his victory over the Greeks to conclude separate unias with the Armenians, the Copts, the Ethiopians, the Monophysite Syrians, the Chaldean Nestorians and the Cypriot Maronites, making inroads into the East that the papacy has retained to the present day. This greatly increased the prestige of Rome, which in turn contributed significantly to "the ultimate defeat of the anti-council of Basle and of the anti-Pope Felix IV, who eventually abdicated. All subsequent 'unions' were clearly

¹⁰¹⁸ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁰¹⁹ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

formulated as an unconditional surrender to the Church of Rome. The shrewd Latins, choosing the Greeks first as their negotiation partners, broke them down. Rome used this fact as an argument in their severe negotiations with the other churches, from whom they extracted complete submission."¹⁰²⁰

Tragically, the Greeks' signing of the unia and endorsement of papism not only betrayed Orthodoxy and condemned the Byzantine Empire to destruction: it also dealt a severe blow to the conciliarist movement in the West. For "conciliar sovereignty and superiority, established officially as law at Constance twenty-five years previously, was given its coup de grâce at Florence by the 'infallible document' of *Laetentur caeli*. 'By its very existence it [Florence] counterbalanced and finally outweighed the council of Basel, and in so doing checked the development of the conciliar movement that threatened to change the very constitution of the [papal] Church.'"¹⁰²¹

With the conciliarist movement in disarray, the Czech Hussite rebellion against the papacy crushed, and the Greeks (officially, at any rate) on his side, Pope Pius II launched a counter-attack on the very concept of conciliarity in his bull *Execrabilis* of 1460: "There has sprung up in our time an execrable abuse, unheard of in earlier ages, namely that some men, imbued with the spirit of rebellion, presume to appeal to a future council from the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ... We condemn appeals of this kind as erroneous and detestable..."¹⁰²²

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Thus the situation in the West now was superficially similar to what it had been four centuries before, with the popes in their quest for absolute power once again carrying the battle to those who sought to limit it. However, the constant civil war between the ecclesiastical and the secular principles, and the constant arguments of canonists and revolutionary thinkers such as William of Ockham, Marsilius of Padua and the Conciliarists, had taken their toll: a return to the papism and feudalism of the High Middle Ages was now out of the question; a decisive change of landmarks was about to take place. If there was no question of a movement back to the Orthodox origins of the European concept of statehood - that is, to the Orthodox symphony of powers, - then the only alternative was to move "forwards", to the full unravelling of the revolutionary principle of the autonomous "I" first proclaimed by that most revolutionary of popes, Gregory VII...

Indeed, according to Larry Siedentop, it was precisely the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and not any later period, that was the period of the birth of "liberalism", that quintessentially western ideology that has now conquered

¹⁰²⁰ *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, pp. 476-477.

¹⁰²¹ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

¹⁰²² Bettenson and Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

the world. “The roots of liberalism were firmly established in the arguments of philosophers and canon lawyers by the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries: belief in a fundamental equality of status as the proper basis for a legal system; belief that enforcing moral conduct is a contradiction in terms; a defence of individual liberty, through the assertion of fundamental or ‘natural’ rights; and, finally, the conclusion that only a representative form of government is appropriate for a society resting on the assumption of moral equality.

“These roots of liberalism were, however, dispersed in the fifteenth century. They had not yet been combined to create a coherent programme or theory for reform of the sovereign state, into what we have come to call ‘secularism’. That development awaited developments in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries – the Renaissance and the Reformation – when the fragmentation of Christianity led to religious wars, civil and international. In an attempt to restore a broken unity, Catholic and Protestant churches resorted to force. It was an appeal to force which led sensitive minds gradually to put together the credo of secularism, drawing on the insights of the so-called ‘medieval’ thinkers.

“Increasingly, the adjective ‘barbarous’ – which in earlier centuries had been applied by churchmen to the beliefs and practices of the tribes overrunning the Western Roman empire – would be reapplied to the attitudes and actions of the churches...”¹⁰²³

However, Siedentop regards liberalism, if not secularism, as a *product* of Christianity rather than its opponent. “On its basic assumptions, liberal thought is the offspring of Christianity. It emerged as the moral intuitions generated by Christianity were turned against an authoritarian model of the church.”¹⁰²⁴

This is true if by “Christianity” we mean “Western” or “Roman Catholic Christianity”. But that immediately raises the question: how and why, if Christianity is the parent of liberalism, did liberalism lead to secularism and the *rebellion against* Christianity, so that the grandchild devoured the parent? That question we shall attempt to answer in the following volumes of this series...

In the meantime, it should be pointed out that if “Christianity” means “Eastern” or “Orthodox Christianity”, the “progression” to liberalism and secularism is by no means a necessary development; for Orthodox Christianity, rightly understood and practiced, contains within itself antibodies, as it were, against the spread of the liberal-secular disease. The Orthodox East did not have to develop in that direction because it did not have the West’s heretical and authoritarian model of the church, but retained

¹⁰²³ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

¹⁰²⁴ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

the truly Christian understanding of Church-State relations and of the correct relationship of individual rights to social duties. It developed in a westernizing direction only after that truly Christian understanding began to be undermined by western cultural injections after the Fall of Constantinople, and especially after the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French revolution...

So let us now return to the history of the Byzantine Autocracy, the main bastion of Orthodox Christianity, in the final phase of its existence.

VI. THE ZENITH OF NEW ROME

64. ST. PHOTIUS THE GREAT AND CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

The last iconoclast emperor, Theophilus, died in February, 842. His widow, St. Theodora, wanted to restore the icons, but she used her imperial authority to impose a bargain on the Church: if her reposed husband could be restored to the diptychs as an Orthodox emperor, she would give carte blanche to the patriarch to restore the true faith as he saw fit. The confessors of Orthodoxy were understandably reluctant to enter into such a bargain, since there was no reliable evidence that Theophilus had repented before his death.

However, God inspired the new patriarch, St. Methodius, to resolve the dilemma in the following way. As Nun Cassia tells the story, "On March 4, 843 Methodius was consecrated to the see of Constantinople and immediately proclaimed that the whole Church should pray for the Emperor Theophilus, which continued for the whole of the first week of the Great Fast and ended with the miraculous blotting out of the name of Theophilus from the list of heretics that the patriarch had sealed before the beginning of the prayer and placed on the altar of Hagia Sophia. The reposed emperor was recognized as forgiven by the Church and as Orthodox, and on Sunday, March 11, 843 the icons were brought in a triumphal procession into the main church of the Empire, and icon-veneration has remained forever as an unshakeable dogma of the Orthodox Church..."¹⁰²⁵

In this way the dissonance of powers that had prevailed, with some intermissions, for such a long time was transformed into a symphony that remained stable, if not completely unshaken, until the last, Palaeologan dynasty...

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

¹⁰²⁵ Senina (editor), *Zhitia Vizantijskikh Sviatykh Epokhi Ikonoborchestva* (Lives of the Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclast Period), vol. I, St. Petersburg: Kvadrivium, 2015, pp. 129-130.

distinction of having been at the head of their heretical movement; they were heresiarchs 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."¹⁰²⁶ 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.¹⁰²⁷

This new intransigence of the patriarchs in relation to the emperors had been foreshadowed even before the last period of iconoclast persecution, when, on 24 December, 804, as Gilbert 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' ... 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."¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁶ Theosterictus, *Life of St. Nicetas of Medicion*; in Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Gallimard, 1996, p. 197.

¹⁰²⁷ 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!

¹⁰²⁸ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

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. 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 focussed 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 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 have no truck 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)”.¹⁰²⁹ 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 the patriarch of the time, St. Methodius, while he had severe reservations about some of the writing of St. Theodore, followed him in trying to exalt the authority of the patriarchate in relation to the empire. His successors, Saints Ignatius and Photius, went still further in the same direction...

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.¹⁰³⁰ 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.”¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁹ St. Theodore, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishesvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 94.

¹⁰³⁰ G.A. 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).

¹⁰³¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

However, St. Photius soon came into conflict with one who exalted his priesthood in such a way as to encroach on the prerogatives of kings and introduce heresy into the Church - Nicholas I, Pope of Rome. The dogmatic aspect of the quarrel related to Nicholas' introduction into the Creed of the Filioque, which Photius succeeded in having anathematized together with its author. But the conflict 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. It was becoming clear that if "caesaropapism" had been the greatest danger in the iconoclast period, it was its opposite, "papocaesarism", that was 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 defence 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 the false council of 869-70 that had anathematized St. Photius, firmly restricting the Pope's jurisdiction to the West.¹⁰³²

David Ford writes: "There is considerable discussion today within the worldwide Orthodox Church about the status of the so-called 'Photian Council,' held in Constantinople in 879-880. This is an exceedingly important council in the history of the Orthodox Church, and therefore deserves to be much more widely known among the Orthodox faithful. And this Council is of special relevance for our Orthodox Church vis-a-vis the Roman Catholic Church, in that 1), it officially prohibited any addition to the Nicene Creed, thus rejecting the Filioque clause, which was in use by many churches in Western Europe at that time (though not in Rome until 1014); and 2), it

¹⁰³² "We [Pope John VIII] wish that it is declared before the Synod, that the Synod which took place against the aforementioned Patriarch Photios at the time of Hadrian, the Most holy Pope in Rome, and [the Synod] in Constantinople [869/70] should be ostracized from this present moment and be regarded as annulled and groundless, and should not be co-enumerated with any other holy Synods." The minutes at this point add: "The Holy Synod responded: We have denounced this by our actions and we eject it from the archives and anathematize the so-called [Eighth] Synod, being united to Photios our Most Holy Patriarch. We also anathematize those who fail to eject what was written or said against him by the aforementioned by yourselves, the so-called [Eighth] Synod."

Pope John VIII's Letter to Photios: "As for the Synod (i.e., the 869 Synod that condemned St. Photius) that was summoned against your Reverence we have annulled here and have completely banished, and have ejected [it from our archives], because of the other causes and because our blessed predecessor Pope Hadrian did not subscribe to it..." See Fr. George Dragas, "The 8th Ecumenical Council: Constantinople IV (879/88) and the Condemnation of the Filioque Addition and Doctrine", http://geocities.com/heartland/5654/orthodox/dragas_eighth.html.

implicitly rejected the principle of Papal Supremacy, or jurisdictional authority, over the Eastern Churches, in that this Council rendered null and void the pro-papal Ignatian Council held in Constantinople ten years earlier. But in one of the greatest ironies of Christian history, the Photian Council *was recognized as legitimate by the papacy for nearly 200 years until the period of the Gregorian Reform*, when the canon lawyers of Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085) rejected the Photian Council and resurrected the Ignatian Council to take its place."¹⁰³³

As regards the emperor, St. Photius gave him due honour in a letter to the bishops in exile: "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."¹⁰³⁴ Moreover, in his advice to the newly baptized Bulgarian Tsar St. 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"¹⁰³⁵ For the emperor was, according to Alexander Dvorkin, "the supreme judge and lawgiver, the defender of the Church and 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."¹⁰³⁶

However, in the law code entitled the *Epanagoge*, in whose composition St. Photius probably played a leading part, the authority of the Patriarch is exalted over the Emperor. Its bias 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]."¹⁰³⁷ He can be

¹⁰³³ Ford, "St. Photius the Great, The Photian Council, and Relations with the Roman Church", Preacher's Institute, November 12, 2017.

¹⁰³⁴ D.S. White, Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 155.

¹⁰³⁵ St. Photius, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 95.

¹⁰³⁶ Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novogorod, 2006, pp. 586-587.

¹⁰³⁷ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, pp. 41, 42. It will be recalled that Justinian used the same phrase...

called that only in the secular sphere: "The Emperor must act as the law when there is none written, except that his actions must not violate 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' (εὐνομος ἐπιστασία), 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 (εἰκὼν ζῶσα Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐμψυχὸς δι' ἔργων καὶ λόγων χαρακτηρίζουσα τὴν ἀληθειαν)... 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."¹⁰³⁸

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 re-establish 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).

¹⁰³⁸ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

Although a more exalted place is accorded to the patriarch in the *Epanagoge*, it is 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.

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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 the thought of St. Photius, 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 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.”¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³⁹ Shabanov, “Kanonicheskaya Spravka o Prave Vselenskogo Patriarchego Prestola Konstantinopolia - Novogo Rima prinimat’ apelliatsii na sudebnie dela iz drugikh

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.¹⁰⁴⁰ In 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.¹⁰⁴¹ Thus the patriarchate was becoming ever more truly “ecumenical”...

At the same time, St. Photius did not deny 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 everything and agreement (συμφωνία) between the Empire and the Priesthood (constitutes) the spiritual and bodily peace and prosperity of the citizens” (*Titulus* III, 8). And so the iconoclast thesis and the post-iconoclast antithesis in political theology came to rest, in the *Epanagoge*, in a synthesis emphasizing the traditional symphony of 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 – provided 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 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, in the former case, and to the State, in the latter.

Pomestnykh Tservej” (A Canonical Note on the Right of the Ecumenical Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople – New Rome to accept appeals in judicial cases from other Local Churches), <http://portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=64720>, July 24, 2008.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 241; Shabanov, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁴¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

65. MIGHT AND RIGHT IN BYZANTIUM

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 secular life 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 rite¹⁰⁴²; that marriages should take place in church, and in accordance with the church 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, in the thirteenth century 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 the penitents at the Divine Liturgy. 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 these applications 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. St. Theodore allowed no compromise in relation to the Holy Canons. He who was not guided by them was not fully Orthodox. St. Paul anathematized anyone who transgressed the law of Christ, even if he were an angel from heaven. *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.¹⁰⁴³

St. Photius faithfully followed St. Theodore's teaching: when Basil I came to power after murdering his predecessor, he accepted him as emperor, but

¹⁰⁴² This did not come about until the thirteenth century. However, as we have seen, already in the fifth century the patriarch had begun to take part in the ceremony of crowning.

¹⁰⁴³ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 89-93.

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 (προνοια, a word which can equally well mean the 'providence' of God) controls and governs everything."¹⁰⁴⁴ 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".¹⁰⁴⁵ 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.

However, the patriarch did not give in. Commenting that the Emperor was to Zoe "both bridegroom and bishop"¹⁰⁴⁶, he defrocked the priest that had "married" him and stopped the Emperor from entering Hagia Sophia. Then, when the papal legates recognised 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 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!"¹⁰⁴⁷ However, after the death of Leo in 912, Euthymius was imprisoned and St. Nicholas was restored to his see. Finally, in the *Tome of Union* (920), fourth marriages were condemned as "unquestionably illicit and void", and third marriages permitted only by special dispensation.

St. Nicholas wrote 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

¹⁰⁴⁴ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 36

¹⁰⁴⁵ Wood, *Leo VI's Concept of Divine Monarchy*, London: Monarchist Press Association, 1964, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴⁶ P.G. 91.197.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Life of Euthymius*, quoted in Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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 to act in a lawless manner and do anything 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?"¹⁰⁴⁸ 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, and adulterer and a thief".¹⁰⁴⁹

The attempts of emperors to impose their will on the Church continued. Thus "Emperor Romanus, who reigned over Byzantium at the beginning of the tenth century had a son, Theophylact, who was sixteen years old when Patriarch Stephen died. The emperor wanted his son to be elevated as patriarch for he had promised him this spiritual calling from his youth. [However,] since his son was a minor, the emperor was ashamed to do this. The patriarchal throne was assumed by Tryphun a simple but chaste and pious old man. Tryphun remained on the throne for three years. When the son of the emperor reached his twentieth year, the emperor thought to remove Tryphun at any price and to install his son as patriarch. The saint of God, Tryphun, did not want to relinquish his throne voluntarily, for no other reason, because he considered it to be a great scandal that such a young man be elevated to such a responsible and burdensome position as that of being patriarch. Through the intrigue of a nefarious bishop, the signature of the innocent Tryphun was extracted on a blank sheet of paper. Later on, in the imperial court, above that signature, the alleged resignation of the patriarch was written which the emperor decreed. As a result of this, there arose a great confusion in the Church, for the laity and the clergy stood by Tryphun, the godly man. The emperor then forcibly removed the aged patriarch and sent him to a monastery and, his son, Theophylact, was elevated as patriarch. St. Tryphun lived as an ascetic in this monastery for two years and five months and presented himself before the Lord in the year 933 A.D."¹⁰⁵⁰

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Another area in which imperial might came up against ecclesiastical right was that of imperial legitimacy and succession. We have seen that in the early Byzantine period very strict criteria of legitimacy were applied by such bold hierarchs as St. Ambrose of Milan. However, these strict criteria were by no means consistently adhered to in later centuries¹⁰⁵¹; and even late into the

¹⁰⁴⁸ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 90.

¹⁰⁴⁹ St. Nicholas, "Epistle 32", *P.G.* 111: 209-213; Fr. George Poullas, "Indestructible Towers", *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. 26, 2009, N 2, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Life of St. Tryphun, Patriarch of Constantinople.*

¹⁰⁵¹ 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

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”.¹⁰⁵²

Dagron has pointed out that one could become emperor in Byzantium in various ways: by dynastic succession from father to son, by being “purple-born (πορφυρογεννητος)”¹⁰⁵³, 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.¹⁰⁵⁴ Although a usurper would naturally be considered 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 instead.¹⁰⁵⁵ Or the legitimate emperor could simply hand over power to the usurper in order to avoid bloodshed, as when Emperor Michael Rangabe sent his crown, purple robe and shoes to Leo V, saying: “I abdicate in your favour. Enter Constantinople without fear and reign gloriously.”¹⁰⁵⁶

A comparison can be made between the Byzantine idea of legitimacy and the Chinese “mandate of heaven”. In the Chinese system, as J.M. 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.”¹⁰⁵⁷ 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

“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).

¹⁰⁵² Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9. Dvorkin echoes this judgement (*op. cit.*, p. 587).

¹⁰⁵³ That is, born in the *porphyra*, 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”.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Dagron, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

¹⁰⁵⁵ “In the middle of the 9th century, the Khazars dispatched an envoy to [St.] Constantine/Cyril, who had landed in their country to evangelise 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).

¹⁰⁵⁶ *The Life of our Holy Monastic Father Nicholas the Confessor, Abbot of the Studium*, in St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, February 4.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 360.

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."¹⁰⁵⁸

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 going 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."¹⁰⁵⁹ St. Photius also accepted the new emperor – but refused him communion in church.

Paradoxically, writes Judith Herrin, "despite his obscure origins, 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."¹⁰⁶⁰

Sometimes the usurper was crowned, provided certain conditions were fulfilled. Thus when Nicephorus Phocas was murdered on December 11, 969 by his successor, John Tzimiskes¹⁰⁶¹, 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 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

¹⁰⁵⁸ Lemerle, in Rosemary Morris, "Succession and usurpation: politics and rhetoric in the late tenth century", in Paul Magdalino, *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantine History, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 200-201.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *The Lives of the Spiritual Mothers*, Buena Vista, CO; Holy Apostles' Convent, 1991, p. 325.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Herrin, *Byzantium*, London: Allen Lane, 2007, pp. 146-147. According to Andrew Louth, by the time of the Macedonian dynasty in the tenth century, the idea of legitimate succession from father to son had taken hold (*Greek East and Latin West*, p. 213).

¹⁰⁶¹ Nicephorus had been warned about this three months before the event by his spiritual father, St. Michael Maleinus, and so spent his last days in prayer and fasting.

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".¹⁰⁶²

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. Such a concept, as we have seen, is similar to the Chinese idea of "the mandate of heaven".

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 had made at least a 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.

While the Byzantines accepted Tzimiskes as basileus, they condemned the deed by which he attained the throne. 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 legitimised by receiving the blessing of the church."¹⁰⁶³

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

¹⁰⁶² Leo the Deacon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 99.

¹⁰⁶³ Morris, in Magdalino, op. cit., p. 205.

anointing washed out all his previous sins!¹⁰⁶⁴ 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.”¹⁰⁶⁵

“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 legitimate by choosing to respect the law...”¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶⁴ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 211. “Together with the Holy Synod... [Patriarch Polyeuctus] recognized that, just as chrismation at Holy Baptism forgives sins committed up to that time, whatever they may be, so, it goes without saying, anointing to the kingdom forgives the sin of murder committed earlier by Tsimiskes... On the basis of the 19th canon of the Nicaean Council, the 9th and 11th of Neocaesarea and the 27th of St. Basil the Great, the ordination of hierarchs and the anointing of emperors removes all sins committed before ordination and anointing, whatever they may be. But the ordination of priests and other sacred people forgives small sins, such as impulses to sin, lying and other suchlike, which are do not subject them to deposition. But they do not forgive adultery” (M.V. Zyzkin, *Tsarskaia Vlast’* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1934, <http://www.russia-talk.lrg/cd-history/zyzkin.htm>, p. 29).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39.

66. THE FIRST BULGARIAN EMPIRE

The question of the legitimacy of usurpers of the Roman throne was linked to the question of the legitimacy of other kings that claimed to take the place of the Roman emperor. The first Christian kingdom that posed a direct challenge to New Rome was that of Charlemagne. But, as we have seen, from the Byzantine point of view, Charlemagne might be an “emperor” (*basileus*), but in no way could he be called the “emperor of the Romans”, whose seat could only be the New Rome of Constantinople.

A challenge similar to that of Charlemagne – but much more threatening to the real power of the Roman emperors – was provided by the Bulgarian tsars...

The Slavs had first moved into the Balkans in large numbers during the reign of Justinian in the sixth century. In Greece, and particularly the Peloponnese, they had quickly become Christian and Hellenized. Further north, however, they remained hostile to Byzantium. In 626 they helped the Avars in their unsuccessful siege of Constantinople. In 681 the Byzantines were forced to cede a large area of land south of the Danube to the Bulgars, a Slavic people with a Turkic aristocratic leadership, and in 811 they ceded still more territory after a Byzantine army was crushed by Khan Krum with the death of Emperor Nicephorus I – the first time a Roman or Byzantine ruler had been killed in battle in nearly five centuries.

In the 860s Khan Boris of Bulgaria was converted to the Orthodox faith by the famous Greek bishop St. Methodius...

Methodius and his brother St. Cyril were Greeks from Thessalonica who knew Slavonic because of the large numbers of Slavs living in their homeland. St. Cyril had already conducted an important diplomatic and missionary mission to the Khazars north of the Black Sea. Then he and his brother were invited to the court of Prince Rostislav of Moravia, who was interested in his land becoming Christian. In preparation for the trip, and with the blessing of St. Photius, St. Cyril created a Glagolitic alphabet for the Slavs and translated a selection from the Gospels for use in a Slavic liturgy. Decades later, Glagolitic was replaced by Cyrillic, a simpler alphabet in which the Old Slavonic Bible and liturgy common to all the Slavic Orthodox nations was written. In 863 the brothers set out for Moravia, but encountered difficulties from the German bishops who were pressing in from the West and strongly opposed a Slavic-language mission to the Slavs. Pope Nicholas I summoned the brothers to Rome, where St. Cyril died in 869. The following popes, Adrian II and John VIII, supported Methodius’ Slavonic mission.¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶⁷ Thus Pope Hadrian wrote to the Slavic Princes Rostislav, Svatopluk, and Kocel: “‘Glory to God in the highest, and one earth peace, goodwill towards men’ (Luke 2:14). We have heard of your spirituality and eagerly desire and pray for your salvation; and how the Lord moved your hearts to seek Him, and showed you that it is fitting to serve God not only through faith,

Nevertheless, he was cast into prison on his return to Moravia, and with his disciples had to flee to Bulgaria, while the German bishops of Passau and Salzburg persuaded Pope Stephen V to ban Slavonic as a liturgical language (reversing the decision of his predecessor, John VIII).

In 865 Tsar 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 Byzantines¹⁰⁶⁸, 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 clearly within the jurisdiction of Constantinople, the Pope's mission to Bulgaria was already a canonical transgression and an early manifestation of his claim to universal dominion in the Church. It would never have happened if the West had recognised the authority of the East Roman Emperor, as the Popes had done in earlier

but also through good works. For faith without works is dead, and they fall away who profess to know God, but deny Him in works. You have asked for a teacher not only from this Holy See, but also from the pious Emperor Michael. And he sent you the blessed Philosopher Constantine together with his brother before we managed to. But when they learned that your lands belonged to the Apostolic See, they did nought against the Canon, but came to us bearing the relics of Saint Clement. Deriving threefold joy therefrom, we considered the matter and decided to send to your lands our son Methodius, an Orthodox man accomplished in mind, whom we consecrated with his disciples in order to teach, as you requested, and to explain fully in your language the Scriptures, the Holy Mass, that is, the Liturgy, as well as Baptism according to the entire Church Office, just as Constantine the Philosopher had begun through the Grace of God and the prayers of Saint Clement. Likewise, if there be someone else who is able to explain properly and faithfully, may this be holy and blessed by God, by us, and by the entire Catholic and Apostolic Church, so that God's commandment be easily learned. But keep this one custom: during Mass read the Apostolos and Gospel, first in Latin, then in Slavic, that the word of the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Praise the Lord, all ye nations' (Psalm 116:1) and elsewhere, 'all the difference tongues shall proclaim the greatness of God as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.' But if one of the teachers called to you, or one of those who tickle the ears and who turn from the Truth to lies dares, and begins in another manner to corrupt you, reviling the writings of your tongue, may he be cut off not only from communion, but also from the Church until he corrects himself. For they are not sheep but wolves whom you shall know by their fruits and avoid. And you, O beloved children, obey God's teaching and reject not the Church's instruction, that you might be true worshipers of God, our Heavenly Father, and all the Saints. Amen."

¹⁰⁶⁸ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

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 for the training of 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 now wanted to take the place of the Byzantine emperors. He was opposed by St. Nicholas the Mystic, who refused him the title of "Emperor of the Romans" and vigorously defended the authority of the East Roman Emperor. "The power of the Emperor," he said, "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 in 913: "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".¹⁰⁶⁹

The patriarch called the king "a tyrant and rebel who deserved the severest penalty. The existence of an independent Bulgaria violated the principle of a single Orthodox empire as an icon of the Kingdom of God, and therefore the Bulgarians, as soon as they achieved a schism in the empire, deserved punishment. And although these wars continued to be seen as fratricidal..., they had to 'unite the divided under one yoke'."¹⁰⁷⁰

Symeon assumed the title of "tsar of the Bulgarians and the Romans" and unsuccessfully tried to capture Tsargrad (Constantinople). He continued to act like a new Constantine, transferring the capital of the new Christian kingdom from Pliska, with its pagan and Turkic associations, to the more Slavic and Christian 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.¹⁰⁷¹ And in 932 the title "patriarch" was

¹⁰⁶⁹ St. Nicholas the Mystic, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Svetlana Lurye, "Translatio Imperii", *Epokha*, N 10, pp. 19-20.

¹⁰⁷¹ Peter's legitimacy was also recognized by the greatest of the Bulgarian saints, John of Rila.

granted to the first-hierarchy of the Bulgarian Church, Damian. So there were now *three* officially recognized Christian emperors of the one Christian empire, with capitals at Constantinople, Aachen and Preslav!

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. But then 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."¹⁰⁷²

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. As we have seen, 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 see this as far afield as Scotland in the far north-west, where St. Columba anointed a king directly in the Roman autocratic tradition, and the Arabian kingdom of Himyar in the far south-east, where the anointing was carried out by an Italian bishop owing allegiance to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople. 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 ethnic 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...

On the other hand, it could be argued that the Bulgarians' ecclesiastical nationalism, as expressed in their insistence on having an autocephalous Church independent of Constantinople, was a natural reaction to the Greeks'

¹⁰⁷² Archimandrite Doctor Seraphim, "The Life of King Boris-Michael, Converter of the Bulgarian People to Christianity", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, N 3, May-June, 1985, p. 14.

no less dangerous and prideful insistence that their empire “extends over the whole earth, and is the only power established by the Lord of the world upon the earth”. The idea of the Roman universal empire was an essentially pagan one that refused to die out when the empire became Christian. It was unsustainable, not only for the obvious reason that the Byzantine Empire never ruled the whole world and towards its end ruled only a tiny area much smaller than, for example, that of the Russian Great Prince, but also because the legitimacy of Orthodox Christian kingdoms, such as those of England or Spain or Georgia, neither derived from, nor depended on, Byzantium in any real way.

The idea of the New Rome as the primus inter pares was acceptable to all the Orthodox Christian States: the idea that the legitimacy of their States, and the independence of their Churches, depended completely on their submission to, or recognition by, New Rome, was not.

With the single exception of Serbian autocephaly (and that only at the beginning), the Byzantines always resisted the bestowal of ecclesiastical autocephaly, ignoring the obvious benefits that an independent Church would bring in promoting the Faith in a newly Christianized kingdom. They tended to offer autocephaly only when they had no alternative, as a bargaining chip in negotiations with a powerful rival or needed ally – and withdrew the favour immediately they themselves felt stronger and no longer in need of allies.

In this way Byzantine imperial nationalism elicited anti-imperial nationalisms among the Balkan Orthodox. It was quenched temporarily after the Fall of the City in 1453, but came to life again in the early nineteenth century in the form of “the great idea” of Free Greek quasi-imperial nationalism. Greek and Balkan nationalisms have continued to cause innumerable inter-Orthodox quarrels down the centuries, to the tragic detriment of the universalist idea of Holy Orthodoxy....

67. ST. VLADIMIR THE GREAT

In 860 a new nation which St. Photius called "Ros" (Ρως) - "an obscure nation, a nation of no account, a nation ranked among slaves.. a nation dwelling somewhere far from our country, barbarous, nomadic, armed with arrogance, unwatched, unchallenged, leaderless" - appeared in the waters surrounding Constantinople and ravaged the suburbs. They came from Russia, but were probably Scandinavian Vikings by race (the Finns call the Swedes "Rossi", and the Estonians call them "Rootsi", to this day). The invaders were defeated, 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.

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 organisation, 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."¹⁰⁷³ (As I. Solonevich notes¹⁰⁷⁴, this appeal was similar to that of the British Christians to the Saxons Hengist and Horsa. 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 not only ceased to be "leaderless", but also 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 recognised 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".¹⁰⁷⁵

In 866, writes Archbishop Averky, "two of Rurik's companions, Askold and Dir, taking control of Kiev, undertook a raid on Constantinople. Along with a multitude of warriors on 200 boats, they approached Constantinople

¹⁰⁷³ Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow: Pravda, 1989, p. 65.

¹⁰⁷⁴ I. Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷⁵ St. Andronicus, *O Tserkvi, Rossii* (On the Church and Russia), Fryazino, 1997, p. 132.

itself, striking fear in the hearts of its residents. Emperor Michael III and Patriarch Photios, along with a multitude of worshipers, cried out in prayer to God to save their capital from the wild barbarians. Upon the conclusion of all-night vigil in Blachernae Church, they took out the veil of the Theotokos which was kept there and went in a procession of the cross to the shores of the Bosphorus, immersing the garment into the water. The sea began to roil with large waves, which destroyed and sank many Russian boats. Many died, while the rest fled, profoundly impressed by the Divine wrath that smote them. This caused the massive conversion of Russians to Christ. 'The people of Rus,' wrote Patriarch Photios, 'set aside the dishonorable superstitions of heathenism and took up the pure and chaste Christian faith, and, receiving a bishop and teacher, conduct themselves as obedient children and friends.' Further, he writes that they accepted a bishop and the Christian rites (*Epistle of Photios*, Stritt Memor. pop. 2, 957). Indeed, a Greek bishop soon arrived in Kiev and began to preach Christ, as Emperor Constantine wrote: 'When the bishop arrived in the capital of the Rus, the king of the Rus gathered his council (*veche*).'

"There were a great many people here: the Prince himself presided with the boyars and elders, who were from ancient times more than anyone bound to paganism. They began to discuss their faith and Christianity, and, inviting the archpastor, asked what he wishes to teach them. The bishop [called Michael] opened the Gospel and began to tell them about the Savior and His miracles, and about miracles performed by God in the Old Testament. The people of Rus, listening to the preacher, said 'If we do not see something akin to that which happened to the youths in the ovens, we do not wish to believe.' The servant of God was not perturbed, he boldly responded: 'We are nothing before God, but tell me, what do you want?' They asked that the Gospel be thrown into the fire, and vowed to convert to the Christian God if it remained undamaged. Then the bishop declared: 'Lord, glorify Your name before these people!' and place the Book in the fire. Soon, the fire burned the wood, but the Gospel itself remained whole, even the ribbons binding it. Seeing this, the coarse men, confounded by this miracle, began to accept baptism (Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De administr. imp.* c. 29).

"This was in the year 867. Apparently, this was when the princes were christened, too.¹⁰⁷⁶ In any case, a church was later built in honor of St Nicholas upon the tomb of one of them, Askold, which gives reason to believe he was baptized with that name.¹⁰⁷⁷

¹⁰⁷⁶ 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." (*P.G.* 102, 736-737). (V.M.)

¹⁰⁷⁷ 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

“Subsequently, under Prince Oleg, included among the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was a Russian Diocese.

“During Igor’s reign, as evidenced by text from the pact between the Rus and the Greeks, the Rus were officially divided into those ‘who accepted baptism’ and ‘the un-baptized,’ and in fact the baptized recognized this pact with an oath given in the Cathedral of St Elias in Kiev. The fact that a cathedral already existed in Kiev suggests that other churches already existed there, too. Consequently, there was a significant number of Christians there already.

“The first herald of the general baptism of the people of Rus was Grand Duchess Olga. The chronicler praises her with enthusiasm and warmth, venerating her wisdom. In his depiction, she was for the Russian land “the morning star preceding the Sun, the early dawn preceding the day; she shone like the full moon in the night, shining among the heathens like a pearl.” Bestowed with a bright, incisive mind and seeing the sinless life of Christians, she submitted to the Gospel truths and, according to tradition, herself traveled to Constantinople in 957, where she was baptized by Patriarch Polyeuctos, while Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos himself was her godfather. The Patriarch blessed Olga with a cross which she then brought back with her to Kiev, and foretold that her descendents would achieve glory. Olga gave him in return a gift of a gold platter with the depiction of the Savior in precious stones. Indubitably, many members of her entourage were also baptized. Returning to Kiev, she earnestly began spreading the Christian faith, which the *Stepennaya Kniga* [Book of Degrees of Royal Genealogy] attests to: ‘Many, wondering at her [Olga’s] words, having yet heard them before, received the word of God with love from her mouth, and were baptized.’ For this, and for her lofty Christian sensibility, the Church glorified Grand Duchess Olga and commemorates her on July 11 (o.s.).

