THE THEOLOGY OF POLITICAL POWER
An Historical Approach to the Relationship between Religion and Politics

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Politics, like sexuality, is a phenomenon that is difficult to “place” within the traditional spheres of theological thought. On the one hand, it can be argued that politics has nothing at all to do with theology, except as being perhaps the foremost tool of Satan’s persecution of Christians and the Church; for it is the essence of “the world that lies in evil” and forms no part of the traditional subjects of theological knowledge: God, Christ, the Church, spirituality, the life of the age to come… On the other hand, it can equally be argued that nothing specifically human is alien to theology insofar as the aim of the Christian life is to bring all spheres of human activity into obedience to the Grace-filled life in Christ; and politics, being an inescapable and extremely important part of all organized social life, is no exception to this rule.

In any case, was not Christ a King as well as a Priest and a Prophet, “the King of kings and Lord of lords”? And while He said that His Kingdom was “not of this world”, is it not significant that He spoke these words – almost His last on earth – in the context of a discussion of the origin and limits of political power with Caesar’s representative, Pontius Pilate? And did not the Prophets and Apostles speak frequently about the duties of kings and subjects, and the destinies of peoples and kingdoms – not least, of the kingdom of the Antichrist that will threaten to wipe out the last vestiges of Christianity at the end of the world?

The truth is that the manifestations of political power range from genocide and the imposition of mass apostasy to the most selfless and beneficial service to mankind and the Church. Thus in opposition to Nero and Diocletian and Stalin we see the Prophet-King David, St. Constantine the Great and Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II… Moreover, just as fallen eros is transfigured and sanctified through the sacrament of crowning in marriage, so the fallen lust for power is transfigured and sanctified through the sacrament of anointing and crowning to the kingdom.

There is another extremely important reason why politics should be studied as a part of theology in the broader sense: in modern times, especially since the French revolution, various political teachings have come to be believed in more than any of the traditional religions, so that the real faiths of many millions of people have been: democratism, human rights, nationalism, socialism, communism, etc. Indeed, as Paul Johnson writes, “perhaps the most significant characteristic of the dawning modern world... was the
tendency to relate everything to politics.”

Even the contemporary “heresy of heresies”, ecumenism, is a “political faith” insofar as it poses an essentially political, this-worldly approach to the question of the nature and unity of the Church.

This being the case, I have written this book in order to develop a “theology of politics” that will counter these dangerous new threats, and to re-establish in the minds of Orthodox Christians that vision of a State in union with Christ and His Holy Church that was the norm in the Orthodox world from the Age of Constantine to the Russian revolution. At the heart of my analysis is a distinction between three basic forms of political power: “autocracy”, “absolutism” and “democracy”. It is my contention that only autocracy – that is, a monarchy that is in “symphony” with, and spiritual obedience to, the Church of Christ - is blessed by God; and that absolutism and democracy represent two sides of a single coin - equal and opposite deviations from this ideal that have in common the rejection of the true God as the ultimate source of political authority and His replacement by one man (absolutism) or everyman (democracy).

I believe that the meaning of world history consists in the struggle between the Orthodox Autocracy, on the one hand, and what I have simply called “the revolution” on the other, a process of apostasy consisting in the progressive undermining of autocracy by absolutism-democracy, and of all Christian faith and morality by atheism and satanism. This process culminated in what appeared to be the final fall of the Orthodox Autocracy in the Russian revolution of 1917, which has ushered in what Holy Scripture calls “the last times”, a period of increasing anarchy leading finally to the reign of the most despotic of absolutist tyrants, the Antichrist. I will argue that the only hope for the world consists in the return of Autocracy, which is called by St. Paul “that which restrains” the appearance of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7).

The historian Shlomo Sand writes that “the best way to define a concept is to follow its history”. Being profoundly convinced of the truth of this remark, I have adopted an historical approach in my attempt to explicate the concepts of autocracy, absolutism and democratism, a review of the major developments in the relationship between religion and politics, the Church and the State, from Old Testament times (where the basic principles are revealed with particular clarity) through the early Christian and medieval periods until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. I believe that the great complexity of modern political life can be greatly clarified if these concepts, and their origins in antiquity, are understood. In this way I also hope to show that in politics “there is nothing new under the sun”, but that what seems new is very often a complex interaction of fundamentally the same forces and

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ideas as in ancient times – of which the corollary must be that the insights and judgements of the ancients are still relevant to the modern world...

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-1000-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 context of this book, which aims to explicate the ideal of Christian statehood, its origins, triumph and decline, in 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.

In the writing of this book I am indebted above all to the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. Among more recent Fathers and Church writers, I have especially drawn on the works of Patriarch Nicon of Moscow, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, Elder Ambrose of Optina, L.A. Tikhomirov, M.V. Zyzykin, Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Lubny, St. John Maximovich, Archbishop of San Francisco, Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) of Novgorod and Archpriest Lev Lebedev. But I have also, of course, drawn extensively on contemporary writers and historians, 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.

St. George the Great Martyr.
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I. THE ORIGINS, END AND MAIN KINDS OF POLITICS

He appoints kings and removes them… The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,  
And giveth it to whomsoever He will, setting up over it even the basest of men. 
Daniel 2.21, 4.17.

The Two Kingdoms

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He declared: “All power hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28.18). All power means just that: power over both angels and men, both believers and unbelievers, both souls and bodies. Jesus Christ is the supreme King of kings and Lord of lords: there is nothing created that is not ruled by Him.

Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers make a particular distinction between the power that Christ wields in the spiritual realm, and in the secular realm. His power is supreme in both, but is wielded in different ways, corresponding to their different natures. The spiritual realm is the “inner Kingdom”, the Kingdom that is “not of this world”. In it Christ rules in an inner, mystical way those who through faith have voluntarily submitted to His dominion, declaring Him to be their King and God in Holy Baptism, and promising to obey all His commandments. The secular realm, on the other hand, is the “outer kingdom”, the kingdom “of this world”, which Christ rules through His providential power. As Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria writes: “‘All is delivered’ to the Son by the Father (Luke 10.22) in that all is to be subject to the Son. There are two ways in which God rules over all. First, He rules over all independently of their own will [the outer kingdom]. And second, He rules over those who willingly subject themselves to Him [the inner Kingdom]. Hence I can say: God is my Master independently of my will, inasmuch as He is my Creator. But He is also my Master whenever I, as a grateful servant, fulfil His will by working to keep the commandments.”

Divine Providence uses the whole of nature, rational and irrational, to attain Its ends. So the kingdom of this world can be said to embrace the whole of nature. The State is that part of the outer kingdom in which human beings organize themselves in order to cooperate with (or, in some cases, oppose) Divine Providence to the greatest degree. The Church is the inner kingdom on earth. Although having a visible presence and organization on earth, its essence is not of this world, being the Kingdom of Grace. The inner Kingdom of the Church ministers to the inner needs of man, his salvation for eternity. The outer kingdom of the State ministers to his external needs - food and shelter and security from external enemies.

“One must distinguish two Kingdoms of Christ,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “and consequently two of His powers. ‘The Son of God, having received human nature into the unity of His Divine Hypostasis, is called a king,’ says St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘but in one sense He is king as the Almighty and king of both the willing and the unwilling, and in the other, as leading to obedience and submitting to His kingdom those who have willingly recognised Him as king’ (quoted in Metropolitan Macarius, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 178-179). In the first case the kingdom of Christ is without end and all three Persons of the All-Holy Trinity participate in Providence. In the second it will end with the leading of all the true believers to salvation, when Jesus Christ hands over the Kingdom to God and the Father, when He will annul every authority and force, that God may be all in all (I Corinthians 14.18). The power of which it is said: ‘all power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ was *handed over by Him to nobody*. He remains the Highest Teacher (*Matthew* 23.8), the Highest Priest (*Hebrews* 7.24-25) and the highest Ruler of His kingdom, the Pastor of pastors (*I Peter* 5.4).

“The Church is the visible form of the Kingdom of Christ, its realisation on earth, by which it is destined to embrace the world (*Mark* 16.15-16; *Matthew* 28.19-20; *Luke* 24.47; *John* 20.23); it is the kingdom that is not of this world (*John* 18.36). It is a special sphere in which the relationship of man with God is developed (*Matthew* 22.21; *Luke* 20.25); Church power by the spiritual character of its commission does not consist in mastery and lordship, which are characteristic of earthly power, but in service (*Matthew* 20.25-27; *Mark* 9.35).”

The relationship between the two kingdoms was highlighted during Christ’s trial before Pilate. While recognizing Pilate’s power as lawful, the Lord at the same time insists that both Pilate’s and Caesar’s power derived from God, the true King and Lawgiver. For “you could have no power at all against Me,” He says, “unless it had been given to you from above” (*John* 19.11). These words, paradoxically, both limit Caesar’s power, as being 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”.

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5 Blessed Theophylact, *On John* 18.36.
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…”

The Family and the State

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 man, 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.

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.” 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.

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7 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 (in Russian)).
8 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.
9 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 34 on 1 Corinthians.
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.”

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.

This process 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. As Metropolitan 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.”

Again, Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes: “Both the familial and the monarchical systems are established by God for the earthly existence of sinful,

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12 Metropolitan Philaret, Sochinenia (Works), 1848 edition, volume 2, p. 169 (in Russian). Cf. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov: “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.” Sobranie Pisem (Collected Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781 (in Russian)).
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 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.”

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 Metropolitan 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.” 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 punished by their expulsion from Paradise – that is, from 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, it was God Himself Who imposed the punishment – expulsion from the society of men: “a fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth” (Genesis 4.12). And after the Flood of Noah it was God Who decreed the first law of all civilized States in the new, postdiluvial order – that of capital punishment for murder: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man” (Genesis 9.6)...

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13 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 (in Russian).
Pagan Absolutism

In the ancient world one-man rule, or monarchy, was the norm. The major exceptions to the norm – Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and Rome (partially) before Julius Caesar – were fleeting and did not become deeply rooted although their historical example was to become important in modern times. Thus Greece came under the one-man rule 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: Absolutism (or Despotism) and Autocracy. From a chronological point of view, absolutism appears first – in Nimrod’s Babylon, the mystical fount and root of all antichristian despotic power down the ages, and was characteristic of all developed pagan States throughout the world – in Babylon, Egypt, the Indus valley, China, Central and Southern America - before the rise of Athenian democracy. Absolute rulers recognize their power to be absolute, unlimited by any other power in heaven or earth. Autocracy, on the other hand, is not absolutist, but recognizes itself to be limited by the Law of God and the interpreters of that Law on earth - God’s faithful priesthood. It 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.  

The modern world, of course, 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, 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.”

15 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 the distinction for reasons that will become clear in this book.

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". 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. 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. So the divinity seems to have reincarnated himself in every member of the dynasty.

It was probably Nimrod who invented the traditions of nature-worship and ancestor-worship, or at least combined them in a uniquely powerful and dangerous way. Having risen 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)), he then consolidated his power by giving himself divine honours. By imposing false religion in this way he led men away from God, which earned him the title given him by the Jerusalem Targum of “hunter of the sons of men”; for he said: “Depart from the judgement of the Lord, and adhere to the judgement of Nimrod!”

The great spring festival of Marduk took place at Babylon, at the splendid temple with ascending steps which is called in the Bible the Tower of Babel, and which by tradition was built by Nimrod himself. In Genesis (11.8-9) we read that God destroyed this Tower, divided the languages of its builders so that they could not understand each other, and 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.

"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

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18 Shafarevich, I.R. Sotzializm kak Iavlenie Mirovoj Istorii (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977 (in Russian); Smart, op. cit., p. 299.
20 Smart, op. cit., p. 298.
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.21

“Nimrod” means "let us rebel", and "it was Nimrod," according to Josephus, “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.”22

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 both the governmental and the priestly hierarchies culminated in one man, the king-priest-god.23 This deification of the ruler of the City of Man was, of course, a direct challenge to the truly Divine Ruler of the City of God.

It was from this antitheist civilization that Abraham was commanded to depart, and went to live in Canaan “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” and with heaven's followers. They must build their own polity that is not founded on the worship of man, but of God, and does seek its end in itself, but outside itself, in God.

23 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." (“Khristianstvo i Idea Monarkhii” (“Christianity and the Idea of the Monarchy), Put’ (The Way), № 6, January, 1927, p. 660 (in Russian).)
It was fitting, therefore, that it was only after he had fought a successful battle against a coalition of mainly Babylonian kings that Abraham was met by the first recorded true king and “priest of the Most High God,… Possessor of heaven and earth”, Melchizedek (Genesis 14.18). In fact, Melchizedek is an image of Christ Himself, which is why, unlike any mortal man before or since, he was both a king and a priest in the image of Christ’s Kingship and Priesthood. So Abraham is blessed by Christ Himself to seek a Polity that is not absolutist, but autocratic...