“And so, gradually, firm foundations were laid down for the conversion of the entire Russian people to Christ, which finally occurred in the year 988 under the grandson of St Olga, Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles. So the Sun as described by the chronicler, was preceded by the early dawn, Olga, and was St Vladimir himself.

“Constantine the Great was for the Roman Empire what Prince Vladimir was to be for Rus, for the latter performed the great work of converting the entire Russian people to Christ. His life is exceptionally instructive for us. He clearly attests to the regenerative power of Christian teaching; how – when it is taken to heart and brought to life – it can utterly transform the human soul. The pre-baptism Vladimir and post-baptism Vladimir were two completely different people. At first brooding, cruel, suspicious, coarse, a lustful barbarian, after his baptism he becomes a tender, welcoming prince, full of

of the First Russian Christian Ruler, Askold-Nicholas of Kiev”),
http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr12/R13_22.htm. (V.M.)

love and mercy, a true father of his subjects. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun is the name given to him which characterizes the second part of his life.

“The first years of his reign, Vladimir was occupied with bloody wars and lived like the most sinful pagan. Defeating his brothers in battle, whom he had fought to gain power, he became the sole ruler of the Kievan Duchy. But his conscience gave him no respite, and he attempted to find peace by erecting new idols on the banks of the Dniepr and Volkhov Rivers, adorning them with gold and silver, and making abundant sacrifices before them. He even made human sacrifices, which apparently became the turning point in Vladimir’s soul and forced him to consider changing his faith.

“After his defeat of the Yatvags, it was decided that the gods must be thanked through human sacrifice. The lot fell to a handsome young man, a Christian named Ioann. His father, Feodor, did not wish to give up his son to be sacrificed to idols. The angered mob broke into their home with weapons, demanding that the father surrender his son. The father, standing on an elevated balcony of his house with his son, calmly responded: ‘If your gods are truly gods, let them send one of their own to take my son, why do you ask for him?’ The aggravated pagans then destroyed the pillars under the balcony, and father and son died. The holiday of these first Russian martyrs, Ioann and Feodor, is celebrated on July 12.

“This event inflicted great spiritual pain on Vladimir and instilled doubt in the truth of pagan beliefs. His soul languished, seeking succor and peace, and he remembered great Olga, ‘the wisest of all,’ and her God, the God of the Greek Christians. According to the chronicler, representatives of neighboring faiths visited Vladimir proposing that he adopt their religion. The first to come were the Volga Bulgars, who confessed Mohammedanism, and began to praise their faith. Vladimir did not like their practice of circumcision and ban on drinking wine. Latin missionaries from the Roman pope came and spoke about the grandeur of the unseen God, and the nothingness of the idols, but the glorious prince, having had enough of the power-hungry politics of the pope, did not give them much time to speak, but sent them away with the words: ‘Go back where you came from: our fathers did not take their faith from the pope.’ Then the Khazar Jews came, who said that they believe in the one true God. Vladimir, hearing their words, suddenly asked ‘Where is your homeland?’ ‘In Jerusalem,’ they replied, ‘but God, for the sins of our fathers, deprived us of a fatherland and scattered us throughout the world.’ ‘How can you teach others,’ retorted Vladimir, ‘having been rejected by God yourselves; if God loved you and your law, you would not be scattered throughout the foreign lands; do you wish the same for us?’ So the clever words of Vladimir revealed his innate wisdom and clear, incisive intellect, qualities which justified his selection by Divine Providence as being the executor of the great work of converting the entire Russian people to Christ.

“Finally, after everyone else, Vladimir was visited by a scholarly Greek monk, a philosopher, as they called him. In a long speech, he showed the

error of all other faiths and explained to him the Biblical history of Divine Providence's plan for mankind, beginning from the creation of the world and ending with the Dread Judgment, showing the prince an icon of the Day of Judgment. Vladimir, beholding the icon, sighed deeply and said: 'It is good for those on the right, and there is sorrow for those on the left.' 'If you desire to be with the righteous, be baptized,' said the preacher. 'I will wait for now,' replied the wise prince.

"Since Vladimir was considering the conversion to a new faith not only by himself but by his people, it was naturally important that the selection of a new religion would involve the best representatives of the people. So, dismissing the Greek emissary and rewarding him with abundant gifts, in 987, he gathered his council of boyars and shared with them the proposals of his recent visitors. 'Every one of them praises his own faith,' said the boyars, 'you have many wise men: send them to study whose faith is best.' Then Vladimir, heeding his advisor's words, sent 'ten men, good and wise,' so that they examined the novel faiths in their own lands. They went to the lands of the Volga Bulgars, then to the Germans who confessed the Latin faith, and finally arrived in Constantinople, where they came to the magnificent Hagia Sofia Cathedral, where the patriarch himself was officiating at divine services. The grandeur of the temple, the service of the many clergymen, headed by the patriarch, the orderly, profoundly prayerful singing, virtually lifting worshipers up from the earth, the splendor and simplicity of the divine service brought the envoys into a holy ecstasy and shook them to their very core.

'Returning home, they gave negative reviews of the Muslim and German services and recounted their experience of the Greek divine services with fervent elation. 'When we came to the Greeks,' said the envoys, 'we were led to the place where they serve their God, and we did not know whether we were in heaven or still on earth: we cannot forget that beauty, for every man, having tasted the sweet, then disdains the bitter and we no longer wish to remain in our old pagan faith.' Then the boyars and elders reminded the prince: 'If the Greek law were not good, then your grandmother Olga, wisest of all, would not have adopted it.' 'Then we will accept christening, but where?' asked Vladimir. 'Wherever you wish,' replied the boyars, presenting the prince the decision to manifest that which the people themselves, in the persons of their finest representatives, had decided – to adopt the holy faith of Christ from the Greeks.

"The warlike prince, though he decided to convert to Christianity, could not without Divine intervention, humble his soul to the degree sufficient to appeal to the Greeks with the meek request to be baptized and to be taught, together with his people, about the new faith. At the same time, his innate wisdom and refined political instinct told him asking this of the Greeks would not be without danger. Examples from history of the time indeed showed that peoples who adopted the Christian faith from another nation often found themselves not only in spiritual dependence upon them, but losing political

and even sovereign independence. Vladimir, of course, did not want this for his people. And so, fearing that following spiritual submission would be the political submission of the Russian people to the Greeks, he decided to win the new faith with the power of arms. This explains everything that followed after Vladimir and his boyars decided to accept holy baptism, and what at first blush appears strange to many, and even antithetical to the Christian spirit.

“Vladimir decided to show the Greeks that, while accepting their faith, he did not intend to subject his state to them and wished to speak with them as an equal. So he set out for war, besieging the Greek city of Chersonesus (Korsun in Slavic), in the Tauride, then gave the vow to be baptized if he took the city. Having taken it, in order to further humble the Greeks, he demanded the co-Emperors Basil and Constantine their sister Anna’s hand in marriage. They responded that they would agree to give them their sister, but only on the condition that he be baptized, since their sister could not marry a pagan. ‘I have long studied and come to love the Greek law,’ replied Vladimir.

“Before Princess Anna’s arrival with the priests who were to perform the baptism then marriage, Vladimir underwent a miraculous experience which possesses profound spiritual meaning. By God’s will, he was stricken with a serious ocular sickness and was completely blinded. Blindness is an ailment in which a person is particularly sensitive to his vulnerability, his weakness, and is naturally humbled. For this reason, the Lord, wishing to make this proud prince a true servant to Him, sent him this temporary tribulation, so that before he receive the great Christian Mystery of baptism, he would be taught the great Christian virtue of humility, just as he had done to that proud persecutor of Christianity, Saul, designating him as His vessel for the conversion of pagans. Vladimir, just as Saul did in this condition, recognized his spiritual poverty, his weakness and nothingness, and with a feeling of profound humility prepared to receive the holy Sacrament. And a great miracle occurred over him which symbolized the opening of his spiritual eyes and rebirth. The moment the bishop of Korsun, during baptism, placed his hand on Vladimir (renamed Basil) as he emerged from the baptismal font, he instantly began to see and cried out joyously: ‘Now for the first time I see the true God!’ Many of his fellow warriors, stunned by this miracle, were also baptized, after which the wedding to Princess Anna took place.

“But Vladimir sought a better faith not only for himself but for his entire nation. Having himself experienced at the moment of his baptism all the power and grandeur of the Christian faith, he doubtless burned with greater fervor to hasten to illuminate with the light of faith in Christ and the greatness of the Christian faith his own people. And then, returning to Kiev, he first baptized his twelve sons, then decisively began destroying idols and spreading the Christian message to his people. The priests who came with Vladimir walked the streets of Kiev and taught the people about the truths of the new faith, which was already familiar to many Kievans.

“Vladimir then designated a specific day when all the residents of Kiev were to gather at the river to be baptized. Kievans joyfully rushed to fulfill the wish of their beloved prince, reasoning: ‘If this new faith were not better, the prince and boyars would not have adopted it.’ Countless crowds of people, old and young, mothers and children, appeared on the banks of the river. Soon the prince himself appeared along with the host of clergymen. Upon a predetermined signal, the mass of people entered the water: some up to their necks, some up to their chest, adults holding children in their arms, while the priests, standing on shore, read prayers, performing the great Mystery over them.

“During these holy moments, as the pious chronicler [Nestor] wrote, the heavens and the earth truly rejoiced to this enormous number of saved souls. Those being baptized rejoiced, those baptizing rejoiced, but more than anyone, the central figure in this celebration rejoiced, Holy Prince Vladimir. Raising his eyes to the sky, he spoke to God with love: ‘Oh God, Who hath created heaven and earth, look down, I beseech Thee, on this Thy new people, and grant them, o Lord, to know Thee as the true God, even as the other Christians nations have known Thee. Confirm in them the true and inalterable faith, and aid me, o Lord, against the hostile adversary, so that, hoping in Thee and in Thy might, I may overcome his malice.’”¹⁰⁷⁸

Vladimir now devoted his whole life to the evangelization of his people. A.V. Kartashev writes: “To use the whole strength of state power, and all the resources of the state treasury, so that baptized people should feel, as the book of the *Acts of the Apostles* says, that they had ‘one heart and one soul’, and that they had ‘everything in common’... He wanted to preserve and broaden the common feast and common joy of brother-loving Christian life.”¹⁰⁷⁹

Of course, the consolidation of the victory of the true faith, and the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, required many more centuries of spiritual and political struggle as the autocracy established itself over its internal and external rivals. But “the real state life of Rus’,” writes St. John Maximovich, “begins with 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.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Archbishop Averky (Taushev), “The Baptism of Rus’ and the Legacy to the Russian People of Holy Prince Vladimir”, in *A Time for Everything*, in *The Spiritual Inheritance of the Russian Diaspora*, Moscow Sretensky Monastery, 2006.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Russian Church), Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, volume 1, p. 125.

“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.”¹⁰⁸⁰

St. Vladimir united the Russian nation and Church. Under him, as St. John Maximovich said, “the divided Slavic tribes which composed Vladimir’s nation began to feel united. This new consciousness of their unity was strengthened by the fact that for several centuries the whole of Rus’ constituted, in ecclesiastical terms, one metropolitan district, despite the later division of Rus’ into independent principalities. The Church greatly influenced the unification of Rus’ into one state. As Orthodoxy spread among the Slavic and non-Slavic tribes which were living in eastern Europe, they were able to become one with the Russian nation. The Church acted as a peacemaker in times of civil strife, and inculcated an awareness that the Russian nation is one, and should therefore constitute one integral unit in all things.”¹⁰⁸¹

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 their 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...”¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁸⁰ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origins of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸¹ Maximovich, “950-year anniversary of the Baptism of Rus’”, in *Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco*, Richfield Springs, N.Y., 1994, p. 222.

¹⁰⁸² Archbishop Nathanael (Lvov), “O Petre Velikom” (“On Peter the Great”), *Epokha* (Epoch), N 10, 2000, pp. 37-38.

In about 1050, in his famous *Sermon on the Law and Grace*, Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev applied the epithet of “the new Constantine” to St. Vladimir. But he 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 the New Rome into being its *reincarnation* or *successor* or *heir*.

Indeed, Russia was not only an *offshoot* or *child* 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 St. Vladimir to the purple-born princess Anna in the tenth century, and 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. In fact, Vladimir’s realm was *the Third Rome* in embryonic form, and he minted coins depicting himself in imperial attire.¹⁰⁸³

But Russia the Third Rome was not to become a reality for nearly another five hundred years; for 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 Graeco-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...”¹⁰⁸⁴ It took 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 and recognize that the Russian Tsar had become, as Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople said in 1589, the sovereign of *all* Orthodox Christians.

¹⁰⁸³ Vladimir Volkoff, *Vladimir the Russian Viking*, Bath: Honeyglens, 1984, p. 256.

¹⁰⁸⁴ St. Photius, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 123.

68. THE YEAR 1000: APEX OF MONARCHISM

By the year 1000 the Byzantine ideal of “symphonic” Church-State relations had triumphed well beyond the boundaries of the Eastern empire. Thus it was the rule also in the most powerful states outside Byzantium: East Francia (modern Germany), England and Kievan Rus’. Even in those parts of the West where normal government had broken down in many places, such as West Francia (modern France), the ideal was still alive. Thus in the mid-tenth century Abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der wrote to Queen Gerbera, the Saxon wife of the Frankish King Louis IV: “Even though we see the Roman Empire for the most part in ruins, nonetheless, as long as the Kings of the Franks who now possess the Roman Empire by right shall last, the dignity of the Roman Empire will not completely perish because it will endure in its kings. Some of our learned men say that one of the Kings of the Franks will possess anew the Roman Empire. He will be in the last time and will be the greatest and the last of all kings. After he has successfully governed his empire, he will finally come to Jerusalem and will lay aside his sceptre and crown on the Mount of Olives. This will be the end and the consummation of the Roman and Christian Empire...”¹⁰⁸⁵

As the year 1000 approached, when many Western Christians were expecting the reign of the Antichrist, the End of the World and the Second Coming of Christ, the question of the survival of legitimate monarchical authority became ever more pressing. For with the removal of that authority, according to the prophecy of St. Paul (II Thessalonians 2.7), would come the Antichrist – and the monarchy, at any rate in the Frankish lands to the west of the Rhine, was in a very parlous state as the “true” Carolingian line died out and virtual anarchy ruled. Signs of millennial fever were certainly increasing. 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...¹⁰⁸⁶ And in 992 Abbot Adso, now in his eighties, set sail for Jerusalem, no doubt in order to witness the apocalyptic events that were about to take place there.¹⁰⁸⁷

And yet paradoxically, if we exclude the chaos in West Francia, by the year 1000 the monarchical principle had never looked in better health. A survey of the world in the year 1000¹⁰⁸⁸ gives rise to the thought: just as the year 2000 has witnessed the apex of democratism in political thought, so the year 1000 witnessed the apex of its opposite, monarchism. The monarchical regimes that dominated the ancient world were of two main kinds: autocracy, based on the *symphony* between Church and State and exemplified first of all in Byzantium, and despotism, based on the *fusion* between Church and State.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Adso, *Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist*.

¹⁰⁸⁶ See John Eadie, “The Man of Sin”, in *Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.

¹⁰⁸⁷ He died on the way. See Tom Holland, *Millennium*, London, 1999 p. 129.

¹⁰⁸⁸ John Man, *Atlas of the Year 1000*, London: Penguin Books, 1999.

On Christmas Day, 1000 or 1001, King Stephen of Hungary became the last member of the family of Orthodox kings of Europe... Autocracy now ruled from the England of Ethelred the Unready to the Georgia of Bagrat III, with the exception only of the Baltic lands, Finland, Iceland and the Islamic half of the Iberian peninsula. Writing about the "outer" regions of Europe, Chris Wickham writes: "Kings and princes were in every region more ambitious around 1000 than they had been around 750: they often ruled wider areas, or at least were aiming at wider hegemonies, and sometimes had more elaborate structures to underpin that rule as well; they were often more relevant to local societies, too, thus ruling more deeply as well as more widely... Overall,.. the trend to wider and deeper political power seems to have been based on two sorts of developments. The first was the development of aristocratic power, and therefore of the possibility of hierarchies of political dependence extending from kings and princes down into the localities. The second was the development of techniques of rule and of control, usually (except in Spain and Ireland) borrowed from neighbouring powers, more specialized royal officials, a more complex and more top-down judicial system, the ability to demand military service from the population, the ability to exploit manpower to build fortifications of different types, and, in newly Christianized areas, the development of tighter official hierarchies of the church...

"Broadly, the more of these developments a ruler had access to, the more stable his power was, and the more ambitious he (in Rus', once, she) could be. Political aggregation was perhaps greatest in Rus', and also, in a smaller compass, Bulgaria, Denmark and Asturias-Leon; it was beginning, however, to crystallize in Croatia, Bohemia, Poland and maybe Norway by the end of our period as well, in a less stable and more contested way, and also (the obscurest of all) in Scotland. In Wales and Ireland, however, and also Sweden, royal ambition did not yet have an adequate infrastructural development behind it, and the expansion of kingdoms promoted instability more than solid bases for government (this was partly true of Bohemia and Poland as well); and in some places, on the Baltic coast or in Iceland (as also sometimes in Norway) such expansion was successfully resisted for some time..."¹⁰⁸⁹

In all the Orthodox lands we find strong kings allied to independent Churches. These included not only the well-established empires of New Rome in the East and the German-Italian Holy Roman Empire in the West, but also such newly-established kingdoms as Norway (Olaf Trygvasson, Olaf the Saint), Sweden (Olaf Skotkunning), Poland (Boleslav the Great), Hungary (Stephen the Great) and Russia (Vladimir the Great). Despotism in the strict sense is nowhere to be found. Iceland's Althing preserved a form of pre-

¹⁰⁸⁹ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, pp. 505-506.

liberal democratism¹⁰⁹⁰, while France was already breaking down into feudalism.

The whole of this vast area was not only monarchical in governance, but also Orthodox Christian in faith. And so the year 1000 represented the peak of the influence both of Orthodox autocracy and of Orthodox Christianity in world history so far. As Wil van den Bercken writes: "In the eleventh century, when with the exception of the Finns and the Baltic peoples all the European peoples had adopted Christianity as their national religion, Christian Europe had formally become a historical reality"¹⁰⁹¹ Moreover, in all those nations the Christianity was Orthodox. It would not be until 1054 that Western Christianity fell into the heresy of Roman Catholicism...

Despotism, meanwhile, ruled throughout Asia and Northern Africa, including the Islamic lands from Morocco to northern India, and the Hindu-Buddhist-Confucian lands from southern India to China and Japan.

The unity of politics and religion is clearly evident in Japan. Thus J.M. Roberts writes: "The keys to the continuity and toughness of Japanese society have been the family and the traditional religion. The clan was an enlarged family, and the nation the most enlarged family of all. In patriarchal style, the emperor presided over the national family as did a clan leader over his clan or, even, the small farmer over his family. The focus of family and clan life was participation in the traditional rites, the religion known as Shinto, whose essence was the worship at the proper times of certain local or personal deities."¹⁰⁹²

In 645, according to the Taika Reform Edict, the emperor, who was from the ruling Yamato elite and claimed to be descended through the first emperor Jinmu from the sun goddess, acquired absolute power and claimed ownership of all land in the kingdom. As W.M. Spellman writes, "he also reaffirmed his status as Shinto high priest, thereby combining supreme religious authority with new-found political primacy on the classic pagan god-king model. In reality, however, the Taika Reform Edict did little to alter the status of powerful and semi-autonomous aristocrats in the countryside, of whom the most important were the Fujiwara..."¹⁰⁹³

Even the Jews had a quasi-monarchy in the form of their Exilarch in Baghdad-Babylon. But in 1040 this power came to an end. The only independent Jewish State since the fall of Jerusalem, Khazaria, fell in 966-967 to Sviatoslav of Kiev. However, it survived in a weakened form until the Mongols finally swept it away, eliciting a mass migration of Khazars to

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Things*, or parliaments, were a characteristic of many Viking lands. Cf. the Tynwald, or *Thingwald* of the Isle of Man, which has lasted from the eleventh century to the present day, and the *Veche* of Novgorod.

¹⁰⁹¹ Van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁹² Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 371.

¹⁰⁹³ W.M. Spellman, *Monarchies, 1000-2000*, Trowbridge: Reaktion, 2001, pp. 57, 58.

Eastern Europe that created the Yiddish-speaking communities that were to have such a destructive impact on Tsarist Russia.¹⁰⁹⁴

This fairly sharp contrast between Orthodox and Autocratic Europe, on the one hand, and pagan and despotic Asia and North Africa, on the other, confirms the thesis that there is a more than coincidental correlation between Orthodoxy and Autocracy, on the one hand, and paganism and despotism, on the other. Orthodoxy flourishes under authoritarian political rule, but does not allow that rule to subsume the authority of the Church, which sanctifies and supports the king while remaining independent of him. Pagan rulers, on the other hand, almost always ascribe quasi-divine honours to themselves. Thus the Japanese emperors traced their ancestry back to the sun goddess, the Khmer rulers of Cambodia in this period were “the embodiment of Shiva, spirit of the ancestors and the earth and the fount of fertility”¹⁰⁹⁵, and the Fatimid Islamic ruler Al-Hakim – who destroyed the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – believed that he was god incarnate.¹⁰⁹⁶ The sharp contrast between Orthodox and Autocratic Europe, on the one hand, and pagan and despotic Asia and North Africa, on the other, began to break down only with the appearance of the heretical papacy...

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Characteristic of all these European and Asian monarchies – Christian, Islamic and pagan – was an intense religiosity. The modern idea that religion should be separated from the State would have been incomprehensible to almost any man in the year 1000. The religiosity of these monarchies was not incompatible with striking artistic, technical and economic achievements. Thus the great cities of Constantinople, Cordoba, Baghdad and Bukhara were at their peak at this time, as was the Sung empire in China.

The most important corollary of the religious monarchism of Europe and Asia in the year 1000 was the belief it incarnated that, as John Man writes of Sung China, “state and society, administration and education, could be united, and take civilization forward to a new level”.¹⁰⁹⁷ The major tendency of modern democratic civilization has been the opposite: the belief that state and society must be disjoined. Of course, one cannot deny that the conjoining of state and society can be to an evil end; and some of the states of this period, such as Al-Mansur’s in Spain or Al-Hakim’s in Egypt, were aggressively antichristian. (In 1009 Al-Hakim destroyed the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, creating the nominal cause of the First Crusade.) But it is no less unreasonable to suppose that state and society *cannot* in any circumstances be conjoined for

¹⁰⁹⁴ See Schlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, London: Verso, 2009, pp. 210-229.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Man, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Man, *op. cit.*, p. 75. Which is what the Druse of Lebanon still believe him to be. In fact, Al-Hakim was one of the closest of all forerunners of the Antichrist. Not only did he proclaim himself to be god: he destroyed the Temple of God, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, in 1009.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Man, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

the good. Certainly, the Christian monarchies of the period compare favourably, from a Christian point of view, with the disjointed, secularized democracies of today.

The unity enjoyed by these monarchical societies gave each citizen a purpose in life higher than his own narrowly personal interests. This purpose, in such a religious age, could only be religious. That is why changes of regime which did not involve changes of religion – as when the Muslim Turks took control of Bukhara from the Muslim Samanids in 999 – caused less upheaval than might have been expected. Correspondingly, the most savage wars of the time – as between the Muslims and Hindus in northern India, or between the Muslims and Christians in the Iberian peninsula – were invariably religious. The scourge of modern states, ethnic rivalry, was less of a problem in an age that took multi-ethnic empires like the Roman and Muslim for granted.¹⁰⁹⁸ (Indeed, St. Stephen, King of Hungary (+1038), is reported to have said: “A country of one language and one set of customs is feeble and fragile”.) Much more problematic was the idea of *religious* pluralism, because it threatened society’s unity of purpose. Hence the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Rhineland in 1002 and in Limoges in 1010 – it was not the different *nationality* of the Jews that exacerbated the Christians so much as the clear contradictions in faith and life between the Jews and the Christians.

Since religion was so important to these people, when they did change religion, they tended to convert *en masse*. The most important and striking example of this is the conversion of the vast territory of Russia from paganism to Orthodoxy under St. Vladimir. Some western historians, puzzled by the speed of the process in Russia and noting one or two violent incidents, have come to the conclusion that it was all the result of coercion. But they fail to take into account, not only the grace of God, but also the cohesiveness of tribal societies, and therefore the unanimity or near-unanimity of their decision-making, and the genuine respect and awe in which the views of the tribal leader or king were held, which naturally led to their decisions being

¹⁰⁹⁸ “National identities,” writes Wickham, “were not widely prominent in 1000, even if one rejects the association between nationalism and modernity made in much contemporary scholarship. We must recognize that some such identities did exist. One can make a good case for England in this respect (the dismal years of the Danish conquest in the early eleventh century produced a number of texts invoking a version of it). Italians, too, had a sense of common identity, although it hardly reached south of Rome (of course, that is pretty much still true today), and did not lead to a desire for political unity. Geographical separation, such as that provided by the English Channel and the Alps, helped both of these, as it also did the Irish, who were capable of recognizing a version of an Irish community, however fragmented Ireland really was. In the parallel case of Byzantium, what gave its inhabitants identity was simply the coherence of the political system, which was much greater than any other in Europe at that time; Byzantine ‘national identity’ has not been much considered by historians, for that empire was the ancestor of no modern national state [not the Greek? (V.M.)], but it is arguable that it was the most developed in Europe at the end of our period. By contrast, France, Germany and Spain (either Christian or Muslim) did not have any such imagery. The Danes may have had it, but in Scandinavia as a whole there is good evidence for it only in Iceland. The Slav lands were still too inchoate to have any version of identity not specifically tied to the fate of ruling dynasties” (*op. cit.*, pp. 4-5).

accepted as God-inspired. Thus the Kievans reasoned, as the Chronicler records: "If it had not been good, then our prince and boyars would not have accepted it".

Even democratic Iceland converted from paganism to Christianity at this time with scarcely any opposition once the opinion of one wise man, the Lawgiver Thorgeir, became known. For, as Tom Holland writes, "All the Icelanders assembled on the Thingvellir, Christian as well as pagan, duly agreed to accept his judgement on what the faith of Iceland should be; and Thorgeir accepted the fateful charge. 'He lay down and spread his cloak over himself, and lay all that day and the next night, nor did he speak a word.' Then abruptly, on the following morning, he sat up and ordered the Icelanders to accompany him to the great Law Rock - and from there he delivered them his verdict. Men were still be permitted to eat horseflesh; to expose unwanted children; to offer sacrifices, provided that it was done in private. In every other respect, however, they were to submit themselves to the laws of the new religion. Whether in cold water or warm, all were to be baptized. The inhabitants of Iceland were to become a Christian people."¹⁰⁹⁹

And so these societies combined two characteristics which, from the modern point of view, cannot be combined: the "collectivist" belief that men can and should freely choose its supreme end *together*, and the "individualist" belief that the supreme end can be revealed to one particular man. For if wisdom comes from God, "it is much more natural to suppose," as Vladimir Trostnikov says, "that divine enlightenment will descend upon the chosen soul of an Anointed One of God, as opposed to a million souls at once".¹¹⁰⁰ Scripture does *not* say vox populi - vox Dei, but: "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever He will" (Proverbs 21.1).

¹⁰⁹⁹ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Cf. Man, *op. cit.*, p. 40; Gwyn Jones, *The Vikings*, London: The Folio Society, 1997, pp. 266-270.

¹¹⁰⁰ Trostnikov, "The Role and Place of the Baptism of Rus in the European Spiritual Process of the Second Millenium of Christian History", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 39, N 3, May-June, 1989, p. 34.

69. THE RIGHTS OF THE ORTHODOX AUTOCRAT

Whatever rights the emperor has in the Church are given to him by the Church, for the sake of the Church, and in view of the fact that he is himself specially anointed to the kingdom by the Church. This is a vitally important point which is often overlooked by those who look on Church and State as necessarily warring principles. Just as the soul and the body are not by nature warring principles, even if the fall has often set them against each other, so it is with the Church and State. And yet we must agree with Sir Steven Runciman that “the chief practical problem that faces any organized Church lies in its relation to the State”...¹¹⁰¹

The rights of the Emperor in the Church were limited by the fact that he could not perform sacraments, nor did he ordain or defrock bishops and priests. “To be sure, the Emperor wore vestments similar to those of the bishop and even had a special place in the worship of the Church, such as censing the sanctuary at the Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ, offering the sermon during Vespers at the commencement of the Great Lent, and receiving Holy Communion directly from the altar as did the clergy. Nevertheless, the Emperor was not a priest and many Greek Fathers disapproved of even these privileges. Emperor Marcian (451-457) may have been hailed as a priest-king at the Council of Chalcedon (451), but this did not bestow sacerdotal status on him or any Byzantine imperator.”¹¹⁰²

One of the rights given to the Emperor by the Church was that of convening Councils and enforcing their decisions. This right did not empower the emperor or his officials to interfere in the proceedings on a par with the bishops, but it did enable him to make quiet suggestions which were often vitally important. Thus at the First Council it was the Emperor Constantine who quietly suggested the word “consubstantial” to describe the relationship between the Son of God and God the Father.¹¹⁰³ Again, although the Emperor Marcian said that he had decided to be present at the Fourth Ecumenical Council “not as a manifestation of strength, but so as to give firmness to the acts of the Council, taking Constantine of blessed memory as my model,”¹¹⁰⁴ his firm but tactful intervention was decisive in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

The Emperor also had the right to invest the Patriarch. “According to the official formula,” writes Runciman, “the Patriarch was elected by the decree of the Holy Synod and the promotion of the Emperor. His investiture took place in the Imperial Palace in the presence of the high dignitaries of Church and State. Until 1204 the scene was the Palace of Magnaura, where the Emperor in person announced the election with the formula: ‘The Divine

¹¹⁰¹ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 55.

¹¹⁰² *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, Co.: Holy Apostles’ Convent, p. 125.

¹¹⁰³ Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse, *Sem’ Vselenskikh Soborov* (The Seven Ecumenical Councils), Moscow, 1996, p. 11.

¹¹⁰⁴ Averky, op.cit., p. 71.

grace, and Our Majesty which derives from it, raised the most pious [*name*] to be Patriarch of Constantinople.' After 1261 the investiture was held in the triclinium of the Palace of Blachernae; and about the same time the formula was changed. The Emperor now said: 'The Holy Trinity, through the power that It has given Us, raises you to be Bishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Oecumenical Patriarch.' By the beginning of the fifteenth century the formula and the setting had changed once more. The investiture now took place in a church in the presence of the Emperor; but it was a high lay official who pronounced the words: 'Our great and holy Sovereign and the Sacred Synod call Your Holiness to the supreme throne of Patriarch of Constantinople.' The theologian Simeon of Thessalonica, writing in about 1425, regretted the change of words as there was no mention of God, though he liked the recognition given to the Holy Synod. When the election had thus been proclaimed the Emperor gave to the Patriarch the cross, the purple soutane and the pectoral reliquary which symbolized his office. After this investiture the new Patriarch rode in procession through the streets of Constantinople to the church of Saint Sophia, where he was consecrated by the Metropolitan of Heraclea, in memory of the days when Byzantium had been a suffragan see under Heraclea."¹¹⁰⁵

The Emperor chose the Patriarch from three candidates put forward to him by the Holy Synod. As Simeon of Thessalonica witnessed, this right was not seized by the emperor by force, "but was entrusted to him from ancient times by the Holy Fathers, that is, by the Church itself". Moreover, "if none of the three candidates was suitable, the basileus could suggest his own candidate, and the Hierarchical Synod again freely decided about his suitability, having the possibility of not agreeing. The king's right did not in principle violate the Hierarchs' freedom of choice and was based on the fact that the Patriarch occupied not only a position in the Church, but was also a participant in political life... Simeon of Thessalonica said: 'He, as the anointed king, has been from ancient times offered the choice of one of the three by the Holy Fathers, for they [the three] have already been chosen by the Council, and all three have been recognized as worthy of the Patriarchy. The king assists the Council in its actions as the anointed of the Lord, having become the defender and servant of the Church, since during the anointing he gave a promise of such assistance. De jure there can be no question of arbitrariness on the part of the king in the choosing of the Patriarch, or of encroachment on the rights and freedom of choice [of the Hierarchs].'"¹¹⁰⁶

Another imperial right was that of handing the Patriarch his staff. This should not be interpreted as if the emperor bestowed the grace of the Patriarchy. Nor was it the same as the ceremony of "lay investiture" in the West. The emperor did this, according to Simeon of Thessalonica, "because he wishes to honour the Church, implying also at the same time that he

¹¹⁰⁵ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹¹⁰⁶ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 116, 117.

personally accepts the individual now consecrated as his own pastor whom God has chosen for him.”¹¹⁰⁷

“Simeon of Thessalonica explains that in this act the king only witnesses to the fact of his agreement with the installation of the new Patriarch, and after the bestowal of the staff he witnesses to his spiritual submission... by the bowing of his head, his asking for a blessing from the Patriarch and his kissing of his hand. By the grace and action of the Hierarchy, the Patriarch does not differ from the Metropolitans and Bishops. But in the dignity of his see, and in his care for all who are under his authority, he is the father and head of all, consecrating Metropolitans and Bishops, and judging them in conjunction with the Council, while he himself is judged by a Great Council, says Simeon of Thessalonica. The king was present at both the consecration and the enthronement of the Patriarch in the altar...; but the consecration and enthronement were acts of a purely ecclesiastical character, and the king’s participation in them was no longer as active as in the first stages of the process, when he convened the Hierarchical Council, chose one of the three elected by the Council and witnessed to his recognition of him in the act of *προβλησις* [which gave the Patriarch his rights in Byzantine civil law]. In the act of consecration [assuming that the candidate to the Patriarchy was not already a bishop] Hierarchical grace was invoked upon the man to be consecrated by the Metropolitan of Heraclea, while in the act of enthronement he was strengthened by abundant grace to greater service for the benefit, now, of the whole Church, and not of one Diocese [only].”¹¹⁰⁸

These rights of the emperor in the Church were paralleled by certain rights of the Church in the State, especially the Patriarch’s right of intercession (Russian: *pechalovanie*). “The Patriarch was called to intercede for the persecuted and those oppressed by the authorities, for the condemned and those in exile, with the aim of easing their lot, and for the poor and those in need with the aim of giving them material or moral support. This right of intercessory complaint, which belonged by dint of the 75th canon of the Council of Carthage to all Diocesan Bishops, was particularly linked with the Patriarch of Constantinople by dint of his high position in the Byzantine State with the king.”¹¹⁰⁹

Also, State officials “were obliged to help the Bishop in supporting Church discipline and punishing transgressors. Sometimes the emperors obliged provincial officials to tell them about Church disturbances which depended on the carelessness of the Bishop, but the emperors gave the Bishops the right to keep an eye on officials, while the Bishops, in carrying out this obligation imposed on them by the civil law, did not thereby become State officials... In the Byzantine laws themselves the Church was distinguished from the State as a special social organism, having a special task distinct from that of the

¹¹⁰⁷ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 322-323.

¹¹⁰⁸ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 120-121.

¹¹⁰⁹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 121.

State; these laws recognized the Church as the teacher of the faith and the establisher of Church canons, while the State could only raise them to the status of State laws; Church administration and Church courts were recognized as being bound up with the priestly rank.”¹¹¹⁰

“In reviewing Byzantine ideas on royal power, we must recognize the fact that, in spite of the influence of pagan traditions, in spite of Saracen Muslim influences leading to a confusion of powers, in spite of the bad practices of arianizing and iconoclast emperors, it remained a dogma of Byzantine law to recognize the Church of Christ as a special society, parallel to the State, standing separate and above the latter by its aims and means, by dint of which the supreme head of the State was by no means the head of the other, ecclesiastical union, and, if he entered into it in the position of a special sacred rank, it was far from being the higher, but was only equal to the deacon’s, being subject thereby to the canons which established the Church as a Divine institution having its own legislation, administration and court...”¹¹¹¹

The State is rooted in the family, so that the head of the State, the Emperor or King, is like the Father of all his citizens. However, if the Emperor is the father of his people, the Patriarch is the father of the Emperor, and was so called in Byzantium and in all her daughter-autocracies: Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Russia. Thus Emperor Theodosius the Great, embraced St. Meletius, president of the Second Ecumenical Council, as his father. In Serbia, this spiritual relationship was even paralleled by physical paternity: St. Symeon, the first Nemanja king, was the physical father of the first archbishop, St. Savva, but at the same time his spiritual son. Again, in Russia the first Romanov Tsar, Mikhail Fyodorovich, was the spiritual *and* natural son of Patriarch Philaret. This emphasized that Christian politics, as represented by the Emperor or Tsar, should ideally be conformed to – even “begotten by” – the other-worldly spirit and aims of Christian spirituality, as represented by the Patriarch.

¹¹¹⁰ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 137.

¹¹¹¹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 139.

70. KIEVAN RUS'

After the Baptism of Rus' in 988, the Russian princes continued to look up to the Byzantine Emperor as to their father in spite of the fact that their own kingdom was completely independent of, and even more powerful than, the Empire. Nor did this change with the enthronement of the first metropolitan of Russian blood, Hilarion, in the eleventh century. Thus G. Podskalsky writes: "Although Hilarion compared Vladimir with Constantine the Great and recognised his sovereignty over Kievan Rus', he ascribed the title of 'Emperor' neither to him nor to his successor. The collector (or editor) of the *Izbornik* of 1076 everywhere exchanged the term βασιλευς ('emperor') for 'prince' or 'kahan', so as thereby to adapt the Byzantine texts to Russian conditions, while the term βασιλευς, 'tsar', was kept only when it referred to God. The idea of the 'transfer of the empire' (*translatio imperii*), which captivated the Bulgarian tsar Simeon or Charles the Great in relation to the Frankish empire, was foreign to pre-Mongol Rus'. The Byzantine supremacy in the hierarchy of States was also strengthened by the emperors' practice of adopting the role of sponsor at the baptism of newly converted kings or princes."¹¹¹² Thus the Emperor became the sponsor at the baptisms of Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria and Princess Olga of Kiev. Such sponsorship, according to Richard Fletcher, "indicated secular lordship as well. The experience of baptism could thus become a token of submission. Exported to the west we can see the idea at work in the baptismal sponsorship of Widukind by Charlemagne in 785, or of Harald Klak by Louis the Pious in 826, or of the Viking leader Guthrum by Alfred of Wessex in 878."¹¹¹³

The inferiority of the other Orthodox rulers to the Byzantine Emperor was indicated by differences in titles (the Russian princes were called αρχοντες), and by the anointing of the emperors at their enthronement. Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: "The Russian Great Princes and the Serbian, Georgian and Bulgarian rulers were defenders of the Church only in their territories. They were also raised to the principdom with the blessing of the Church, but by a different rite (*o ezhe blagosloviti knyazyä*), which included the crowning of the prince, but contained no anointing."¹¹¹⁴ If the Frankish and Bulgarian rulers had been accorded the title of *basileus*, this was only under compulsion and was withdrawn as soon as politically expedient. And even much later, in 1561, when the pre-eminence of Russia in the Orthodox world could not be denied, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joasaph II accorded the Ivan the Terrible the title *Basileus* only because he was thought to descend from a Byzantine princess - Anna, the wife of St. Vladimir. So tenacious was the idea among the Greeks that there could be no Third Rome after the Second...¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹² Podskalsky, *Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237)* (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus' (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 68.

¹¹¹³ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 278.

¹¹¹⁴ Alferov and Alferov, *O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow: "Russkaia Idea", p. 18.

¹¹¹⁵ However, not everyone shared this viewpoint. According to Podalsky, a Greek Metropolitan of Kiev in the early twelfth century, Nicephorus I, "without hesitation called

From the beginning Church and State were exceptionally close in Kievan Rus'. This was the result, in part, of the fact that in Russia it was the Great Princes who introduced the Church into Russia, whereas in Byzantium St. Constantine came to power when the Church was already three hundred years old and well-established.¹¹¹⁶ St. Vladimir threatened those who threatened this order as follows: "If anyone breaks my rule, whether he be my son or a servant, or anyone of my race or one of the boyars, and interferes in the ecclesiastical affairs of the metropolitan, which I gave into the hands of the metropolitan, and of the Church, and of the bishops in all the cities in accordance with the canons, he will be judged and punished. If anyone tries to seize the judgement of the Church, he will be deprived of the name of Christian, and may all such be cursed by the Holy Fathers."¹¹¹⁷

Yaroslav the Wise, strengthened this tendency in "The Church Statute of Kiev". "In this document, we observe the symphony already developing between the Russian princes and the Church: 'I, Grand Prince Yaroslav, son of Vladimir, in accordance with the wish of my father, have conferred with Metropolitan Illarion and have prepared [this] Church Statute because I believe that there are matters that belong neither to [the exclusive] jurisdiction of the prince nor to that of the boyars. I have granted this jurisdiction, as embodied in the present rules of the Church Church Statute, to the metropolitan and the bishops.' An examination of these rules reveals that their nature is primarily concerning morality as determined by Church law, for example, 'If the godfather should have illicit relations with the mother [of his godchild], the bishop shall receive one grivna of gold and at his discretion he shall also impse [an appropriate] penance.' Sometimes the line between Church and State is blurred, as in the following statute: 'If a husband should force his wife into prostitution, this is a religious crime. The prince [however] shall administer justice [in this case in accordance with the ancient customs and traditions].' Occasionally the decision is shared: 'The bishop shall receive 100 grivnas as the fine from whoever sets a dwelling, or a barn, or anything else afire. The prince shall the jurisdiction 'in this matter in accordance with

both the emperor and the prince equally likenesses of the Divine archetype. This meant that he rejected the Byzantine idea of the single and undivided imperial power, which was inherent only in the Basileus of the Romans and which in this capacity reflected the Divine order of the world. The conception of the emperor as 'the image of God' (*imago Dei*, εικων θεου) became well-known in Kiev thanks to the *Mirror of Princes* composed in 527 by Deacon Agapetus for Justinian. Extracts from it, in which the discussion was about the duty of subjects to submit to the visible deputy (prince) of the invisible ruler of the world (God), were included in the *Izbornik* of 1076 (Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68). "Yet it was a quite exceptional case," writes G. Fedotov, "when the author of the panegyric of Prince Andrew of Vladimir dared to apply to him the famous definition of Chrysostom-Agapit, so popular in later Moscow: 'Caesar by his earthly nature is similar to any man, but by the power of his dignity he is similar to God alone' (*The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 398).

¹¹¹⁶ Alferov, "Teokratia ili Ierokratia".

¹¹¹⁷ St. Vladimir, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 83-84.

ancient custom and traditions].’ As we see from the above statutes, the State both acknowledged and deferred to the Church from the beginning of Russian history. This relationship between the Prince and (in this case) the Metropolitan was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The State had its older traditions but incorporated a Christian worldview into its legal system and invited the Church to take part in the judicial side of Russian life when it deemed it appropriate.”¹¹¹⁸

The leaders of Church and State cooperated closely in the evangelization of the vast land of Russia, and in preserving the faith they had received from Byzantium undefiled. Thus in his “Testament”, perhaps the greatest saint of period, Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1074) wrote to Great Prince Iziaslav as follows: “I have something to say to you, God-loving Prince! I, Theodosius, the wretched slave of the All-Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, was born and raised in the pure and Orthodox faith and in good Orthodox teaching by my father and mother.

“Beware, my child, of those who are crooked in faith, and beware all their conversations, for our land is full of them.

“If a man will save his soul, this is possible only by living in the Orthodox faith. For there is no other faith better than our pure, holy, Orthodox faith. Living in this faith, not only will you be delivered from sins and eternal torments, but you will also become a partaker of eternal life, and you will rejoice endlessly with the saints. But those who live in another faith will not see eternal life.

“Also, my child, it is not good to praise a foreign faith. He who praises a foreign faith is doing the same as if he were blaspheming against his own faith. But if someone will praise both his own faith and a foreign faith, then he is two-faithed, and is close to heresy.

“And so, my child, beware of them and always stand for your own faith. Do not be friendly with them, but flee from them and struggle in your own faith through good works. Give alms not only to those of your own faith, but also to those of other faiths. If you see someone naked or hungry, or who has fallen into misfortune, – whether he is a Jew, or a Turk, or a Latin, – be merciful to everyone, deliver him from his misfortune, as far as you are able, – and you will not be deprived of a reward from God. For God Himself in this age pours out His mercies not only on Christians, but also on the unbelievers. God cares for pagans and unbelievers in this age, but in the future age they will be strangers to the eternal good things. But we who live in the Orthodox faith will both receive all good things here and will be saved in the future age by our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹¹¹⁸ Archimandrite Luke, “Nationalism, Russia, and the Restoration of the Patriarchate”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 51, N 6, November-December, 2001, pp. 26-27.

“My child! If it will be necessary for you even to die for this holy faith, go with boldness to death. In this way did the saints die for the faith, and they now live in Christ.

“My child, if you see those of other faiths quarrelling with the Orthodox and trying to seduce them away from the Orthodox Church, help the Orthodox. In this way you will deliver the sheep from the mouth of the lion. But if you are silent and leave him helpless, that is the same as if you took away a soul that had been redeemed by Christ and handed him over to Satan. If someone says to you: “Both your and our faith are from God”, you, my child, must reply to him as follows: “O crooked in faith! Or do you think that God, too, is two-faithed? Have you not heard what the Scripture says: ‘There is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Ephesians 4.5)? How many years have you kept the right, Apostolic faith, and now through Satan’s insinuation you have been corrupted into evil belief. Have you not heard the teaching of the Apostle Paul: ‘Even if an angel should come from heaven and preach to you a Gospel that we have not preached to you, let him be anathema’ (Galatians 1.8)? But you have rejected the apostolic teaching and the decrees of the Holy Fathers and accepted a wrong and corrupted faith, filled with all destruction. Therefore you are rejected by us. You are dead, and the sacrifice you offer [i.e., the Eucharist] is dead. But we offer a living sacrifice to the living God, a pure and undefiled sacrifice, so as to obtain eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. To Him be glory. Amen.”

As another example of the closeness of Church and State in Kievan Rus’, we may cite an incident from Novgorod in 1078, as described by Bishop Dionysius (Alferov): “A certain sorcerer by demonic power wrought many signs and wonders, collected a huge crowd of people whom he had deceived and went with them to destroy the church of Hagia Wisdom. The Bishop of Novgorod with a cross in his hands stood in front of the church and called the Christians to help him. But only very few hastened to his side. Only the Prince of Novgorod, Gleb Svyatoslavich, did not fear. He went alone to meet the armed mob and in the sight of all struck with his sword the servant of satan who had proudly prophesied to the people that he would be enthroned that day. After this the crowd dispersed. It is evident that in such a situation no ordinary good fellow could take the place in the defence of the Church of the Christian Autocrat, who had received from her a blessing on his service and who was protected by the power of God through her prayers”.¹¹¹⁹

The relationship between Church and State in Kievan Rus’ is described by Podskalsky as follows: “The relations between the sovereign and his subjects were based on principles drawn from Old- and New-Testament texts. This, for example, how the chronicler views princely virtue: ‘If there are righteous princes on the earth, then many sins are forgiven to the earth, but if they are evil and cunning, then God brings more evil on the earth, insofar as its head is of the earth’. The Novgorod Bishop Luke the Jew looks at the matter

¹¹¹⁹ Alferov and Alferov, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

differently: 'Fear God, honour the prince, you are slaves first of God, and also of the lord (that is, the prince - *G.P.*). The logical consequence of both utterances is, in principle, the right to resist the authorities, although its existence and the practical possibilities of applying it were just not formulated sufficiently clearly in Rus'. On the contrary, the Church willingly resorted to helping the State in its struggle with the remnants of paganism and the reappearance of heresies, and also in the missionary absorption of new territories. In the first place this was a work of the monks, whose ranks at the beginning were filled up with many from the land-owning nobility and the social élite of society. But the metropolitans, who were all practically without exception Greeks, tried, on their part, to direct the efforts of the Russian princes to ward off the attacks of the nomads on the East Roman empire, without, however, overstepping the bounds of loyalty to the princely power...."¹¹²⁰

"The princes in their turn gradually gave the Church juridical privileges, steady income and possessions in land... Crimes in the sphere of family relations, which were subject to punishment from the point of view of Christian morality, entered into the administration of the Church already in the 11th century. The jurisdiction of the prince's power was limited by the immunity of the clergy and the members of their families, and also of the monks and the 'church people', that is, people under the special protection of the Church (the poor, the sick, strangers, etc.). However, sometimes representatives of the clergy were still brought before the prince's court...

"Just as the princes took part in the administration of Church affairs, so the episcopate strove to influence the princes' politics. Such cooperation between Church and State reached its zenith during the rule of Vladimir Monomakh [1113-1125]. But, according to the words of Hilarion, already Vladimir I had taken part in councils, discussing with the Church leadership ways and means of strengthening faith amidst the newly converted. In the future such cooperation gradually broadened in proportion as the place of the Greek hierarchs was taken by bishops of Russian extraction, while the princes thereby received the possibility of exerting greater influence on the choice of candidates and their consecration. The chronicler tells us of a whole series of bishops who recommended themselves by carrying out complicated diplomatic missions. The triumphant conclusion of treaties by the princes was accompanied by oaths and kissing of the cross. The monks of the Kiev Caves monastery more than once took up a critical position in relation to the prince. Thus, for example, in 1073 Abbot Theodosius refused to join the princely civil war on the side of Svyatoslav, who had then seized the princely throne, and did not even fear sharply to point out to the prince the lawlessness of his actions, and of his exiling his brother Izyaslav. Only the lofty authority of the monastery leader and the pleas of the brethren saved him from persecution, and after the laying of the foundations of a new monastery church complete reconciliation was achieved. If the monks thereby kept an inner distance in

¹¹²⁰ Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

relation to politics, the episcopate was forced sometimes to enter into it, although it did not take an immediate part in the counsels of the princes...

“In general, in the course of the civil wars of the 11th-12th centuries, the Church acquired a new moral authority in the eyes both of the princes and the people, while the State, for its part, received from the Church a confirmation of its divine purpose for the sake of the common good. From the Slavonic translation of the *Nomocanon in 14 chapters* Kievan Rus’ drew the ideal formula for the relations between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities going back to Justinian’s *Sixth Novella*.... The emperor was bound to concern himself with the teaching of the faith, with respect for the clergy and with the observation of the canons. It was precisely this postulate that was laid by Metropolitan Hilarion at the base of his reasonings on agreement between the Church and the State...

“And so, in all the manifestations of theological and church-political thought, in art, in Divine services and in literary works of various genres, already in the 11th century one and the same national tendency was revealed, a leaning towards a State Church... The strength of the Church consisted in the fact that it worthily presented itself in a non-standard situation which it was impossible to master without the aid of earlier conceptual models and models of behaviour transferred to the new situation; while the strength of the State consisted in an understanding of the far-reaching commonality of its interests with the interests of the Church, by virtue of which it was necessary to give the Church necessary aid in the fulfilment of her mission. In spite of, or even thanks to the fact that not one of these two powers was able to boast of complete independence from the other, the sphere of their external activity and internal freedom was as great as it would ever be later.”¹¹²¹

Kievan Rus’ represented a rare balance of freedom and obedience in State life. Obedience was owed to the power that be; but if they obtained their power in an unlawful manner, the Church felt at liberty to withdraw her support. Thus St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1074) for a time stopped commemorating Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev because he had usurped the throne of his brother Iziaslav.¹¹²²

Fedotov writes: “Kievan chroniclers are very outspoken about the vices and flaws of their princes; they obviously felt no restraint imposed by princely dignity upon the freedom of their judgement. All they can afford to do, in order to alleviate the guilt of a prince, is to attribute his deficiency to the influence of bad counselors. Bad counselors, mostly ‘young ones’ (compare *Isaiah* 3.1-4), are the root of all political evils. The youth of the prince himself is often considered as a great misfortune and a sign of God’s wrath against the country.

¹¹²¹ Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 64-65, 66-67, 71.

¹¹²² Nestor, *A life of St. Theodosius*.

“Good and bad princes alike are sent by God as a reward or punishment to the people. ‘If a country is right before God, He ordains in it a just Caesar or prince, loving law and justice, and he installs governors and judges administering justice.’ But ‘woe to the city where the prince is young, and likes to drink wine at the sound of the gusli with young counselors... Such are given by God for our sins’ (*Lavr.* 1015).

“If a bad prince is sent by God and his tyranny has a penitential significance this seems to exclude revolt against the tyrant as a legitimate political action. This conclusion would be quite correct in the spirit of the Byzantine and even early Christian ethics; it was indeed the doctrine of Anastasius Sinaitas in the seventh century and it was repeated by some Russian moralists as well. And yet the import of this doctrine of obedience was greatly exaggerated by the modern historians who often viewed the early Russian ways of life from the viewpoint of Muscovy. The Kievan chronicler may consider a revolt of the citizens against their prince as the act of God’s will, punishing the prince in his turn (*Lavr.* 1068)... The chastising providence of God, in the political sphere, is double-faced; occasionally, it can use to its own ends even a popular revolution.

“There was, however, one thing before which ancient Russia, unlike Byzantium, stopped with horror: the murder of a prince. Regicide in Byzantium was so common that it seems a part of the political system, a necessary corrective to autocracy. In Russia,... a revolt, although it was sometimes justified if it ended in the overthrow of a prince, was never pardoned if it resulted in his murder...”¹¹²³

¹¹²³ Fedotov, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-400.

VII. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF NEW ROME

71. THE SLIDE TOWARDS ABSOLUTISM

We have seen that political power, even Christian political power, was evaluated ambiguously by the Holy Fathers. On the one hand, it was a force for law and order, a protection of the defenceless, a focus of unity in the Church, a support of missionary work beyond the boundaries of the Church. On the other hand, it could be the object of naked ambition, the instrument of the oppression of Christians and even of open revolt against God.

We have already met the two basic forms of the abuse of state power in Christianity: caesaropapism, the besetting sin of the East, and papocaesarism, the besetting sin of the West.¹¹²⁴ In modern times the philosopher Nicholas Berdiaev was an opponent of all Christian state power, seeing in it just so many variations on the caesaropapist or papocaesarist theme. As he writes: "Papocaesarism and caesaropapism were two forms of 'the Christian state', two false attempts on the part of the authorities of this world to claim themselves to be Christian, whereas it has never been said or foretold that the religion of Christ would lord it over the world, would persecute and rape (and not itself be persecuted and raped). 'The Christian state', which gives the impression that the world has accepted Christianity and that Christian power lords it over the world, in all its forms was a historical deal between Christianity and paganism, or rather, it was a state of non-Christians. The state is of pagan origin and is necessary only for the pagan world; the state cannot be a form of Christian society, and for that reason Catholic papism and Byzantine caesaropapism are remains of paganism, signs of the fact that humanity has not yet accepted Christ into itself. For humanity that has accepted Christ, for God-manhood, human power is not necessary, since it is absolutely obedient to the power of God, since for it Christ is the High Priest and King. A genuine theocracy is the revelation of Godmanhood on earth, the revelation of the Holy Spirit in conciliar humanity. In Christian history, in 'historical Christianity' the time of this revelation has not yet arrived, and humanity has been deceived, living in its collective history in a pagan manner. As an exception, ascetic religious consciousness has turned away from the earth, from the flesh, from history, from the cosmos, and for that reason on earth, in the history of this world the pagan state, the pagan family, and the pagan way of life have pretended to be Christian, while papism and the whole of medieval religious politics has been called theocratic."¹¹²⁵

The Church has never accepted this view. As we have seen, she has accepted Christian statehood since Constantine as a gift from God. And however frequently Christian statehood has fallen away from the ideal, this does not mean that the gift itself should be rejected.

¹¹²⁴ 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>).

¹¹²⁵ Berdiaev, *Filosofia Svobody* (The Philosophy of Freedom).

Nevertheless, it is true that the more ascetic writers have tended to give more ambiguous assessments of Christian statehood. For example, St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022), while never saying a word against the institution of the Orthodox autocracy as such, was fierce in his criticism of its abuse at the hands of Emperor Basil II. As Archbishop Basil (Krivoshein) writes: "Following the thought of the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 1.27-28) that 'God has abandoned the wise and powerful and rich of the world, and has chosen in His inexpressible goodness the weak and foolish and poor of the world', Symeon the New Theologian draws the following contrast between the Divine and the earthly kingdom: 'People are disgusted by them (i.e. the weak, the foolish, the poor), the earthly king cannot bear the sight of them, their ruling men turn away from them, the rich despise them and, when they meet them, pass by them as if they did not exist, and nobody considers it desirable to mix with them, while God, Who is served by an innumerable number of angels, Who upholds all things by the word of His power, Whose majesty is unbearable for all, did not refuse to become father and friend and brother of these outcasts, but wanted to become incarnate, so as to become like us in everything except sin and make us participants in His glory and kingdom.' In this excerpt from the second *Catechetical Sermon*, what is interesting is not only the vivid description both of the 'rich' with their disgust and disdain towards the 'weak and poor', and of the 'king' who cannot even 'bear the sight of them', but also the contrast between the 'earthly king' and the heavenly King, God, Who, in contrast to the earthly did not refuse to become poor and a man like us, our brother. As we can see from this, St. Symeon the New Theologian was foreign to the thought that the 'earthly king' was an image of God on earth, and that the earthly kingdom is a reflection of the Heavenly Kingdom. On the contrary, the earthly kingdom with all its customs seems to him to be the opposite of the Kingdom of God".

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Unfortunately, from the twelfth century, the behaviour of the Byzantine emperors tended to confirm St. Symeon's negative assessment of the earthly kingdom...

However, before that we are presented with the much rarer image of a papocaesarist patriarch in the person of Michael Cerularius. This is somewhat ironical because it was in the patriarchate of Michael Cerularius that the papocaesarist patriarchs of the West fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, being condemned precisely by him and his Synod. But if we are to believe Psellos, the patriarch "tried to rule over the Empress" Theodora, overthrew her successor, Michael VI (1056-1057), forcibly tonsuring him, and set up Isaac Comnenus (1057-1059) in his place.

¹¹²⁶ Krivoshein, "Prepodobnij Simeon Novij Bogoslov i ego otnoshenie k sotsial'no-politicheskoj dejstvitsel'nosti svoego vremeni" ("St. Symeon the New Theologian and his relationship to the social-political reality of his time", in *Bogoslovskie Trudy* (Theological Works), Nizhni Novgorod, 1996, pp. 242-243.

Then, “losing all shame,” according to Psellos, “he joined royalty and priesthood in himself; in his hand he held the cross, while from his mouth imperial laws came.” But gradually Isaac asserted his power, arrested Cerularius and tried him for high treason in 1059. So the East’s one brush with papocaesarism came to a swift end...

It is a striking coincidence that in the same year, 1059, in which Pope Nicholas II obtained an imperial-style coronation from his cardinals, Patriarch Michael Cerularius should attempt the same. But Nicholas succeeded, whereas Michael failed, defeated by the power of the Orthodox Emperor. That was the difference between East and West.

As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) of Novgorod writes: “Fortunately, these [papocaesarist] tendencies did not develop in the East into real papism. The eastern ‘candidates for the papacy’ (for example, the Egyptian or Constantinopolitan patriarchs) always had a power counter-weight in the person of the emperors. In this sense the emperors played the role of the *restrainers* not only of the external forces of evil nestling in the underground, but also the forces of intra-ecclesiastical apostasy in the person of archpastors wanting to be ‘ecclesiastical monarchs’.”¹¹²⁷

The difference between East and West consisted in the fact that while deviations from the “symphonic” norm of Church-State relations were common in both, this norm was never forgotten in the East, whereas it was officially and triumphantly rejected in the West.

The norm was described by I.I. Sokolov as follows: “In the question of the mutual relations of Church and State Byzantium not only limited the principle of the all-powerful and all-devouring State (quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem), but also pushed into the foreground the idea of the Church and proclaimed the superiority of Church canon over civil law, ecclesiastical power over secular power, ecclesiastical teaching over the principles of social-political life. According to the Byzantine view, the State could carry out its function only to the extent that it was penetrated with the teaching of the Church.”¹¹²⁸ And again he wrote, referring to the *Epanagoge*: “The very nature of royal power is corrupted when the king weakens in carrying out good works. In relation to the Church the king is the keeper of piety and right belief, the exact fulfiller and protector of the church dogmas and canons; he must be distinguished more than anyone else by zeal for God. But generally speaking the whole power of the king finds its limit in the religious and moral law established by the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, Christ.”¹¹²⁹

¹¹²⁷ Alferov, “Teokratia ili Ierokratia” (Theocracy or Hierocracy), [www.evanorthodox.ru; Vernost'](http://www.evanorthodox.ru/Vernost/), 130, 2009, <http://metanthonymemorial.org/VernostNo130.html>.

¹¹²⁸ Sokolov, *Lektsii po istorii Greko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Lectures on the History of the Greek-Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 14.

¹¹²⁹ Sokolov, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

These principles were in general respected by the early Comnenan emperors. Thus Emperor John Comnenus wrote 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."¹¹³⁰

But the norm was more and more often defied as 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 dissidents.¹¹³¹ Thus John Comnenus' successor, Manuel I, had the following powers, according to 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."¹¹³²

The meaning of the term "epistemonarch" here is obscure¹¹³³; 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".¹¹³⁴ However, the Byzantines could hardly fail to notice the use to which the emperors now put it – to justify their ever-increasing interference in ecclesiastical affairs.

¹¹³⁰ Emperor John Comnenus, in A.P. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie Oчерki Sostoiania Vizantijsko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 101.

¹¹³¹ This tendency is already evident in Alexis I, who also ordered one of the very rare executions for heresy in Orthodox history, that of the Paulician Monk Basil, which took place after Alexis' death, in 1119 (Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 105).

¹¹³² Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, pp. 259-260.

¹¹³³ 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 *Svt. Grigorij Palama*, St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 166-167.

¹¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1303 a 22.

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."¹¹³⁵

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."¹¹³⁶ 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."¹¹³⁷

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 over Islam that took place towards the end of the reign of Manuel I. Now, as Hieromonk Enoch writes: "There were 22 Anathemas and renunciations a convert from Islam had to make. The final one was the following: 'And before all, I anathematize the God of Muhammad, about whom he [Muhammad] says, 'He is God alone, God made of solid, hammer-beaten metal; He begets not and is not begotten, nor is there like unto Him any one.' In 1180 the Emperor assembled a Synod. At the Synod he wanted this anathema removed and reworded, to just anathematize Muhammad, but not 'the God of Muhammad.' The Council refused to do this. There was a great conflict over this for about 6 months; after this, the Emperor died, the issue was dropped, and the old anathemas that the Bishops had originally refused to change, remained."

Before the Emperor's death, however, he had managed to gain some concessions from the bishops. Thus after the Council of 1180, 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

¹¹³⁵ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 261. See Sokolov, *op. cit.*

¹¹³⁶ Acropolites, *Chronicle*, ch. 53; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹¹³⁷ Gregoras, *History of Byzantium*, VIII, 2; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

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 [St. Theodosius] and [most of the] 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."¹¹³⁸

¹¹³⁸ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124.

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 teaching 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.”¹¹³⁹

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 (ἕροσυλη) 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 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.”¹¹⁴⁰

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

¹¹³⁹ Balsamon, *Interpretation of the 69th Canon of the Council in Trullo*, in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹¹⁴⁰ Dagrón, *op. cit.*, p. 267; Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

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."¹¹⁴¹

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."¹¹⁴²

Ostrogorsky characterizes the ideas of Balsamon and Chomatianos as "merely echoes of old and antiquated ideas".¹¹⁴³ 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 recognized by the Church for the emperor are no longer considered as exceptional 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

¹¹⁴¹ 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.

¹¹⁴² *Tvorenia sv. Otsov i uchitelej tserkvi* (The Works of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church), St. Petersburg, 1907, pp. 360-361.

¹¹⁴³ 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.

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..."¹¹⁴⁴

Balsamon even 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." Again, he wrote: "The emperor is subject neither to the laws nor to the Church canons".¹¹⁴⁵ And yet St. Nicholas the Mystic had written: "If the emperor is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?" And so the Balsamonite teaching on the role of the Emperor could only lead to the undermining of the Empire and its eventual fall...

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The late twelfth century was bloody even by Byzantine standards... 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 sharp regression from earlier practice - a regression made worse by the fact that there now existed a "canonical" argument for the absolutism of the emperors. Moreover, ambition on the one side was matched by servility on the other: the attitude of many in Byzantium to the emperors was nothing short of idolatrous. Thus in 1216 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 recognised 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..."¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴⁴ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹¹⁴⁵ Balsamon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 120.

¹¹⁴⁶ Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Manuel*, VI, 31; quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

The ghastly story began in 1182, when a popular philanderer and adventurer, Andronicus Comnenus, marched on the capital against the young Emperor Alexis Comnenus II. "As he progressed," write Lord Norwich, "the people flocked from their houses to cheer him on his way; soon the road was lined with his supporters. Even before he crossed the straits, rebellion had broken out in Constantinople, and with it exploded all the pent-up xenophobia that the events of the previous two years [Manuel's pro-western proclivities] had done so much to increase. What followed was the massacre of virtually every Latin in the city: women and children, the old and infirm, even the sick from the hospitals, as the whole quarter in which they lived was burnt to the ground."¹¹⁴⁷

Vengeance was swift in coming, both from within and outside the empire. First, Andronicus, having ascended the throne, proceeded to conduct a reign of terror against his subjects that can be compared only to Ivan the Terrible's. And then the empire began to collapse. Already in 1181 the Hungarians had seized Dalmatia, much of Croatia and Sirmium. In 1183 they joined forces with the Serbs under Stephen Nemanja and sacked Belgrade, Nish and Sardica. A great-nephew of Manuel's, Isaac Comnenus, seized power in Cyprus and declared its independence. In 1185 a huge Sicilian army sacked Thessalonica with fearful brutality and were finally repelled only by the next emperor, Isaac II Angelus. Later, the Bulgarians and Wallachians under Peter and Asen rebelled.

Andronicus was overthrown by Isaac II Angelus, and the ever-fickle people took a gory revenge on their former idol, torturing him before finally killing him. For, as Nicetas Choniates relates, "they 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".¹¹⁴⁸ Thus in the person of Andronicus was fulfilled the prophecy of Emperor Constantine VII in 1057: "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'..."¹¹⁴⁹

Isaac in his own way was no better than Andronicus. He deposed several patriarchs; for, as he claimed, "the Emperors are allowed to do everything, because on earth there is no difference in power between God and the

¹¹⁴⁷ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 143. See also http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_the_Latins.

¹¹⁴⁸ Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Isaac*, III, 7; quoted in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95. See also Norwich, *op. cit.*, chapter 9.

¹¹⁴⁹ Emperor Constantine VII, *On the Government of the Empire*.

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."¹¹⁵⁰ Isaac ascribed to himself the power to correct what was done in the Church contrary to the Church canons.¹¹⁵¹ Moreover, the encomiasts blasphemously addressed him as "God-like" and "equal to God!"¹¹⁵²

When the Emperors exalted their dignity to the level of Divinity, and the people trampled on them in spite of the Lord's command: "Touch not Mine anointed", Divine vengeance could not fail to appear. Isaac was deposed and blinded by his brother, Alexis III Angelus, who was no better than he. Finally, in 1204 Isaac's son, Alexis IV regained the throne for himself and his father. He did this by accompanying the Doge of Venice Dandolo (who was thirsting for revenge against the Greeks for earlier mistreatment) and the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople and promising them money, soldiers and the subjection of the Church of Constantinople to Rome. But the Angeli betrayed the Venetians, who then seized the City, subjected it to the worst sacking in its history and installed a western king on the imperial throne and a western bishop on the patriarchal throne...

As Bishop Dionysius 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..."¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁵⁰ Nicetas Choniates, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹¹⁵¹ Isaac, *Novella de electionibus pontificum (Law on the Election of Bishops)*, P.G. 135: 440; in Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

¹¹⁵² 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.