However, it was not given to Abraham or any of the patriarchs to build that Polity. The new, God-pleasing Polity would emerge after a long process lasting hundreds of years that began with a famous “war of national liberation” from the second of the great absolutist monarchies of the ancient world – Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses the Hebrews created an embryonic state of a new kind, which finally acquired a territorial base and stability under Kings Saul and David...

From Theocracy to Autocracy

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, together (in religious societies) with the worship of that man as god; which, 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, 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 so 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.

The essence of autocracy is 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, and also showed great honour to Joseph’s 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
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 Jacob, 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". Moreover, according to Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, it was Joseph, and not any of the pagan Pharaohs, who was "the founder of autocratic (or monarchical) rule in Egypt" transforming it from patriarchal simplicity to a fully organized state with permanent citizenship and an organized tax structure—essentially the land tax, which Joseph organized to prepare for the years of famine and which lasted, essentially unchanged, for many hundreds of years.

Of course, Egypt remained a pagan country, and on Jacob's and Joseph's deaths the embryonic "symphony of powers" that existed between them 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 lasting autocracy, that of Moses, came into being.

The time was ripe for the formation of a State structure. By the time of Moses the Israelites had grown to 400,000 souls, far beyond the size of unit that a single patriarchal figure could know and control unaided, and had become a people with its own internal structure of twelve tribes. They needed order, and consequently, both a law and a judicial system to administer it.

That law was given by God Himself as the Supreme Ruler (Exodus 20 et seq.). And in obedience to God Moses created a quasi-governmental judicial system to administer it, delegating the power of resolving disputes to "the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known," making them "captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes" (Deuteronomy 1.15), while reserving for himself the final court of appeal. Again, at God’s command, he entrusted the priesthood to his brother Aaron, who became the head of the Levitical priesthood. Thus in the relationship between Moses and Aaron we see the first clear foreshadowing of the relationship between the State and the Church, the monarchy and the priesthood. The symphony of these blood brothers foreshadowed the spiritual symphony of powers in both the Israelite and the Christian autocracies.

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24 Menaion, September 24, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Mattins, Canon, Canticle 7, troparion.

However, while the Church in Moses’ time was already a reality, with a real high priest under God, the State was not yet fully formed. For Moses was a lawgiver and prophet rather than a king (in fact, he was also a priest). The Israelites would have to wait for a king until they had acquired a land. For as the Lord said 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 in any wise set him 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 continue 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 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 holy, truly 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 provide them with a king.

God fulfilled their request. However, 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 at the expense of the Philistines and Ammonites, he persecuted true piety, as represented by the future King David and his followers, and he allowed the Church, as represented by the priesthood serving the Ark at Shiloh, to fall into the hands of unworthy men (the sons of Eli).
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. Let us consider the following passages: "In all, a king is an advantage to a land with cultivated fields" (Ecclesiastes 5.8); “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 long as He was recognised as the true King of kings. 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 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 that was understood in the Ancient World meant both the loss of political freedom and alienation from the true and living God.

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.
It is important to realise that the worldly principle was introduced 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 the spiritual leaders had some responsibility - and also the people, to whom the principle applied: "like people, like priest" (Hosea 4.9).

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 made a sacrifice to the Lord without waiting for Samuel. For this sin, the sin of “caesaropapism”, as western scholars term it, the sin of the invasion of the Church's sphere by the State, Samuel prophesied that the kingdom would be taken away from Saul and given to a man after God's heart.

This example was also quoted by Patriarch Nicon 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.”

Then Saul spared 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).

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 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).

26 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 17.
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.

The anointing of Saul raises the question: are only those kings anointed with a visible anointing recognised by God? The answer to this is: no. There is also an invisible anointing.

Thus Metropolitan 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!”

27 That Saul became continued to disobey God is shown by his asking on the witch of Endor to summon the soul of Samuel from Hades, although he himself had passed laws condemning necromancy. See St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Witch of Endor: A Letter to Bishop Theodosius, translated in Living Orthodoxy, #124, vol. XXI, № 4, July-August, 2000, pp. 24-26. 
King David

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 supported the claim of Saul's surviving son to the throne, while the southern tribes 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 in his person he represented the true autocrat, who both closed the schism that had opened up 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. For while being unequalled as a political leader, his zeal for the Church, and for the house of God, was also second to none.

For “like Gideon,” notes Paul Johnson, “he 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?”

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). Again, King Jehoshaphat appointed Amariah the chief priest, saying that he was “over you [the Israelites] in all matters of the Lord” (II Chronicles 19.11). Nevertheless, there was a sphere, the sphere of service in the temple, into which the king entered at his peril, as we see in the case of King Uzziah, who was punished with leprosy for presuming to burn incense before the Lord...

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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 centralising 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 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.” 30

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 which 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.

Only 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” (Psalm 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?” (Kings 8.27).

As Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow 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 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 (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’ (Psalm 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 recognised 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 to 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 theorising 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, Josaphat, 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.”

The Decline of the Israelite Autocracy

Although King Solomon forefigured Christ in many ways, in other ways – his luxury, pagan wives and inclination to idolatry, and vast military projects involving forced labour - he displayed the image of the absolutist pagan despot that the Prophet Samuel had warned against. And after his 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 body politic was divided between the two tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam and the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. The political schism was mirrored by a religious schism when Jeroboam built a rival altar and priesthood to the altar and priesthood in Jerusalem.

Although the northern kingdom was accorded some legitimacy by the prophets, this changed when King Ahab’s Tyrian wife Jezabel tried to make Baalism the official religion of the State and began to persecute those who resisted her. In this, probably the first specifically religious persecution in history, the holy Prophet Elijah rose up in defence of the true faith, working miracles in the sight of all and slaughtering the priests of Baal and the soldiers whom Ahab sent against him. After Elijah’s ascension to heaven 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 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 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)... Later, however, Elisha anointed a new king for Israel, Jehu, in the place of Ahab, who led the counter-revolution which killed Jezabel and restored the true faith to Israel.

Here, then, we see the first application of a very important principle, namely, that loyalty to autocracy is conditional on its loyalty to the true faith.

Both Israel and Judah enjoyed a certain recovery in the first half of the eighth century. However, idolatry continued, combined with greed, injustice and debauchery. Then Israel descended into a time of troubles in which many illegitimate rulers came briefly to power and then disappeared – “they have set up kings, but not by Me,” said the Lord through the Prophet Hosea (8.3). Instead of relying on the Lord, Israel turned to the foreign powers, and even invaded its brother-state of Judah. Therefore God permitted its conquest by despot Asshur and the deportation of its inhabitants to the east, which spiritually speaking constituted a reversal of the exodus from Egypt – “now will He remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they shall return to Egypt” (Hosea 8.13).

Judah was spared for a time because of the remnants of piety that were still preserved in her. Thus King Hezekiah, though a vassal of Asshur, 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 (Psalm 19.7). Moreover, Judah even survived her tormentor Asshur, which, having been used to punish the sins of the Jews, was then cast away (Isaiah 10.15).

In this period, as the people became weaker in faith, the kingship became stronger. This was good if the king was good, for his strength and piety could in part compensate for the weakness of the Church. 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.”

But betrayal did not only come from the kings: it could come from the high priesthood. Thus the high priest and temple treasurer in the time of King Hezekiah of Judah was called Somnas. Jewish tradition relates that Somnas 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." Ozias 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.

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).

But the same spiritual sicknesses that had afflicted Israel continued to undermine Judah, and so the Lord raised another despot to punish her – the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the Temple and exiled the people to Babylon in 586 BC. 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).

33 St. Cyril, P.G. 70, 516B.
Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem and carrying away of the Jews to Babylonia, writes 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. 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 Assyro-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…”

**Athenian Democracy**

Each of the main political systems is the reflection of a particular religious (or anti-religious) outlook on the world. Greek democracy, which appeared at the same time as the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, is no exception to this rule. Like Hinduism, it was the expression of a particularly human view of God or the gods. Thus J.M. Roberts writes: “Greek gods and goddesses, for all their supernatural standing and power, are remarkably human. They express the humanity-centred quality of later Greek civilization. Much as it owed to Egypt and the East, Greek mythology and art usually presents its gods as better, or worse, men and women, a world away from the monsters of Assyria and Babylonia, or from Shiva the many-armed. Whoever is responsible, this is a religious revolution; its converse was the implication that men could be godlike. 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.”

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 and remove it from the centre of political power. 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 and those they ruled take their place. 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.” Although cosmic justice must always be satisfied, and the men who defy the laws of the gods are always punished

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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, who are depicted like the tyrannical capitalists of nineteenth-century Marxism. 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.”

This 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.”

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 sophists, 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.” 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. Thus he did not take the final step in the democratic argument, which consists in cutting the bond between human institutions and law (νομος) and the Divine order of things (φυσις) – a step that was not taken unequivocally until the French revolution in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, his thought shows that the movement towards democracy went hand in hand with religious scepticism.

It is in the context of this gradual loss of faith in the official “Olympian” religion that Athenian Democracy arose. But just as Athens was not the whole

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38 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, Routledge: London and New York, 1996, p. 11).
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.\textsuperscript{39}

This naturally led to a debate on which form was the best; and we find one debate on this subject recorded by the “Father of History”, Herodotus, who 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. But 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. 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

\textsuperscript{39}Sparta has been seen as one of the earliest models of socialism in the western world. See Lev Karpinsky, “S ‘Sotsializmom’ napereves’” (“In a horizontal position with socialism”), \textit{Moskovskie Novosti} (Moscow News), No 21, May 27, 1990; Vladimir Rusak, \textit{Svidetel’stvo obvinenija (Witness for the Prosecution)}, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1989, part III, p. 102 (in Russian).
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.’”

Otanes’ main thesis is true as regards Despotic power, but false as regards Autocratic power, as we shall see; for Autocracy’s rule over the people is not absolute in that it is wielded only in “symphony” with the Church, which serves as its conscience and restraining power. The theme of “equality under the law” is also familiar from modern Democracy; it was soon to be subjected to penetrating criticism by Plato and Aristotle. As for the assertion that “the people in power do none of the things that monarchs do”, this was to be disproved even sooner by the experience of Athenian Democracy in the war with Sparta.

“Otanes was followed by Megabyzus, who recommended the principle of oligarchy in the following words: ‘Insofar as Otanes 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

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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.”

This to a western ear paradoxical argument that monarchy actually delivers freedom – freedom from the scourge of 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, allowing them to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Augustus, the first Roman emperor, freed the Romans from the ravages of civil war. So did St. Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, who also granted them religious freedom. Riurik, 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 tried to free Serbia from Austro-Hungarian despotism, and died trying to save his people from the worst of all despotisms, Communism...

Of course, these men were exceptional rulers: examples of monarchs who enslaved their subjects rather than liberating them are easy to find. 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. 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.

The defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian war, and the many negative phenomena that war threw up, 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.

41 Herodotus, *History*, III, 81, 82.
The first and most obvious defect it 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, they were almost continually at war with each other. Nor was this disunity manifest only between city-states: within them traitors were also frequent (the Athenian Alcibiades, for example).

Evidently, attachment to the idea of democracy does not necessarily go together with attachment to the idea of 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 selfish and destructive individualism is described by Roberts: “Greek democracy... was far from being dominated, as is ours, by the mythology of cooperativeness, and 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 [αρετή] 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.”

Another defect was the fact that while, as Aristotle said, democracy arose from the belief that men who are equally free should be equal in all respects, in practice Athenian democracy could be as cruel and unjust and imperialistic as any despotism. It was exemplified in the Athenians’ cruel treatment of the inhabitants of the little island of Melos simply because they did not want to

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become part of the Athenian empire. 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 quality of the religion that the citizens profess...

Plato on the State

It was the reflections on the failure of their state that prompted Plato to undertake the construction of the first systematic theory of politics and of the relationship of politics to religion.

According to Plato in The Republic, the end of the state is happiness, which is achieved if it produces justice, since justice is the condition of happiness. It was therefore greatly to the discredit of Athenian democracy that it condemned to death its finest citizen and Plato’s own teacher, Socrates. 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, Anytus fails to convince us, 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…”

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.

Before examining Plato’s ideal, let us consider first why democracy was for him, not merely not the ideal, but 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.” 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.”

“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 is because it is unstable, and paves the way for the worst, which is despotism or tyranny.

Plato compares the democratic state to a ship, the people to the captain and the politicians to the crew: “Suppose the following to be the state of affairs on board a ship or ships. 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. They have no idea that the true navigator must study the seasons of the year,

46 Plato, The Republic, 557.
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?”

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.

“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.”

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 had the insight to see 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

49 “The true Philosopher-Ruler,” writes McClelland, “is a reluctant ruler. His heart is set on the Good, and he accepts the burdens of rulership because the Good can only survive and prosper in a city which is ruled by just men. Rule by guardians is an attempt to universalise justice in so far as that is possible…” (McClelland, op. cit., p. 36).
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.”