¹¹⁵³ Alferov, "Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva" ("Lessons of the Nicaean Empire"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_05.htm.

72. THE DISINTEGRATION OF KIEVAN RUS'

The very first saints canonized in Kievan Rus' were Princes Boris and Gleb, the sons of St. Vladimir, who were killed by their evil brother Sviatopolk. And it was the fratricide of the Kievan princes that was to destroy the State... Nevertheless, it remains true that a far greater proportion of rulers died peacefully in their beds in Russia than in Byzantium.

The unity of Kievan Rus' under St. Vladimir and his immediate successors was an extraordinary achievement in view of the country's vastness, lack of natural frontiers, constant invasions of barbarians and multinational character. However, as G. Podskalsky writes, on the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, according to his will, "the rule of the Kievan princes was replaced by a federation of independent princedoms linked between themselves only by the hierarchy of princely thrones and the constant redistribution of princedoms within the princely clan (according to the principle of seniority) that flowed from that. These new traits of State construction were fraught with constant political tension, and forced the Church to step forward in a new for her role of preserver and defender of State unity".¹¹⁵⁴

And so from the beginning of the twelfth century the State began to weaken from both within and without as a result of the internecine warfare of the princes who, though belonging to the same family, fought each other for princedoms. For the Russian custom was that the Great Prince of Kiev would divide up his realm into principalities and give each of his sons one part.¹¹⁵⁵ This opened the gates to fratricidal strife. It was not until the fourteenth century that Muscovite Russia, under the influence of St. Sergius of Radonezh, introduced the law of primogeniture...

However, Ivan Solonevich considers the civil wars of the Kievan princes to be insufficient to explain why none of them succeeded in creating a lasting and powerful empire. "For the question inevitably arises: why did Kiev and those with her not cope with situation, and why did Moscow and those with her cope? Neither does the idea that the Moscow princes were talented, or the Kievan ones untalented, contribute to our understanding: was Yaroslav, who, though called 'the Wise', divided the Kievan land between his sons, stupider than, for example, Daniel Alexandrovich, who ascended the throne at the age of ten, or Michael Fyodorovich, who ascended the throne at the age of sixteen? Under these princes the Muscovite land was not divided. Would it not be more correct to seek for the reasons for success and failure in some deeper or much broader phenomena than princely childbirths, and more constant causes than the talent or lack of it of some tens of princes who shone on the Kievan or Muscovite thrones?"

¹¹⁵⁴ Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹¹⁵⁵ According to Ivan Solonevich, (*Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 153) this custom was introduced from feudal Hungary, Poland and, in part, Germany.

“The most obvious reason for the failure of the pre-Muscovite rulers was the ‘civil wars’ in the Novgorodian or Kievan veches [assemblies or parliaments], independently of whether they were decided by the armed combat of princes on the field of battle or by the battle of parties. If we take the main lines of development of Novgorod and Kiev, Galich and Vilna, on the one hand, and Moscow, on the other, then it will become sufficiently obvious: both Novgorod and Kiev, and Galich and Vilna created a purely aristocratic order for themselves. And in Novgorod, and partly also in Kiev, the princes, that is, the representatives of the monarchical principle in the country, were simply hirelings, whom the veche sometimes invited and sometime expelled as seemed fit to them. In Galich the princely power was completely eaten up by the boyars. In the Lithuanian-Russian State the aristocracy was just waiting for the moment to establish their freedoms before the face of the representative of one-man rule. They succeeded in this – at the price of the existence of the State. ‘In Kiev in the 11th century the administration of the city and district was concentrated in the hands of the military elders’ (Klyuchevsky). ‘The veches in Kiev and Novgorod, which appeared according to the chronicler already at the beginning of the 11th century, from the time of the struggle between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk in 1015, began, from the end of the century, to make louder and louder noises, making themselves felt everywhere and interfering in the relations between the princes. The princes had to take account of this force, enter into deals with it, conclude political agreements with the cities. ‘The prince, sitting in Kiev, had to strengthen the senior throne under him by compacts with the Kievan veche. The princes were not fully empowered sovereigns of the land, but only their military-political rulers.’

“Not so long ago Russian social thought looked on Kiev Rus’, and in particular Novgorod, as, very unfortunately, unsuccessful attempts to establish a democratic order in Rus’. The coarse hand of eastern despotism crushed these attempts: ‘the veche is not to exist, the bell is not to exist, and Novgorod is to exist under the complete control of the Muscovite princes’... Now opinions of this democracy have changed somewhat. Neither in Kiev nor in Novgorod was there any democracy. There was a feudal-mercantile aristocracy (in Vilna it was a feudal-landowning aristocracy). And it was this, and by no means ‘the people’, that tried by all means to limit and bind the princely power. And not, of course, in the name of ‘the people’, but in its own class interests. One can say: both in Galich, and in Novgorod, and in Vilna, and in Kiev the aristocracy – whether land-owning or mercantile – swallowed up the supreme power. But one can also put it another way: neither in Galich, nor in Novgorod, nor in Vilna, nor in Kiev did the popular masses succeed in creating their own power. And for that reason the lower classes attached themselves to that power which the Muscovite lower classes had succeeded in creating: ‘we want to be under the Muscovite Tsar, the Orthodox Tsar’.”¹¹⁵⁶

¹¹⁵⁶ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-267. As G.G. Litavrin writes: “(The Great Prince) was not the only one amidst others, like the Byzantine Emperor, - he was only the first among equals”

Archpriest Lev Lebedev is in essential agreement with this verdict: "What a misfortune is democracy, whether it be of the veche or of the boyars! And what madness! Never was the people (or even the best part of it) *the source of power and law, nor can it be*. In democracy everyone wants to 'drag' things in their direction, as a result of which they 'break up' the Russian Land, as the chronicler puts it... The fall of great Kiev was accomplished to a significant degree under the influence of the veche. Often it either summoned princes that it liked, driving out the lawful ones, or, on the contrary, invited the latter and drove out the others, thereby 'helping' the princes 'to break up' Great Kievan Rus', which had been gathered together by the great labours of St. Vladimir, Yaroslav the Wise and Vladimir Monomakh."¹¹⁵⁷

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The first major attempt by a Russian ruler to halt the decline of Kievan Rus' by imposing a more disciplined, centralized and truly autocratic power began in 1155, when Prince Andrew, son of Great Prince George Dolgoruky, left the southern principality of Vyshgorod to settle in Rostov-Suzdal, a small principality situated in the dense forests of the Volga-Oka triangle. Here, far from the fratricidal politics of southern Russia, as N.M. Karamzin writes, "the people had not yet exhibited a mutinous spirit, they did not judge and change their sovereigns, but fervently obeyed them and fought bravely for them".¹¹⁵⁸

(quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, vol. 1, p. 177).

The American professor Richard Pipes agrees that the prince was not the supreme authority: "If in Novgorod the prince resembled an elected chief executive, the Great Prince of Lithuanian Rus' was not unlike a constitutional king." (*Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, second edition, 1995, p. 38).

However, G. P. Fedotov believed that in Novgorod, at any rate, there was real 'people's power': "Was Novgorod a republic? Yes, at least for three and a half centuries of its history, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The fact that a prince held authority in Novgorod should not deceive us..."

"Supreme authority in the Novgorod republic belonged, of course, to the veche, or the assembly of all free citizens. The veche elected the entire administration, not excluding the archbishop, and had the power to check on it and judge it. This was a direct, not a representative, democracy like the republics of the ancient world. Only those who participated in the public meetings could exercise their political rights. An immense territory was administered by the inhabitants of this single city. This was the weak spot in the republican systems of both Athens and Rome; the agora and the forum could not rule empires..."

"The archbishop stood above parties and expressed the unity of the republic. To make him really independent, his name was drawn by lot from those of the candidates elected by the veche. The three lots on the altar in the Cathedral of St. Sophia symbolized the divine will for the fate of the city-state. In the political symbolism of Great Novgorod its sovereign, the bearer of authority, was St. Sophia herself..." (*op. cit.*, volume II, pp. 188-190, 191).

¹¹⁵⁷ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 13.

¹¹⁵⁸ N.M. Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow, 1989, p. 207. Lebedev sees in this trait the influence of the Finnish element of the population. For the Finns, according to Tacitus, "did not fear people, and were not frightened of enemies, but attained that which is difficult to attain - *they wanted nothing*!" So when the Russians emigrated to these areas from the south and absorbed the Finnish population, they "also wanted nothing

It was therefore the perfect base for Andrew, who, "having not only a good heart, but also an excellent mind, clearly saw the reasons for the woes of the State and wanted to save at least his own land from them: that is, he removed the unfortunate system of appanages and ruled on his own, giving cities neither to his brothers nor to his sons".¹¹⁵⁹

"Here in the north," writes M.V. Zyzykin, "the princes felt themselves to be the owners of the territory, which they could dispose of according to their discretion. And recognizing themselves to be creators and builders of that which was being formed more than was the case in the south, they could no longer be reconciled with the character of the temporary ownership of thrones that had brought them to unending transfers of their princedoms, and which gave the impression of some kind of queue, albeit a disordered queue. Now the prince does not leave his appanage, even if he obtains a great princedom. 'This is mine, for it has been brought into being by me' – that was the consciousness of the prince in the north. If earlier, in the south, there had still been some idea of a collective ownership by the Riurik family, now a more complete isolation of the princely lines took place... Together with the concept of property, that appeared in the north as a result of the personal activity and personal political creativity of the princes in the building up of society, there came to an end not only the transfer of princes from throne to throne, but also a change took place in the order of inheritance as the concept of private civil right was introduced into it. Earlier, in order that a prince should obtain the transfer of a throne in favour of the candidate he desired, he had to come to an agreement with the desired heir, with those relatives whom he was bypassing, with his boyars, and finally, with the *veche* of the city, and, last of all, his desire was often not fulfilled after his death, even if the promise to fulfil it was accompanied by kissing the cross. But now the prince, as the owner, could divide his princedom and leave it in his will, according to his discretion, to his sons, his wife, his daughters and distant relatives – sometimes as their property, and sometimes for lifetime use. His private right as a property-owner became the basis for his rights as a ruler..."¹¹⁶⁰

This new political order introduced above all by Prince Andrew received support from the heavenly realm, as Archpriest Lev explains: "In Vyshgorod at that time, in 1154-55, there was a holy icon of the Mother of God which had been brought not long before from Constantinople. This was a special holy thing! It was one of the icons created by the Evangelist Luke, which he painted having before his eyes the Most Holy Theotokos herself. He painted this icon on part of a plank from a table that had belonged to the Holy Family in Nazareth. Kiev, however, did not value this holy thing in a fitting manner. But meanwhile it worked miracles. It was often found in Vyshgorod, having

in their earthly life". Only, since they were Orthodox Christians, these Russians "wanted life in the Heavenly Kingdom, which is why sedentary Rus' strove to construct her earthly Fatherland in the image of the Heavenly, eternal Fatherland!" (op. cit., pp. 12, 15).

¹¹⁵⁹ Karamzin, op. cit., p. 214.

¹¹⁶⁰ Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; <http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm>, pp. 11-12.

departed from its place [in Kiev]. In 1155 it again moved, as it were showing that it did not want to remain there [in Kiev]. This time Prince Andrew was a witness of the event. He fell to his knees in prayer before the icon. And the Most Pure Mother of God told him what he should do. That night, secretly, without asking his father, Andrew of Bogoliubovo took the icon of our Lady and some priests of Vyshgorod and their families, and went away to the North... Again on the instructions of the All-Pure One he did not take it to Rostov, but left it in Vladimir. From that time this great icon began to be called the Vladimir icon. In accordance with God's providence (for otherwise it is impossible to explain it), the father was not angry with his son. Prince Andrew remained in Vladimir, and built next to it the village of Bogoliubovo in which he constructed his palace. In 1157 Yury Dolgoruky [his father] died. His son did not go to live in Kiev. Moreover, he began to petition in Constantinople for the founding of a *metropolitan see* in Vladimir, that is, a see having the same ecclesiastical significance as that of Kiev. [However,] he was blessed to have only a bishopric. But then Bishop Theophanes of Vladimir was murdered in a bestial manner in Kiev at the command of the new Metropolitan, Constantine II, who had been despatched there from Constantinople. In reply to this evil act, and also because of the other injustices of the Kievans, Prince Andrew sent an army there, taking the Polovtsians as his allies. In 1169 Kiev was terribly burned down and looted. The churches were also looted.

“The Great Prince, who already bore the title ‘of Kiev’, moved *the centre of Rus’* to Vladimir, to the North. Here, in Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus’, he erected about 30 churches, among them the noted Dormition cathedral in Vladimir, and the first church in honour of the new feast of the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos – the wonderful ‘Pokrov on the Nerl’. The ‘Golden Gates’ of Vladimir are also his creation. Thus, not accidentally, but consciously, a new capital of Rus’ was being constructed in the image of the former. Prince Andrew himself put his hand to the writing of a service to the feast of the Protecting Veil, which did not exist in the Greek Church, so that it became *the first purely Russian* national feast. It is also thought that he participated in the composition of the service to the All-Merciful Saviour and the All-Holy Theotokos on August 1/14 in commemoration of the victory of the Volga Bulgars, when the Vladimir icon and the icon of the Saviour gave out heavenly rays that were visible to all. The Byzantine Emperor Manuel had the same vision in the same year and day during his battle with the Saracens, as Andrew and Manuel learned from letters they wrote to each other. Prince Andrew also composed a prayer that was attached to the ‘Instruction’ of Vladimir Monomakh. Andrew loved God and people, and they loved him, not in vain giving him the nickname ‘God-loving’ [Bogoliubskij]. To the end of his days he had a special veneration for the passion-bearer Prince Boris, and always had his cap and sword by him.

“But, as in the life of a people, so in the earthly life of a man, not everything is unambiguous. Here they live partly according to Christ, but partly still according to the old Adam. Andrew, for all his love for God, could ‘become

spiteful', as was already said, against Kiev. He also 'became spiteful' in 1170 against wilful Novgorod. And he sent a powerful army there. But none other than the Mother of God Herself now began to become the Opponent of Prince Andrew, through her icon of the Sign defending the Novgorodians and bringing about a stinging defeat for the Suzdalian armies. However, Bogoliubsky nevertheless later brought Novgorod into obedience by 'peaceful' means - by cutting off the movement of bread to it from the Volga region and Ryazan.

"Having moved to the North, Prince Andrew himself hardly waged war at all. Here he was the builder of a state. And not everything was in order in the land. He was an opponent of paganism in everything, including such manifestations of it as the veneration of the military war-band and the ancient veche, which was especially strong in Rostov. He did not want to obey the old war-band nobles of his father. A plot was hatched among them. Prince Andrew wanted to be and become autonomous, an *Autocrat*, relying on the new Vladimir, and in general on the new people who were settling the new Rus'. For old Rostov was a stronghold of resistance not only to Prince Andrew personally. Here, as far back as the Baptism of Rus', there had been strong opposition to the Christian faith, and there had been a rebellion of the sorcerers. Then they had expelled the bishops, not allowing them to preach, so that the holy Hierarch Leontius had had to begin teaching the people outside the city with teaching the children. Then, in the 12th century, through the efforts of many saints, Orthodoxy shone out there also. But something from paganism, and above all self-will and pride, still remained. And these are always the sources of every kind of disturbance. Therefore, while wanting to crush them, Prince Andrew of Bogolyubovo did not at all want to become a tyrant and disregard the rule of the Russian princes of ruling 'together with the land', having its voice as an advisor. That is how he ruled - but as an *Autocrat*, and not as a *plaything* in the hands of the powerful boyars, or of the people's veche!...

"In 1174, in Bogolyubovo, Prince Andrew was killed in a terrible way by plotters. Before this one of them had stolen the sword of Prince Boris from his bedroom. Thus did *the first Autocrat* of Great Russia end his life in a martyric fashion, and the commemoration of his death is celebrated on the very day, July 4/17, when *the last Autocrat* of Great Russia, his Majesty Nicholas Alexandrovich, was killed together with the whole of his Holy Family!..."¹¹⁶¹

¹¹⁶¹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. There was another link between Andrew and the Tsar-Martyr: in both murders Jews took part. Thus A.I. Solzhenitsyn writes: "There was at least one Jew among the confidants of Andrew Bogoliubsky in Vladimir. 'Among those close to Andrew was a certain Ephraim Moizich, whose patronymic, Moizich or Moiseevich, points to his Jewish origin', and he, in the words of the chronicler, was among the plotters by whom Andrew was killed. But there is also a record that under Andrew Bogoliubsky 'there came from the Volga provinces many Bulgars and Jews and accepted baptism', and after the murder of Andrew his son George fled to Dagestan to the Jewish prince" (*Dvesti let vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 17).

Andrew's achievement, according to Georgievsky, was to change "the principles on which ancient Kievan Rus' had lived before him, proclaiming the idea of the autocracy as the basis of the political life of the Russian people. Orthodoxy and autocracy, these corner-stones of the great building of the Russian State, were first indicated to the Russian people by Andrew Bogolyubsky as the foundation of the attainment of State might and popular prosperity. Bogolyubsky's successors, the Great Princes of Moscow who founded the great Muscovite State which then grew into a mighty empire, only developed and realized Bogolyubsky's ideas in their own political activity".¹¹⁶²

An important aspect of the Suzdalian princes' policy was the continuance of close relations with Byzantium. Colin Wells writes: "Relations between Byzantium and the fractious Russian principalities suffered as a new group of Turkic nomads, the Cumans, moved into the steppes during the twelfth century. The southern principalities of Kiev and Galicia both temporarily broke with Byzantium, allying themselves with Hungary, at that time Byzantium's deadly foe. During these and other tribulations, Byzantine historians noted the steadfast loyalty of the principality of Vladimir. Later, a similarly close relationship would prevail between Byzantium and Vladimir's successor, Moscow..."¹¹⁶³

*

Andrew's achievements were consolidated by his brother, Vsevolod III, who was, as John Fennell writes, "one of the shrewdest and more farsighted of all the descendants of Vladimir I, [and] was widely acknowledged among his fellow-rulers. 'All lands trembled at his name and his fame spread throughout the whole country,' wrote his chronicler, who... probably represented the views of most of his contemporaries. All Suzdalia owed him allegiance of some kind or other; the great city-state of Novgorod with its vast subject lands to the west, north and north-east had, for the first eight years of the thirteenth century, only his sons as its rulers; Kiev's eastern neighbour, Southern Pereyaslav', was firmly under his control; and the princes of Murom and Ryazan' to the south were little more than his vassals."¹¹⁶⁴

Then, in 1211, writes G.G. Litavrin, Vsevolod "obtained from a congress of the boyars, cities, villages, merchants, nobles, abbots, priests and 'all the people' a recognition of his son Yury's hereditary rights to the Vladimir-Suzdal throne, which at that time held the seniority in Rus'. L.V. Cherepnin considers this date critical in the history of Old Russian Statehood: there began the change from the system of principedoms headed by a given Prince at a given moment, to a centralised, hereditary Monarchy. The bearer of the

¹¹⁶² V. Georgievsky, *Svyatoj Blagovernij Velikij Knyaz' Andrej Bogolyubskij* (Holy Right-Believing Great Prince Andrew of Bogoliubovo), St. Petersburg, 1900, Moscow: "Preobrazhenie", 1999, p. 4.

¹¹⁶³ Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, p. 247.

¹¹⁶⁴ Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304*, Harlow: Longmans, 1983, p. 1.

seniority, the Great Prince of Rus', became the true Autocrat of the whole of the Russian land".¹¹⁶⁵

Vsevolod's rule, according to Kliuchevsky, "was in many respects the continuation of the external and internal activity of Andrew of Bogolyubovo. Like his elder brother, Vsevolod forced people to recognise him as Great Prince of the whole of the Russian land, and like him again, he did not go to Kiev to sit on the throne of his father and grandfather. He rules the south of Russia from the banks of the distant Klyazma. Vsevolod's political pressure was felt in the most distant south-western borders of the Russian land. The Galician Prince Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav Osmomys, who won back his father's throne with Polish help, hastened to strengthen his position on it, under the protection of his distant uncle, Vsevolod of Suzdal. He sent him the message: 'Father and Lord, keep Galicia under me, and I, who belong to you and God, will always remain in your will together with the whole of Galicia.'¹¹⁶⁶

However, on the death of Vsevolod in 1212 disturbances again broke out between the princes of Russia. Novgorod separated from Vladimir, and the brothers and nephews of the Great Prince held sway in different cities of the land of Vladimir-Suzdal. As a result, "because of our sins", as the chronicler put it, "God sent upon us the pagans", that is, the Tatars...

However, as Nicholas Riasanovsky points out, "the Mongol invasion and other wars and disasters of the time also contributed to the growth of princely authority, for they shattered the established economic and social order and left it to the prince to rebuild and reorganize devastated territory."¹¹⁶⁷

So the survival of autocracy was assured...

¹¹⁶⁵ Litavrin, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.

¹¹⁶⁶ Kliuchevsky, quoted in Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

¹¹⁶⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 93.

73. THE NICAEAN EMPIRE AND 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 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'."¹¹⁶⁸

So Romanity survived in Nicaea; the Lascarid Emperors preserved and nurtured the strength of the Roman power in exile. And their position was reinforced by an important sacramental development that strengthened the autocracy while at the same time restoring the Patriarch to a position of

¹¹⁶⁸ Alferov, "Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva" ("The Lessons of the Nicaean Empire"), *op. cit.*

something like equality with the Emperor – the visible anointing of the emperor with holy oil, at the hands of a patriarch. This was first introduced at the coronation of Emperor Theodore I Lascaris.

It had taken several centuries for the imperial coronation to acquire this strictly 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 feastdays. 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...”¹¹⁶⁹

G.A. Ostrogorsky describes the fully-fledged rite as follows: “Before the coronation, the Emperor, on entering the church of Hagia Sophia, first of all handed over to the Patriarch the text of the Symbol of Faith written in his own hand and signed, and accompanied... by promises to follow unfailingly the Apostolic traditions, the decrees of all the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, and always to remain a faithful son and servant of the Church, etc.... Then before the accomplishment of the actual rite of coronation, in the Augusteon (a courtyard leading to Hagia Sophia) there took place the ceremony of raising on the shield... The shield was held in front by the Patriarch and the first functionary of the Empire, while on the sides and behind there went the nobles who were next in rank... The anointing and crowning of the Emperor were included in the course of the Divine service. At a particular moment in the Liturgy, when the Patriarch came out of the altar and onto the ambon, accompanied by the highest ranks of the Church, and ‘a great silence and quiet’ settled in the church, the Patriarch invited the Emperor to come onto the ambon. The Patriarch read the prayers composed for the rite of anointing – one quietly, the others aloud, - after which he anointed the Emperor with chrism in the form of the cross and proclaimed: ‘Holy!’ Those around him on the ambon repeated this cry three times, and then the people repeated it three times. After this the altar brought a crown out of the altar, the Patriarch placed it on the head of him who was to be crowned and proclaimed: ‘Worthy!’ This proclamation was again repeated three times, first by the hierarchs on the ambon and then by the people.”¹¹⁷⁰

The late appearance of the fully-fledged rite, including anointing, requires some explanation... According to Dagon, Theodore Lascaris’ anointing by the patriarch in Nicaea in 1208 was modelled on the westerners’ anointing of Baldwin I in Constantinople in 1204.¹¹⁷¹ It both bolstered imperial power and strengthened the position of the Church in relation to imperial power.

¹¹⁶⁹ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, 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).

¹¹⁷⁰ Ostrogorsky, “Evoliutsia vizantijskogo obriada koronovania” (“The Evolution of the Byzantine Rite of Coronation”), quoted by Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 117.

¹¹⁷¹ Dagon, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Gallimard, 1996, p. 282. Dvorkin agrees with him (*op. cit.*, p. 698). So, in a more guarded way, does Vera Zemskova, 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...” (personal communication, August 11, 2000)

“Far from the historical capital, in the modest surroundings of Nicaea, it would have appeared necessary to materialise 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 Lascaris, 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.”¹¹⁷²

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.”¹¹⁷³

Perhaps also 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 the greatest political power in the world at that time and the greatest threat to the survival of the Byzantine Church and

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) and G. Podskalsky (*Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237)* (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus’ (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 70) – in the 13th century. Nicetas Khoniates 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. See also O.G. Ulyanov, “O vremeni vozniknovenia inauguratsionnogo miropomazania v Vizantii, na Zapade i v drevnej Rusi”, in *Rus’ i Vizantia*, Moscow, 2008, pp. 133-140.

¹¹⁷² Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

¹¹⁷³ Zosimas, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 118.

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, as we have seen, 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 1208. 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.

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 may have been a perceived need to protect the monarchy against potential usurpers and 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 Greek kingdoms that survived the fall of the City: Nicaea, Trebizond and Epirus. But which? For a time it looked as if the Epirote ruler Theodore Angelus, whose dominion extended from the Adriatic to the Aegean and who was related to the great families of the 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, Theodore Lascaris. However, Theodore Angelus's weakness was that the Patriarch lived in Nicaea, and 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, who crowned and anointed him in Thessalonica in 1225 or 1227. As Vasiliev writes, Theodore "'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.'¹¹⁷⁴

From the letters of Metropolitan John Apocaucus 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

¹¹⁷⁴ Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, p. 521.

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."¹¹⁷⁵

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 have been devoured by time?"¹¹⁷⁶

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...

¹¹⁷⁵ Vasilievsky, quoted in Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, pp. 521-522.

¹¹⁷⁶ Patriarch Germanus, in F.I. Uspensky, *Istoria Vizantiiskoj Imperii* (A History of the Byzantine Empire), Moscow: "Mysl'", 1997, p. 412.

“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...”¹¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless, in the end it was the anointing from the true first-hierarch of the Church that gave the victory to the Lascarids. We have seen that this sacrament was critical in strengthening the Western Orthodox kingdoms at a time when invasions threatened from without and chaos from within. Now it came to serve the same purpose in Eastern Orthodoxy. As 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.”¹¹⁷⁸

Soon the opponents of the anointed emperors in the West began to fail. 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 “despot”; and four years later the Emperor John conquered Thessalonica.¹¹⁷⁹ Thus it was the earlier and more authoritative anointing of the Nicaean Emperors that enabled them to win the dynastic struggle. And under their rule the Nicaean Empire prospered.

Another reason for its prosperity was that the Lascarid emperors of Nicaea were much more modest in their pretensions than their predecessors. As R.J. 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

¹¹⁷⁷ Archbishop Demetrius, in Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

¹¹⁷⁸ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

¹¹⁷⁹ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin books, 1996, pp. 188, 189.

because the opinion and choice of his subjects was not evident. John was an emperor who reproved 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..."¹¹⁸⁰

In relation to the patriarchate, too, the Lascarid emperors were less "caesaropapist" than their predecessors. We see this in the election of Patriarch Arsenius under Theodore II: "After the triumphant burial of Emperor John [Vatatzes] in Sosandri, Theodore II was raised onto the shield by the nobility and clergy, in accordance with ancient custom. Setting off for Nicaea, he occupied himself with the election of a patriarch in the place of the reposed Manuel; then the new patriarch had to crown the new emperor. Up to 40 hierarchs assembled, and asked for the learned Blemmydes as patriarch. He, however, was displeasing to the court because of his independence. Emperor John Vatatzes had already once rejected his candidacy, declaring openly that Blemmydes would not listen to the emperor, who might have different views from those of the Church. The new Emperor Theodore did not decide on speaking openly against Blemmydes, and even tried to persuade him, promising various honours. But Blemmydes refused outright, knowing the explosiveness and insistence of the young emperor. The efforts at persuasion ended in a tiff, and Blemmydes left Nicaea for his monastery."¹¹⁸¹ That is how Blemmydes himself recounted the matter, but according to an anonymous author there was a strong party against Blemmydes among the hierarchs. Then the emperor suggested electing the patriarch by lot. On proclaiming the name of a candidate, they opened the Gospel at random and read the first words of the page. To one there fell the words: 'They will not

¹¹⁸⁰ 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, N 6, November-December, 1982, p. 44).

¹¹⁸¹ Theodore offered his old tutor "more power and glory than any Patriarch had ever possessed before. But he [Nicephorus] was suspicious because the young Emperor had already published a treatise maintaining that matters of faith and doctrine could only be decided by a General Council summoned by the Emperor and attended also by members of the laity. So he said that he would accept the Patriarchate only if he could put first the glory of God. 'Never mind about the glory of God', the Emperor replied crossly. Blemmydes, so he says, was so deeply shocked that he refused the post..." (Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 66). (V.M.)

succeed', to another: 'They drowned', to the abbot of Sosandri there even came: 'ass and chicken'. Finally Arsenius Avtorianus succeeded: at his name there fell the words 'he and his disciples', and he was elected. Monk Arsenius, from a family of officials... was a new man, with a strong character, sincerely devoted to the royal house... At Christmas, 1254, Patriarch Arsenius triumphantly crowned Theodore II as emperor of the Romans...."¹¹⁸²

¹¹⁸² Uspensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 463-464.

74. THE GEORGIAN MONARCHY

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 in general became stronger, and Byzantine liturgical practice became the norm throughout the autocephalous Church of Georgia...¹¹⁸³

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

¹¹⁸³ V.M. 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.

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).¹¹⁸⁴ 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 abused, and reorganize the Church, culminated in 1103 at the synod of Ruisi-Urbnisi. 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."¹¹⁸⁵

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."¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸⁴ "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.)

¹¹⁸⁵ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, pp. 139, 140, 141, 143-144.

¹¹⁸⁶ Ioseliani, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

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The Georgians in this, their golden age, saw themselves as sons of the Byzantines. This was undoubtedly good for them. 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...

Let us examine this relationship to Byzantium a little more closely.

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 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..."¹¹⁸⁷

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."¹¹⁸⁸

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.

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.

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."¹¹⁸⁹

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.¹¹⁹⁰

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

¹¹⁸⁷ 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.

¹¹⁸⁸ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 828.

¹¹⁸⁹ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

¹¹⁹⁰ *The Life of St. Tamara*.

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...”¹¹⁹¹

Queen Tamara is called a second Constantine, a David and a Solomon in the chronicles.¹¹⁹² She deserves both titles as having been great in both peace and war, and as having defended Orthodox autocracy against the threat of constitutionalism. She preserved the Orthodox and Byzantine ideal of the symphony of powers as purely, perhaps, as it has ever been seen in Christian history...

However, things began to go downhill after her death. Thus Saint Basil Ratishvili, one of the most prominent figures of the 13th-century Church, was the uncle of Catholicos Ekvtime III. He labored with the other Georgian fathers at the Iveron Monastery on Mt. Athos. Endowed with the gift of prophecy, Saint Basil beheld a vision in which the Most Holy Theotokos called upon him to censure King Demetre’s impious rule. (This is actually Saint Demetre the Devoted, who in his youth lived profligately but later laid down his life for his nation.)

Having arrived in Georgia and been brought before the king, the God-fearing father denounced the sovereign’s unblessed marriage. He promised the king that if he abandoned his present way of life, he would find great happiness and success. Saint Basil also condemned the ungodly ways of Georgia’s apostate feudal lords. But the king and his court disregarded the virtuous elder’s admonitions, and in response Saint Basil prophesied: “A vicious enemy will kill you, and your kingdom will remain without refuge. Your children will be scattered, your kingdom conquered, and all your wealth seized. Know that, according to the will of the Most Holy Theotokos, everything I have told you will come to pass unless you repent and turn from this way of life. Now I will depart from you in peace.” Saint Basil returned to Mt. Athos and peacefully reposed at the Iveron Monastery. His vision was fulfilled.¹¹⁹³

¹¹⁹¹ “Holy Righteous Queen Tamara of Georgia”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 53, № 2, March-April, 2003, p. 9.

¹¹⁹² Eastwood, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

¹¹⁹³ *Life of St. Basil*, translated by Holy Cross Monastery.

75. ST. SAVA AND SERBIAN AUTOCEPHALY

Among the achievements of the Nicaean Empire was the granting of autocephaly to the Serbian Church in the person of her first archbishop, St. Savva. This was a unique event in that *full* autocephaly, - as opposed to, for example, the semi-autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church centred at Ohrid, - had never been granted before to any Church by the Byzantines. As Alexander 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 demonstrated a subtle, but very important evolution in the meaning of the concept of autocephaly. Before that, with the single exception of Georgia, all the autocephalous Churches had been in the Empire and had acquired juridical status by a 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 means of bilateral agreements between two civil governments. This 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 which we know today as ecclesiastical **phyletism**..."¹¹⁹⁴

And yet the Serbian autocephaly was neither motivated by phyletism, nor were its consequences in the medieval period anything other than good. For the Serbs proceeded to create one of the most perfect examples of Church-State symphony in Orthodox history. Both in the fact that the first king, St. Stefan, and the first archbishop of the Nemanja dynasty, St. Savva, were father and son, and that the son became the spiritual father of his physical father, we see a profound symbol of the true relationship between Church and State, in which the physical pre-eminence of the State is controlled and purified by the spiritual pre-eminence of the Church.

Moreover, St. Savva enshrined the ideal in his *Zakonopravilo* or *Kormchija*, "a code," as Dmitrije Bogdanovich writes, "written in 1220 and consisting of a selection of Byzantine legal texts, to be enforced in the Serbian Church and State life. Under the title of 'The Law of the Holy Fathers', they were enforced

¹¹⁹⁴ Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 688, 690.

throughout the Middle Ages; to a certain extent, they were valid even later, during the reign of the Ottoman empire. It is a known fact that the reason behind the drafting of this code was the planned establishment of an independent, autocephalous Serbian Church. On his way back from Nicaea, where in 1219 he succeeded in having the autocephaly recognized, thus securing the preconditions for the organization of a new Church, Serbia's first archbishop St. Sava, aided by a group of collaborators and working on Mount Athos and in Salonika, put together a selection of Byzantine Church laws, relying on the existing *nomocanon* but taking a highly characteristic course. Instead of following the existing *nomocanonic* codes, where certain commentators opposed the original symphony of the political and ecclesiastical elements, subordinating the latter to the former, Sava selected texts which, as opposed to the ideas and relations then obtaining in Byzantium ('Caesaropapism', the supremacy of the State over the Church), constituted a return to the old, authentic relation, i.e. the original Orthodox, early Byzantine political philosophy.