This represents a major advance on all previous pagan systems of statehood or political 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 imply, he was fully aware of the fact that, as Lord Acton put it much later, “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” But he was also enough of a “Platonist”, as it were, to know that the end of human society must transcend human society.

Having said that, one cannot deny that there are elements of utopianism in Plato’s system. Thus his approach to statecraft 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...”

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52 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.”
53 Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, pp. 127-128. Metropolitan Anastasius (op. cit., p. 40) 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
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, soberly rational beings who alone could inspire wise and soberly rational 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 gods.

But what if there was another divinity higher than these lechers and buffoons, 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.”54 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 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.”

54 McClelland, op. cit., p. 39.
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 the despotism that all Greeks despised. It was all for the sake of “justice” – that is, in his conception, 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 became the model for that supremely 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 use of the lie for the sake of the survival of the State.

**Aristotle on the State**

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”). The fact that Aristotle was prepared to consider the possibility of a good kind of monarchy may have something to do with the fact that one of his pupils was the future King of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, whose father, Philip took advantage of the perennial disunity of the Greek city-states to assume a de facto dominion over them. However, Aristotle’s favourite form of government was politeia, in which, in Copleston’s words, “there naturally exists a warlike multitude able to obey and rule in turn by a law which gives office to the well-to-do according to their desert”.

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.”

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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.” 57 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 equally free should be equal in everything, oligarchs thinking that because men are unequal in wealth they should be unequal in everything.” 58

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.” 59 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?” 60

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.” 61

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58 Copleston, op. cit., p. 97.
59 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 98-99
60 Plato, The Republic, 544.
61 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
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.62

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.”63 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.”64

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. This is not to say that Aristotle’s politics was irreligious in a general sense. As 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.65 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 religious myth 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.

62 McClelland, op. cit., p. 57.
63 McClelland, op. cit., p. 117.
64 Aristotle, Politics, I, 2 1253a25; quoted in Azkoul, op. cit., p. 225.
65 Quoted by Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 7. Other ancient writers said the same. Thus 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.”
However, Greek democracy was not as irreligious and 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...

“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...”

*Alexander, the Stoics and the Demise of Democracy*

Classical Greek Democracy, undermined not only by the disunity, instability and licence highlighted by the critiques of Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, but also by its narrow nationalism and pride in relation to the “barbarian” world, ended up by succumbing to that same barbarian world – first, the “Greek barbarism” of Macedon, and then the iron-clad savagery of Rome. And if the glittering civilisation made possible by Classical Greek democracy eventually made captives of its captors culturally speaking, politically and morally speaking it had been decisively defeated. Its demise left civilised mankind dazzled, but still thirsting for the ideal polity.

When the West turned again to democratic ideas in the early modern period, it was to the Greek classical writers that they turned for inspiration. Thus Marx and Engels turned to Aristotle’s description of democracy when

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they planned the Paris Commune of 1871, while Plato’s ideas about philosopher-kings and guardians, child-rearing, censorship and education found a strong echo in the “people’s democracies” of twentieth-century communism... In the intervening period, only two major ideas made a significant contribution to thinking on politics. One was Christianity, which we shall discuss in detail later. And the other was 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.

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.”

Another important element in Stoicism was fate. Stoicism took the idea of fate, 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 runs through 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. This attitude led to a more passive, dutiful approach to politics than had been fashionable in the Classical Greek period.

The political event that elicited this broadening in political thought was the rise of the Hellenistic empire of Alexander the Great. 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’.”

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. In spreading Greek civilisation throughout the East, he betrayed its greatest ideal, the dignity of man, by making himself into a god (the son of Ammon-Zeus) and forcing his own Greek soldiers to perform an eastern-style act of

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67 Held, op. cit., p. 21.
68 Copleston, op. cit., p. 143.
proskynesis to their fellow man. He married the daughter of Darius, proclaimed himself heir to the Persian “King of kings” and caused the satraps of Bithynia, Cappadocia and Armenia to pay homage to him as to a typical eastern despot. Thus Alexander, like the deus ex machina of a Greek tragedy, brought the curtain down on Classical Greek civilisation, merging it with its great rival, the despotic civilisations of the East.

Alexander’s successor-kingdoms of the Ptolemies and Seleucids 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).”

Classical Greek civilisation began with the experience of liberation from despotism; it ended with the admission that political liberation without individual, 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 democratic 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

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71 Roberts, op. cit., p. 173.
72 Roberts, op. cit., p. 175.
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 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 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 tope 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…”

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 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, more humane 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 eastern experience 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 civilisation of the Greeks to the universal community and civilisation of all mankind (or, at any rate, of the oikoumene), and from the narrow worship of Athene of Athens or Diana of the Ephesians to the One God Who created all men, endowed them all with reason and freewill and brought them all together under one single dominion. Thus, as McClelland writes, “polis had given way to cosmopolis. 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…”

From Zerubbabel to the Maccabees

Although the political schism between Israel and Judah had been “healed” by the disappearance of the northern kingdom of Israel, and although the political passions of Judah had been at least partially quenched by the exile to Babylon in 586, the spiritual “schism in the soul”, the schism between faithfulness to the God of Israel and the opposite tendency, remained. For while the books of Daniel, Esther and Tobit show that piety was not completely extinguished even among those Jews who stayed in Persia, and that a pious remnant returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple, a still larger part stayed among the pagans and learned their ways.

In Israel, the most important Jewish leader 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’,

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23 McClelland, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
24 McClelland, op. cit., p. 82.
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...”75

However, we are running ahead of our story... In spite of the attempt to revive observance of the law under Ezra and Nehemiah, piety declined in Israel, especially after the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great. Not that he harmed Judah: on the contrary, he 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.

The pagan idea of kingship 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

75 Tikhomirov, Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii, op. cit., pp. 141-142.
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.

In 175 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a god-king on the Middle Eastern despotic model, came to power. As US 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.”

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 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 preeminent in virtue that neither the virtue nor the political capacity of all the 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 Hellenising Jews] wanted was for Judaism to universalize itself by pervading Greek culture; and that meant embracing the polis.”

Antiochus was soon acting, not as “Epiphanes”, “divine manifestation”, but as his enemies called him, “Epimanes”, “raving madman”. In his eagerness to speed up the Hellenization of Judaea, he removed the lawful Jewish high-priest Onias and replaced him by his brother Jason, who proceeded to introduce pagan Hellenistic practices. After a struggle for power between Jason and Menelaus, another hellenizing high-priest, Antiochus invaded Jerusalem in 168. He plundered the Temple, led many of the people away into slavery, banned circumcision, Sabbath observance and the reading

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77 Johnson, op. cit., p. 102.
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.

Lieberman continues: “The Jews resisted Antiochus’ edict and worshipped in secret. The conflict festered before finally coming to a head in Modi’in, a small village outside Jerusalem, where a priest named Matityahu rose up against a Greek soldier who dared sacrifice a swine on the village altar. Soon thereafter, Antiochus’ army swept through Jerusalem and ravaged the Holy Temple, torturing and murdering many Jews along the way.”

However, a liberation movement led by Matityahu (Mattathias) and his sons succeeded in expelling the Greeks from Israel, purifying the Temple and restoring the True Faith. This victory, which was celebrated in the feast of Hannukah, or Purification, is a clear example of how, in certain extreme circumstances when the faith is under direct attack, God blesses the taking up of arms in defence of the faith. However, a true autocracy on the Davidic model was not re-established, for the Maccabees (or Hasmonaeans, as they were called after Matityahu’s surname, Hasmon) sinusly combined the roles of king and high priest ([I Maccabees 13.42]).

Simon’s son, John Hyrcanus, writes Johnson, “accepted as literal truth that the whole of Palestine was the divine inheritance of the Jewish nation, and that it was not merely his right but his duty to conquer it. To do this he created a modern army of mercenaries. Moreover, the conquest, like Joshua’s, had to extirpate foreign cults and heterodox sects, and if necessary slaughter those who clung to them. John’s army trampled down Samaria and razed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. He stormed, after a year’s siege, the city of Samaria itself, and ‘he demolished it entirely, and brought streams to it to drown it, for he dug ditches to turn it into floods and water-meadows; he even took away the very marks which showed a city had been there.’ In the same way he pillaged and burned the Greek city of Scythopolis. John’s wars of fire and sword were marked by massacres of city populations whose only crime was that they were Greek-speaking. The province of Idumaea was conquered and the inhabitants of its two main cities, Adora and Marissa, were forcibly converted to Judaism or slaughtered if they refused.

“Alexander Jannaeus, John’s son, took this policy of expansion and forcible conversion still further. He invaded the territory of the Decapolis, the league of ten Greek-speaking cities grouped around the Jordan. He swept into Nabataea and took Petra, the ‘rose-red city half as old as time’. He moved into the province of Gaulanitis. The Hasmoneans pushed north into the Galilee and Syria, west to the coast, south and east into the desert. Behind their

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78 Liberman, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
79 The Maccabees were, in any case, of the tribe of Levi, so they could only be priests, not kings.
frontiers they eliminated pockets of non-Jewish people by conversion, massacre or expulsion. The Jewish nation thus expanded vastly and rapidly in terms of territory and population, but in doing so it absorbed large numbers of people who, though nominally Jewish, were also half Hellenized and in many cases were fundamentally pagans or even savages.

“Moreover, in becoming rulers, kings and conquerors, the Hasmoneans suffered the corruptions of power. John Hyrcanus seems to have retained a reasonably high reputation in Jewish traditional thought. Josephus says he was considered by God ‘worthy of the three greatest privileges: government of the nation, the dignity of the high-priesthood, and the gift of prophecy’. But Alexander Jannaeus, according to the evidence we have, turned into a despot and a monster, and among his victims were the pious Jews from whom his family had once drawn its strength. Like any ruler in the Near East at this time, he was influenced by the predominantly Greek modes and came to despise some of the most exotic, and to Greek barbarous, aspects of the Yahweh cult. As high-priest, celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, he refused to perform the libation ceremony, according to ritual custom, and the pious Jews pelted him with lemons. ‘At this,’ Josephus wrote, ‘he was in a rage, and slew of them about six thousand.’ Alexander, in fact, found himself like his hated predecessors, Jason and Menelaus, facing an internal revolt of rigorists. Josephus says the civil war lasted six years and cost 50,000 Jewish lives.

“It is from this time we first hear of the Perushim or Pharisees, ‘those who separated themselves’, a religious party which repudiated the royal religious establishment, with its high-priest, Sadducee aristocrats and the Sanhedrin, and placed religious observance before Jewish nationalism. Rabbinic sources record the struggle between the monarch and this group, which was a social and economic as well as a religious clash. As Josephus noted, ‘the Sadducees draw their following only from the rich, and the people do not support them, whereas the Pharisees have popular allies.’ He relates that at the end of the civil war, Alexander returned in triumph to Jerusalem, with many of his Jewish enemies among his captives and then ‘did one of the most barbarous actions in the world… for as he was feasting with his concubines, in the sight of all the city, he ordered about eight hundred of them to be crucified, and while they were living he ordered the throats of their children and wives to be cut before their eyes’…

“Hence, when Alexander died in 76 BC, after he had (according to Josephus) ‘fallen into a distemper by hard drinking’, the Jewish world was bitterly divided and, though much enlarged, included many half-Jews whose devotion to the Torah was selective and suspect…”

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**Herod the Great**

It was at this point that the shadow of Roman power (with which the Maccabees had maintained friendly relations[^81]) began to fall across the scene, taking the place of the already severely weakened Seleucids. In 64 the Roman general Pompey arrived in Antioch and deposed the last of the Seleucid kings. The two sons of Alexander Jannaeus, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, were fighting each other for the kingship and high priesthood at this time, 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, taking the side of Hyrcanus, captured Jerusalem and, to the horror of the Jews, entered the Holy of Holies.

Although Hyrcanus II, remained formally in power, under Pompey and then Julius Caesar, the real ruler of Judaea, with the title of Roman procurator, was his adviser, an Idumaean named Antipater. His son, who was placed in charge of Galilee, was named Herod, known in history as “the Great”, the first persecutor of Christianity, and the man who finally destroyed the Israelite autocracy…

In 43 BC, Antipater was poisoned by the Jewish nationalist party, and his son Herod was forced by the Sanhedrin to flee to Rome. Thus when the Hasmonean Antigonus with the help of the Parthians conquered 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. Paryaev 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.”[^82] 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 since Herod was not only not of the line of David, but not even a Jew by birth[^83], 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. Perhaps the time had come for the appearance of the Messiah, whose kingdom would be eternal. After all, the “seventy times seven” prophecy of

[^81]: See I Maccabees 8, a fascinating and largely approbatory portrait of the Roman republic.
[^83]: “His mother was an ethnic Arab, 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 Hasmonean kings had traditionally done. Many of his subjects consider 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 Hasmonean theocracy.” (Tom Mueller, “Herod: The Holy Land’s Visionary Builder”, National Geographic Magazine, December, 2008, p. 41).
Daniel (9.24-27) indicated that his coming would be in the first half of the first century AD. 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?