“‘St. Sava’, as S. Troitsky puts it, ‘rejected all the sources containing “traces of the Hellenic evil” in the form of the theory of Caesaropapism’, since that theory went against the dogmatic and canonical doctrine of the episcopate as the seat of Church authority, as well as the political situation in Serbia, where imperial authority had not yet been established at the time. He also rejected the theory of “Eastern Papism”, which, according to Troitsky, imposes the supremacy of the Church of Constantinople over all the other local Churches of the Orthodox *oecumene* – and which was, moreover, at variance with the dogmatic doctrine of the Council as the supreme organ of Church authority, with the canonical doctrine proclaiming the equality of the heads of the autocephalous Churches, and with the position of the Serbian Church itself, which met the fundamental canonical condition of autocephaly (that of independently electing its own bishops), so that any interference of the Patriarch of Constantinople in its affairs would have been anticanonical. Sava therefore left out of the *Nomocanon* any work from the Byzantine canonical sources in which either the centripetal ideology of Caesaropapism or the Eastern Papism theory was recognized; he resolutely ‘stood on the ground of the diarchic theory of symphony’, even to the extent of amending it somewhat...”¹¹⁹⁵

“Serbian history,” writes Bishop Nikolai, “never knew of any struggle between Church and state. There were no such struggles, but bloody wars have filled the history of Western nations. How does one explain the difference between the two cases? The one is explained by *theodulia* [the service of God]; the other by theocracy.

¹¹⁹⁵ Bogdanovich, “The Political Philosophy of Medieval Serbia”, in 1389-1989, *Boj na Kosovu* (The Battle of Kosovo), Belgrade, 1989, p. 16. St. Savva's *Zakonopravilo* has only recently been published in full by Professor Miodrag M. Petrovich – not in Serbia, where the official hierarchy discouraged its publication, but in Greece.

“Let us take two tame oxen as an example, how they are both harnessed to the same yoke, pull the same cart, and serve the same master. This is theodulia. Then let us take two oxen who are so enraged with each other that one moment the ox on the left pulls himself out from the yoke and gores the other one, goading him on to pull the cart alone, while the next moment the ox on the right does the same to his companion on the left. This is theocracy: the war of the Church against the state and the war of the state against the Church; the war of the pope against kings and the war of kings against the pope. Neither ox wished to be yoked and serve the Master; each of them wanted to play the role of the Master and drive his companion under the yoke. Thus the Master’s cart has remained stationary and his field uncultivated and has eventually become completely overgrown with weeds. This is what happened in the West.”¹¹⁹⁶

“In those days the problem of relations between the Church and the State did not disquiet people as it does in our days, at least not in the Orthodox countries. It had been regulated as it were by itself, through long tradition. Whenever Caesaropapism or Papocaesarism tried to prevail by force, it had been overcome in a short time. For there existed no tradition in the Church of the East of an augustus [emperor] being at the same time Pontifex Maximus, or vice-versa. There were unfortunate clashes between civil and ecclesiastical authorities on personal grounds, but those clashes were temporary and passing. Or, if such clashes and disagreements arose on matters of religious doctrines and principles, threatening the unity of the Christian people, the Councils had to judge and decide. Whoever was found guilty could not escape condemnation by the Councils, be he Emperor or Patriarch or anybody else.

“Savva’s conception of the mutual relations between Church and State was founded upon a deeper conception of the aim of man’s life on earth. He clearly realized that all rightful terrestrial aims should be considered only as means towards a celestial end. He was tireless in pointing out the true aim of man’s existence in this short life span on earth. That aim is the Kingdom of Heaven according to Christ’s revelation. Consequently, both the Church and the State authorities are duty-bound to help people towards that supreme end. If they want to compete with one another, let them compete in serving people in the fear of God and not by quarrelling about honors and rights or by grabbing prerogatives from one another. The King and the Archbishop are called to be servants of God by serving the people towards the final and eternal aim...”¹¹⁹⁷

¹¹⁹⁶ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *A Treasury of Serbian Orthodox Spirituality*, Grays lake, Ill.: Free Serbian Diocese, 1988, pp. 23-24.

¹¹⁹⁷ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, “The Life of St. Sava”, in *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), volume 12, Khimelstir, 1984, pp. 573-574.

76. ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY AND THE MONGOL YOKE

Apart from Georgia, the one Orthodox nation that remained loyal to Byzantium until its fall in 1204 was Kievan Rus'. And both nations paid with their blood for their faithfulness. Thus in Russia, as in Georgia, a rejection of pleas for union with the heretical West was followed by devastation at the hands of the pagan or Muslim East. On October 7, 1207, Pope Innocent called on the Russians to renounce Orthodoxy, since "the land of the Greeks and their Church has almost completely returned to the recognition of the Apostolic see". The Russians, led by their metropolitan, a Nicaean Greek, rejected the papal demands.

Then, however, the Mongols invaded... In 1215, China, the greatest despotism that the world had ever seen up to that time, lost "the mandate of heaven" and fell to the Mongols under Chinghis Khan. In 1223 he defeated a Russian-Cuman army at the battle of Kalka. In the following years until his death in 1227 Chinghis extended his conquests from Persia to Korea; and his successor Tamerlane even conquered India...

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..."¹¹⁹⁸

When the Mongols advance began again, they sacked Ryazan, Moscow and Vladimir in 1237-38 and then completely destroyed Kiev in 1240, thereby establishing suzerainty over all the North Russian principalities except Novgorod. The Poles, the Teutonic Knights and the Hungarians were defeated but not occupied, sending shock waves throughout the West - and several missions to convert the Mongols to Christianity before they could convert the rest of the world to dust. Then the horde smashed the Turkish Seljuk Sultanate (in 1243) and the Arab Abbasid Caliphate (in 1258). The cruelty of the Mongol invasion of Russia was illustrated by the destruction of Ryazan, where "the prince with his mother, wife and sons, the boyars and inhabitants, without regard to age or sex, were slaughtered with the savage cruelty of Mongol revenge... Priests were roasted alive, and nuns and maidens were ravished in the churches before their relatives. No eye remained open to weep for the dead..."¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁸ Archpriest Zakaria Machidatze, *The Lives of the Georgian Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, pp. 403, 404.

¹¹⁹⁹ Anonymous Chronicler, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassel, 2004, p. 169.

The only Russian principality not destroyed by the Mongols was Novgorod. This was because the Novgorodians' ruler, Great-Prince Alexander Nevsky of Vladimir, decided to pay tribute to the Mongols in the East in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be their more dangerous enemies in the West - the papist Swedes and the quasi-monastic orders of the Teutonic Knights and the "Knights of God". These orders played a critical part in the crusades in both the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and were answerable only to the Pope. Their wealth - and violence - was legendary. As the Knights said in 1309: "The sword is our pope".¹²⁰⁰ But in 1240 St. Alexander defeated a Swedish army on the Neva. And on April 5, 1242, he crushed the "Knights of God" on the ice of Lake Chudov in present-day Estonia.

Having failed with the stick, the Pope now tried the carrot. In 1248 he sent "the two cleverest" of his cardinals to Alexander, in order that he might "forsake the false way of corruption which leads to the damnation of eternal death... and recognize the Roman church as mother and obey its pope." But Alexander refused, saying that Holy Tradition, the constant teaching of the Church from the beginning, had been passed down to the Orthodox alone.¹²⁰¹

Then, in accordance with his principle: "Not in might, but in truth, is God", he made the historic decision to submit to the Mongols, who might subdue the Russians politically but would not harm their Orthodox faith, rather than to the Pope, who would destroy both their statehood and their faith.

However, there was strong opposition to his policy. Thus one of his brothers, Andrew, having adopted the opposite course of standing up to the Tatars, was routed and had to flee to Catholic Sweden. And the other brother, Yaroslav, placed himself at the head of the anti-Alexander party in Novgorod, which led to an armed confrontation between the two sides in 1255. The tax imposed by the Tatars was very burdensome; and even in Vladimir-Suzdal there were uprisings. The Tatars responded harshly, forcing the Russians to fight in their armies... Alexander's last major act was to journey to the Khan to plead for mercy... He died on his return home, exhausted by his efforts, having taken the schema as Monk Alexis. "My children," said Metropolitan Cyril, know that the sun of the land of Suzdal has now set! For nevermore shall such a prince be found in the land..."¹²⁰²

The Church had strongly supported Alexander not simply because it believed that it was necessary to give to Caesar (the Tatars) what was Caesar's: there were also substantial benefits for the Church itself. For under the Tatars, as Fennell writes, "its lands and possessions were secure and the clergy was

¹²⁰⁰ Quoted in Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 502.

¹²⁰¹ Ya.K. Begunov, A.P. Kirpichnikov, *Knyaz' Aleksandr Nevsky i ego epokha* (Prince Alexander Nevsky and his Age), St. Petersburg, 1995, p. 200.

¹²⁰² Metropolitan Cyril, in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

immune from taxation and conscription. Religious toleration had been Mongol policy ever since the time of Chinghis Khan, and the khans of the Golden Horde, whether pagan or Moslem, always showed consideration and even generosity to the churches in the lands under their sway."¹²⁰³

Indeed, as Fr. Sergei Hackel writes, Mengu-Temir's *iarlyk* of 1308 declared that "no one is 'to seize, tear or destroy that which belongs to their law: icons or books or anything else by means of which they pray to God. And if anyone blasphemes against their faith or curses it, that man shall not be pardoned and shall be cruelly put to death.' But of primary importance to Mengu-Temir, as it would have been to Chengis-Khan himself, was the requirement that the clergy should use their freedom to offer intercessions for their distant masters: 'that they may pray to God for us and for our people with an upright heart [...] and that they may bless us.' Not that the masters were content with formal prayer. With a fine sense of discrimination, the *iarlyk* envisaged the possibility of prayer with inward reservations (*nepravym serdtsem*). This would be sinful, and the responsibility of the priest involved: 'that sin shall be upon him'.

"None of these arrangements were affected by the conversion to Islam of the khan Uzbek (1313), nor by the Islamic faith of his successors. In 1347 the senior wife of Khan Janibeg, Taidula, could still write of the Christian metropolitan as 'our intercessor'.

"Two very different foreign rulers might now be commemorated in the Russian Church. One of these had from the first required, and had normally if not invariably received, commemoration. That was the ruler of the *oikoumene*, the senior partner in that symphonic structure which bound the Byzantine emperor and patriarch into an immutable and, ideally, symbiotic relationship with one another and, together with them, the empire and the Church. At least an honorary membership of the one followed from integration with the other. Both had been received by Rus' as part and parcel of conversion and acculturation. The metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus' was there to link his flock to each in due proportion.

"By contrast, prayers for the khan could hardly fit the established pattern, however much the Russians might attempt to modify the non-Byzantine nature of his title by calling by the name they also used for the Byzantine emperor himself, tsar. For this was soon to be the designation of the distant emperor in Karakorum, as also of the khan at Sarai. In either case, the Russians were no doubt mindful of the Pauline exhortation to the effect that 'supplications, prayers, intercessions' be made for all men, including 'kings and for all who are in authority', and this regardless of their faith..."¹²⁰⁴

¹²⁰³ Fennell, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹²⁰⁴ Hackel, "Under Pressure from the Pagans? - The Mongols and the Russian Church", in J. Breck, J. Meyendorff and E. Silk (eds.), *The Legacy of St. Vladimir*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990, pp. 49-50.

Another important feature of Church life under the Mongols, as Papadakis writes, was that "the metropolitan of Kiev, a prelate appointed from Nicaea and later from Constantinople, was considered by the khans as a privileged representative of a friendly power, which throughout the thirteenth and the fourteenth century promoted commercial exchanges between the Far East and Western Europe. Before the conquest, the Greek metropolitan stood above local political struggles between the Russian princes. Respected as he was by the Tatars, he acquired additional and exclusive powers, since he headed the only administrative structure extending over the whole 'land of the Rus', divided as it was now between territories controlled by the Tatars, the Lithuanians and the Poles."¹²⁰⁵

Indeed, Metropolitan Cyril II (1242-1281) went freely through all the Russian lands, from Galicia, where his former patron, Prince Daniel Romanovich, ruled to Vladimir, where St. Alexander ruled, being accepted as the leader of the Church by all. Therefore as the old Kievan State continued to disintegrate it was becoming clearer that only through the Church could Russia be united. Russia could not prosper without strong political authority; but only the Church could decide who and where that authority should be. For the time being, that authority remained the Mongols, who, in spite of their false religion, protected the Church and so were accepted as a legitimate political authority...

¹²⁰⁵ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 332; Fennell, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

77. MOUNT ATHOS AND THE COUNCIL OF LYONS

As the Roman Catholic heresy gained in strength, a reminder of what true, Orthodox Catholicism is was provided by the foundation, not long before the Western schism, of the multinational monastic community of Mount Athos. The first coenobitic community was founded by St. Athanasius of the Holy Mountain in the tenth century. Following the lead of St. Athanasius, many new monasteries were founded, not only Greek, but also Russian, Georgian, and even Latin. The ruins of the Amalfitan Latin monastery, founded in the late tenth century, can still be seen today.¹²⁰⁶

After the schism, however, the Latin monasteries ceased to exist; and early in the thirteenth century, when the uniate John Beccus was patriarch in Constantinople, Catalan soldiers ravaged the Holy Mountain, putting to death many monks who refused to accept the pope. From that time until now, the Holy Mountain - which today has Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian, as well as Greek, Georgian and Russian communities - has been at the heart of the Orthodox Church's struggle against the false union with Rome.

The papacy tried to subdue the Orthodox East to itself not only by force, through the crusades and the Catalans, but also by negotiation, through the offer of ecclesiastical union - but in any case under the Pope. For their part, ever since communion with the Roman Church had been broken in the eleventh century, the Byzantine Emperors had sought to restore it, not so much for spiritual reasons (although there were Emperors with spiritual motives) as for political reasons, so that they could call on the West to provide military support against the Turks. Thus Alexius I Comnenus and Manuel I Comnenus both put pressure on the patriarchs of their time to restore union.

However, these early negotiations came to an abrupt end after the fearful sack of Constantinople in 1204. Even the Pope, Innocent III, recognized that relations could never be the same again: "How is the Church of the Greeks, when afflicted with such trials and persecutions, to be brought back into the unity of the Church and devotion to the Apostolic See? It has seen in the Latins nothing but an example of perdition and the works of darkness, so that it now abhors them as worse than dogs. For they who are supposed to serve Christ rather than their own interests, who should have used their swords only against the pagans, are dripping with the blood of Christians. They have spared neither religion, nor age, nor sex, and have committed adultery and fornication in public, exposing matrons and even nuns to the filthy brutality of their troops. For them it was not enough to exhaust the riches of the Empire and to despoil both great men and small; they had to lay their hands on the treasures of the Church, and what was worse its possessions, seizing silver

¹²⁰⁶ See Dom Leo Bonsali, "The Benedictine Monastery of St. Mary on Mount Athos", *Eastern Churches Review* 2:3 (1969), pp. 262-7; <https://eirenikon.wordpress.com/2009/08/20/benedictine-hagiorites/>

retables from the altars, breaking them into pieces to divide among themselves, violating the sanctuaries and carrying off crosses and relics."¹²⁰⁷

Several Greek bishops, writes Spiros Vryonis, "fled the Latin lands. Others remained in their sees, sometimes ignoring Latin ecclesiastical demands and often maintaining contact with the Greek clergy in non-Latin territory. The Catholics decided that the Greek clergy were to keep the churches in those regions inhabited exclusively by Greeks, but in mixed areas the bishops were to be Latins. The hierarchy of the Church in the conquered areas thus passed into the hands of the Catholics, whereas the village priests remained Greek. With some exceptions the Latin bishoprics were filled with adventurers little inspired by the religious life, who treated their Greek parishioners as schismatics. Very often the Greek clergy who conformed to the demands of the papacy and hence were supported by Innocent were removed by fanatic Latin bishops who wished to take over all the bishoprics."¹²⁰⁸

The Pope was right that the Greeks would now hate the Latins. But he was wrong in thinking that they would not seek the union of the Churches. The simple people rejected it; but as the empire grew weaker, and then went into exile after 1204, the Greek elites' attachment to it grew, and for the sake of the empire they began to bargain with the faith. Thus the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I unsuccessfully attempted to convene a Council of Patriarchs and to decide, with them, on the opening of negotiations with the Pope.

Then, as Fr. Ambroise Frontier relates, "John Vatatzes, the new emperor, took as his second wife, Constance, the daughter of Frederick II, the Emperor of the West. Upon becoming Orthodox she took the name Anna. A great friendship linked Frederick II and John Vatatzes. Even though Frederick II was a Roman Catholic he was in conflict with the Pope and he showed much regard for the Orthodox Church: '... how can this so-called pontiff every day excommunicate before the whole world the name of your majesty and all the Roman subjects (at this time the Greeks were called Romans) and without shame call the most orthodox Romans, heretics, thanks to whom the Christian Faith was spread to the far ends of the world.'...

"In 1250 Frederick II died and his son Manfred, an enemy of the Nicaean Empire, became King of Sicily. The relations between John Vatatzes and [Pope] Innocent IV took a dangerous turn. Innocent IV tried to turn the Venetians and the Franks of the East against the Nicaean Empire. This forced John Vatatzes to concede the following privileges to the Pope: 1) Recognition of the Pope's supremacy, 2) Commemoration of the Pope's name, 3) Recognition of the right to appeal to the Pope. These concessions were sufficient for the time being to change the Pope's politics so that he supported the policies of the Nicaean Empire.

¹²⁰⁷ Innocent III, in R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longmans, 1988, p. 333.

¹²⁰⁸ Vryonis, *Byzantium and Europe*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1967, p. 161.

“Other reasons also forced the Pope to uphold the Emperor. Whole territories were breaking away from the Latin state of Constantinople and were repudiating their forced submission to the Pope. Innocent IV thought that it would be good, before the fall of the weakening Latin state of Constantinople, to come to an agreement with the Greeks and thus place the union on a more solid foundation. He thus imposed two more conditions: 1) The Latin Patriarch installed by the Crusaders in Constantinople in place of the legitimate Orthodox Patriarch would be kept in the capital, 2) The doctrine of the Filioque, that is of the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son, a heretical doctrine, cause of the schism between the two Churches and a stumbling block to all attempts at union, would be introduced into the Orthodox Creed. Theodore II Lascaris, the successor of John Vatatzes, a child of his first marriage, however, had other plans. He refused the papal proposals and sent Innocent’s legates away. He even wrote a treatise in which he defended the Orthodox dogmas and refuted the doctrine of the Filioque.”¹²⁰⁹

In 1261 the Greeks defeated the Latins and Emperor Michael Palaeologus entered Constantinople... “The splendour surrounding the ‘New Constantine’,” writes F.I. Uspensky, “was a reflection of the great national triumph. Not only the courtiers and service people rejoiced, but also the patriots, the venerators of the ancient glory; and they could hardly imagine what the restoration would cost the real interests of the people. They had reasons for their joy. From its many years of struggle with the foreign aggressors, the Greek nation emerged not overcome, but united. Under the leadership of the Orthodox Church the population from Thessalonica to Magnesia and Attalia was conscious of itself as one body; the consciousness of nationality grew in strength – the Hellenic idea – not a literary idea, but a popular one; and the Church herself, having borne the struggle upon her shoulders, became still more dear, native and Greek. Some of the educated people could still talk about the union from the point of view of an abstract dogma; the politicians... could reluctantly wish for peace with the curia, but the simple people was lost for ‘the Latin faith’ forever.”¹²¹⁰

However, there were ominous signs. The City itself was still devastated as a result of the Latin conquest, and greatly reduced in population and wealth. Independent Greek statelets in Epirus and Trebizond still existed, and the Serbs and Bulgarians were also independent now. At the same time, Michael himself was a sybarite. He imitated the luxuriousness of the caesaropapist Angeli rather than the modesty of the more Orthodox Lascari. As Uspensky writes, “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

¹²⁰⁹ Frontier, “The Council of Lyons and the False Union of 1274”, *The True Vine*, vol. 2, N 4, Winter, 1975, pp. 5-6.

¹²¹⁰ Uspensky, *Istoria Vizantiiskoj Imperii* (A History of the Byzantine Empire), Moscow: “Mysl’”, 1997, p. 496.

expenses of the antiquated world order that had lived out its time, was also re-established..."¹²¹¹

Worse still, overtures to the Pope continued. As regent, Michael had flattered the hierarchs, saying that he would accept power only from their hands, and promised that he would consider the Church to be his mother – in contrast to Emperor Theodore, who had supposedly despised the Church and kept it in subjection to imperial power.¹²¹² However, on ascending the throne, he changed course in a caesaropapist direction... His aim was to compel the Church and Byzantine society to adopt a more pro-Western attitude leading ultimately to a unia with Rome. For he feared an alliance between Pope Urban, the former Latin Emperor of Constantinople Baldwin and King Manfred of Sicily, whose designs on Constantinople were well-proven. To that end he proposed divorcing his wife Theodora and marrying Manfred's half-sister Anna, the widow of John Vatatzes – but abandoned the project under pressure from his wife, Anna herself and Patriarch Arsenius.¹²¹³

In fact, Michael was, as Sir Steven Runciman writes, "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."¹²¹⁴

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

¹²¹¹ Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

¹²¹² Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

¹²¹³ Norwich, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

¹²¹⁴ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 67.

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.'"¹²¹⁵

Finally Arsenius was deposed for failing to appear at his trial, and the more malleable Germanus was made patriarch in his place. But Arsenius and his followers refused to be reconciled with this. In justification of his deposition of Patriarch Arsenius, the emperor invoked his right as epistemonarch – a vague title used by the emperors since the twelfth century to justify their interference in the Church.

Then, writes Gilbert Dagron, in a prostagma of 1270, 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*."¹²¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Emperor was continuing to manoeuvre for an ecclesiastical union with the Roman Church. However, his real purpose was not spiritual but 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, the new king of Sicily – which help could be bought only at the price of a unia. Charles was ready to invade in 1270, but a terrible storm destroyed his fleet. Michael had been saved again...

¹²¹⁵ Uspensky, op. cit., pp. 510, 511.

¹²¹⁶ Dagron, op. cit., p. 262

Both the people and the Church were against the unia. 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...”¹²¹⁷

“But the Emperor’s humiliation,” continues Runciman, “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...”¹²¹⁸

The Arsenites remained in schism from the official Church for several more decades. They insisted, writes Aristides Papadakis, 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.”¹²¹⁹ 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.¹²²⁰

¹²¹⁷ Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

¹²¹⁸ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹²¹⁹ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994, p. 219.

¹²²⁰ 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.

Restored to communion, and with the anti-uniates 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...'"¹²²¹

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, azymes, papal supremacy) without argument and promised to help the pope in his next crusade. In exchange Pope Gregory X promised to stop his enemies, especially Charles of Anjou, from invading the Greek lands.

Michael continued to persecute the anti-uniates, imprisoning and mutilating their leaders. However, 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."¹²²² The center of Orthodoxy, however, was 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.

¹²²¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

¹²²² "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, believed in co-operation with the State and the use, if need be, of Economy" (Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 70). (V.M.)

“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...¹²²³

“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.”¹²²⁴

In 1280 (Pope Gregory had died by this time) Charles again invaded from the West. In the next year he was defeated by the Emperor Michael, but was planning to invade again in 1282 – this time by sea. And his chances looked good, especially since a new Pope, Martin IV, was now on his side and had excommunicated the Emperor. But then the Sicilians, supported by an Aragonese army, rose up against Charles. The threat of invasion from the West was now finally removed – which only left the formidable threat of the Seljuk Turks in the East to deal with...

In spite of this improvement in his military fortunes, and his excommunication by the Pope, Michael remained faithful to the unia until the end. And so the conqueror of Constantinople, the “new Constantine”, died on December 11, 1282, hated by his people. Rarely has such a glorious beginning to a reign ended in such ignominy...

“His wife, Empress Theodora and his son and successor Andronicus II Palaeologus refused to give him burial and Church honors.¹²²⁵ Andronicus II

¹²²³ 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 (Velimirovic, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131). 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 (*Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XII, N 4, July-August, 1990, p. 15). (V.M.)

¹²²⁴ 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.

¹²²⁵ Andronicus dared not bury his body openly, but put him into the ground at night without a funeral or prayers. The empress issued the following declaration: “My Majesty hates and regards as loathsome this action (the union) that has recently come about in the Church and has caused such discord... As the holy Church of God has determined not to sanction any official commemoration of my departed spouse, our lord and king, on account of his aforementioned actions and intrigues, my Majesty also, bowing in all things to the fear of God and submitting to the holy Church, approves and accepts her decree, and will never

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.

“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.’”¹²²⁶

presume to commemorate the soul of my lord and spouse in any way.” (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part 4, p. 59) (V.M.)
¹²²⁶ Frontier, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12. The Synod’s « Exposition of the Tomos of Faith against Beccus » is found here : <https://sangiulio.org/holy-canons/blachernae/>.

78. THE CRISIS OF BYZANTINE STATEHOOD

The Nicaean Empire was a period of spiritual recovery, and of a return to the symphonic tradition of the Orthodox Autocracy. However, after the reconquest of the City in 1261, Byzantium declined inexorably. The loss of its control over trade to the Genoans and Venetians, who took it in turns to inflict defeats on the Greeks, was a serious blow. They were also vulnerable to the Turks...

In 1055 the Seljuk Turks had captured Baghdad before crushing the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, pushing them out of Eastern Anatolia for good. Fortunately, the Seljuk kingdom was destroyed by the Mongols in the course of the thirteenth century. But the Seljuk Turks were replaced by the Ottomans, who began their inexorable advance from the East in the fourteenth century.

Then, in the middle of the fourteenth century came 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 were the divisions between and within the Greek states (for there were several of them), and the state of near-permanent civil war between the members of the ruling Palaeologan dynasty. The humiliation of Orthodoxy was such that towards the end of the century, all the Orthodox rulers, Greek, Slav and Romanian, were vassals of the Turkish sultan and even had to fight in his armies against other Orthodox Christians...¹²²⁷

The underlying spiritual cause of these disasters was not far to find: in spite of the chastening experiences of the previous century, Byzantine rulers still continued to dangle the bait of union with Rome before western princes in exchange for military help that very rarely came. Only once, at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396, did a large-scale "crusade" led by the King of Hungary set off to rescue the Greeks from the Turks. It ended in disaster...

The lesson was obvious, but seemed never to be learned: no material gain, but only continued disasters, not to speak of spiritual shipwreck, came from attempting to sell the birthright of the Orthodox Faith...

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Paradoxically, however, this deeply dispiriting period from the point of view of state life also witnessed something of a spiritual renaissance in the cultural and religious spheres as a result of *the hesychastic movement*, which was spread by wandering monks such as St. Gregory of Sinai throughout the Orthodox commonwealth, and which brought forth rich fruits of sanctity for centuries to come. Moreover, in defending hesychasm against its humanist

¹²²⁷ Thus the Emperors Manuel II and John VII were forced by the Sultan to take part in the siege of the last Byzantine city in Asia Minor, Philadelphia (Norwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-47).

and latinizing detractors, the Orthodox Church was able to define the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism more broadly and deeply than ever before.

In this struggle, whose epicenter was the decade between 1341 and 1351, two outstanding personalities shine out in the surrounding darkness as defenders of the truth: St. Gregory Palamas, leader of the hesychast monks on Mount Athos and later Archbishop of Thessalonica, who formulated the theological defence of hesychasm, and his friend John Catacuzenus, who in turn became the Great Domestic, the Emperor John VI and then plain Monk Joasaph, and who, while never rejecting the idea of the union as such, always cleverly insisted that it could only be done through an Ecumenical Council – an idea that the Popes rejected because they knew it would end in failure for the uniate cause.

The debate began in the 1330s with a rather original attempt to engineer the unia. The Calabrian Greek monk Barlaam argued that the truths of the Faith – he was thinking especially of the Filioque controversy – cannot be proved, so we might as well take both positions, the Greek and the Latin, as private opinions! Such relativism was refuted by St. Gregory, and found no support in the West either: Pope Benedict was no more inclined than the Byzantine Church to accept such agnosticism.

But Barlaam's pride had been hurt, and he now set about attacking the Athonite hesychast monks with regard to their practice of the Jesus prayer. In particular, he attacked the claim that by combining the prayer with certain physical exercises that involved directing the eye of the mind on the physical heart, the monks could reach a state of deification and behold the Uncreated Light that emanated from Christ's Body during the Transfiguration. Barlaam mockingly called the hesychasts omphalopsychoi, that is, those who locate the soul in the navel, and identified them with the fourth-century sect of the Messalians, which taught that through asceticism and prayer and without the aid of the sacraments one could see God with one's physical eyes.

The Athonite hesychasts refuted Barlaam's charges in a *Tomos* entitled "The Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defence of Those who Devoutly Practise a Life of Stillness". Composed by St. Gregory and signed by the leading hesychasts, including Bishop James of Hierissos and the Holy Mountain, it argued that: 1. The deifying grace of God, in and through which we are united with God and saved, is God Himself, uncreated and eternal; 2. This deification is not a capacity inherent in human nature, as the Messalians taught, but a gift of God by grace; 3. The mind (nous) which sees God in the Divine Light is located in the heart, for the body takes part in deification as well as the soul; 4. The Light that shone around the disciples on Mount Tabor was not an apparition or a symbol, but the Uncreated Divine Light, God Himself, Which they were able to see through the opening of their spiritual eyes, a transmutation of their spiritual senses; 5. Both the Essence of God and His Energies are Uncreated, but constitute one God, insofar as the Energies

are not a second God, but the One God going out of Himself, as it were, in order to unite Himself with created nature; 6. This vision of God and participation in His Uncreated Energies is the mystery of the age to come manifest already in this age. "For if in the age to come the body is to share with the soul in ineffable blessings, then it is evident that in this world as well it will also share according to its capacity in the grace mystically and ineffably bestowed by God upon the purified intellect [nous], and it will experience the divine in conformity with its nature. For once the soul's passible aspect is transformed and sanctified - but not reduced to a deathlike condition - through it the dispositions and activities of the body are also sanctified, since body and soul share a conjoint existence."¹²²⁸

This teaching was vindicated at a Council in Constantinople presided over by Emperor Andronicus III in 1341. There were further Councils in 1347 and 1351, when Barlaam and his helpers Acindynus and Nicephorus Gregoras were excommunicated. Barlaam renounced Orthodoxy and became a Catholic bishop.¹²²⁹

Apart from their dogmatic significance, these Palamite Councils presented a precious image 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...

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But amidst this spiritual triumph the state continued to decline, and now divisions appeared not only within the members of the ruling dynasty but between different layers of society. Thus when St. Gregory Palamas was appointed archbishop of Thessalonica he was not at first allowed to enter his see, because in Adrianople and Thessalonica, where sharp divisions in wealth were exacerbated by the feudal system that had been introduced by the Latin crusaders, a social revolution of the poor (called "zealots") against the rich was in progress.¹²³⁰ This revolution betrayed, according to Diehl, "a vague

¹²²⁸ *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, London: Faber and Faber, 1995, p. 423.

¹²²⁹ According to Fr. Alexander Prapertov, he "stood at the sources of the Renaissance. One of his pupils was Petrarch himself. And another of his pupils was Leontius Pilatus, the first professor of the Greek language in Western Europe, who translated a multitude of the works of the ancient philosophers and writers (in particular, Homer's Iliad) and was a vivid figure in the Early Renaissance. Giovanni Boccaccio learned Greek from him." (Facebook communication, March 13, 2017)

¹²³⁰ "It is perhaps the fault for which Byzantium was punished," writes Rebecca West. "The two classes, the 'powerful' and the 'poor', fought hard from the ninth century. The small landowners and the free peasants were so constantly harried by invasion and civil war that they bartered their liberty in return for the protection of the great nobles, who took advantage of the position to absorb the small landowners' estates and to make serfs of the free peasants. At first the monarchy fought these great nobles, and even appeared to have vanquished them. Feudalism, the exploitation of a country by its large landowners, could not exist in a declared theocracy, which implied the conception of divinely impartial justice for all individuals and every class. But when the Latins invaded the Byzantine Empire they brought

tendency towards a communistic movement”¹²³¹, and in its final wave forced the abdication of Emperor John VI in 1354.

St. Gregory defended the principle of autocracy against the revolutionaries: “The worst... are those who do not demonstrate a due loyalty to the kings established by God... and do not humble themselves under... the hand of God and do not submit to the Church of Christ.” However, he also chastised the rich whose greed and selfishness had laid the seeds for the revolution. He exhorted them: “Do not use force against those subject to you; show them... a fatherly attitude, remembering that you and they are of one race and co-servants. And do not go against submission to the Church and her teachings... You who are in subjection, consider it your duty in relation to the authorities to carry out only that which does not serve as an obstacle to your promised hope of the Heavenly Kingdom.”¹²³²

Amidst all this turmoil there was no agreement about who was the true emperor. First there was a bitter civil war between Andronicus II and his grandson Andronicus III. Then in 1341, after the death of Andronicus III, war broke out between John V Palaeologus and the army’s choice, John VI Cantacuzenus (a firm believer in the dynastic principle and lifetime supporter of the Palaeologi!). Then came the forced abdication of John VI, who became a monk. Then civil war again broke out between John V and his son Andronicus IV. Early in the fifteenth century, Manuel II exiled his nephew; and in the very last years of the Empire John VIII had to contend with a rebellion from his brother Demetrius...

Of course, coups and counter-coups were no rarity in Byzantine history - in 74 out of 109 cases, the throne was seized by a coup.¹²³³ The period of the Nicaean Empire had seen a marked increase in stability and in the quality of imperial rule. But in the fourteenth century, when the external situation of the State was increasingly desperate, the old bad habits reasserted themselves.¹²³⁴

with them the feudal system which was established in their own countries, and it could not be driven out with them, because the Byzantine nobles, like all the rich, would rather choke than not have their mouths full, and applauded the idea of any extension of their wealth and their power, however dangerous.” (*Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, pp. 872-873)

¹²³¹ Diehl, in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, p. 684.

¹²³² St. Gregory Palamas, *Homilies*; quoted in D.I. Makarov, *Antropologia i Kosmologia Sv. Grigoria Palamy* (The Anthropology and Cosmology of St. Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg, 2003, pp. 403, 400. See also Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, *Saint Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, Levadia: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1997, pp. 247-257.

¹²³³ Ivan Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia*, Minsk, 1998, p. 77.

¹²³⁴ We can see that the Byzantines had not lost the consciousness that “rebellion is as the sin of divination” (I Samuel 15.23) in the fact that, as Nikolsky writes, “an anathema against those daring to undertake rebellion was pronounced in the 11th to 14th centuries... Thus, according to the Byzantine historian Kinnamas, Andronicus Manuel fell under anathema in the 12th century. ‘This traitor, enemy of the fatherland, made frequent assaults on the Roman lands from Persia, enslaved many people and handed over much military booty to the Persians, for which he was subjected to anathema by the Church.’... But the anathematization

We have seen that the Byzantines never had an agreed system of imperial legitimacy and succession. However, L.A. Tikhomirov points to another, still deeper weakness of the Byzantine system: the fact that imperial power was based on two mutually incompatible principles, the Christian and the Old Roman (Republican). According to the Christian principle, supreme power in the State rested in the Emperor, not in the People. But, while supreme, his power was not absolute in that it was limited by the Orthodox Faith and Church; for the Emperor, while supreme on earth, was still the servant of the Emperor of Emperors in heaven. According to the Old Roman principle, however, which still retained an important place alongside the Christian principle in the legislation of Justinian, supreme power rested, not in the Emperor, but in the Senate and the People. But since the Senate and the People had, according to the legal fiction, conceded all their empire and power to the Emperor, he concentrated all executive power in his own person, and his will had the full force of law: Quod Principi placuit legis habet vigorem, et in eum solum omne suum imperium et potestatem concessit.

“This idea was purely absolutist, making the power of the Emperor unlimited, but not supreme, not independent of the people’s will. The formula also contradicted the Christian idea of ‘the King, the servant of God’, whose law could in no way be simply what was ‘pleasing’ to him. But the conjunction of popular delegation and Divine election gave Byzantine imperial power the opportunity to be very broadly arbitrary. In the case of a transgression of the people’s rights, it was possible to refer to the unlimited delegation of the people. However, it is impossible not to see that this same conjunction, which gave the Emperor’s power the opportunity to be arbitrary, at the same time did not give it solidity. This power could be taken away from an unworthy bearer of it also on a dual basis: for transgression of the will of God, or on the basis of the will of the people, which did not want to continue the ‘concession’ it had given before any longer.

“The idea of the delegation of the people’s will and power to one person in itself presupposes centralisation, and then bureaucratisation. Truly, as the point of concentration of all the people’s powers, the Emperor is an executive power. In accordance with the concept of delegation, he himself administers everything. He must do all the work of the current administration. For that reason everything is centralised around him, and in him. But since it is in fact impossible in fact for one person, even the greatest genius, to carry out all the acts of State, they are entrusted to servants, officials. In this way bureaucratisation develops.

“The king, ‘the servant of God’, is obliged only to see that the affairs of the country are directed in the spirit of God’s will. The people’s self-administration does not contradict his idea on condition that over this

against the rebels and traitors was in all probability not introduced by the Greeks into the *Order of Orthodoxy*”. (in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 122).

administration the control of 'the servant of God' is preserved, directing everything on the true path of righteousness, in case there are any deviations from it. But for the Emperor to whom 'the people concedes all power and might', any manifestation of popular self-administration, whatever it may be, is already a usurpation on the part of the people, a kind of taking back by the people of what it had 'conceded' to the Emperor."¹²³⁵

In 1369 Emperor John V, knowing that he could never bring his whole people into the unia, went to Italy. As Lord Norwich writes, "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, kneeling before him and kissing him on the feet, hands and finally on the lips."¹²³⁶

But there was no rebellion, and no public humiliation of the body of the apostate after his death, as in the time of Michael VIII. In almost any previous period of Byzantine history, such an apostasy would have elicited disturbances among the Orthodox people. But not now... The reason was that, as Runciman writes, "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."

St. Simeon, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, commented with some bitterness on the situation: "Now... the Bishop is not counted worthy of any kind of honour for the 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

¹²³⁵ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p.163.

¹²³⁶ Norwich, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

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."¹²³⁷

"As an Emperor," continues Runciman, "John V was incompetent and almost impotent. The Turks were overrunning all his territory and exacting tribute from him. 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. It was soon after his death that the Patriarch Antony IV wrote the letter in which he talked of the great position of the Emperor. It was addressed to the Grand Prince of Muscovy, Vassily I, who had somewhat scornfully pointed out the actual weakness of the Emperor, hinting that some more powerful Orthodox ruler ought to lead the Oecumene. 'The Emperor,' Antony wrote, 'is still the Holy Emperor, the heir of the Emperors of old and the consecrated head of the Oecumene. He, and he alone, is the King whom Saint Peter bade the faithful to honour.'

"The Patriarch's loyalty 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..."¹²³⁸

The concordat was a truly shameful document. And yet the old Zealot tradition was not dead. There were still many in Byzantium who rejected the subordination of the Church to the State and would have preferred the

¹²³⁷ St. Symeon, in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 122-123.

¹²³⁸ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 71-72.

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...

V.M. 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 organisation 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 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 caused to 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...”¹²³⁹

Of course, the victory of the Turks would be a terrible disaster.¹²⁴⁰ But the victory of the Latins would be an even greater disaster, since it would signify the end of Greek Orthodoxy. Nor, said the Zealots, would buying the support of the Latins help matters. For, as the Studite Monk and head of the Imperial Academy, Joseph Vryennios said early in the fifteenth century: “Let no one be

¹²³⁹ 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.

¹²⁴⁰ 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)

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..."¹²⁴¹

¹²⁴¹ Cited in Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 672.

79. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SERBIAN EMPIRE

“The 14th century,” writes Dvorkin, “buried the epoch of multinational super-empires. The future lay with centralized national states. However, it is interesting to note how long the peoples did not want to part with the myth of the Empire, to become the centre of which became the dream of practically every European state both in the East and in the West, from Bulgaria to Castilia. In the course of the 13th-14th centuries the canonists of many countries independently of each other developed the principle of the translatio imperii (translation of the empire). This process touched Russia a little later – in the 15th century, in the form of the theory of the Third Rome, which Moscow became...”¹²⁴²

Of all the newly powerful nation-states of the 14th century formed out of the ruins of the ever-decreasing Byzantine Empire, the most powerful was Serbia.

Aristides Papadakis writes: “Greatly expanded under powerful leaders like King Stephen Urosh Milutin (1282-1321) and particularly Stephen Dushan (1331-55), the Serbian kingdom annexed traditionally Byzantine territories in Macedonia and northern Greece. In fact, Stephen Dushan dominated the entire Balkan peninsula. It was inevitable that, like Symeon of Bulgaria in the tenth century, he would dream of taking Constantinople itself and assume the ‘Roman’ imperial title. In the expectation of achieving this goal, he called himself – provisionally – ‘emperor and autocrat of Serbia and Romania’ (1345) and raised the archbishop of Pech to the rank of ‘patriarch of the Serbs and the Greeks’. The important city of Skopje, captured by Milutin, had, more than the other, smaller cities of the Serbian realm, the appearance of an imperial capital. There, on April 16, 1346, Dushan was crowned emperor by his newly-established patriarch Ioannikije.”¹²⁴³

Shortly after this, Dushan published his “Archangelic Charter”, whose introduction set out his political theology in impressive style. The foundation of all power is the Lord God, Who dwells in eternal light. The earthly ruler is a lord only for a time; he does not dwell in eternal light; and his splendour is only a reflection of the splendour of the Lord God. The incarnation of God the Word, His humiliation and descent, is imitated by the earthly ruler in his constant self-correction and the thought of death: “I am reminded of the terrible hour of death, for all the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and saints, and emperors died in the end; none of them remained, all were buried, and the earth received them all like a mother”. At the same time, the ruler, if he protects Orthodoxy and is guided by love for God, earns the titles “holy lord”, “patriot”, “enlightener of Serbia” and “peace libator”. In accordance with this dual character of the ruler’s power, his subjects are obliged, on the one hand, to obey him, in accordance with St. Paul’s word, and on the other to

¹²⁴² Dvorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

¹²⁴³ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-259.

criticise him if he departs from the true path. For while power as such is from God, those in power may act in accordance with God's will or against it.¹²⁴⁴

Dushan's code, writes Rebecca West, "brought up to date the laws made by the earlier kings of the Nemanian dynasty and was a nicely balanced fusion of Northern jurisprudence and the Byzantine system laid down by Justinian. It coped in an agreeable and ingenious spirit with the needs of a social structure not at all to be despised even in comparison with the West.

"There, at this time, the land was divided among great feudal lords who ruled over innumerable serfs; but here in Serbia there were very few serfs, so few that they formed the smallest class in the community, and there was a large class of small free landowners. There was a National Diet which met to discuss such important matters as the succession to the throne or the outbreak of civil war, and this consisted of the sovereigns, their administrators, the great and small nobility, and the higher clergy; it was some smaller form of this, designed to act in emergencies that met to discuss whether John Cantacuzenus should receive Serbian aid. All local government was in the hands of the whole free community, and so was all justice, save for the special cases that were reserved for royal jurisdiction, such as high treason, murder, and highway robbery. This means that the people as a whole could deal with matters that they all understood, while the matters that were outside common knowledge were settled for them by their sovereign and selected members of their own kind; for there were no closed classes, and both the clergy and the nobility were constantly recruited from the peasantry."¹²⁴⁵

In this period, the way in which the Serbian kings were portraying themselves was almost indistinguishable from the symbolism of the Byzantine Emperors. Thus Desanka Miloshevich describes a portrait of Tsar Milutin in Grachanitsa in which "the king had all the prerogatives of power of the Byzantine Emperor, except for the title. The crown, the garments, the loros and the sceptre were all identical to the Byzantine Emperor's. Before Milutin, something like this would have been absolutely unthinkable, for only the Byzantine Emperor was Christ's regent on earth..."¹²⁴⁶

Dushan went further: directly challenging the authority of the Byzantine Emperor, he refused to call his kingdom, following Byzantine custom, "of the Romans", but rather "of the Serbs and the Greeks". The ethnicity of this title was in direct contradiction to the universalism of Christian Romanity. And yet he had come to the throne by rebelling against and then strangling his own father, St. Stephen Dechansky; so his claim even to the Serbian throne, not to speak of the Byzantine, was weak.

¹²⁴⁴ Bogdanovich, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

¹²⁴⁵ West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, pp. 892-893.

¹²⁴⁶ Miloshevich, in Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 22.

In spite of this, so feeble and divided was the Empire at this time that many Greeks supported his claims, and the protos of Mount Athos was present at his coronation in Skopje. But St. Gregory Palamas, remained loyal to Byzantium – even though Dushan had ransomed him from captivity to the Turks. St. Gregory confirmed the traditional Byzantine theory that just as there is only one true God, so there can be only one Orthodox empire. As he wrote: “Will you transform into two emperors that one emperor whom God has established for us on the earth? Will you demonstrate that his empire is composed of two empires?”¹²⁴⁷

“The Serbian patriarchate was immediately recognized and supported by the patriarch of Trnovo and the archbishop of Ochrid (the latter was now controlled by Serbian power), as well as the monasteries of Mount Athos. It included within its realm a number of Greek dioceses, located on territories conquered by Dušan. In the circumstances, it is understandable that the establishment of such a patriarchate was challenged in Constantinople: on December 1349, ecumenical patriarch Callistus anathematized the Serbian Church.”¹²⁴⁸

To anathematize a whole Local Church neither for heresy nor for schism, but for appropriating to itself territories that did not belong to it may have been a defensible step, but it was also a drastic one. It showed how anxious the patriarch was, in the absence of a strong emperor, to retain the centralising power of the patriarchate as the “glue” holding the Byzantine commonwealth together.

However, there is no question: the leading power in the Balkan peninsula at this time was not Byzantium, but Serbia. Dushan’s land was prosperous, and attracted Venetians and Ragusans as traders, and Saxons as miners. As West writes: “Against the military difficulties that constantly beset Stephen Dushan there could be counted the security of this possession: a country rich in contented people, in silver and gold, in grain and cattle, in oil and wine, and in the two traditions, one Byzantine and mellow, one Slav and nascent, which inclined its heart towards civilization... Stephen Dushan ordered that all foreign envoys travelling through the land should be given all the meat and drink they desired at the imperial expense. As he pressed southward into Byzantine territory he restored to it elements necessary to civilized life which it had almost forgotten. He was not in need of money, so he did not need to rob his new subjects after the fashion of participants in the Civil War; he taxed them less, repaired gaps in their strongholds, and lent them Serbian soldiers as police. He also practised the principle of toleration, which was very dear to the Byzantine population; it must be remembered that the Orthodox crowd of Constantinople rushed without hesitation to defend the Saracen merchants’

¹²⁴⁷ St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, III, 2, 27, in *Défense des saints hésychastes (Defence of the Holy Hesychasts)*, edited by John Meyendorff, Louvain: Sacilegium Sacrum Lovaninense, 1973, pp. 692, 693 (in French and Greek).

¹²⁴⁸ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

mosque when it was attacked by the fanatic Latin knights. There could be no complete application of this principle, and Stephen Dushan certainly appointed Serbian governors to rule over his new territories, as well as Serbian ecclesiastics when the local priests were irreconcilable; but he left the indigenous social and political systems as he found them, and there was no economic discrimination against the conquered.

“It was as if there were falling down the map from the Serbian Empire an ooze of honey, runnels of wine. They must drip across Byzantium, they must spread all over the country to the sea, to the Bosphorus. To all men’s minds it became possible that some day Stephen Dushan might come to Constantinople and that he might be Emperor not only of the Byzantines but of Byzantium, seated at its centre in the palace that had known Constantine the Great and Justinian... His own age, and those who lived within recollection of its glory, believed him capable of that journey, and more...”¹²⁴⁹

But it was not to be. Why? Because Dushan’s quarrel with Byzantium divided the Orthodox world at just the moment it needed to unite against their common enemy, the Turks. Indeed, it was the rivalry between the two Orthodox states that let the Turks into the Balkans, leading to the destruction of both... For, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, “in 1350 the Byzantine Emperor, John Cantacuzenus, recruited [Sultan] Orhan’s Ottoman warriors in his campaign against the King of Serbia, Stephen Dushan. Three years later Orhan’s son, Suleiman, crossed the Hellespont to take possession of the fortresses promised as the price of their support. Within a few years, from their base at Gallipoli, the Ottomans had advanced to cut the road from Constantinople to the fortress town of Adrianople, the capital of Thrace.”¹²⁵⁰

Still more importantly, the prosperity of the Serbian Empire under Dushan could not outweigh the injustice of his seizure of the throne, and, above all, the curse of the Church on the ecclesiastical and political disunity that he introduced into the Orthodox world. And so Dushan, for all his glory, was one of the few kings of the glorious Nemanja dynasty who is not inscribed among the saints. Like King Solomon’s in the Old Testament, his reign marks the culmination of his people’s glory in the political sphere, on the one hand, and on the other, the beginning of its decline in the spiritual sphere.

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In 1354 Patriarch Ioannikije died, and in 1355 - Tsar Dushan. “It was as if,” writes Fr. Daniel Rogich, “the passing of two great religious and secular leaders created a huge vacuum over the empire which was filled by a black cloud of lack of faith and political disaster. The upcoming events and internal and external strife would bring Serbia to the brink of political and religious disaster.

¹²⁴⁹ West, *op. cit.*, pp. 893-894.

¹²⁵⁰ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 203.

“The new leadership fell into the hands of Dushan’s son, King Urosh IV and Empress Helen. Urosh was only seventeen years old at the time... Being truly humble in spirit and less worldly than his departed father, Urosh was unable to control such a vast territory. In fact many began to call him Urosh ‘the Weak’. As a result, the next twenty years saw the breakup of the entire region of the southern territory of the Serbian empire, as well as a vying for power in the northern half.”¹²⁵¹

In 1371 the Serbs were disastrously defeated by Sultan Murad I on the Maritsa, and in the same year Tsar Urosh died. However, at this point the Serbian Prince Lazar of Krushevac gradually began to reunite the Serbs with the slogan, Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava, that is, “Only Unity Saves the Serbs”.

Still more important, he finally managed to heal the ecclesiastical break with Constantinople. “In the spring of 1375, Holy Lazar called a National Church Assembly, inviting all civil leaders and bishops to his palace in Krushevac. The widowed Empress Helen, Dushan’s wife, was given a special place of honor, and Patriarch Sava IV served as the ecclesiastical head of the meeting. It was decided at the gathering to bless the virtuous monk Isaiah of Hilandar, with monks Theophanes, Silvester, Niphon, and Nicodemus as companions, to travel to Constantinople to visit His Holiness, Patriarch Philotheos (1364-1376). Due to the letters of the Patriarch and Holy Tsar Lazar, Patriarch Philotheos granted, as Archbishop Danilo II wrote in his Lives of the Kings and Archbishops of Serbia, ‘that the Serbs would no longer simply have an archbishop, but an autocephalous Patriarch over whom no one would exercise authority.’ The Patriarch also forgave Tsar Dushan, Patriarch Ioannikios, Patriarch Sava IV, King Urosh IV, and all the Serbian Orthodox Christians. He also sent two hieromonks, Matthew and Moses, to Prizren to celebrate Divine Liturgy with His Holiness Patriarch Sava IV, and to pronounce over the grave of Tsar Dushan in Pristina the revocation of the anathema. This took place on Thomas Sunday, April 29, 1375. Shortly thereafter Patriarch Sava IV fell asleep in the Lord, and Tsar Lazar summoned the Synod of Bishops, which elevated the venerable elder Ephraim as the new Patriarch of Serbia”.¹²⁵²

In spite of this inspiring miracle of political and ecclesiastical peacemaking, the Turks continued to make inroads into Serbia, culminating in the famous battle of Kosovo Polje (Blackbird Field) in 1389, at which the Sultan was killed, but also 77,000 Serbs, including Tsar Lazar. According to tradition, on the eve of the battle King Lazar had a vision in which he was offered a choice between an earthly victory and an earthly kingdom, or an earthly defeat that would win him the Heavenly Kingdom. He chose the latter and lost the battle – but his incorrupt relics continue to work miracles to this day.¹²⁵³

¹²⁵¹ Rogich, *Great Martyr Tsar Lazar of Serbia*, Platina: St. Herman Brotherhood, 2001, pp. 8-9.

¹²⁵² Rogich, *Great Martyr Tsar Lazar of Serbia*, pp. 11-12.

¹²⁵³ Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 39.

For as Patriarch Danilo wrote in his late-fourteenth century *Narrative about Prince Lazar*: “We have lived for a long time in the world, in the end we seek to accept the martyr’s struggle and live for ever in heaven. We call ourselves Christian soldiers, martyrs for godliness to be recorded in the book of life... Suffering begets glory and labours lead to peace.”¹²⁵⁴

According to the great Serbian Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, it was this conscious seeking of martyrdom, rather than self-preservation, that distinguished Kosovo from all other battles between Orthodox armies and the enemies of Orthodoxy. “As the dead are dressed in new and expensive clothes, so was the Serbian army dressed in its best robes. The shiny and glowing procession hurried from all the borders of the empire into the focus of honour and fame, to the field of Kosovo. Shaded by cross-shaped banners and the icons of the family saints (slava), singing and cheering, singing and playing musical instruments, with song and joy, the army rushed towards its place of execution. Not a single Christian martyr is known to have prayed to God to save him from his approaching death, while thousands and thousands are known to have prayed not to be spared from a martyr’s death. Neither did Lazar’s army hold prayers for salvation from death. On the contrary – it confessed its sins and took Communion – for death. One whole armed people as one Christian martyr, obedient to the thoughtful will of the Almighty, accepted the bitterness of death and that not as bitterness but as a vital force. And hasn’t Kosovo right up to the present day, indeed, served as a vital force to dozens of generations? In the history of the Christian peoples there is not a case of one whole army, one whole armed people being imbued by the wish to die, to meet death for the sake of its religion. Not to meet a suicidal but a heroic death. Kosovo is unique in the twenty-century-old history of the Christian world.”¹²⁵⁵

However, as he stood dying, supported in the arms of a Turkish soldier, the holy king began to have doubts. “He prayed to God to reply to the question that was tormenting him: ‘I am a sinner, and I am dying, but why are my people and my warriors condemned to this torment, to these sufferings?’ And at this moment the king remembered that he had once made a choice between the earthly kingdom and the Heavenly Kingdom. And at that time he had chosen the Heavenly Kingdom. Perhaps his choice had been incorrect, and he had stirred up his people, forcing it to suffer. This thought tormented the dying king. Perhaps it was this decision of his that had become the main reason for the defeat of Serbia and the destruction of his people, the destruction of his closest friends...

“At that moment, when the pain in the soul of the king was so deep that he could no longer feel his physical sufferings, he was suddenly overshadowed by a bright light, and before him there stood an angel and someone else in

¹²⁵⁴ Danilo, in Wheatcroft, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

¹²⁵⁵ Velimirovich, “Kosovo”, in *1389-1989, Boj na Kosovu*, pp. 52-53.

shining raiment. (This was the Prophet Amos - King Lazarus' holy 'slava', that is, his heavenly protector - Nun I.).

"The angel addressed him with the following words: 'Do not grieve, King Lazarus. I am sent from God. I have been sent to you to answer all the questions which are tearing your soul apart. Do not suffer thinking that you made an incorrect choice. Your choice was correct'....

"He said: 'Why has your country fallen? Because it has grown old.'

"Seeing the perplexity of the king, the angel explained that old age is not a physical condition, but a spiritual one (more precisely, not old age, but spiritual paralysis). The poison of sin had poisoned the Serbian nobility and made it old, and this poison was beginning also to penetrate the people and poison its soul. Only a powerful storm could sweep away this evil, the corrupting spirit of the poison, and save the people from the destruction that threatened it. And so in order to save the country spiritually (from sin), it would have to be overthrown. 'Do not grieve, king,' continued the Angel, 'your choice was correct and in agreement with the will of God. It is clear that Christ Himself and His angels, while confirming the sufferings of life, have given them a special higher meaning and thereby forced man to find in them a higher righteousness: to find in these sufferings the path to a better life.' King Lazarus had to understand this inner and higher meaning of sufferings. These sufferings had to be perceived by him as a voluntary exploit taken on by him and his people, an exploit of love for the highest principles of life.

"The world cannot accept this love, for it loves only itself with a love of the flesh and sensuality.

"'No, king, no,' said the angel, 'you made no mistake in your choice, and therefore you will receive a double crown, both a heavenly and an earthly. You have made the right choice, but you are sinning in doubting it.'

"'But how can my choice of the Heavenly Kingdom,' asked the king, 'bring good to my people?'

"Your choice of the Heavenly Kingdom will undoubtedly give unwaning benefit to your people. It will purify their mind, heart and will. It will transfigure their souls into radiant mirrors in which eternal life will be reflected. The Heavenly Kingdom will enter into them and will make them worthy of It. Their minds will be purified from impurity, and their hearts will become worthy of grace. 'In Thy light shall we see light'...

"'Since neither the example of the saints of your people, not the sermons of the priests have produced any benefit or positive result, Providence allowed this terrible death, this killing of your noble generals, and your death. Then will come a time of deep repentance, silence and sufferings. And so, step by step, the hearts of people will have to be drawn away from this world and

return to Heaven. Their hearts must be freed from the smoke of hell and be filled with the true Light...

“One more question tormented King Lazarus: ‘Will not slavery destroy that feeling of inner freedom which is innate in my people? And will not all their talents and abilities dry up under the heavy yoke of slavery?’

The angel replied: ‘Your words, O king, witness to the fact that you are still in the chains of the flesh. But in the Heavens human affairs are evaluated only in accordance with the motives that rule man. All the rest: cities, palaces, mechanisms – are emptiness without any value. Huge cities are all just the dust of the roads, smoke that vanishes. A small, pitiful bee can laugh on looking at your huge towers and empires. And how is one to explain to a bird sitting in a cage this inner, deep meaning of the freedom of a free bird? Those who have chosen the earthly kingdom cannot understand those who have chosen the Heavenly Kingdom. Their evil will is united with the demonic will and so they cannot look on the Heavenly Kingdom. The entrance into it is closed to them. And they have no freedom, they are the slaves of their flesh and the demons.

“‘Understand, O king, that this sad day may be the day of the turning of your people, not to evil, but to good. Until now their earthly will has dragged them down into the abyss of eternal death. Beginning from now, your people must carry out the will of another, and this can teach them to carry out the will of God, separating them from self-opinion and self-will.

“‘They will have to submit to the will of a cruel tyrant, and so will be able to understand and hate their own tyranny, the tyranny of their flesh over their soul. Through the years and centuries, labours and sorrows will teach them to hate these evil powers, their own will and the will of their slave-owners.

“‘And so the people will strive upwards, to heaven, as a tree in a thick wood, and will seek the bright light of their Creator, for, not possessing anything earthly, they will easily acquire the Heavenly Light; for they will hate both their own will and the will of their slave-owners. And then the Divine will will become for them sweeter than milk and honey.

“‘... And so, O king, say to God: ‘Thy will be done.’ It is possible to understand the meaning of the cross and sufferings only if one voluntarily accepts to take up the cross sent by God. Taking up the cross is a witness to one’s love for God through one’s voluntary sufferings. The cross is the witness of holy love.’

“The angel also explained the meaning of freedom. What does freedom mean? It is a symbol. The word ‘freedom’ has many meanings. When the external form of freedom changes to the tyranny of one man over another, and is not punished by the laws of the country, then the Lord takes away the freedom of this nation and casts it into the ‘school’ of slavery, so that the

people may esteem and understand true freedom. But this true, golden freedom is closely linked with the honourable cross. Only through the cross is golden freedom revealed to people. Golden freedom is true, unfailing freedom. And only that mortal man who acquires such freedom becomes truly free, and not the slave of the flesh and passions. Then it truly becomes free from illusions, fleshly passions and glory, free from people and demons, free from himself, from his passions. Free at all times and in all places, wherever he may be, whether in freedom or in slavery. This gem is preserved precisely in the depths of the human soul. True freedom is that freedom which cannot be taken away from man by prison or any foreign power. Without this freedom man is a pitiful slave, be he a king or the meanest servant. This freedom is not from obedience to God, but this freedom is in God - the true, eternal, joyful and golden freedom.

“... And the angel added: ‘It is better to acquire the Kingdom of Heaven by sufferings than the kingdom of the earth by evil. And there is no evil on earth, or in hell, that could conquer the eternal wisdom of the Heavens.’

“After these words of the angel, Lazarus was no longer spiritually the old man, but was renewed in spirit. His soul was enlightened by the spirit of the Heavens. And although the battle still raged around him, in his soul Lazarus felt a new, eternal life and eternal joy. He sighed deeply and said: ‘Amen’.”¹²⁵⁶

Northern Serbia retained some independence from the Turks for a few more decades. But the Bulgars were overwhelmed. Under Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-71) they recovered somewhat; but the “Autocrat of all Bulgarians and Greeks” had the same ambition as had Tsar Dushan of replacing Roman universalism with the ethnic principle. St. Theodosius, of Trnovo (+1363) prophesied that the Turks would conquer the Bulgarian land because of its sins. And so it turned out: in 1393, Trnovo was conquered, the Bulgarian state was dissolved and the patriarch, St. Euthymius, was deposed.

¹²⁵⁶ Velimirovich, in Nun Ioanna, “Taina kosovskoj bitvy – dukhovnoe zaveschanie tsaria Lazaria” (“The Mystery of the Battle of Kosovo – the Spiritual Will of Tsar Lazarus”), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), N 7 (583), July, 1998, pp. 15, 16, 19, 21, 22-23. See also James E. Held, “Legend of the Fall, 1389: the battle of Kosovo”, *Medieval History*, N 5, January, 2004, pp. 32-37.

80. THE RISE OF MUSCOVY

Byzantium survived for over sixty years after Kosovo Polye and the fall of Bulgaria. In this there is a moral: that the persistent attempts of the Slavic states to achieve equal status, ecclesiastically as well as politically, with Byzantium were not pleasing to God insofar as the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox world was still entrusted by God to Byzantium. But it was a different story with a third Slavic state to the north – Russia.

A new phase in Rusian history had begun in 1299, when Metropolitan Maximus of Kiev, whose title now included the phrase “of all Russia”, moved the seat of the Russian metropolitanate from the devastated ruins of Kiev in the South to Vladimir-Suzdal in the North. In this way the Church followed where the State, in the person of St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo, had led in the previous century. This indicated that the political leadership of Russia had to come from the north, from the area that we shall now call “Great Russia”, as opposed to “Little Russia” in the south, centred on Kiev, or “White Russia” in the west, which was increasingly coming under the dominion of the pagan rulers of Lithuania.

On the death of Maximus, Grand-Prince Yury of Galicia petitioned Patriarch Athanasius I to consecrate a “metropolitan of Galicia”. This move was potentially very dangerous for the unity of the Russian lands. For once the Russian territories under Lithuanian rule had their own metropolitan, they might be tempted to break with Great Russia ecclesiastically as well as politically. And this in turn would certainly expose Little Russia to the danger of absorption into Roman Catholicism, which threatened from Poland and the Baltic German lands...¹²⁵⁷ It appears that the patriarchate recognised its mistake, because when Maximus died and Grand Prince Yury put forward a Galician abbot, Peter, for the metropolitanate of Galicia, the patriarchate appointed him “metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia” instead, rejecting the candidate put forward by the great prince of Vladimir, Michael of Tver.

Beginning with St. Peter, the metropolitans firmly maintained their rights to rule over the whole of the Russian flock, having for this the support of the Tatars in the same way that the ecumenical patriarch would later have the support of the Turks. St. Peter moved the seat of Church government again, from Vladimir to Moscow – that is, to the town whose princes, more than any others, followed the “Alexandrian” pro-Tatar and anti-Catholic policy, and

¹²⁵⁷ That this was a real threat already in the fourteenth century, and even in some parts of Great Russia, is illustrated by an incident that took place in Novgorod, which was traditionally, because of its foreign merchant colony, less anti-Catholic than other parts of Great Russia. “On one occasion at the end of the fourteenth century, the city, in bargaining with the patriarch of Constantinople for privileges for its archbishop, threatened to go to Rome as a final argument. This threat was not serious and did not fail to elicit a severe rebuke from the patriarch, but, up to the time of the loss of their independence, the Novgorodians saw no objection against a political alliance with the Catholic kings of Lithuanian Poland” (G. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 336).

which was neither too far east to be under the shadow of the Tatars nor too far west to be under the shadow of the Lithuanians.¹²⁵⁸ And the Tatar Khan in a gramota of 1315 gave to the prince of Moscow the same privileges in the State that he had already given to the metropolitan in the Church.

St. Peter advised Great Prince Ivan I Danilovich to build a stone church dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, which became the first church of Russia. "If, my son, you obey me, and build the church of the Most Pure Mother of God, and give me rest in your city, God will bless you and make you higher than all the other princes, and will extend this city more than all other cities. And your race will possess this place to the ages".¹²⁵⁹

In 1326 St. Peter moved his see to Moscow, and died in December of the same year. As he had prophesied, a process of political and economic centralisation around Moscow now began. The first step in this process consisted in the replacing of Tver by Moscow as the most favoured principality in the eyes of the Mongols.

Now the Mongols liked to appoint one of the Russian princes as their chief tax-collector for the Russian dominions. In exchange for providing the Horde with regular income, this prince was given the Great Princely title, was protected from Mongol raids and had the opportunity of making considerable gains for himself from the other tribute-paying princes. At the time of St. Peter's death, the prince of Tver had the "yarlik" of tax-collector and Great Prince. Almost immediately, however, in 1327, the citizens of Tver rose up against the khan and killed a high-level deputation from the Mongol capital of Sarai sent to oversee the collection of tribute. After some hesitation, the prince of Tver sided with the rebels - which gave Prince Ivan of Moscow his chance. He set off for Sarai and returned at the head of a Mongol-Russian force which devastated Tver. In reward for this service, the khan bestowed the title of Grand Prince on Ivan together with the responsibility of farming all the taxes due to the khan from the whole of Russia.

In 1345 Great-Prince Olgerd ascended the throne of Lithuania. He was a pagan; but, as Papadakis writes, he "would extend his domains over Russian territories from the Baltic to the Black seas, including the prestigious city of Kiev. His avowed goal was to free Russia from the Mongol rule and assume the legacy of the ancient Kievan princes. To reach that goal he was ready to embrace Orthodox Christianity, which was already the religion of his two successive wives (who were Russian princesses), of all his numerous children, and of the vast majority of his subjects. However, it was not Olgerd but "the Church [that] was actually holding the trump card: the real center of the country had to be the metropolitan's residence, since that prelate controlled

¹²⁵⁸ A.E. Presniakov, "Na puti k yedinoderzhaviu" ("On the Path to One-Man Rule"), *Rodina* (Homeland), N 11, 2003, pp. 15-16.

¹²⁵⁹ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 9.

the only administrative structure covering Moscow, Novgorod, Kiev, Vilna (the Lithuanian capital) and distant Galicia. He was, in addition, a representative of Byzantium and a religious official respected by the Tatar khans."¹²⁶⁰

It was at about this time, in 1347, that Olgerd's supposed conversion to Orthodoxy was not genuine: three young Orthodox, Anthony, John and Eustathius, were martyred by him in Vilna for refusing to accept paganism. It then suddenly became clear to all those with eyes to see that the interests of Orthodoxy lay with Moscow rather than Lithuania. And at the same time the issue of the metropolitanate again became of political importance.

In 1353, Metropolitan Theognostus of Kiev, a Greek, had "personally arranged his succession in the person of a Russian, Alexis, whom he had consecrated as bishop of Vladimir... In 1352 the Lithuanian grand-prince strongly demanded from the patriarchate that the seat of the metropolitanate be returned to Kiev, and even sent his candidate, Theodoret, to Constantinople for consecration. Facing a rebuke, he took the unusual step of having Theodoret ordained by the Bulgarian patriarch of Trnovo. Understandably, Theodoret was labelled a schismatic in Constantinople and in Moscow..."¹²⁶¹

The Ecumenical Patriarch, St. Philotheus, wanted to preserve the unity of the Russian metropolitanate and resist the divisive plans of Olgerd. So in 1354 he consecrated Bishop Alexis as metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia. Alexis was a holy man who in 1357 had healed the influential widow of khan Uzbek, Taidul, and consequently had great authority with the Golden Horde. Almost immediately, however, a political and ecclesiastical coup took place in the capital. John VI Cantacuzenos was forced to abdicate, and "with Genoese assistance," as Colin Wells writes, "John V Paleologos resumed the throne as sole emperor. Cantacuzenos' patriarch, Philotheos, was deposed, and the new government installed his rival, Callistos.