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. He also rebuilt the Temple with unparalleled splendour. But his Jewish faith was superficial. When Octavian declared himself divine, he built a temple in his honour in Samaria, renaming it Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of the emperor’s new title, Augustus. And he built so many fortresses, gymnasia, temples and other buildings that Palestine under Herod (Octavian 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 recens 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.”

But of course the essence of the kingdom was quite different from that of David and Solomon. Apart from the fact that the real 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. He was, in fact, the closest type of the Antichrist in Old Testament history…

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84 Bishop Alexander (Mileant) of Argentina (“On the Threshold”, Orthodox America, vol. XVIII, № 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).”

85 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.).

86 Johnson, op. cit., p. 112.
“The last years of the life of Herod,” writes Paryaev, “were simply nightmarish. Feeling that his subjects profoundly hated him, haunted at night by visions of his slaughtered wife, sons and all the Hasmoneans, 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.”\textsuperscript{87} The final 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).

Perhaps the clearest sign of the degeneration of the Jews under Herod was the behaviour of the Pharisees. We have seen that they had led the movement against Hellenising influences in the first century BC, and were zealots of the purity of the law. But just as the Maccabee movement for renewal of the true faith degenerated into its opposite, so did that of the Pharisees. They even once sent a delegation to Rome asking for the establishment of a \textit{republic} in Judaea under the sovereignty of Rome.\textsuperscript{88} Moreover, they supported Herod, and, like him, persecuted Christ, the True King of the Jews, leading to the abandonment of the Jewish people by God.

“King Herod,” writes Blessed Theophylactus, “ruled over Galilee and Judaea from 40 BC until the Birth of Christ. He divided his kingdom among his sons Archelaus (Matthew 2.22). Herod Antipas, and Philip. Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea and is the Herod who slew John the Baptist (Matthew 14.1-12). In the \textit{Acts of the Apostles} there is mention of later members of this Idumean dynasty: Herod Agrippa I (\textit{Acts} 12) and Herod Agrippa II (\textit{Acts} 25 and 26).”\textsuperscript{89}

Herod Agrippa I was eaten by worms for allowing himself to be hailed as a god (\textit{Acts} 12). The wheel had thus turned full circle. The Jews, who had always prided themselves on being ruled by God alone, had become become like the pagans in worshipping a man as god…

\textbf{The King of the Jews}

The final test of a true autocracy is its recognition of, and obedience to, the true Ruler, the King of kings, when He comes to take possession of His Kingdom. The Jews failed this test. As Blessed Theophylact writes: “Some expected and waited for Christ to come and be their King. But these Jews did not want to be ruled by a king and so they slew this holy man, Zacharias, who confirmed that the Virgin had given birth and that the Christ had been born

\textsuperscript{87} Paryaev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{88} Paryaev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 34.
Who would be their King. But they rejected Him because they did not want to live under a king.”

The Jews both crucified their True King, God Himself, 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 recognise 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.”

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 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. 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 submission to "the god of this world" and the spiritual ruler of the pagan nations.

In 66-70 AD the Jews rebelled against Rome and were ruthlessly suppressed; hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed, and the Temple was destroyed. The message of the revolutionaries was striking similar to that of another Jewish-inspired revolution – that of Russia in 1917. Thus Neil Faulkner writes: “The revolutionary message of sectarian radicals and messiahs was 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…”\textsuperscript{93}

In 130, the Emperor Hadrian renamed Jerusalem Aelia Capitolina after himself, and planned to erect a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Temple. In 135 there was another rebellion under Bar Koseba. It was crushed with the deaths of 580,000 Jewish soldiers, the city and ruins were ploughed over and a completely Hellenic city built in its place…

Paradoxically, the Jews’ last stand in both their rebellions took place in the hilltop fortresses built at Herodium and Masada by that arch-Hellenist, Herod the Great.\textsuperscript{94} 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.

“Nevertheless we must not forget that if the nationalist hatred for the Kingdom of God, manifested outside tribal conditions, was expressed in the


\textsuperscript{94} Mueller, op. cit., pp. 58-59.
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 pureblooded 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’.\textsuperscript{95}

\textit{The End of the State}

The history of Israel 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: what is the end, that is, \textit{purpose} of the State? And what is the end, that is, \textit{destroyer} of the State, that which brings the State to an end? The two questions are logically as well as linguistically 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 \textit{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”.\textsuperscript{96} 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 \textit{qualitatively} as well as quantitatively distinct from them insofar as it enabled man to fulfil his potential as a human being.

Hence Aristotle’s 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 organisation in the Greece of Aristotle’s time). For it is only in 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 states that he has the leisure and the education to pursue such uniquely human activities as art, science, organised religion and philosophy, which constitute his true happiness, \textit{eudaemonia}.

The problem was that Greek democracy did not attain its positive end, that is, \textit{eudaemonia}, and even failed to attain its negative end, survival. First,

\textsuperscript{95} Tikhomirov, \textit{Religiozno-Filosofske Osnovy Istorii}, op. cit., p. 142.
\textsuperscript{96} Aristotle, \textit{Politics}, 1252 b 28.
Athenian democracy was defeated by the Spartan dual kingship and aristocracy, a kind of political organisation that theoretically should have been 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 organisation 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 kind of state is that its origin is not the need to survive but 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 may actually be more difficult than before: but the prize is spiritual survival, life with God. Thus we may say that the negative end of Israelite autocracy is the avoidance of spiritual death (Babylon, Egypt, the kingdom of sin and death), and its positive end is 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 autocratic state is not in fact political at all as the word “political” is usually understood, but religious. Its aim is 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. Thus the end of the state is beyond itself, to serve 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 faithfulness it was punished by God 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. But since the purpose of God remained unchanging, the salvation of men for the Kingdom of heaven, autocracy was re-established on a still firmer and wider base. And in the very state that had destroyed the old Israel – Rome...
II. THE BYZANTINE AUTOCRACY

Thou ledest Thy people as sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron.
Psalm 76.80.

The Roman State was based on a unique mixture of monarchical, oligarchical and democratic principles. However, democratic institutions gradually atrophied in Rome; and when 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 despotically by a single man, the Emperor Augustus. 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 empire. It was if, being born at the same time as Christ, it 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.97

The Duty of Obedience

Rome had conquered Israel by military might, and kept her in subjection against the will of her people, the people of God. In spite of that, the whole of the Gospel bears witness to the fact that the Lord accepted the Roman political order as normal 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). Again, St. Peter wrote: “Fear God; honour the king” (I Peter 2.17). And St. Paul wrote: “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).

97 See St. Melito, in Eusebius, Church History, IV, 26, 7-8; Origen, Against Celsus II, 30; St. Gregory the Theologian, Sermon 4, P.G. 47, col. 564B; St. Leo the Great, Sermon 32, P.L. 54, col. 423. The Church has summed up this teaching in her liturgy: “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.” (Festal Menaion, Great Vespers for the Nativity of Christ, “Lord, I have cried”, Glory... Both now...
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? We shall discuss this critical question in detail later. Suffice it to say at this stage that one thing the apostle is clearly not doing in this passage is casting any aspersions on monarchical power as such – even the pagan monarchical power of the Roman Emperors.

There was another reason why obedience to the Roman emperors was enjoined: Roman power was believed to “restrain” the coming of the Antichrist. “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.”

“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’.”

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98 Tertullian, Apologeticum, 32.1.
99 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 Scapulam 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...
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. 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.”

But how this shall come to pass I shall explain... In the first place, the empire shall be parcelled 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.

100 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 Nicon 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...” (quoted by Zyzykin, op. cit., part 2, pp. 48-49).

101 St. Chrysostom, Homily 4 on II Thessalonians.
The Hierarchical Principle

The Apostles extended the principle of obedience to hierarchical authority 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 includes 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 writes: “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).

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 the first Christian Emperor, 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”.

While excluding 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

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102 Eusebius, Oration in Honour of Constantine.
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.\textsuperscript{103}

This idea was taken up by the Fathers of the late fourth century. One-man rule is best both because it reflects the universal monarchy of the One God, and because it prevents anarchy. Thus St. Basil the Great wrote: "Even the king of the birds is not elected by the majority because the temerity of the people often nominates for leader the worst one; nor does it receive its power by lot, because the unwise chance of the lot frequently hands over power to the last; nor in accordance with hereditary succession, because those living in luxury and 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."\textsuperscript{104}

Again, 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. \textit{What we honour is monarchy…}”\textsuperscript{105}

Again, we read in St. John Chrysostom: “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.”\textsuperscript{106}

This teaching of the fourth-century Fathers on the God-given nature of one-man rule was confirmed and generalized, over four centuries later, by St. Theodore the Studite: “There is one Lord and Giver of the Law, as it is written: one authority and one Divine principle over all. This single principle is the source of all wisdom, goodness and good order. It extends over every creature that has received its beginning from the goodness of God…

“It is given to one man only… to construct rules of life in accordance with the likeness of God. For the divine Moses in his description of the origin of the world that comes from the mouth of God, cites the word: ‘Let us create man in accordance with Our image and likeness’ (Genesis 1.26). Hence the establishment among men of every dominion and every authority, especially

\textsuperscript{103} Eusebius, \textit{Oration in Honour of Constantine}.
\textsuperscript{104} St. Basil the Great, \textit{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.
\textsuperscript{106} St. John Chrysostom, \textit{Homily 34 on I Corinthians}, 7.
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.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{Monarchy and Tyranny (1) Before Constantine}

While exalting the principle of one-man rule, the Holy Fathers made an important distinction between the true monarch, \textit{basileus}, and the unlawful usurper, rebel or tyrant, \textit{tyrannis}. Such a distinction was not new. Thus King Solomon wrote: “My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not mix with rebels” (Proverbs 24.21). Now 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.”\textsuperscript{108}

The Holy Fathers developed this idea in a Christian context. Thus St. Basil the Great said: “If the heart of the king is in the hands of God (Proverbs 21.1), then he is saved, not by force of arms, but by the guidance of God. But not every one is in the hands of God, but only he who is worthy of the name of king. Some have defined kingly power as lawful dominion or sovereignty over all, without being subject to sin.” 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.”\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} Aristotle, \textit{Politics}, IV, 10.
\textsuperscript{109} St. Basil, quoted in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. \textit{Rossia pered Vitorym Prishestviem} (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, pp. 66, 102 (in Russian).
St. Basil’s definition of true kingship 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 which 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.

We have seen that Christ was enrolled as a citizen of the Roman Empire and always upheld its legitimacy. Even the crucifixion of Christ by the Roman authorities could not shake the Christians’ loyalty to Rome; for the Lord had ascribed the primary responsibility for His death, not to the Romans, but to the Jews (John 19.11). In fact, Pilate, as the Apostle Peter pointed out, was inclined to release Christ (Acts 3.13), and might well have done so if he had been a stronger character. 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.

In fact, we do not have to wait that long to see Roman power fulfilling the role of protector of the Christians. Thus already in 35, on the basis of a report sent to him by Pilate, the Emperor Tiberius proposed to the senate that Christ should be recognised 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 in the future. Moreover, when St. Mary Magdalene complained to the emperor about the unjust sentence passed by Pontius Pilate on Christ, the emperor moved Pilate from Jerusalem to Gaul, where he died after a terrible illness.110

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).111 So at first the Romans, far from being persecutors of the Christians, were their chief protectors against the Jews – the former people of God who had now become His chief enemies.

111 Sordi, op. cit., chapter 1.
It is therefore not surprising that the Apostles, following in the tradition of Christ’s own recognition of the Romans as a lawful power, exhorted the Christians to obey Caesar in everything that did not involve transgressing the law of God. Thus 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. Therefore the emperor is to be obeyed "not only because of wrath, but for conscience's sake" (Romans 13.5). For he is "the servant of God for good" and "wields not the sword in vain" (Romans 13.4).

But what of the Roman emperors who persecuted the Church? Surely they could not be considered as true kings by St. Basil’s definition? Surely they were not “servants of God for good”?

Let us look at the historical record… The first persecution, that of Nero in 64, in which the Apostles Peter and Paul were killed, was a local persecution in Rome, and was not for matters of principle, but because 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” (dominus et deus), and required people to swear “by the genius of the emperor”. Those who did not were called “atheists”, and the Apostle John was exiled to Patmos for his refusal to obey.

However, over the next two centuries and a bit, 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 the last persecution, under Diocletian, 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.

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside Russia wrote that Soviet power could not be compared with “the Roman authority, submission to which the Apostles Peter and Paul required of the Christians of their time, even though it too later persecuted the followers of Christ. The Romans by nature were distinguished 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…"112

The early Christians always expressed loyalty to the emperor. St. Clement of Rome expressed this clearly in the first century113, and 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…”114 That is why, as Tertullian said, 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”.115

At the same time, submission to the emperor was never considered to be unconditional. Thus in the third century Hieromartyr Hippolytus, Pope of Rome, 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

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113 St. Clement of Rome, To the Corinthians, 60.
114 St. Justin the Martyr, First Apology, 17.
115 Tertullian, Apologeticum 33.1.
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).”