"The new Genoese-controlled government in Constantinople now swung towards Olgerd, the powerful grand prince of Lithuania, as a counter to Moscow. Callistos offered Olgerd his own 'metropolitan of the Lithuanians', for which position the Lithuanian ruler nominated a Russian from Tver named Roman [he had by this time dropped Theodoret]. The patriarchal archives record Byzantine impressions of Olgerd's motive: 'to find a means, with Roman's help, of ruling Great Russia', as the northeastern provinces were now called. Since he already ruled 'Little Russia', including Kiev, it was clear that Olgerd was making a bid to take over all of Russia.

"In keeping with Olgerd's ambitions, Roman soon began styling himself metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, moving his residency to Kiev and

¹²⁶⁰ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

¹²⁶¹ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

ignoring Callistos' injunctions that he respect the claims of Alexis, the rightful metropolitan, whom Philotheos had installed before Cantacuzenos' resignation, and who resided in Moscow. But Roman died in 1362, and Callistos – perhaps under Cantacuzenos' renewed influence behind the scenes – reunified the Russian metropolitanate under Alexis.

“Olgerd wasn't about to give up so easily. Over the next decade and a half until his death in 1377, the energetic Lithuanian grand prince challenged Moscow for control of Russia. That struggle was a major watershed in Eastern European history. It reached its peak in his unsuccessful siege of Moscow in 1368, which was repelled by Moscow's grand prince Dimitri II, not yet the victor of the Don. Olgerd's campaign continued even after that defeat. It turned Alexis and the metropolitanate into political footballs...”¹²⁶² Thus in 1369 Great Prince Dimitri, having consolidated his position within Great Russia, sent an army against Lithuanian-controlled Smolensk and Briansk. “At the same time Metropolitan Alexis excommunicated from the Church those princes who had entered into union with the Lithuanian pagans against the Christian prince of Moscow.”¹²⁶³

By this time, Philotheos had resumed control of the patriarchate on the death of Callistos in 1363 – and resumed also his support of St. Alexis. Olgerd hit back by complaining to Philotheos that Alexis never visited his flock in Lithuania, and asked him to grant a second metropolitan for all the lands which he and his allies controlled. He was supported by a threat coming from King Casimir of Poland, as Papadakis writes, “forcibly to convert the Galicians to Roman Catholicism. Faced with an emergency situation, Philotheos reestablished a separate [but *temporary*] metropolitanate in Galicia (1371), and called on Alexis to exercise more even-handedness towards Olgerd and his Orthodox subjects. [In particular, he was to visit them more often.] In 1375, he also consecrated a man of his immediate entourage, the learned Bulgarian monk Cyprian, as metropolitan in Lithuania. He made sure, however, that this consecration would not lead to a lasting division of the metropolitanate: Cyprian received the right to succeed Alexis. Upon his arrival in Kiev in 1376, he restored order and the prestige of the metropolitanate in territories controlled by Lithuania.”¹²⁶⁴

At the same time, Great Prince Dimitri was bringing Tver, which previously had been in the Lithuanian sphere of influence, in vassalage to himself, and Prince Sviatoslav of Smolensk broke with Olgerd and entered into union with Dimitri. With the change in political orientation in these lands, Metropolitan Alexis was able to appoint new bishops for Smolensk and Briansk. As Lithuania began to be threatened by the Catholic Teutonic knights from the Baltic, Prince Dimitri took the title “Great Prince of all Russia” when

¹²⁶² Wells, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

¹²⁶³ Boris Floria, “Tochka raspada” (“The Point of Dissolution”), *Rodina* (Homeland), N 11, 2003, p. 29

¹²⁶⁴ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 339

signing a treaty with Novgorod; and it looked as if the reunification of the Russian lands under Moscow was about to begin....

At about this time the Metropolitan of Lithuania Cyprian urged a union between Orthodox Muscovy and Lithuania against the Tatars. However, this policy was not favoured by the Muscovite Great-Prince. And so when Cyprian hastened to Moscow on the death of St. Alexis in 1378 he was imprisoned and then expelled from Moscow, which led to a prolonged struggle to fill the vacant metropolitan's throne...

Encouraged by another coup in Constantinople, Dimtri sent his candidate for the metropolitanate, Mityai, to the City. But Cyprian had got there before him – and another coup changed the situation again in Cyprian's favour. Besides, as Mityai came within sight of the City he dropped dead...

But in 1380 the pendulum swung again. The new patriarch, Neilos, could not resist the pressure of Dimitri, and decided on a compromise. A man called Pimen was consecrated metropolitan of Kiev and Great Russia, while Cyprian was given Lithuania and Little Russia.

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It was at this time that one of the greatest saints of this or any other age, Sergius of Radonezh, assumed the spiritual leadership of the Russian Church. In 1380, a Tatar usurper, Mamai, invaded Muscovy. He was claiming unpaid tribute, and was supported by Genoa, Ryazan – and Lithuania under Olgerd's son Jagiello. St. Sergius blessed the Great-Prince to fight only when all other measures had failed¹²⁶⁵: "You, my lord prince, must care and strongly stand for your subjects, and lay down your life for them, and shed your blood in the image of Christ Himself, Who shed His blood for us. But first, O lord, go to them with righteousness and obedience, as you are bound to submit to the khan of the Horde in accordance with your position. You know, Basil the Great tried to assuage the impious Julian with gifts, and the Lord looked on Basil's humility and overthrew the impious Julian. And the Scripture teaches us that such enemies want glory and honour from us, we give it to them; and if they want silver and gold, we give it to them; but for the name of Christ, the Orthodox faith, we must lay down our lives and shed our blood. And you, lord, give them honour, and gold, and silver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride."

¹²⁶⁵ The following account, though accepted before the revolution, has been rejected more recently by scholars who argue that St. Sergius could not have blessed the Great-Prince, who had been excommunicated by St. Cyprian, Metropolitan of Moscow. See Oleg Morozov, "Novie Russkie Sviatie", *Portal-Credo.Ru*, February 5, 2016. However, in lieu of a definitive consensus among the historians, I have chosen to keep the following account in this work, especially in view of its important didactic content.

“I have already done that,” replied the Great Prince: “but my enemy is exalted still more.”

“If so,” said the God-pleaser, “then final destruction awaits him, while you, Great Prince, can expect help, mercy and glory from the Lord. Let us hope on the Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God, that They will not abandon you”. And he added: “You will conquer your enemies.”¹²⁶⁶

Fortified by the blessing of the saint, Great-Prince Demetrius defeated the enemy at the great battle of Kulikovo Polje, at which over 100,000 Russian warriors gave their lives for the Orthodox faith and their Russian homeland. Some have seen in this, the first victory of the Russians over the Tatars, a sign that the Russians had changed the policy of submission to the Tartars that they had inherited from St. Alexander Nevsky, and that St. Sergius actively blessed a policy of rebellion against those whom previous princes and metropolitans had seen as their lawful sovereigns. However, as we have seen, the saint advised submission in the first place, and war only if the Tatar could not be bought off. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that Mamai was himself a rebel against the Horde, so that in resisting him the Russians were in no way rebelling against their lawful sovereigns. In any case, two years later the lawful khan came and sacked Moscow; so there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy. It was not until a century later, in 1480, that the Muscovites refused to pay any further tribute to the khans. The real significance of Kulikovo Polje lies in the fact that a union of princes had defeated an external foe under the leadership of the Orthodox Church, thereby holding out the promise that the spiritual unity of the Russian lands, which had never been lost, could be complemented by that political unity which had been lost two hundred years before.

To seal this spiritual unity, Metropolitan Cyprian returned in triumph to Moscow in the spring of 1381. “A chronicler relates that he was greeted with great rejoicing among the people. He resumed his active promotion of ecclesiastical unity, conspicuously ministering to the Orthodox in Lithuanian-controlled ‘Little Russia’ (which included Kiev).

“But he also made it clear that this unity now cohered around Moscow, exalting it as the divinely favored center of Orthodoxy in Russia. His *Life of Peter*, written at this time, pointedly celebrates his illustrious predecessor, the metropolitan who had first taken up residence in Moscow. Dimitri and his dynasty benefited immensely from such influential propaganda. The *Life of Peter* glorifies them as the legitimate heirs of Kievan rule, specially anointed to hold sway over the lands of the Orthodox Russians...”¹²⁶⁷

¹²⁶⁶ Archimandrite Nikon, *Zhitie i Pobedy Prepodobnago i Bogonosnago Otsa Nashego Sergia, Igumena Radonezhskago* (The Life and Victories of our Holy and God-bearing Father Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh), Sergiev Posad, 1898, p. 149

¹²⁶⁷ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

As it turned out, in spite of the pan-Russian vision of such leaders as Metropolitan Cyprian and St. Sergius, political union with Lithuania was not achieved: although, in 1383, the Lithuanian Great Prince Jagiello signed a treaty with Moscow and agreed to convert to Orthodoxy, he quickly changed his mind and instead, in 1386, converted to Catholicism, which led to the union of Lithuania with Catholic Poland and the increasing identification of Russian Orthodoxy and Russian Orthodox statehood with Muscovite Great Russia alone. Nevertheless, although only Great Russia remained faithful to the ecumenical vision of Orthodoxy, that vision, drawing strength from the Palamite renewal of monasticism taking place in Constantinople and the Balkan lands, helped produce that flowering of monasticism, iconography and missionary activity that makes the Age of St. Sergius such a glorious one in the annals of Russian history. The northern forests were covered with new monasteries founded by the disciples of St. Sergius (over 100 of whom were canonized). And icon-painters such as Andrei Rublev glorified the newly-built churches with their wonderful works.

Moreover, it was at this time that, under the influence of St. Sergius, Great-Prince Dimitri ordered his children to observe a new order of inheritance, whereby his eldest son was to inherit the Great Princedom, not allowing any quarrels or claims from the other children. Once again, St. Sergius was entrusted with guarding this most important decree, which served to strengthen the institution of one-man, autocratic rule in Russia.¹²⁶⁸ For, as St. John Maximovich writes, "under Dimitri Ivanovich the significance of the Great Prince grew mightily. The most powerful appanages of the Great Prince - Tver and Ryazan - were forced to conclude agreements with him in which they recognised themselves to be his younger brothers... Basil Dimitrievich continued the work of his father. He joined some appanages to Moscow, and with the remaining appanage princes he concluded agreements to the effect that they had to submit to him and not seek the Great Princedom."¹²⁶⁹

Although Dimitri again quarreled with St. Cyprian and replaced him with Pimen, on the deaths of both Dimitri and Pimen in 1388, Cyprian reentered Moscow again in 1390 as the unchallenged metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia...

The Russians' defeat of the Mongols at Kulikovo Polje in 1380 and the Serbs' defeat by the Ottomans at Kosovo Polje in 1389, represent the opposite poles of Orthodox fortunes in the Middle Ages. The first marked the beginning of the rise of the last of the Orthodox autocracies, while the second marked the beginning of the end of Orthodox autocracy in its original Mediterranean homeland.

¹²⁶⁸ Archimandrite Nikon, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹²⁶⁹ St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

81. THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE

The Fall of Bulgaria in 1393 exposed Constantinople to the Turks, and the West summoned a large army under King Sigismund of Hungary to rescue the first city of Christendom. The two armies met at Nicopolis in 1396. The Turks won...

Now the Serbian Despot Stephen Lazarevich was a Turkish vassal, and so had to fight on the Turkish side. However, it may be that, like St. Alexander Nevsky 150 years before, he consciously chose to support the Turks rather than the Catholics, seeing in the latter a greater danger to the Serbian Faith and Nation. In partial support of this hypothesis, Barbara Tuchman writes that, "as a vassal of the Sultan," Stephen "might have chosen passive neutrality like the Bulgarians on whose soil the struggle was being fought, but he hated the Hungarians more than the Turks, and chose active fidelity to his Moslem overlord. His intervention was decisive. Sigismund's forces were overwhelmed."¹²⁷⁰

The way to Constantinople was now open for the Turks. But once again God saved the Orthodox when all human support had failed: at the battle of Ancyra in 1402 the Turkish Sultan Bayezit (with Stephen Lazarevich again fighting on his side) was defeated by the Mongol Tamerlane, one of the greatest and most ruthless conquerors in history. "Later the same year," writes Simon Sebag Montefiore, "he annihilated the Christian city of Smyrna, floating the severed heads of his victims out to sea on candlelit dishes. By 1404, even the Byzantine emperor John I was paying him tribute in return for a guarantee of safety."¹²⁷¹

However, the position of the Empire continued to decline. The City itself was ravaged and largely depopulated; its inhabitants dragged out a miserable existence, ill-fed, ill-clothed and demoralized. In a desperate last throw of the dice, the Byzantines decided to unite with the Roman Church in exchange for the promise of military help against the Turks...

Outside the City, the only considerable Byzantine possession was the Despotate of Morea, now known as the Peloponnese. Andronicus Palaeologus had given Thessalonica into the hands of the Venetians, who then, in 1430, lost it to the Turks. There, in the capital of Mystra, a last flourishing of Byzantine civilization took place... And yet it was a strange flourishing when Mystra's most famous citizen, the philosopher George Gemistus Plethon, was a student of Aristotle, Zoroaster and the Jewish Cabala, and who was discovered, after his death, to have been a believer in the pagan Greek gods!

¹²⁷⁰ Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century*, New York: Knopf, 1978, p. 560.

¹²⁷¹ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 157.

Colin Wells writes: "In so flagrantly abandoning Orthodox Byzantium for ancient Greece, Pletho represents an extreme version of the classicizing tendency that had helped drive the humanists [students of the "Outer Wisdom", pagan classical literature and art] further and further from the Byzantine mainstream. Most Byzantines had already paid their money and taken their choice, and their choice was not Pletho's. Their most urgent priority was to save their immortal souls, not to preserve what was an essentially Greek state. Imbued with Hesychasm's somber, otherworldly tones, the mainstream of Byzantine civilization had already turned towards a better life in the next world while resigning itself to Turkish captivity in this one. For his self-reliant stand against the Turks, Pletho has been called the first Greek nationalist - so ardent was he, in fact, that he argued against church union not for religious reasons but for patriotic ones, preferring to find strength from within [the Byzantine state]." ¹²⁷²

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 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 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 [at the urging of Cosimo de Medici] in January 1439." ¹²⁷³

The Greek delegation consisted of 700 ecclesiastical and lay notables, including twenty metropolitans. 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." ¹²⁷⁴ 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 "proceeding through" and "proceeding from" meant the same.

But he did not become a Roman Catholic... One day, as Hefele writes, "The Patriarch was found dead in his room. On the table lay (supposedly) his testament, Extrema Sententia, consisting in all of some lines in which he declared that he accepted everything that the Church of Rome confesses. And then: "In like manner I acknowledge the Holy Father of Fathers, the Supreme

¹²⁷² Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, pp. 91-92.

¹²⁷³ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 103-104.

¹²⁷⁴ A.P. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie Oчерki Sostoiania Vizantijsko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 102.

Pontiff and Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Pope of Old Rome. Likewise, I acknowledge purgatory. In affirmation of this, I affix my signature."

"There is no doubt whatever that Patriarch Joseph did not write this document. The German scholar Frommann, who made a detailed investigation of the "Testament" of Patriarch Joseph, says: "This document is so Latinized and corresponds so little to the opinion expressed by the Patriarch several days before, that its spuriousness is evident."¹²⁷⁵

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, not the Orthodox 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. Thus 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 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

¹²⁷⁵ Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 1015sq.

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.*”¹²⁷⁶

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).”¹²⁷⁷

Thus many factors – obedience to the emperor, fear for the fate of Hellenism, hopes of a reunion of Christendom – combined to undermine the resistance of most Greeks to the unia, which involved surrender to almost all the pope’s demands, including the Filioque and papal supremacy.

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During the council, the Latins wore down the Greeks with their scholastic reasoning. “The Papal theologian John Protonotarios, the Spaniard, otherwise known as Juan de Torquemada, uncle to the terrible Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, during one of the synodal assemblies, abused the logic of Aristotle to such an extent, that one Orthodox Bishop from Iberia was overheard by Silvester Syropoulos, an eyewitness of this historic Synod,

¹²⁷⁶ 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.

¹²⁷⁷ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

muttering: 'Aristotle, Aristotle, why all this Aristotle when they should be quoting St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Basil, Gregory the Theologian, Chrysostom, but not Aristotle.' Syropoulos says that he writes this to show how the Latins were condemned for their scholastic mentality, which was foreign to the authentic ecclesiastical spirit, not only by the Orthodox who attended the Synod, but also by those "who spoke other languages" who were present at the discussions."¹²⁷⁸

Throughout, the heretical Pope stubbornly insisted that the Orthodox were outside the Church: ""The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this ecclesiastical body that only those remaining within this unity can profit by the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, their almsgivings, their other works of Christian piety and the duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved, unless he remain within the bosom and the unity of the Catholic Church."

"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 [on July 6, 1439], with the exception of Mark Evgenicus [Metropolitan of Ephesus], and, it seems, of Plethon...; and, after retiring for a while to his see of Ephesus, in Turkish territory, he submitted to pressure and abdicated."¹²⁷⁹

Michael Ducas records that on February 1, 1440, "the people of Constantinople kissed the hierarchs immediately as they disembarked from the triremes and they asked the hierarchs how things went. 'What happened at the Synod? Were we successful?' The hierarchs answered, 'We sold our faith, we exchanged Godliness for godlessness, betraying the pure sacrifice, we became upholders of unleavened bread.' They said all this and more obscene and sordid words. When they were asked why they had signed, they said 'Because we feared the Latins.' And when they were asked if the Latins had tortured them or whipped them or put them in prison they responded, 'No'. The people then asked them: 'So what happened? Let the right hand that

¹²⁷⁸ John Sanidopoulos, "The Danger of 'Mutant' Theology", <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2015/03/the-danger-of-mutant-theology.html?m=1>.

¹²⁷⁹ 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 [of the Morea] 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)

signed,' they said, 'be cut off and the tongue that professed [heresy] be pulled out from its root.' ...

"The people spat in their faces, and history recorded them as betrayers and the people praised St. Mark of Ephesus as the pillar of Orthodoxy..."¹²⁸⁰

In fulfillment of his side of the bargain, the Pope called on western leaders to mount a crusade against the Turks. The resultant "Crusade of Varna" set out from Hungary with twenty-five thousand men. It was crushed by the Turks at Varna in November, 1444...

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St. Mark now undertook the leadership of the anti-uniatic Church with the motto: "There can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith."¹²⁸¹ 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."

In July, 1440 St. Mark wrote: "To All Orthodox Christians on the Mainland and in the Islands.

"From Mark, Bishop of the Metropolis of Ephesus – Rejoice in Christ!

"To those who have ensnared us in an evil captivity – desiring to lead us away into the Babylon of Latin rites and dogmas – could not, of course, completely accomplish this, seeing immediately that there was little chance of it. In fact, that it was simply impossible. But having stopped somewhere in the middle – both they and those who followed after them – they neither remained any longer what they were, nor became anything else. For having quit Jerusalem, a firm and unwavering faith – and yet being in no condition and not wishing to become and to be called Babylonians – they thus called themselves, as if by right, 'Greco-Latins,' and among the people are called 'Latinizers.'

"And so these split people, like the mythical centaurs, confess together with the Latins that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and has the Son as Cause of His existence, and yet together with us confess that He proceeds from the Father. And they say together with them that the addition to the Creed (of the Filioque) was done canonically and with blessing, and yet together with us do not permit it to be uttered. (Besides, who would turn away from what was canonical and blessed?). And they say together with them that unleavened bread is the Body of Christ, and yet together with us do

¹²⁸⁰ Ducas, in volume 6 p. 299 of the *History* of Paparrigopoulos.

¹²⁸¹ "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" (Constantine Tsipianlis, *Mark Eugenikos and the Council of Florence*, New York: Kentron Vyzantinon Erevnon, 1986, p. 60).

not dare to accept it. Is this not sufficient to reveal their spirit, and how that it was not in a quest for the Truth—which, having in their hands, they betrayed—that they came together with the Latins, but rather from a desire to enrich themselves and to conclude not a true, but false, union?

“But one should examine in what manner they have united with them; for everything that is united to something different is naturally united by means of some middle point between them. And thus they imagined to unite with them by means of some judgment concerning the Holy Spirit, together with expressing the opinion that He has existence also from the Son. But everything else between them is divergent, and there is among them neither any middle point nor anything in common. Just as before, two divergent Creeds are uttered. Likewise, there are celebrated two Liturgies, divergent and discordant one with the other—one with leavened bread, the other with unleavened bread. Divergent also are baptisms—one performed with triple immersion, the other with “pouring” over the head from above; one with anointing chrism, the other completely without. And all rites are in everything divergent and discordant one with the other, along with the fasts, church usages, and other, similar things...

“The pious canons speak thus: ‘He is a heretic and subject to the canons against heretics who even slightly departs from the Orthodox Faith.’ If, then, the Latins do not at all depart from the correct Faith, we have evidently cut them off unjustly. But if they have thoroughly departed [from the Faith]—and that in connection with the theology of the Holy Spirit, blasphemy against Whom is the greatest of all perils—then it is clear that they are heretics, and we have cut them off as heretics.

“Why do we anoint with chrism those of them who come to us? Is it not clear that it is because they are heretics? For the seventh canon of the Second Ecumenical Council states:

“‘As for those heretics who betake themselves to Orthodoxy, and to the lot of those being saved, we accept them in accordance with the subjoined sequence and custom: Arians, and Macedonians, and Sabbatians, and Novatians, those calling themselves Cathari (“Puritans”) and Aristeri (“Best”), and the Quartodecimans, otherwise known as Tetradites, and Apollinarians we accept when they offer libelli (recantations in writing), and anathematize every heresy that does not hold the same beliefs as the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God, and are sealed first with holy chrism on their forehead and their eyes, and nose, and mouth, and ears, and in sealing them we say: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”’

“Do you see with whom we number those who come from the Latins? If all those are heretics, then it is clear that these are the same...

“If the Latin dogma is true that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, then ours is false that states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father—

and this is precisely the reason for which we separated from them. And if ours is true, then without a doubt, theirs is false. What kind of middle ground can there be between two such judgments? There can be none, unless it were some kind of judgment suitable to both the one and the other, like a boot that fits both feet. And will this unite us?..

“And we affirm, in agreement with the Fathers, that the will and energy of the uncreated and divine nature are uncreated; while they, together with the Latins and Thomas, say that will is identical with nature, but that the divine energy is created, whether it be called divinity, or the divine and immaterial light, or the Holy Spirit, or something else of this nature—and in some fashion, these poor creatures worship the created ‘divinity’ and the created ‘divine light’ and the created ‘Holy Spirit.’

“And we say that neither do the Saints receive the kingdom and the unutterable blessings already prepared for them, nor are sinners already sent to hell, but both await their fate which will be received in the future age after the resurrection and judgement; while they, together with the Latins, desire immediately after death to receive according to their merits. And for those in an intermediate condition, who have died in repentance, they give a purgatorial fire (which is not identical with that of hell) so that, as they say, having purified their souls by it after death, they also together with the righteous will enjoy the kingdom; this is contained in their Conciliar Decree.

“And we, obeying the Apostles who have prohibited it, shun Jewish unleavened bread; while they, in the same Act of Union, proclaim that what is used in the services of the Latins is the Body of Christ.

“And we say that the addition to the Creed arose un-canonically and anti-canonically and contrary to the Fathers; while they affirm that it is canonical and blessed—to such an extent are they unaware how to conform to the Truth and to themselves!

“And for us, the Pope is as one of the Patriarchs, and that alone—if he be Orthodox; while they, with great gravity, proclaim him ‘Vicar of Christ, Father and Teacher of all Christians’ May they be more fortunate than their Father, who are also like him. For he does not greatly prosper, having an anti-pope who is the cause of sufficient unpleasantness; and they are not happy to imitate him.

“And so, brethren, flee from them and from communion with them, for they are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (II Corinthians 11:13-15). And in another place, the same Apostle says of them: ‘For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, hut their own belly’; and by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the

hearts of the simple. Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal (Romans 16:18; II Timothy 2:19). And in another place: 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the circumcision' (Philippians 3:2). And then, in another place: 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you—let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8). See what has been prophetically foretold, that 'though an angel from heaven,' so that no one could cite in justification of himself an especially high position. And the beloved Disciple speaks thus: 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting is partaker in his evil deeds' (II John 10-11).

'Therefore, in so far as this is what has been commanded you by the Holy Apostles, stand aright, hold firmly to the traditions which you have received, both written and by word of mouth, that you be not deprived of your firmness if you are led away by the delusions of the lawless.

"May God, Who is all-powerful, make them also to know their delusion; and having delivered us from them as from evil tares, may He gather us into His granaries like pure and useful wheat, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom belongs all glory, honor, and worship, with His Father Who is without beginning, and His All-holy and Good and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

St. Mark's confession had a good effect. In April 1443 the three Patriarchs Joachim of Jerusalem, Philotheos of Alexandria, and Dorotheos of Antioch met in Jerusalem and condemned the Council of Florence as "vile" and Patriarch Metrophanes of Constantinople as a heretic.

On the day of his death in 1444, St. Mark said: "Concerning the [uniate] Patriarch I shall say this, lest it should perhaps occur to him to show me a certain respect at the burial of this my humble body, or to send to my grave any of his hierarchs or clergy or in general any of those in communion with him in order to take part in prayer or to join the priests invited to it from amongst us, thinking that at some time, or perhaps secretly, I had allowed communion with him. And lest my silence give occasion to those who do not know my views well and fully to suspect some kind of conciliation, I hereby state and testify before the many worthy men here present that I do not desire, in any manner and absolutely, and do not accept communion with him or with those who are with him, not in this life nor after my death, just as (I accept) neither the Union nor Latin dogmas, which he and his adherents have accepted, and for the enforcement of which he has occupied this presiding place, with the aim of overturning the true dogmas of the Church. I am absolutely convinced that the farther I stand from him and those like him, the nearer I am to God and all the saints; and to the degree that I separate myself from them am I in union with the Truth and with the Holy Fathers, the Theologians of the Church; and I am likewise convinced that those who count themselves with them stand far away from the Truth and from the blessed

Teachers of the Church. And for this reason I say: just as in the course of my whole life I was separated from them, so at the time of my departure, yea and after my death, I turn away from intercourse and communion with them and vow and command that none (of them) shall approach either my burial or my grave, and likewise anyone else from our side, with the aim of attempting to join and concelebrate in our Divine services; for this would be to mix what cannot be mixed. But it befits them to be absolutely separated from until such time as God shall grant correction and peace to His Church.”¹²⁸²

St. Mark, as Runciman writes, “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 the city would have nothing to do with them...

“At this supreme moment of the Empire’s agony, the [uniatic] Church of Constantinople could provide little help for the people. Its provincial

¹²⁸² St. Mark, *P.G.* 160, cols. 536c and 537a.

administration had been disorganized by the Turkish advance. In Constantinople itself the official policy of union had produced chaos. There was no Patriarch. The last occupant of the post, Gregory Mammias, had fled to Italy. As bishoprics fell vacant the Emperor could find no one to fill them who would support his work for union. The clergy and the congregations of the city held aloof from the ceremonies in the Great Church of Saint Sophia, going instead for guidance to the monastery of the Scholarius, where the monk Gennadius, the former George Scholarius, fulminated against the union. Was it right for the Byzantines to seek to save their bodies at the cost of losing their souls? And indeed, would they save their bodies? To Gennadius and his friends it was all too clear that the help provided by the West would be pathetically inadequate. Holy Writ maintained that sooner or later Antichrist would come as a precursor of Armageddon and the end of the world. To many Greeks it seemed that the time had come. Was this the moment to desert the purity of the Faith?"¹²⁸³

Gennadius went into seclusion, but left a notice on the door of his cell: "O unhappy Romans, why have you forsaken the truth? Why do you not trust in God, instead of in the Italians? In losing your faith you will lose your city."¹²⁸⁴

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Of vital importance was how the rising star in the Orthodox firmament, Russia, would react to the council...

In 1434, on the death of Metropolitan Photius, Bishop Jonah of Ryazan was elected metropolitan of Kiev and sent to Constantinople for consecration. "But here," writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, "obstacles were encountered. The Greeks were going through their last years. The Turks had moved up to Constantinople from all sides. The only hope of salvation was seen to be help from the West, but that could be bought only by means of humiliation before the Roman pope. Negotiations concerning the union of the Churches were undertaken. On the Latin side, people were being prepared in the East who would be able to agree to union, and they were given influential places and posts. One of these people was a certain Isidore, a very talented and educated person, but one who from a moral point of view was not especially firm, and was capable of changing his convictions. It was he whom they hastened to appoint as metropolitan for Moscow before the arrival of Jonah in Constantinople. St. Jonah was promised the metropolitanate after Isidore.

"Soon after Isidore had arrived in Moscow, he declared that the Eighth Ecumenical Council was being prepared in Italy for the union of the Churches, and that it was necessary for him to be there. Then he began to prepare for the journey. Great Prince Basil Vasilievich tried in every way to dissuade Isidore

¹²⁸³ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110, 159-160.

¹²⁸⁴ Gennadius Scholarius, in Sir Edmund Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, VII, 176.

from taking part in the council. Finally he said to him: 'If you unfailingly desire to go to the eighth council, bring us thence our ancient Orthodoxy, which we received from our ancestor Vladimir, and do not bring us anything new and foreign, which we will not accept.' Isidore swore to stand for Orthodoxy, but at the council of Florence he was especially zealous in promoting an outcome that was favourable for the pope. At the end of the council and after the reception of the unia, Isidore... returned to Moscow, and in his first service began to commemorate the pope instead of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The great prince publicly called him a Latin seducer and heretic and ordered that he be placed under guard until a conciliar resolution of the matter. The Russian bishops gathered in Moscow [in 1441] and condemned Isidore. Together with his disciple Gregory he fled to Tver, then Lithuania, and finally to Rome, where he remained for good with the pope.

"After Isidore's flight from Russia, St. Jonah remained for seven more years a simple bishop... Finally, in 1448... Basil Vasilievich summoned all the bishops of the Russian land to a council. The Fathers of the Council, on the basis of the Church canons, previous examples and the decision of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch that St. Jonah should be metropolitan after Isidore, appointed him to the see of the first-hierarchy. At a triumphant service in the Dormition cathedral the omophorion which had been placed on earlier metropolitans was placed on him, and the great metropolitan's staff, the symbol of first-hierarchical power, was put into his hands."¹²⁸⁵

The Russian Church was now technically in schism from the Great Church of Constantinople, which had fallen into the Latin heresy...

"However," writes N. Boyeikov, "even after he had learned about the treachery of the Orthodox emperor and the events which had shaken Byzantium, Basil did not consider that he had the right to break the canonical dependence which the Russian Church had inherited since the time of the Baptism of Rus', and after Jonah's election he wrote the following: 'After the death of Metropolitan Photius, having taken counsel with our mother, the Great Princess, and with our brothers, the Russian princes, both the Great Princes and the local ones, together with the lord of the Lithuanian land, the hierarchs and all the clergy, the boyars and all the Russian land, we elected Bishop Jonah of Ryazan and sent him to you in Constantinople for consecration together with our envoy. But before his arrival there the emperor and patriarch consecrated Isidore as metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus', while to Jonah they said: "Go to your see - the Ryazan episcopate. If Isidore dies or something else happens to him, then be ready to be blessed for the metropolitan see of all Rus'." Since a disagreement in the Church of God has taken place in our blessed kingdoms, travellers to Constantinople have suffered all kinds of difficulties on the road, there is great disorder in our countries, the godless Hagarenes have invaded, there have been civil wars,

¹²⁸⁵ Smirnov, *Istoria Khristianskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Orthodox Christian Church), Moscow: Krutitskoe podvorye, 2000, pp. 159-160.

and we ourselves have suffered terrible things, not from foreigners, but from our own brothers. In view of this great need, we have assembled our Russian hierarchs, and, in accordance with the canons, we have consecrated the above-mentioned Jonah to the Russian metropolitanate of Kiev and all Rus'. We have acted in this way because of great need, and not out of pride or boldness. We shall remain to the end of the age devoted to the Orthodoxy we have received; our Church will always seek the blessing of the Church of Tsargrad and obey her in everything according to the ancient piety. And our father Jonah also begs for blessing and union in that which does not concern the present new disagreements, and we beseech your holy kingdom to be kindly disposed to our father Metropolitan Jonah. We wanted to write about all these church matters to the most holy Orthodox patriarch, too; and to ask his blessing and prayers. But we do not know whether there is a patriarch in your royal city or not. But if God grants that you will have a patriarch according to the ancient piety, then we shall inform him of all our circumstances and ask for his blessing.'

"On reading this gramota of the Great Prince Basil, one is amazed at his tact and the restraint of his style. Knowing that the emperor himself had betrayed the faith, that Patriarch Gregory had fled to Rome, as also Isidore who had been sent to Moscow, Basil II, instead of giving a well-merited rebuke to his teachers and instructors, himself apologised for the fact that circumstances had compelled the Russian bishops to consecrate a metropolitan for themselves, and comes near to begging him to receive Jonah with honour. It is remarkable that the Great Prince at every point emphasizes that this consecration took place 'in accordance with the canons', while doubting whether there was a lawful patriarch in Byzantium itself or not. The whole of this gramota is full of true Christian humility and brotherly compassion for the emperor who had fallen on hard times."¹²⁸⁶

The Russian Church was now de facto autocephalous - and would become so de jure towards the end of the sixteenth century. And soon, after the fall of New Rome in 1453, the Russian State, too, would be independent, not only in the sense of being de facto self-governing (she had been that for centuries), but also in the sense of owing no filial, de jure allegiance to any other State. Indeed, the Russian Grand Prince Basil II was already being called "Tsar" and "Autocrat" by his own people, and "brother" by Emperor John VIII... Russia, whose Church constituted only one of the two hundred or so metropolias of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was becoming the leader of the Orthodox world...¹²⁸⁷

¹²⁸⁶ Boyeikov, *Tserkov', Rus' i Rim (The Church, Rus' and Rome)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983. See Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

¹²⁸⁷ And yet at the same time that it acquired full independence, the Russian Church lost its unity: a separate metropolia for the Lithuanian State was established in Kiev in 1458 (N. Riasonovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 121).

82. THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In December, 1452 a uniate liturgy in which the Pope was commemorated was celebrated in Hagia Sophia. The emperor communed... 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, large numbers crowded into Hagia Sophia for a final Great Vespers. They sought comfort in numbers where they had lost comfort in the true faith...

“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...”¹²⁸⁸

Now, with both emperor and patriarch fallen into heresy, 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 an instrument of God’s purpose, and allowed it to be conquered by Sultan Mehmet II...

Sir Steven Runciman describes the final assault as follows: ‘The afternoon of Monday, 28 May, had been clear and bright. As the sun began to sink towards the western horizon it shone straight into the faces of the defenders on the walls, almost blinding them. It was then that the Turkish camp had sprung into activity. Men came forward in thousands to complete the filling of the foss, while others brought up cannons and war-machines. The sky clouded over soon after sunset, and there was a heavy shower of rain; but the work went on uninterrupted, and the Christians could do nothing to hinder it. At about half-past one in the morning the Sultan judged that everything was ready and gave the order for the assault.

“The sudden noise was horrifying. All along the line of the walls the Turks rushed in to the attack, screaming their battle-cries, while drums and trumpets and fifes urged them on. The Christian troops had been waiting silently; but when the watchmen on the towers gave the alarm the churches near the walls began to ring their bells, and church after church throughout the city took up the warning sound till every belfry was clanging. Three miles away, in the Church of the Holy Wisdom the worshippers knew that the

¹²⁸⁸ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 452.

battle had begun. Every man of fighting age returned to his post; and women, nuns amongst them, hurried to the walls to help bring up stones and beams to strengthen the defenses and pails of water to refresh the defenders. Old folk and children came out of their houses and crowded into the churches, trusting that the saints and angels would protect them. Some went to their parish church, others to the tall Church of Saint Theodosia, by the Golden Horn. It was her feast-day on the Tuesday; and the building was decked with roses gathered from the gardens and the hedgerows. Surely she would not abandon her worshippers. Others went back to the great cathedral, remembering an old prophesy that said that though the infidel might penetrate through the city right into the holy building, there the Angel of the Lord would appear and drive them back with his bright sword to perdition. All through the dark hours before dawn the congregations waited and prayed.

“There was no time for prayer at the walls. The Sultan had made his plans with care. Despite his arrogant words to his army experience had taught him to respect the enemy. On this occasion he would wear them down before risking his best troops in the battle. It was his irregulars, the Bashi-bazouks, whom he first sent forward. There were many thousands of them, adventurers from every country and race, many of them Turks but many more from Christian countries, Slavs, Hungarians, Germans, Italians and even Greeks, all of them ready enough to fight against their fellow-Christians in view of the pay that the Sultan gave them and the booty that he promised. Most of them provided their own arms, which were an odd assortment of scimitars and slings, bows and a few arquebuses; but a large number of scaling-ladders had been distributed amongst them. They were unreliable troops, excellent at their first onrush but easily discouraged if they were not at once successful. Knowing this weakness Mehmet placed behind them a line of military police, armed with thongs and maces, whose orders were to urge them on and to strike and chastise any who showed signs of wavering. Behind the military police were the Sultan’s own Janissaries. If any frightened irregular made his way through the police they were to cut him down with their scimitars.

“The Bashi-bazouks’ attack was launched all along the line, but it was only pressed hard in the Lycus valley. Elsewhere the walls were still too strong; and they were attacked chiefly with the purpose of distracting the defenders from going to reinforce their comrades in the vital section. There the fighting was fierce. The Bashi-bazouks were up against soldiers far better armed and far better trained than themselves; and they were further handicapped by their numbers. They were continually in each other’s way. Stones hurled against them could kill or disable many at a time. Though a few attempted to retreat, most of them kept on, fixing their ladders to the walls and the stockade and clambering up, only to be cut down before they reached the top. Giustiniani and his Greeks and Italians were supplied with all the muskets and culverins that could be found in the city. The Emperor came himself to encourage them. After nearly two hours of fighting Mehmet ordered the

Bashi-bazouks to retire. They had been checked and repulsed, but they had served their purpose in wearying the enemy.

“Some of the Christians hoped that this might be just an isolated night-attack, intended to test their strength; and all of them hoped for a moment of rest. It was not granted to them. They scarcely had time to reform their lines and replace beams and barrels of earth on the stockade before a second attack was launched. Regiments of Anatolian Turks from Ishak’s army, easily recognized by their special uniforms and breastplates, came pouring down the hill from outside the Civil Gate of Saint Romanus into the valley and wheeled round to face the stockade. Once more the bells of the churches near the walls rang out to give the alarm. But the sound was drowned by the booming of Urban’s great cannon and its fellows as they began afresh to pound the walls. Within a few minutes the Anatolians had rushed in to the assault. Unlike the irregulars they were well armed and well disciplined, and all of them devout Moslems eager for the glory of being the first to enter the Christian city. With the wild music of their trumpeters and pipers to encourage them they hurled themselves at the stockade, climbing over each other’s shoulders in their efforts to fix their ladders on to the barrier and hack their way over the top. In the faint light of flares, with clouds continually veiling the moon it was hard to see what was happening. The Anatolians, like the irregulars before them, were at a disadvantage on that narrow front because of their numbers. Their discipline and their tenacity only made their losses the heavier as the defenders flung stones down on them and pushed back their ladders or fought with them hand to hand. About an hour before dawn, when this second attack was beginning to falter, a ball from Urban’s cannon landed fully upon the stockade, bringing it down for many yards of its length. There was a cloud of dust as the rubble and earth were flung into the air; and the black smoke of the gunpowder blinded the defense. A band of three hundred Anatolians rushed forward through the gap that had been made, shouting that the city was theirs. But, with the Emperor at their head, the Christians closed around them, slaughtering the greater part and forcing the others back to the foss. The check discomfited the Anatolians. The attack was called off, and they retired to their lines. With cries of triumph the defense once more set about repairing the stockade.

“The Turks had been no more successful on other sectors. Along the southern stretch of the land-walls Ishak was able to keep up enough pressure to prevent the defense from moving men to the Lycus valley, but, with his own best troops gone to fight there, he could not make a serious attack. Along the Marmora Hamza Bey had difficulty in bringing his ships close in shore. The few landing parties that he was able to send were easily repulsed by the monks to whom the defense had been entrusted or by Prince Orhan and his followers. There were feints along the whole line of the Golden Horn but no real attempt at an assault. Around the Blachernae quarter the fighting was fiercer. On the low ground by the harbour the troops that Zaganos had brought across the bridge kept up the constant attack, as did Karadja Pasha’s men higher up the slope. But Minotto and his Venetians were able to hold

their section of the walls against Zaganos, and the Bocchiardi brothers against Karadja.

“The Sultan was said to be indignant at the failure of his Anatolians. But it is probable that he intended them, like the irregulars before them, to wear out the enemy rather than themselves to enter the city. He had promised a great prize to the first soldier who should successfully break through the stockade; and he wished the privilege to go to some member of his own favourite regiment, his Janissaries. The time had now come for them to enter the battle. He was anxious; for if they failed him it would scarcely be possible to continue the siege. He gave his orders quickly. Before the Christians had time to refresh themselves and do more than a few rough repairs to the stockade, a rain of missiles, arrows, javelins, stones and bullets fell upon them; and behind the rain, the Janissaries advanced at the double, not rushing in wildly as the Bashi-bazouks and the Anatolians had done, but keeping their ranks in perfect order, unbroken by the missiles of the enemy. The martial music that urged them on was so loud that the sound could be heard between the roar of the guns from right across the Bosphorus. Mehmet himself led them as far as the foss and stood there shouting encouragement as they passed him. Wave after wave of these fresh, magnificent and stoutly armoured men rushed up to the stockade, to tear at the barrels of earth that surmounted it, to hack at the beams that supported it, and to place their ladders against it where it could not be brought down, each wave making way without panic for its successor. The Christians were exhausted. They had fought with only a few minutes’ respite for more than four hours; but they fought with desperation, knowing that if they gave way it would be the end. Behind them in the city the church bells were clanging again, and a great murmur of prayer rose to heaven.

“The fighting along the stockade was hand-to-hand now. For an hour or so the Janissaries could make no headway. The Christians began to think that the onslaught was weakening a little. But fate was against them. At the corner of the Blachernae wall, just before it joined the double Theodosian wall, there was, half-hidden by a tower, a small sally-port known as the Kerkopoporta. It had been closed up many years earlier; but the old men remembered it. Just before the siege began it had been reopened, to allow sorties into the enemy’s flank. During the fighting the Bocchiardis and their men had made effective use of it against Karadja Pasha’s troops. But now someone returning from a sortie forgot to bar the little gate after him. Some Turks noticed the opening and rushed through it into the courtyard behind it and began to climb up a stairway leading to the top of the wall. The Christians who were just outside the gate saw what was happening and crowded back to retake control of it and to prevent other Turks from following. In the confusion some fifty Turks were left inside the wall, where they could have been surrounded and eliminated if at that moment a worse disaster had not occurred.

“It was just before sunrise that a shot fired at close range from a culverin struck Giustiniani and pierced his breastplate. Bleeding copiously and obviously in great pain, he begged his men to take him off the battle-field.

One of them went to the Emperor who was fighting near by to ask for the key of a little gate that led through the inner wall. Constantine hurried to his side to plead with him not to desert his post. But Giustiniani's nerve was broken; he insisted on flight. The gate was opened, and his bodyguard carried him into the city, through the streets down to the harbour where they placed him on a Genoese ship. His troops noticed his going. Some of them may have thought that he had retreated to defend the inner wall; but most of them concluded that the battle was lost. Someone shouted out in terror that the Turks had crossed the wall. Before the little gate could be shut again the Genoese streamed headlong through it. The Emperor and his Greeks were left on the field alone.

“From across the foss the Sultan noticed the panic. Crying: ‘The city is ours’, he ordered the Janissaries to charge again and beckoned on a company led by a giant called Hasan. Hasan hacked his way over the top of the broken stockade and was deemed to have won the promised prize. Some thirty Janissaries followed him. The Greeks fought back. Hasan himself was forced to his knees by a blow from a stone and slain; and seventeen of his comrades perished with him. But the remainder held their positions on the stockade; and many more Janissaries crowded to join them. The Greeks resisted tenaciously. But the weight of numbers forced them back to the inner wall. In front of it was another ditch which had been deepened in places to provide earth for reinforcing the stockade. Many of the Greeks were forced back into these holes and could not easily clamber out, with the great inner wall rising behind them. The Turks who were now on top of the stockade fired down on them and massacred them. Soon many of the Janissaries reached the inner wall and climbed up it unopposed. Suddenly someone looked up and saw Turkish flags flying from the tower above the Kerkopoorta. The cry went up: ‘The city is taken.’

“While he was pleading with Giustiniani the Emperor had been told of the Turks' entry through the Kerkopoorta. He rode there at once, but he came too late. Panic had spread to some of the Genoese there. In the confusion it was impossible to close the gate. The Turks came pouring through; and the Bocchiardis' men were too few now to push them back. Constantine turned his horse and galloped back to the Lycus valley and the breaches in the stockade. With him was the gallant Spaniard who claimed to be his cousin, Don Francisco of Toledo, and his own cousin Theophilus Paleologus and a faithful comrade-at-arms, John Dalmata. Together they tried to rally the Greeks, in vain; the slaughter had been too great. They dismounted and for a few minutes the four of them held the approach to the gate through which Giustiniani had been carried. But the defense was broken now. The gate was jammed with Christian soldiers trying to make their escape, as more and more Janissaries fell on them. Theophilus shouted that he would rather die than live and disappeared into the oncoming hordes. Constantine himself knew now that the Empire was lost, and he had no wish to survive it. He flung off his imperial insignia and, with Don Francisco and John Dalmata still at his side, he followed Theophilus. He was never seen again.”

And so, writes Andrew Wheatcroft, on the morning of May 29, 1453, “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.”¹²⁸⁹

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The Fall of Constantinople brought the Age of Faith to an end. It was the greatest disaster in Christian history since the Fall of Old Rome in 476; and its like would not be seen until the fall of the Third Rome in 1917. The Orthodox of the Balkans came under infidel rulers; the Orthodox of Russia began to weaken spiritually as Byzantine traditions became more remote; the Western Catholics lost their best chance of being restored to *Orthodox* Catholicism; and the Western Conciliarists, who were meeting in Basle at the very moment of the council of Florence, and to whom John VIII had sent three ambassadors, lost their chance of being united to the Conciliar Church par excellence.

Many Greeks fled to the West, taking their learning and culture with them and giving an important impulse to the Renaissance. But it was pagan poets such as Plato and Homer and the pagan court philosopher of Mystra, George Gemisthus Plethon, not saints such as John Chrysostom or Gregory Palamas,

¹²⁸⁹ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 207.

whom the Westerners were eager to read. The true heroes of Byzantium did find admirers and imitators - but in the north, in the mountains of Romania, and, especially, in the forests of Russia, not in the Mediterranean homeland of Roman Christian civilization. Here Romanitas, the ideal of Christian Statehood, remained intact.

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 Slavs and Greeks, and Greeks and Greeks, or, most plausibly, the betrayal of the Faith at 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 Persians in the seventh and to the Arabs in the eighth centuries, 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 them, as it 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 Florence 1439 was rejected almost immediately by the people, and was officially rejected by the hierarchy after the Fall 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."¹²⁹⁰

¹²⁹⁰ Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii" ("The Destinies of Russia"), *Pravoslaonij Vestnik* (Orthodox Messenger), N 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7; translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wG9wwq60XM8>.

If we take this prophecy as God-inspired, as I believe we can, then we have the beginnings of an answer: Constantinople fell because something fundamental in the relationship between Church and State went wrong in the Palaeologan period – something that was irreparable in the context of late Byzantium, and which was so serious, according to God’s righteous judgement, as to require the final Fall of the Empire itself... As for the “third God-chosen people” of the prophecy, this was the Russians. It was they who were able to re-express the Christian ideal of the symphony of powers for the modern age, the age of Rationalism and Revolution, when the foundations, not only of the Church, but also of the State, would be shaken to their foundations...

But 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, prompting the remark of J.B. Bury that the government of Byzantium was “an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution”.¹²⁹¹ How many had not broken the laws of marriage in a flagrant manner! How many had not tried to impose heresy on the Empire, thereby stretching the Church-State relationship to breaking point! What was so sinister about the apparently peaceful relations between Church and State in the Palaeologan period that called for so terrible and final a judgement?

According to the theory of Church-State “symphony”, the Emperor was in complete command of the political sphere, and could be deposed only in the case of his apostasy from the true faith. However, until the first Fall of the City in 1204, the Byzantines were constantly “shaking the yoke of the emperors from their necks” – and not for reasons of 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...

The Russian diplomat K.N. Leontiev tried to defend the Byzantines against the charge of serial regicide: “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*.”¹²⁹² 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 much of its history, from one unchristian extreme to the other, from the extreme of *idolatry* (the emperor as demi-god) to the extreme of *sacrilege* and *murder* (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.

¹²⁹¹ Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9.

¹²⁹² 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. 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 exercised in the more modest conditions of Nicaean exile and not in the pomp and splendour of Constantinople. Moreover, no Lascarid emperor was killed by his own people...

However, with the advent of the last Byzantine dynasty, that of the Palaeologi, this apparent improvement in morals was compromised by what amounted to a deviation from the faith, *a heresy concerning the kingdom*. For the emperor was now not only the Anointed one – both physically and spiritually, but also considered to be *untouchable and irremovable*, even in the event of his falling away from the Orthodox faith. The Easterners now had their equivalent of the Western Pope...

This development began in 1369, only a few years after the great spiritual triumph of the Palamite Councils, when the Emperor John V Palaeologus travelled to Italy and converted to Roman Catholicism. No rebellion against him followed because of his apostasy, as there had been in the time of Michael VIII. And the reason was that the emperor was now untouchable...

The concordat concluded by John V with the Orthodox Church was a shameful document, which subordinated the Church to the State in a truly caesaropapist manner. The Emperor now 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 even excommunicated, according to the concordat. Or, if some still thought he should be removed, nobody called on the people to do it. Thus John V submitted to Rome – and kept his 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 killed him and captured it...

The unia with Rome was not caused by real sympathy for the papacy: only a small minority were real Latinophiles. It was caused by the fact that the bishops (except Mark of Ephesus) chose to follow their emperor rather than Christ. But the last emperor, Constantine XI, was not even crowned after his return to Constantinople in 1449, but in Mystra, because of the opposition of the zealots of Orthodoxy.¹²⁹³

¹²⁹³ 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 yet in spite of the fact that their emperor was neither anointed nor Orthodox, the people still followed him... And so the emperors, although they were no longer seen as gods, as in pagan times, nor have pretensions to be priests, as in the times of the iconoclasts, were nevertheless for all practical purposes god-kings and king-priests. For they were untouchable, being placed by their subjects above the laws both of God and of man. And this untouchable idol was placed as the lynch-pin upon which the whole Byzantine system of government, both political and ecclesiastical, rested. For as Patriarch Anthony IV said to Great Prince Basil of Moscow, "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, in the last years of Byzantium, the emperor's ever-decreasing rule extended over the City, the Morea, and little else, the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch was truly universal in the Orthodox world, extending beyond throughout the Orthodox commonwealth of nations.¹²⁹⁴

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 no longer truly ecumenical but increasingly Greek in its orientation – and Greek hopes centred narrowly and 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, or Moscow. But not now... The fatal weakness of the Byzantines was their placing the Empire above that of the Church, the earthly kingdom above the Heavenly Kingdom. They reversed the choice that the holy Prince Lazar of Serbia had made on the field of Kosovo. Like Judah in the time of Jeremiah, they tried to play off one despotic power against another – the Pope against the Sultan – and lost to both. Unable to present a truly Catholic – in the sense of universal, non-nationalistic – vision of Christian society to the world, the

and the senate, the holy union was sanctioned and solemnly decreed on December 12th, the feast of Saint Spirydon, the bishop" (quoted in Judith Herrin, "The Fall of Constantinople", *History Today*, vol. 53, N 6, June, 2003, p. 15). St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite believed that Constantine was not a uniate and therefore inscribed him in some calendars. His name is also found on some Russian 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).

¹²⁹⁴ For a map of the patriarchate's dominions, see

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zFF_0-ggg3xI.kANSIEUOgS-o

Byzantines fell into a false union with the West with its heretical, but more explicitly universal vision. And so, in becoming Latins, they ceased to be Romans, whose whole glory, even when their dominion was no longer universal, lay in their *universal vision*. For, as Solomon said, "where there is no vision, the people perish..." (Proverbs 29.18)

Great-Prince Basil had been right: "We have a Church," he said to Patriarch Anthony, "but we do not have an emperor". For how can the emperor of Christian Rome be a heretic? 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. 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). The universal, eschatological and supernatural vision of Christian Rome had been narrowed to a terribly debilitating concentration on one small speck of dust in space and time. 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...

CONCLUSION: AUTOCRACY, DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY

Ideally, the people of God should be ruled only by God, or by a man directly appointed by God, that is, *the Orthodox Autocrat*. A true autocrat is a man who is appointed by God and who strives to rule in obedience to the Church and the commandments of God.¹²⁹⁵ Under these conditions God blesses one-man rule unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions. Contrary to the generally held view, autocracy is not a form of absolutism or despotism. Indeed, as D.A. Khomiakov writes, "the tsar is 'the denial of absolutism' precisely because it is bound by the confines of the people's understanding and world-view, which serve as that framework within which the power can and must consider itself to be free."¹²⁹⁶ The true Autocrat is unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions, but is bound to fulfill the Law of God, and is an obedient son of God's Kingdom on earth, the Church.

The questions arise: What if there is no autocrat appointed by God? How are we to relate to despotic or democratic regimes? Is it permissible to obey a ruler who does not worship the God of Israel?

In the Old Testament the loss of autocracy, and its replacement by foreign despotic rule, was a sign of the wrath of God. The classic example was the Babylonian captivity. However, God's ultimate purpose in subjecting His people to foreign rule was always positive - to draw the people back to Him through repentance. The sign of the remission of God's wrath and the manifestation of His mercy and forgiveness is His return of true, autocratic rule, as when the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.

It is possible for the people of God to serve a foreign despot with a good conscience - as Joseph served Pharaoh, and Daniel - Darius. Indeed, it may be sinful to rebel against such rule, as was the case with King Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. In the first century there was a Jewish sect called the Essenes who did not use money that had the image of Caesar and did not recognize any ruler except God Himself.¹²⁹⁷ Christ rejected this position in His famous words about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's (money, military service) and to God what is God's. And the Church affirmed that "all authority is of God" (Romans 13.1).

¹²⁹⁵ As such, he first of all *rules himself*, his spirit being the autocratic ruler of the rest of his nature. As Bishop Theophan the Recluse writes: "when determination and a readiness to live according to God is formed in the spirit, the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments enters into the spirit, and from this time man's inner life begins before God; his psychosomatic needs not only cease to rule him, on the contrary, he himself begins to rule them, following the indications of the Spirit. In this way our spirit, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, again becomes *autocratic*, both within and without." (*Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (An Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 446-447.

¹²⁹⁶ Khomiakov, *Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'* (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk, 1997, p. 103.

¹²⁹⁷ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 23; St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Philosophoumen*, 18-28.

However, the word “authority” here does not apply to rulers who compel the people of God to worship false gods. If they do this, then resistance – at any rate of the passive kind – becomes obligatory, as when the Three Holy Children refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s golden idol. And in certain circumstances even armed rebellion may be blessed by God, as when the Maccabees rebelled against Antiochus Epiphanes. Even if the ruler was originally a true autocrat, if he later turns against the God of Israel, becoming a despot, he must be resisted, as when the Prophet Elijah rebelled against Ahab and Jezebel, and when the Prophet Elisha anointed Jehu as king in their stead. Similarly, in Christian times the Christian people rebelled against Julian the Apostate, the Spanish prince St. Hermenegild against his Arian father, and the English Orthodox rebelled against the Catholic King William I.

The Christian people can *survive* under other systems of government than autocracy, but not *prosper*. Thus Bishop Dionysius writes: “The Church can live for some time even in conditions of persecution, just as a dying man can remain among the living for a certain period of time. But just as the latter desires deliverance from his illness, so the Church has always wished for such a situation in which there will be flocks, not individuals, of those being saved – and this can be attained only if she is fenced around by the power of ‘him who restraineth’”¹²⁹⁸ – that is, the Autocracy.

The autocrat is distinguished from the absolutist despot in two ways. First, having been appointed by God and being in obedience to Him, he will never ascribe divine honours to himself; whereas the despot either commands that he be worshipped as a god, or acts as if he were God by rejecting any criticism of his actions based on the law of God. Secondly, the autocrat will always respect the priesthood and will yield it authority in the sphere of Divine worship and the spiritual life, whereas the despot will attempt to subject the priesthood to himself, sometimes even by making himself high priest.

Although the relationship between the autocracy and the priesthood is not clearly defined in the Old Testament, the embryo of the Christian symphony of powers is already to be seen in the relationships between Moses and Aaron, David and Abiathar, and Zerubbabel and Joshua. And encroachment by the autocrat on the priestly prerogatives is already severely punished, as when King Saul was removed from the kingship for taking it upon himself to offer sacrifices. It was the Hasmonean combination of the roles of king and high-priest that finally ushered in the end of the Israelite autocracy.

The autocrat can sin in either of two directions: by becoming a despot on the Near Eastern pagan model, or by becoming a democrat on the Classical Greek model. For, on the one hand, truly autocratic power is not arbitrary, but

¹²⁹⁸ Hieromonk Dionysius, Priest Timothy Alferov, *O Tserkvi, Pravoslavnom Tsarstve i Poslednem Vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow, 1998, pp. 61-62.

subject to a higher power, that of God – as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow puts it, the king “freely limits his unlimited autocracy by the will of the Heavenly King”. And on the other hand, it neither derives from the people nor can it be abolished by the people.

In the period of the Byzantine Autocracy, the main temptation was despotism. This took two forms: “caesaropapism” in the East and “papocaesarism” in the West. “Caesaropapism” signifies the intrusion of State power into the realm of the Church, and “papocaesarism” – the intrusion of the Church power into the realm of the State, by the transformation of the Church’s first-hierarchy into a secular despot.

Orthodoxy stands for the Chalcedonian unity-in-diversity of Church and State, priesthood and kingship. The two powers are unconfused but undivided under the One King of kings and Chief High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The eventual fall of Byzantium was preceded by the gradual decay of this symphonic, Chalcedonian principle of Church-State relations, making its conquest by anti-Chalcedonian, absolutist principles easier.

The decay of the symphonic principle began already with the Arian emperors in the mid-fourth century, revived with the Monothelite and Iconoclast emperors in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, and became firmly entrenched with the Angeli emperors before the first Fall of Constantinople in 1204. If anything, the “Orthodox” absolutism of the Angeli, supported by canonists such as Balsamon, proved to be a more dangerous temptation than the heretical absolutism of the Arians and Iconoclasts. In any case, with its revival in a still stronger form under the later Palaeologi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Byzantium was doomed.

The final Fall of Constantinople in 1453 was caused by three absolutisms: the internal absolutism of the last Palaeologi emperors, and the external absolutisms of the Latins and the Turks. Both Papism and Islam, in imitation of the absolutist pagan empires, tended to conflate Church and State, religion and politics, kingship and priesthood, into a single institution or activity, in contrast to the duality of the two spheres which is the norm in Orthodoxy. Both could therefore be called ecclesiological analogues of the Monophysite-Monothelite group of heresies in Christology; and, perhaps not coincidentally, the beginnings of the papist and Islamist heresies coincide with the beginnings of the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies.

In the West, the last Orthodox autocracies of England and Germany fell to the “papocaesarist” version of the absolutist heresy, Papism. But in the West, by contrast with the East, the ideal of the Orthodox autocracy did not survive in the hearts of the people. Here not only the flesh, Christian Statehood, died: the spirit, the Christian Faith and Church, was also radically corrupted. So in the West, in contrast to the East, there could be no transfer of the ideal to another soil, no renovatio imperii, no Third Rome to succeed the First and Second Romes...

Not that there were no attempts to pretend that the old ideal was still alive and well. The “Holy Roman Empire” of the Hohenstaufens (and later, of the Habsburgs) claimed to be the continuation and revival of the Roman and Constantinian Empires. But where was the “symphony of powers” between the Roman Church and Empire when one of the powers, the Church, was itself a State that sometimes waged war – physical war – against the Empire?

Indeed, the continual wars between the Roman papacy and the “Holy Roman Empire” in the later Middle Ages cannot be compared to the conflicts between Church and State in Byzantium because they were not in fact wars between Church and State, but between State and State. For ever since Pope Leo IX rode on horseback into battle against the Normans in 1053, the very difference between Church and the State, between the other-worldly spirit of Christian society and its this-worldly flesh, had been obscured in the Western mind...

It is time to define more precisely the religio-political heresy of absolutism, which destroyed the flesh of New Rome in the East, and both the flesh and the spirit of Old Rome in the West.

L.A. Tikhomirov writes: “Absolutism... signifies a power that is not created by anything, that depends on nothing except itself and that is qualified by nothing except itself. As a tendency, absolutism can in fact appear under any principle of power, but only through a misunderstanding or abuse. But according to its spirit, its nature, absolutism is characteristic only of democracy, for the will of the people, qualified by nothing but itself, creates an absolute power, so that if the people merges with the State, the power of the latter becomes absolute.”¹²⁹⁹

“Absolutism is characteristic of democracy”?! This is the height of paradox to the modern Western (and Classical Greek) mind, for which absolutism and democracy are polar opposites, and for which the ideal of Statehood (even Christian Statehood) must consist in the complete extermination of absolutism and the fullest possible installation of democracy. And yet the paradox is true, as we shall demonstrate.

The absolutist despot, be he emperor or king, pope or patriarch, believes that all power on earth, in all matters, is given to him alone – even if, as in pagan Rome, this power was supposedly transferred to him from the people. In pagan times, such a belief would be expressed in the idea that the ruler was also a god. In Christian times, such open self-deification was no longer expedient, so the phrase “vicar of God” or “deputy of God” was used instead. In theory, such a title is compatible with a certain self-limitation, insofar as the vicar or deputy of God is obliged to submit his will to the will of God; and

¹²⁹⁹ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 92.

some rulers have succeeded in doing just that, becoming saints and “equals-to-the-apostles” in the process. But if the ruler dispenses with an independent priesthood, and is seen as the highest interpreter of the will of God, the path is open to arbitrariness and tyranny on a vast scale, which is precisely what we see in absolutist rulers throughout history, whether pagan or Christian, religious, secular or atheist.

However, the arbitrariness and tyranny of the single unchecked will inevitably elicits, sooner or later, the appearance of other wills determined to check or completely subdue it. This, in its turn, is inevitably accompanied by the process of the debunking or desacralising of kingship: since the authority of the ruler is hedged around with an aura of divinity, the first task of the reformers or revolutionaries is to strip away this aura, to reveal the ruler to be an ordinary man. Then they will strive either to place one of themselves in the place of the former ruler, endowing him with the same aura of divinity as he had, or will put forward a general theory of the ordinariness – or kingliness – of all men. But this is a sign of God’s wrath. For “because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes” (Proverbs 28.2).

Medieval western history developed precisely in this direction: first in the struggle between the popes and the “Holy Roman Emperors” for absolute power, and then in the emergence of the doctrines of natural law, conciliarism and democratism. The second, democratic path would appear to be radically different from the first, absolutist one insofar as it abolishes the idea of sacred persons altogether. But in fact it simply endows all men with the same absolutism and sacredness as was formerly attributed to pope or emperor. Thus the old personal gods of pope or emperor make way for the new collective god of the people in accordance with the often-cited but completely erroneous saying: vox populi – vox Dei. And yet, as Deacon Alcuin of York said to the Emperor Charlemagne: “The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained... Those who say, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God,’ are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness.”¹³⁰⁰

And so absolutism is characteristic of democracy insofar as the demos is an absolute power, free from any restraint in heaven or on earth. In a democracy the will of the people is the final arbiter. Before it neither the will of the (constitutional) monarch, nor the decrees of the Church, neither the age-old traditions of men, nor the eternal and unchanging law of God, can prevail. This arbiter is in the highest degree arbitrary: what is right in the eyes of the people on one day will be wrong in the next. But consistency is not required of the infallible people, just as it is not required of infallible popes. For democracy is based on the Heraclitan principle that everything changes, even the demos itself. As such, it does not have to justify itself on the basis of any unchanging criteria of truth or falsehood, right or wrong: its will *is* truth and justice, and if its will changes, then truth and justice must change with it...

¹³⁰⁰ Alcuin of York, *Letter to Charlemagne*, M.G.H., 4, letter 132.

The famed tolerance or freedom of religion in democratic states is only apparent. Or rather, it can be real only for a time, until the State works out its own ruling ideology and applies it consistently. For, as Tikhomirov writes, "if a state, as law and power, removes itself from being linked with a determinate confession, that is, from the influence of a religious confession on its own religious politics, it becomes the common judge of all confessions and subjects religion to itself. All relations between the various confessions and the rights of them all must, evidently, be decided by the state that is set outside them, which is governed exclusively by its own ideas on justice and the good of the state and society. In this situation it evidently has the complete right and opportunity to carry out repressions whenever, in its opinion, the interests of a confession contradict civil and political interests."¹³⁰¹

In many ways the collective absolutism of democracy is a more absolute and destructive absolutism than the personal absolutisms of popes and emperors. Although many absolutist rulers appeared in both East and West in the medieval period, fundamental changes in society were slow to appear. Whatever absolutist rulers may have thought or said about their own unfettered power, in practice they conformed to tradition in most spheres, for they knew that the masses of the people believed in a higher truth in defence of which many of them were prepared to die. Hence the failure of most absolutist rulers to establish a firm tradition of absolutism: Julian the Apostate was replaced by Jovian the Pious, Pope Nicolas I by Pope John VIII, Michael Palaeologus by Andronicus II. Even the more enduring absolutism of the post-schism popes was bitterly contested for centuries, and became weaker over time.

But the triumph of democracy in the modern period has been accompanied by the most radical and ever-accelerating change: the demos that overthrew the monarchy in the English revolution, even the demos that obtained universal suffrage in the early twentieth century, would not recognise, and most certainly would not approve of, what the demos has created in twenty-first-century England...

Democracy considers itself to be at the opposite pole from absolutism, and justifies itself on the grounds that its system of checks and balances, which provides frequent opportunities to remove the ruler at the ballot-box, precludes the possibility of absolutism. However, as the old traditions grow weaker, the leaders that the democracy votes for become more radical and anti-traditional. And if democracy has always had the tendency to elect vainglorious and dishonest demagogues, in modern times these demagogues have often also turned out to be absolutist tyrants. For, as Plato noted, there is a persistent tendency for democracy to pave the way for absolutism.

¹³⁰¹ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-filosofskie osnovy istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 269.

Thus the democracy of the English Long Parliament paved the way for Cromwell; the democracy of the French Estates General - for Robespierre and Napoleon; the democracy of the Russian Provisional Government - for Lenin and Stalin; the democracy of the German Weimar Government - for Hitler; the democracy of Chiang Kai Shek - for Mao; and the democracy of Yeltsin - for Putin.

So the whole of world history can be seen as a struggle between God-pleasing autocracy, on the one hand, and God-hating despotism and democracy, on the other, whose main feature is the gradual weakening of autocracy, and strengthening of despotism, in and through the triumph of democracy, leading finally to the enthronement of the Antichrist...