This attitude of qualified, conditional obedience was well exemplified by the Egyptian general Maurice, who was martyred with his Christian legion in the fourth century. Like many Christian martyrs before him (for example, Saints George, Demetrius and Menas), he did not refuse to fight in the armies of the pagan Roman emperors against the pagans. But he refused to destroy a village composed of fellow-Christians. For “we are your soldiers, yes,” he said, “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.”

So even the persecuting pagan emperors were recognized as having some legitimate authority: it was only when their commands contradicted the Law of God that they were to be defied. And even then, there is no hint of 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 this tradition, the pagan absolutist kings who persecuted the people of God were not legitimate rulers but tyrants.

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117 Eucherius of Lyons, The Passion of the Martyrs.
118 Nebuchadnezzar, for example, is called “tyrant” in some liturgical texts: “Caught and held fast by love for the King of all, the Children despaired the impious threats of the tyrant in his boundless fury” (Festal Menaion, The Nativity of Christ, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Seven, second irmos).
Again, the Revelation of St. John the Theologian was written during the persecution of Domitian, and in the figure of the first beast, or, alternatively, of the whore of Babylon - “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”, “a woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (17.5, 6), - many early interpreters saw a symbolic reference to Roman power. Thus Hieromartyr Victorinus of Petuau wrote that the whore’s downfall was “the ruin of great Babylon, that is, of the city of Rome.”\(^{119}\) In other words, Rome was seen, not as a lawful monarchy or the blueprint of a future Christian autocracy, but as a bloody and blasphemous despotism, in the tradition of all the ancient despotisms that took their origin from Nimrod’s Babylon.\(^{120}\)

This tradition became more popular as 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 bulwark restraining the advent of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7), 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.

**St. Constantine the Great**

And then the miracle happened: the conquest of the Roman Empire by the first Christian Emperor, St. Constantine... This was surely a vindication of the Christians’ attitude to the empire. “The world,” said Tertullian in the third century, “may need its Caesars. But the Emperor can never be a Christian, nor

\(^{119}\) Hieromartyr Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.  
\(^{120}\) Some saw in I Peter 5.13 a similar identification of Rome with Babylon, but this is doubtful. The Babylon referred to here 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.
a Christian ever be an Emperor.”¹²¹ But 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 anticlerical 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).

The cause of the final clash between the Church and paganism was a declaration by the haruspices, the Roman-Etruscan priestly diviners, that it was the presence of the Christians that prevented the gods from giving their responses through the entrails of sacrificial victims. Angered by this, Diocletian ordered that all soldiers and all palatines should sacrifice to the gods. The real persecution began on February 23, 303, the pagan feast of the Terminalia. 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?”¹²²

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 Constantine’s 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: “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.”¹²³

The next night Christ appeared to him and told him to make standards for the army in this form, “and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies”. So the next day Constantine had the pagan standards removed and the Christian one, the so-called Labarum, put in their place, and declared himself publicly to be a Christian. 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.\textsuperscript{124}

Breaking with tradition, Constantine refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. “And because Constantine made no supplication to evil spirits,” wrote St. Augustine, “but worshipped only the true God, he enjoyed a life more favoured by marks of worldly prosperity than anyone would have dared imagine was possible.”\textsuperscript{125} Contrary to many western historians, who assert that he diplomatically did not break with paganism, the Emperor was not slow to ascribe his victory to Christ and the Cross: “In the royal city he raised this sacred standard and inscribed definitely and indelibly that this saving sign is the preserver of the Roman Empire and the whole kingdom. But when in the most crowded place of Rome they raised a statue to him, he immediately ordered that a long spear in the shape of a cross be put in the hand of his representation and that the following inscription be written word for word in Latin: ‘By this saving and famous sign, the true witness of courage, I saved and liberated your city from the yoke of tyranny, and on liberating it, returned to the Roman senate and people its freedom, its former glory and its celebrity.’”\textsuperscript{126}

He continued to experience the power of the Cross, “the sceptre of kings”, throughout his reign. Thus “wherever the sign of the cross was shown, enemies were turned to flight, while the victors pursued them. When the Emperor heard about this, he ordered the saving sign, as being the most genuine means of victory, to be transferred to the place where he saw one of his regiments weakening. Immediately victory was restored to it, because the warriors at the sight of it were strengthened by a vigour and a power sent from on high.”\textsuperscript{127}

In the West the persecution of the Christians was now over. However, in the East the persecution continued under the Caesar Galerius until his death in 311, and in the territories of the Caesar Maximinus until 313. In that year St. Constantine met the new emperor in the East, Licinius, and with him proclaimed an Edict of religious toleration: “Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each

\textsuperscript{125} St. Augustine, \textit{The City of God}, 5.25.
\textsuperscript{126} Eusebius, \textit{On the Life of Constantine}, I, 40.
\textsuperscript{127} Eusebius, \textit{On the Life of Constantine}, II, 7.
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”.

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.”

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

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. For, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: “there is benefit in the union of the altar and the throne, but it is not mutual benefit that is the first foundation of their union, but the independent truth, which supports both the one and the other. May the king, the protector of the altar, be blessed; but the altar does not fear the fall of this protection. The priest is right who preaches that the king should be honoured, but not by right of mutuality, but by pure obligation, even if this took place without the

128 Lactantius, On the Deaths of the Persecutors, 48. 2-12.
129 Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 27 (in Russian).
hope of mutuality… Constantine the Great came to the altar of Christ when it already stood on the expanses of Asia, Europe and Africa: he came, not in order to support it with his strength, but in order to submit himself with his majesty before its Holiness. He Who dwells in the heavens laughed at those who later thought of lowering His Divine religion to dependence on human assistance. In order to make their sophistry laughable, He waited for three centuries before calling the wise king to the altar of Christ, and meanwhile from day to day 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…”

Having said that, the conversion of the Emperor to the Church was an event of the greatest historical significance that brought immeasurable benefits. As Eusebius of Caesarea wrote: “Divine joy blossomed in all hearts as we saw that every place which a little whole 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.”

In 324, Constantine defeated Licinius and imposed his rule on the East, thereby delivering Christians throughout the Empire from persecution. Rome was now, not the persecutor, but the protector, of the Christian people. Indeed, long before his defeat of the last tyrant, Constantine had started to legislate in favour of Christianity with the following decrees: “on the abolition of pagan games (314), on the liberation of the Christian clergy from civil obligations and church lands from additional taxes (313-315), on the abolition of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment (315), on the abolition of the branding of criminals (315), against the Jews who rose up against the Church (315), on the liberation of slaves at church gatherings without special formalities (316), on forbidding private persons from offering sacrifices to idols and divining at home (319), on the annulment of laws against celibacy

132 Eusebius, Church History, X, 2, 10.
(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).”

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

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

“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

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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.”

Constantine also defended the Christians against the Jews. He ordered the release of all slaves whom the Jews had dared to circumcise, and those Jews who killed their co-religionists for converting to Christianity were executed.

How central Christianity was to Constantine’s conception of empire is illustrated by his words on hearing of the Donatist heresy: “Until now I cannot be completely calm until all my subjects are united in brotherly unity and offer to the All-holy God the true worship that is prescribed by the Catholic Church”. Again, when the Donatists appealed to him against the judgement of the bishops, he said: “What mad presumption! They turn heavenly things into earthly, appealing to me as if the matter was of a civic nature.” And on the decision of the Council of Arles he said: “The bishops’ decision should be looked upon as though the Lord Himself had been sitting in judgement.”

Thus Constantine separated Church matters from civic matters and did not subject the former to State law, but on the contrary tried to conform his legislation to Christian principles. He gave to the Church the full honour due to her as an institution founded by the One True God, no less than the Body of the God-Man Himself, and therefore higher by nature than any human institution, not excluding the Roman Empire itself. Christianity did not simply take the place of the old Roman religion in the State apparatus; for Constantine understood that the Christian faith was not to be honoured for the sake of the empire, or in submission to the empire, but that the empire existed for the sake of the faith and was to be submitted to it. This was most clearly illustrated at the First Ecumenical Council in 325, when the emperor took part in the proceedings only at the request of the bishops, and did not sit on a royal throne, but on a little stool.

Later, when he addressed the Council Fathers he demonstrated that for him the internal peace and prosperity of the Church was even more important than the external peace and prosperity of the Empire: “Now that we, with the help of God the Saviour, have destroyed the tyranny of the atheists who entered into open war with us, may the evil spirit not dare to attack our holy Faith with his cunning devices. I say to you from the depths of my heart: the internal differences in the Church of God that I see before my eyes have

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

Again, to the Fathers who were not present at the Council of Nicaea he wrote concerning its decrees: “That which has been established in accordance with the God-inspired decision of so many and such holy Bishops we shall accept with joy as the command of God; for everything that is established at the Holy Councils of Bishops must be ascribed to the Divine will.”

Indeed, so obedient was he to the Church that, as I.I. Sokolov writes, “at the First Ecumenical Council, according to the witness of the historian Rufinus, the Emperor Constantine said: ‘God has made you priests and given you the power the 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.’

Constantine saw himself as the instrument whereby God replaced the 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.”

Whatever Constantine did for the Church he did, not as arbitrary expressions of his imperial will, but in obedience to the commission of the Church. Thus the Fathers of the First Council welcomed the Emperor as follows: "Blessed is God, Who has chosen you as king of the earth, having by your hand destroyed the worship of idols and through you bestowed peace upon the hearts of the faithful... On this teaching of the Trinity, your Majesty, is established the greatness of your piety. Preserve it for us whole and unshaken, so that none of the heretics, having penetrated into the Church, might subject our faith to mockery... Your Majesty, command that Arius should depart from his error and rise no longer against the apostolic teaching. Or if he remains obstinate in his impiety, drive him out of the Orthodox Church." As Bishop Dionysius writes, "this is a clear recognition of the divine election of Constantine as the external defender of the Church, who is obliged to work with her in preserving the right faith, and in correspondence with the conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church."

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140 St. Constantine, in Archbishop Seraphim, Russkaia Ideologia, op. cit., p. 71.
142 Eusebius, On the Life of Constantine, II, 28.
143 A. Tuskarev, Tserkov’ o Gosudarstve (The Church on the State), Staritsa, 1992, p. 75 (in Russian).
The most famous definition of the relationship between Constantine and the Church is to be found in two passages from Eusebius’ *Life of Constantine*, which speak of him as “like a common bishop” and “like a bishop of those outside”. The first passage is as follows: “[Constantine] was common for all, but he paid a completely special attention to the Church of God. While certain divergences manifested themselves in different regions, he, like a common bishop established by God, reunited the ministers of God in synods. He did not disdain to be present at their activities and to sit with them, participating in their episcopal deliberations, and arbitrating for everyone the peace of God... Then, he did not fail to give his support to those whom he saw were bending to the better opinion and leaning towards equilibrium and consensus, showing how much joy the common accord of all gave him, while he turned away from the indocile...”

In the second passage the emperor receives the bishops and says that he, too, is a bishop: “But you, you are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I also am a bishop, ordained by God to oversee those outside the Church.” Eusebius immediately explains that Constantine’s “bishopric” here consisted, not in liturgical priestly acts, but in “overseeing all the subjects of the empire” and leading them towards piety. The word translated “overseeing” [ἐπισκέπτει] here has the same root as the word for “bishop” [ἐπισκόπος], thereby underlining the commonality of functions.

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

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

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

**Monarchy and Tyranny: (2) After Constantine**

Protestant writers have often accused the Church of betraying its pre-Constantinian independence in the fourth century and of entering into a union with the State that made it into the slave of the Emperors. However, the truth is rather the opposite: the fourth-century Fathers showed a heroic independence even of 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 for a 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 stronger than 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 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.145 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 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.”146

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Constantius' heretical cast of mind made it easier for him to assume the place of Christ as head of the Church. Thus at the Council of Milan in 355, he said: “My will is law”. To which St. Osius of Cordoba, replied: “Stop, I beseech you. Remember that you are a mortal man, fear the Day of Judgement, preserve yourself pure for that. Do not interfere in matters that are essentially ecclesiastical and do not give us orders about them, but rather accept teaching from us. God has entrusted you with the Empire, and to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church. And just as one who seizes for himself your power contradicts the institution of God, so fear lest you, in taking into your own hands the affairs of the Church, do not become guilty of a serious offence. As it is written, give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. We are not permitted to exercise an earthly role; and you, Sire, are not authorised to burn incense.”

At about this time, the Persian King Sapor started to kill the clergy, confiscate church property and raze the churches to the ground. He told St. Simeon, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, that if he worshipped the sun, he would receive every possible honour and gift. But if he refused, Christianity in Persia would be utterly destroyed. In reply, St. Simeon not only refused to worship the sun but also refused to recognise the king by bowing to him. This omission of his previous respect for the king’s authority was noticed and questioned by the King. St. Simeon replied: "Before I bowed down to you, giving you honour as a king, but now I come being brought to deny my God and Faith. It is not good for me to bow before an enemy of my God!" The King then threatened to destroy the Church in his kingdom… He brought in about one hundred priests and about one thousand other Christians and killed them before the saint’s eyes. The saint encouraged them not to be frightened and to be in hope of eternal life. After everyone had been killed, St. Simeon himself was martyred.147

This shows that the Fathers and Martyrs of the Church recognised 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. Thus St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian in his wars against the Persians; and it was through his prayers, and those of the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia, that the apostate was in fact killed.148

147 St. Demetrius of Rostov, Lives of the Saints, April 17.
St. Basil’s friend, St. Gregory the Theologian, rejoiced at this news: “I call to spiritual rejoicing all those who constantly remained in fasting, in mourning and prayer, and by day and by night besought deliverance from the sorrows that surrounded us and found a reliable healing from the evils in unshakeable hope... What hoards of weapons, what myriads of men could have produced what our prayers and the will of God produced?”149 Gregory called Julian not only an “apostate”, but also “universal enemy” and “general murderer”, a traitor to Romanity as well as to Christianity,150 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).”151

This raises the question: what made Julian the Apostate so much worse than previous persecutors and unworthy even of that honour and obedience that had been given to them? Two possible answers suggest themselves. The first is that Julian was the first – and last – of the Byzantine emperors who openly trampled on the memory and legitimacy of St. Constantine, declaring that he “insolently usurped the throne”. 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”152, then Julian’s rejection of Constantine was clearly a rejection of the imperial order as such. In this sense he was an anti-emperor as well as an anti-christ.

That this is how the Byzantines looked at it is suggested by what happened at the death of Julian and the accession of the Christian Emperor Jovian in 363: “Themistus assured the people of the city that what they were getting, after Constantine’s son Constantius and Constantine’s nephew Julian, was nothing

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149 St. Gregory, First and Second Words against Julian.
150 St. Gregory, First Word against Julian, 35; Second Word against Julian, 26.
less than a reincarnation of Constantine himself.” Jovian’s being a “new Constantine” was a guarantee that he represented a return to the old order and true, Christian Romanity (Romanitas or Ρωμειοσύνη). 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.

A second reason for ascribing to Julian an exceptional place amongst the forerunners of the Antichrist 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.”

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

After Julian, there could be no question that all emperors were established by God. The principle of monarchical power was good and from God – that was the true meaning of St. Paul’s words. 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, who were not kings but rebels and tyrants.

153 Magdalino, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
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’.”

Rulers like Julian were not established by God, but they 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.” And again St. Jerome said: “He often permits wicked kings to arise in order that they may in their wickedness punish the wicked.”

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.” Again, Blessed Theodoret of Cyr wrote: “Paul does not incite us to obey even if we are being constrained to impiety; he has, in fact, clearly defined the function of the power and the manner in which God has regulated human affairs, so that promulgating laws contrary to piety is not part of the function of the power, but rather belongs to the will of those who exercise power badly. For that which concerns God does not belong to the judgement of those who exercise power; they have not been established for that; they have been established as intercessors and guarantors of justice in that which concerns the affairs of men and their mutual rights.”

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

156 St. Chrysostom, Homily 23 on Romans, 1.
157 St. Isidore, Letter 6 to Dionysius.
158 St. Jerome, Commentary on Daniel, 2.21.
159 St. Basil, The Morals, Rule 79 (Cap. 1).
160 Blessed Theodoret, P.G. 66, col. 864, commenting on Romans 13.5.
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’.”161

Not only apostate or heretical emperors experienced the opposition of 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”.162 And St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: “The law of Christ submits you to our power and our judgement. For we also rule, and our power is higher than yours. In fact, must the spirit bow before matter, the heavenly before the earthly?”163 Again, St. John Chrysostom wrote: “The priesthood is as far above the kingdom as the spirit is above the body. The king rules the body, but the priest – the king, which is why the king bows his head before the finger of the priest.”164 And again: “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.”165

This teaching on the complete independence of the Church in relation to the State, and superiority over it, 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.”166

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.”167

161 Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, VI, 18.
162 St. Basil, Rule 79.
163 St. Gregory, Sermon 17.
164 St. Chrysostom, On the Priesthood.
165 St. Chrysostom, quoted in Zyzykin, op. cit., p. 68.
166 Apostolic Constitutions, XI, 34.
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 innocent as well as guilty were killed, perhaps as many as seven thousand.

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

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

Another example of Ambrose’s boldness took place in 383, when Magnus Maximus, leader of the army in Britain, seized power in the West and killed the Western Emperor Gratian. Now Maximus was baptized, was a champion of the Church and defended the Western frontier against the Germans well. Moreover, his usurpation of the empire should not have debarred him from the throne: many emperors before and after came to the throne by the same means. Nevertheless, he is consistently portrayed in the sources as a tyrant; and Sulpicius Severus wrote of him that he was a man “whose whole life

would have been praiseworthy if he could have refused the crown illegally thrust upon him by a mutinous army.”\textsuperscript{169} St. Ambrose refused to give him communion, warning him that “he must do penance for shedding the blood of one who was his master [the Western Emperor Gratian] and... an innocent man.” Maximus refused, “and he laid down in fear, like a woman, the realm that he had wickedly usurped, thereby acknowledging that he had been merely the administrator, not the sovereign \textit{[imperator]} of the state.”\textsuperscript{170} In 388 he was defeated and executed by the Eastern Emperor Theodosius.

The very fact that western bishops such as Ambrose could recognize the Emperor Theodosius as a true king while rejecting the British usurper Maximus, was a tribute to the way in which Christianity 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 – \textit{Senatus PopulusQue Romanorum}, the senate and people of Rome. But might usually turned into right: 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. And yet by the early fifth century, perhaps under the influence of St. Ambrose, a new, stricter criterion of legitimacy was emerging. Might was no longer right: right was bestowed by God and the Church. Of course, Constantine himself had seized the empire by force; but he had done so from a legitimate base (his inheritance of Britain from his father) and 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.

\textit{Monarchy and Heresy}

The lynch-pin of the pagan absolutist system of government had been the concentration in the hands of one man of supreme power in both the political and the religious spheres. Thus in Rome the emperor was also the leading priest, the \textit{pontifex maximus}. As we have seen, however, St. Constantine 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 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.

\textsuperscript{169} Sulpicius Severus, \textit{Dialogues}, I (2, VI).
\textsuperscript{170} Paulinus, \textit{Life of St. Ambrose}, chapter 19, in the translation by E.R. Hoare.
The question arises, therefore: 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 and permitted to exercise by the Church
Fathers. And in the first half of the fifth century that power was increasing…

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

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…”

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

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

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 anathematised 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”.

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”. 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”. 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.

175 St. Marcian, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim, op. cit., p. 71.
176 J. Meyendorff, Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary
177 St. Leo, in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 73.
At such times, when the majority of bishops were betraying the truth, the pious emperors stood out as the representatives of the laity, which, as the Eastern Patriarchs were to declare in their encyclical of the year 1848, is the guardian of the truth of the Church. At such times they were indeed higher than the clergy, if not by the grace they had received, at any rate in view of the fact that the clergy had forsaken their vocation and trampled on that grace they had received. At such times, 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 Dagron points out, “the emperor could not remain neutral. He was the guarantor and often the principal architect of the unity of the Church. Thus the Orthodox or heretical council unanimously celebrated the sovereign ‘guarded by God’ by giving him without niggardliness the title of ‘teacher of the faith’, ‘new Paul’, ‘equal to the apostles, illumined like the bishops by the Holy Spirit’. At the end of the fourth session of the council held in Constantinople in 536, the bishops expressed the conviction of all in declaring that, ‘under an Orthodox emperor’, the Empire had nothing and nobody to fear; and Patriarch Menas concluded: ‘It is fitting that nothing of that which is debated in the holy Church should be decided against the advice and order [of the emperor].’”

It is in this context that one has to understand the at times highly rhetorical expressions often applied to the rulers. Dagron again: “The distinction between the two powers was never as clearly formulated as while there was a disagreement between them. When there was concord or the hope of harmony, the celebration or hope of unity carried the day. Nobody found anything wrong when the synod that condemned the heretic Eutyches in Constantinople in 448 acclaimed Theodosius with the words: ‘Great is the faith of the emperors! Many years to the guardians of the faith! Many years to the pious emperor, the emperor-bishop (τὸ αρχιερεία βασιλεία).’ 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 ‘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 ‘Dominius et pater, rex et sacerdos’. To justify the canonisation of a king, they said that he had been led during his reign a csi 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.”

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 present; 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 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…”

179 According to Alexander Dvorkin, the crowning of Marcian and Pulcheria “was the first in history to be carried out in church” (Ocherki po Istorii Vселенской Православной Церкви (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novogorod, 2006, p. 292 (in Russian)).
The Question of Religious Freedom

As the Empire became more securely Christian, the pressure on pagans and heretics increased, especially from the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (379-395). This raised for the first time the question of religious freedom in the Christian State. This question had not been raised under the pagan emperors, because no Christian had been in a position of political power.

The main motive of religious toleration in the ancient world was simply 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 (who was almost always religious), the god of this people is more likely to help me if I do not persecute his people... And so, contrary to what is often thought, in Imperial Rome before Constantine periods of persecution were intermittent and generally short-lived, and directed exclusively at Christians. (The Soviet persecution of the twentieth century was, by contrast, far more intense and persistent, and directed at all religions.)

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.”

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.

The Christian attitude is expressed by the lawyer Tertullian. “It does not belong to religion,” he said, “to force people to religion, since it must be accepted voluntarily.”\(^{182}\) “His Barring of Heretics (ca. 200) contained an exposition of Catholic principles and included a Rule of Faith that he called it heresy to question. Heretics, in his opinion, could not be called Christians. Although he insisted on the truth of Christianity, Tertullian was nevertheless 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’."\(^{183}\)

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? If Christian rulers were to take the Old Testament Kings David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah as their models, then they would recognize that rulers were required by God to defend the faith of the people as their first duty. 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 greatest of the New Testament kings, Constantine I, Theodosius I and Justinian I. Constantine is often unjustly blamed by Protestants for introducing religious intolerance into the State. However, the truth is that he delivered the Church from the Diocletian persecution, and then introduced certain laws which facilitated Christian worship. He exiled the heretic Arius, but is not known to have killed anyone for his faith. 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.”\(^{184}\) His imperial successors in the fourth century did persecute those whom they considered heretics – but Julian the Apostate was a pagan, and the emperors before him were heretics themselves, and so not representative of Christian right practice.

The Holy Fathers of the fourth century rejected the idea of killing people for their faith. 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).\(^{185}\) ‘The mystery of salvation,’ writes St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘is for those who desire it, not for those who are compelled’. The 108\(^{th}\) canon of the Council of Carthage cites

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\(^{182}\) Tertullian, \textit{Ad Scapulam}, 2.

\(^{183}\) Zagorin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21.


\(^{185}\) Lactantius, \textit{Divine Institutes}, 19.
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’.186

Non-violence to the persons of heretics combined with mercilessness to the heresies themselves was especially emphasised by St. John Chrysostom (+407), who wrote: “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.”187 St. John interpreted the parable of the wheat and the tares to mean that the heretics (the tares) should not be killed - although they were to be resisted in other ways.

Thus Hieromonk Patapios writes: “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.”188

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

187 St. John Chrysostom, quoted by Fr. Antonious Henein, orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, 8 August, 2000.
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), who, as Perez Zagorin writes, “was an implacable enemy of heresy, against which he issued no fewer than eighteen edicts. He proscribed various heresies by name, ordered the confiscation of churches and private houses where heretics met 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 of 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.”

Zeal against heretics was, of course, not the exclusive preserve of the emperors. In 388 some Christians burned down the synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates. Theodosius ordered its rebuilding at the Christians’ expense. However, St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, wrote to him:

189 Moreover, in 392 the Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius decreed that pagans should “forfeit that house or landholding in which it is proved that [they] served a pagan superstition” (XVI, 10, 2). (V.M.)
“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 calmer 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 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!”

Ambrose refused to celebrate the Divine Liturgy until the imperial decree had been revoked. Theodosius backed down... So here we find one of the greatest saints of the Church urging one of the most severe of the Christian emperors (who is also counted as a saint) to adopt still greater severity against non-Christians than was his wont!

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 not 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... At the same time, even St. Ambrose never advocated the execution of heretics or Jews.

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 of Bishops condemning the Spanish heretic Priscillian and handing him over to the Western Emperor Maximus for execution, he felt the reproaches of his conscience, and never again attended a Synod of Bishops.\(^{193}\) So can we say that the execution of heretics is absolutely forbidden by Orthodox Christianity? Not quite... In the Lives of the Saints we find a few instances of the saints blessing the execution of heretics. We even find cases in which saints who are not secular rulers have executed heretics or magicians 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, Manichaeanism, 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.

\(^{193}\) Sulpicius Severus, Life of St. Martin of Tours.
“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 see 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’.”194

The Rise of the Popes

As we have seen, St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (440-461), was completely “eastern” in his political theology and in his respect for the Roman Emperor ruling from Constantinople. Following the teaching of St. Ambrose of Milan, that there is “one God, one empire, one emperor”\(^{195}\), he was not only loyal to the Emperor, but 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 and 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” and 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, and a vital rampart against which the waves of barbarism and heresy beat in vain.

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, 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

\(^{195}\) St. Ambrose, quoted in Archimandrite Luke, “Church, Monastics, Empire”, Orthodox Life, vol. 56, № 4, p. 11.
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....”196

And so, as he wrote to the Monophysite 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.”197

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, of course, the specifically 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 travelled to the camp of Attila and succeeded in turning him away from Rome. The fall of Old Rome had created a vacuum 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 a position of unparalleled authority, as being almost the first authority in both Church and State in the West. And this gave their “anti-caesaropapism” a different tone and emphasis that was to become increasingly important...

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

196 Gelasius, Tractatus IV; translated from Dagron, op. cit., pp. 190-191.
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.”

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.

There was another source of this specifically western exaltation of ecclesiastical, and especial papal, power: 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, and even most of the Western 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 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.”

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

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198 Dagron, op. cit., p. 191.
199 St. Cyprian, On the Unity of the Church, 4, 5.
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. (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.201

Although in error in this matter, St. Leo was too tactful, too Orthodox and too genuinely concerned for the welfare of the Church to put his ideas into practice, or lead them to their logical conclusion – the infallibility of the Roman papacy.202 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”!203 Rome’s jealousy went so far as to create a schism with Archbishop Acacius of Constantinople, although the East accepted Acacius as Orthodox. The “Acacian schism” was finally overcome in 518, but not before Pope Hormisdas in his libellicus had not only again anathematized Acacius, but also 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 at the Liturgy. 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”…204

201 See Dvorkin, op. cit., pp. 299, 309.
202 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).
204 Dvorkin, op. cit., pp. 398, 399.
However, the papist tendency was firmly checked at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, when Pope Vigilius’ wavering over whether to anathematize the “three Chapters” led even to some western councils – in Africa and Northern Italy (the so-called “Aquilean schism”) – breaking communion with him. Moreover, his penitential letter to Patriarch Eutyches of Constantinople was an open admission of his fallibility…

The Symphony of Powers

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

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

In relation to Old Rome he was successful. Under Belisarius’ generalship Italy was reconquered for the Empire, and “the ancient and lesser Rome,” in Michael Psellus’ words, was returned to the dominion of “the later, more powerful city”. A Byzantine governor ruled Northern and Central Italy from Ravenna; Byzantine titles were lavished on the Roman aristocracy; and the Pope commemorated the Emperor at the liturgy. 205 Tactfully, Patriarch John Kappadokes of Constantinople continued to recognize the primacy of the see of Old Rome, 206 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) 207

206 Which, however, he declared to be one church with the see of New Rome (Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 214).
207 A. Gerostergios, Justinian the Great: the Emperor and Saint, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982, p. 82.
The negotiations with the Monophysites in the East were less successful. Nevertheless, the union, however fleeting, of the five ancient patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in one Orthodox Church under one right-believing Emperor, was a great achievement. And there could be little doubt that the single person most instrumental in achieving this union was the emperor himself: if the five patriarchates represented the five senses of the Body of Christ on earth, then the head in which they all adhered – again, on earth - was the emperor.

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

Thus, as in Constantine’s time, the emperor acted as the focus of unity of quarrelling Christians. The importance of this function was recognised 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.”

As if to symbolise 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. 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

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208 Meyendorff, _op. cit._, p. 291.
209 L.A. Tikhomirov, _Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’_ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg: “Komplekt”, 1992, p. 162 (in Russian). 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” (_op. cit._, p. 178).
things of men and assumes the burden of care for them. Both proceed from one source and adorn the life of man. Nothing therefore will be so greatly desired by the emperors than the honour of the priests, since they always pray to God about both these very things. For if the first is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God, and the other adorns the state entrusted to it rightly and competently, a good symphony will exist, which will offer everything that is useful for the human race. We therefore have the greatest care concerning the true dogmas of God and concerning the honour of the priests..., because through this the greatest good things will be given by God – both those things that we already have will be made firm and those things which we do not have yet we shall acquire. Everything will go well if the principle of the matter is right and pleasing to God. We believe that this will come to pass if the holy canons are observed, which have been handed down to us by the apostles, those inspectors and ministers of God worthy of praise and veneration, and which have been preserved and explained.

Several points in Justinian’s Sixth Novella need to be emphasised. First, both the priesthood and the empire are said to “proceed from the same source”, that is, God. This has the very important consequence that the normal and natural relationship between the two powers is one of harmony and symphony, not rivalry and division. If some of the early Fathers, in both East and West, tended to emphasise 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 (ἱερωσύνη) and the empire (βασιλεία) is small, as it is between the sacred goods and the goods that are common to the community.”

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 ‘churchification’ from all sides of the life of the Orthodox Empire, and the symphonicity of all levels of the Church-State

210 Dagron, op. cit., p. 313.
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 Justianian conceived of himself completely as a Christian sovereign, and strove throughout the whole of his life to make the whole world Christian. His symphony with the Patriarch was desirable as a useful means towards that end, but it was not an end-in-itself.

During Justinian’s time five Patriarchates entered into the Empire, including the Roman, and the Emperor did not establish ‘symphonic’ relations with all of them personally (as, for example, with Pope Vigilius, who did not want to accept the decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council). But symphony with the whole Church did exist, and a proof of this is provided by the 5th Ecumenical Council, which was convened through the efforts of Justinian and accepted the dogmatic definitions against the heresies that he presented; and by the multitude of saints who shone forth during his reign and who related completely ‘symphonically’ to him (for example, St. Sabbas the Sanctified); and by the general flourishing of Christian culture.”

Thirdly, it is not any kind of harmony that is in question here, but only a true symphony that comes from God and leads to the good. As I.N. Andrushkevich points out, the word "symphony" [consonantia] 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. 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”.

Justinian himself, in his preface to the Novella, pointed out that, although he was an Autocrat, he could not exercise dominion over the priesthood. This meant that he was obliged to allow the priests to follow their own 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. And in his Novella 131 he decreed: “The Church canons have the same force in the State as the State laws: what is permitted or forbidden by the former is permitted or forbidden by the latter. Therefore crimes against the former cannot be tolerated in the

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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. Justinian did not always observe this restriction on his power.

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

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

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)”.

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 laws of the Church, according to which only bishops were to take part in the election. In practice, the Church’s laws prevailed in this sphere, but Justinian’s laws remained in force. The recruitment of bishops to undertake secular duties was contrary to Apostolic Canon 81 insofar as it led to a secularisation 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.

\[214\] Nikolin, op. cit., p. 17.
\[215\] Nikolin, op. cit., p. 32.
As Nikolin writes, “Justinian’s rule was a rule in which the mutual relations of Church and State were inbuilt, and which later lasted in Byzantium right up to the days of her fall, and which were borrowed in the 10th century by Rus’. In the first place this related to the principle: ‘Ecclesiastical canons are State laws’. Moreover, the Christian direction of Justinian’s reforms told on the content of the majority of juridical norms. This was most vividly revealed in the resolutions of questions concerning the regulation of individual spheres of Church life. Church communities were now provided with the rights of a juridical person. In property questions they were given various privileges...

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

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

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.”

217 Nikolin, op. cit., pp. 32-33, 34.
The Symphony of Nations

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

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

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 religio-cultural commonwealth or civilization 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.

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

And so from Britain and Spain 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.”

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222 However, there was no attempt to force Greek (or Latin) upon the non-Greek parts of Christendom. Thus in the East Syriac and Coptic were still spoken by millions, and some of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. Ephraim the Syrian, spoke no Greek at all. (V.M.)
Of course, this was a *commonwealth* of nations, not a single integrated political structure. By the sixth century the disintegration of the Roman empire, especially in the West, was already well advanced... However, the significant point is that the new kingdoms that arose on the ruins of the western empire, while politically independent of the Emperor in Constantinople, were still eager to receive Roman titles from him as if he were their suzerain – for example, King Clovis, founder of the Gallic Merovingian dynasty, accepted the title of consul from the Emperor Anastasius. In some places, the attempt to preserve the remnants of *Romanitas* extended well into the Middle Ages – as we see, for example, in the coronation of the English King Edgar the Peaceable in the ruins of the Roman city of Bath in 973. Moreover, in all these sub-Roman or post-Roman kingdoms both the religion of the Roman Autocracy, Orthodox Christianity, and the basic “symphonic” spirit of Church-State relations was preserved – sometimes more faithfully than in New Rome itself.

And so the idea of a single Christian Roman Empire extending from the Atlantic to the Caspian was no myth, but a living spiritual reality, and one that endured until the rise of the heretical Papacy destroyed it. 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."\(^{224}\)

There were gaps, admittedly, in the record of Orthodox unity. Thus towards the end of the fifth century the Eastern Emperor Zeno confessed Monophysitism, as did the Armenians, while a vast swathe of Italy, France and Spain was ruled by the Arian Theodoric. Again, in the seventh century all of the patriarchates fell, temporarily, into the heresy of Monothelitism, and in the eighth century the East fell into iconoclasm. But while Orthodoxy faltered – although never in all places at the same time – the underlying unity of Orthodox Christian civilization enabled unity of faith to be recovered before long. It was only in the first half of seventh century, in the East, and towards the end of the eighth century, in the West, that the first more or less permanent cracks in the unity both of faith and civilization began to appear.

To Obey or Not to Obey?

In the sixth century the Emperor Justinian undertook a series of wars in the West in order to regain the formerly Roman provinces of the West for the Empire and (since many of these territories were now under Arian rulers) for Orthodoxy... The Gothic wars that ensued posed an acute dilemma for the Orthodox Roman populations under Arian rule, a dilemma that was to be felt many times in the future by Orthodox Christians living under non-Orthodox rule: to rebel or not to rebel. The question was: was the Roman Empire the only legitimate political authority for those of Roman descent living on its former territories? Or were the barbarian kings also legitimate powers, the legal successors of Rome in some sense?

The question was easily answered – in a positive sense - in the case of the Frankish kings, who immediately entered into a close, harmonious relationship with the Gallo-Roman nobility and episcopate, and even received Baptism under Clovis. It was also easily answered – in a negative sense - in the case of the Vandals of North Africa, whose first king, Gaiseric, a rigorous Arian, had banished Orthodox priests who refused to perform the Arian services and even sacked Rome in 455. 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. And then in 530, the pro-Roman and pro-Orthodox King Hilderic was overthrown by the anti-Roman and anti-Orthodox Gelimer. This gave Justinian the excuse he needed, and in a short six-month campaign (533-34) his general Belisarius, supported by the local population, destroyed the Vandal kingdom and placed all the dissident and heretical assemblies under ban.

But the Gothic rulers of Italy and Spain constituted a less clear-cut case. On the one hand, they remained socially and legally separate from their Roman subjects and did not adopt Orthodoxy; but on the other hand, they did not, in general, persecute the Faith, and allowed the Romans to follow their own laws. The dilemma was made more acute by the fact that in Rome itself many suspected that Justinian had deliberately appointed a pro-Monophysite patriarch of Constantinople in the person of Anthimus. And when Pope Agapetus arrived in Constantinople, Justinian said to him: “I shall either force you to agree with us, or else I shall send you into exile.” Whereupon the Pope replied: “I wished to come to the most Christian of all emperors, Justinian, and I have found now a Diocletian; however, I fear not your threats.”

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

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

“The end of the empire,” writes Chris Wickham, “was experienced most directly in Gaul. The Visigothic King Euric (466-84) was the first major ruler of a ‘barbarian’ polity in Gaul – the second in the empire after Geiseric – to have a fully autonomous political practice, uninfluenced by any residual Roman loyalties. Between 471 and 476 he expanded his power east to the Rhône (and beyond, into Provence), north to the Loire, and south into Spain. The Goths had already been fighting in Spain since the later 450s (initially on behalf of the emperor Avitus), but Euric organized a fully fledged conquest there, which is ill-documented, but seems to have been complete (except for a Suevic enclave in the north-west) by the time of his death. By far the best documented of Euric’s conquests, though not the most important, was the Auvergne in 471-5, because the bishop of its central city, Clermont, was the Roman senator Sidonius Apollinarius. Sidonius, who was Avitus’ son-in-law, and had been a leading lay official for both [Emperors] Majorian and Anthemius, ended his political career besieged inside his home city, and we can see all the political changes of the 450s-470s through his eyes. A supporter of alliance with the Visigoths in the 450s, by the late 460s Sidonius had become increasingly aware of the dangers involved, and hostile to Roman officials who still dealt with them; then in the 470s we see him despairing of any further help for Clermont, and contemptuous of the Italian envoys who sacrificed the Auvergne so as to keep Provence under Roman control. By around 480, as he put it, ‘now that the old degrees of official rank are swept away... the only token of nobility that the old degrees will henceforth be a knowledge of letters’; the official hierarchy had gone, only traditional Roman culture remained...”  

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.).”

The threat to the continuance of Christian Roman Gaul came from the Arian Ostrogothic and Visigothic kings. However, these were not intolerant of Orthodox Christianity, and St. Caesarius was able to establish good cooperative relations with Alaric of Toulouse and Theodoric of Ravenna. Moreover, the conversion and baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks into the Orthodox Church (sometime between 496 and 506), who soon won some stunning victories over the Arian kings, was a tremendous boost to Gallic Romanitas, and marked the beginning of the history of the Orthodox kings of Gaul.

Thus St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, congratulated him on his baptism in terms that showed that he regarded Clovis’ kingdom as still part of the Eastern Roman Empire: “Let Greece rejoice indeed in having chosen our princeps.” 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.”

Actually, since the Emperor Anastasius was a Monophysite 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 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

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229 St. Avitus, Letter 4; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 118.
230 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 (in Russian).
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.”

Clovis defeated the Arian Visigothic King Alaric II at Vouillé in 507. By 510 the Visigoths had been forced to give up most of their lands in France, and then in 511 the Franks’ allies against the Visigoths, the Burgundians, were converted from Arianism to Orthodoxy. The revival of Orthodoxy received its strongest boost in 518 when the Monophysite Emperor Anastasius, died, and was succeeded by the Orthodox Justin I. 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.

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

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.” Nowhere does he dispute the legitimacy of Frankish rule; and the rebellions that take place are of Franks against Franks rather than Gallo-

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233 Wickham, op.cit., p. 200.
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.  

Perhaps the only clear-cut case of justified disobedience was found in Spain...

In the fourth century Spain had been an important part of the Roman Empire, producing such great Christians as St. Osias, 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.”

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

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 camp). 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 give all the honors due a martyr of Christ”. 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”

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”, preferred the peaceful status quo.

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237 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).
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”.

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

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

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.

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241 One result of this Council was the appearance, for the first time in Church history at a conciliar level, of the famous Filioque, which asserted that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This innovation was introduced, probably, not to express a heresy, but to protect the Orthodox doctrine of the Divinity of the Son against the Arians. Nevertheless, it was unfortunate, with very important consequences...

242 St. Demetrius of Rostov, op. cit., p. 17.

243 Wickham, op. cit., p. 136.

244 Ziegler, op. cit., p. 54.
The Dissonance of Nations

The unity achieved by Justinian between the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Empire was striking, but it was not, of course, monolithic. Not only were there Roman citizens who were not Orthodox – the Monophysite Copts and Syrians: 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 did occur; and although nationalism as such is usually considered to be a modern phenomenon stemming from the French Revolution, something similar to nationalism is certainly evident in antiquity.

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 Arian Goths, the Donatist Berbers, the Monophysite Copts and Syrians – and, of course, the Jews...

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 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.”

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

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 inflated 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 preached attracted crowds of Jews who did not hesitate to follow the prophet. These hordes went to the sea and, at a sign from Moses, began to hurl themselves from a lofty cliff into the water. Many crashed against the rocks, others drowned, and only the forcible intervention of the Christians saved the rest: fishermen dragged them from the water, while other inhabitants forcibly drove the Jews from the

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

In about 520, 4000 Christians were martyred by the Jewish ruler of the South Arabian land of Omir (or Himyar), Dû-Nuwâs, for their refusal to renounce Christ. Again, in 555 the Jews supported the Samaritans in their rebellion against Byzantium. Later, during the Time of Troubles that began for Byzantium with the murder of the Emperor Maurice in 602, Jewish anti-Romanism reached a new peak of frenzy.

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 Antiochan Jewish community was almost totally extinguished.”

The situation was no better in the Holy Land. The Jews appealed to all the Jews of Palestine to join the Persians, and Jewish crowds killed the Bishop of Tiberias and 90,000 Christians in one day. When the Persians conquered

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Jerusalem, most of the Christians were sent into captivity to Persia. However, “the Jews distinguished themselves at this point with a beastly cruelty unique in the history of the world. They spared no money to buy many Christians from the Persians with one purpose only – to gain enjoyment in killing them. They say that in this way they bought and destroyed 80,000 people. The Jewish historian G. Graetz glides silently over this terrible fact, saying only: ‘Filled with rage, the Jews of course did not spare the Christians’ and ‘did not spare the holy things of the Christians’. Graetz reduces the number of Christians killed to 19,000.”

The Persians were defeated by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, who banished the Jews of Jerusalem to a distance of three miles from the city, and decreed that all the Jews of the empire should be baptised. But the pendulum swung again when the Byzantines were defeated by the new power of the Arab Muslims. Thus in 638 Caliph Omar entered the Holy Sepulchre, while Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem remarked: “Surely this is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet standing in the holy place.”

The Jews, however, were delighted; many thought that Mohammed was a prophet who had come to prepare the way for the Messiah. And “even when the Messiah failed to arrive,” writes Karen Armstrong, “Jews continued to look favourably on Islamic rule in Jerusalem. In a letter written in the eleventh century, the Jerusalem rabbis recalled the ‘mercy’ God had shown his people when he allowed the ‘Kingdom of Ishmael’ to conquer Palestine. They were glad to remember that when the Muslims arrived in Jerusalem, ‘there were people from the children of Israel with them; they showed the spot of the Temple and they settled with them until this very day.’”

Meanwhile, in what remained of the Byzantine Empire there were intermittent attempts to return to the policy of Phocas and Heraclius. Thus Cyril Mango writes that “Leo III ordered once again the baptism of Jews and those who complied were given the title of ‘new citizens’, but they did so in bad faith, while others, it seems, fled to the Arabs. The failure of this measure was acknowledged by the Council of 787 which decreed that insincere converts should not be accepted; it was preferable to let them live according to their customs while remaining subject to the old disabilities. A fresh attempt was made by Basil I: Jews were summoned to disputations and if they were unable to demonstrate the truth of their religion, they were to be baptized. Remission of taxes and the grant of dignities were offered as

250 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 (in Russian)).


252 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.)
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.”

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

The Monothelite and Iconoclast Challenge

Justinian’s formulation of the Symphony of Powers had been consciously based on Chalcedonian Orthodoxy: the unity of kingship and priesthood in one State was likened to the union of the two natures, human and Divine, in the one Christ. It is therefore not surprising to find that under succeeding emperors who renounced Orthodoxy and embraced heresy (Monothelitism and Iconoclasm), 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. The empire suffered accordingly: vast areas of the East were lost, first to the Persians, and then to the Muslim Arabs. As religious unity collapsed, so did the unity of nations.254

Of course, this was not the first time that an emperor had been tempted to apply violence against the Orthodox. Even the great Justinian had come close to overstepping the mark in his relations with the Roman Popes. That mark, in the final analysis, was not overstepped by him, because a real unity of faith between the Old and New Romes was achieved in his reign.

253 Mango, op. cit., pp 92-93.
254 St. Anastasius of Sinai considered these defeats to be Divine punishment for the heresy of the Monothelite emperor. (Dagron, op. cit., p. 178).
But this was no longer the case a century later, in 655, when the Orthodox Pope St. Martin was martyred for the faith by a heretical emperor acting in concert with a heretical patriarch. The heretics then proceeded to torture the famous monk and defender of the Church against Monothelitism, St. Maximus the Confessor. They wished him to acknowledge the power of the emperor over the Church, as if he were both king and priest like Melchizedek. But Maximus refused. When his interrogators asked: “What? Is not every Christian emperor a priest?” the saint replied: “No, for he has no access to the altar, and after the consecration of the bread does not elevate it with the words: ‘The holy things to the holy’. He does not baptise, 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 Melchizedech 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 Melchizedech is the unique type. If you say that there is another king and priest after the order of Melchizedech, 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 Melchizedech. 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’. 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.”

When Bishop Theodosius of Caesarea claimed that the Roman Council of 649 was invalid since it was not convened by the Emperor, St. Maximus replied: “If only those councils are confirmed which were summoned by royal decree, then there cannot be an Orthodox Faith. Recall the councils that were summoned by royal decree against the homoeousion, proclaiming the blasphemous teaching that the Son of God is not of one essence with God the

255 Dagron, op. cit., p. 181.
256 The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor, op. cit., p. 12.
Father... The Orthodox Church recognizes as true and holy only those councils at which true and infallible dogmas were established.”

In 663 Constans II, the persecutor of Saints Martin and Maximus, moved his capital from Constantinople to Syracuse in Sicily. However, after his murder in 668 his successor, Constantine IV, restored the capital to Constantinople, rescued the Empire and Europe from the Arabs, and convened the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680, which anathematized Monothelitism and restored Orthodoxy. In the next century, however, the iconoclast Emperor Leo III’s heretical, quasi-Muslim understanding of the nature of icons went hand in hand with a resurrection of the pagan model of the *imperator-pontifex maximus*. In fact, insofar as the Muslim Caliph considered himself to be both a king and a prophet, Leo could be said to have borrowed his theory of kingship (“I am both king and priest”), as well as his iconoclasm, from the Muslims. It was therefore eminently fitting that his main critic in both spheres should have been St. John of Damascus, a functionary at the Caliph’s court.

“What right have emperors to style themselves lawgivers in the Church?” asked St. John. “What does the holy apostle say? ‘And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers and shepherds, for building up the body of Christ.’ (I Corinthians 12.28). He does not mention emperors… Political prosperity is the business of emperors; the condition of the Church is the concern of shepherds and teachers.”

It may be pointed out, however, that I Corinthians 12.28 includes among the spiritual gifts that of “governments” (κυβερνησία), which could plausibly be interpreted as referring to political government. But of course, this gift was that of governing the State, not the Church...

Again, addressing both the Patriarch and the Emperors, the Seventh Council 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”. The epistle also produced a concise and inspired definition of the Church-State relationship:

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257 The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
258 St. John of Damascus, Second Apology against those who attack the Divine Images, 12.
259 Quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 91. As Gervais Dumeige points out, the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea was freer than “Constantinople II [the Fifth Council], which felt the strong pressure of the Emperor Justinian, and more even than Constantinople III [the Sixth Council] where the presence of Constantine IV risked imposing on the conciliar debates... At Nicaea the men of the Church dealt with the affairs of the Church, under the direction of a man of the Church who knew the desires and wishes of the sovereigns. It was on a path prepared in advance that the bishops were able to advance freely” (Nicée II (Nicaea II), Paris: Éditions de l’Orante, 1978, p. 195 (in French)).
“The priest is the sanctification and strengthening of the Imperial power, while the Imperial power is the strength and firmness of the priesthood.”

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 completely begun to observe the decrees of the Fathers..."

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 dogmatise. 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.”

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 justly called “forerunner of the Antichrist” in the

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262 Pope Gregory II, in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 82.
Byzantine service books, and was anathematised by the Church as “the tormentor and not Emperor Leo the Isaurian” 263

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: “The priest is the sanctification and strengthening of the Imperial power, while the Imperial power is the strength and firmness of the priesthood”.

St. Photius the Great

With the fall of iconoclasm in Byzantium in 843, there also fell the absolutist theory of Church-State relations preached by the iconoclast emperors. Although the new dynasty of Macedonian emperors was one of the strongest in Byzantine history, the patriarchs of the period were in no mood to concede more power than was necessary to it, however Orthodox it might be. One reason for this was the particularly prominent – and damaging - role that the emperors had taken in the recent persecutions, in which several of the leading hierarchs themselves had suffered (St. Methodius had been in prison, while St. Photius’ parents had been martyred). The early Roman emperors had persecuted the Church at times – but they had been pagans in a pagan society, and were therefore simply expressing the prejudices of the society in which they lived. Later emperors in the post-Constantinian era, such as Constantius and Valens, had also persecuted the Church – which was worse, since they were supposed to be Christians, but again, they had not been the initiators of the persecution, but had responded to the pleas of heretical churchmen. However, the iconoclast emperors enjoyed the dubious distinction of having been at the head of their heretical movement; they were heresiarchs 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.” 264 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. 265


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

265 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
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, “Leo V brought Patriarch Nicephorus and several bishops and monks together to involve them in coming to an agreement with those who were ‘scandalised’ by the icons and in making an ‘economy’. The confrontation gave way to a series of grating ‘little phrases’ that were hawked about everywhere and which sketched a new theory of imperial power. The clergy refused to engage in any discussion with this perfectly legitimate emperor who had not yet taken any measures against the icons and who wanted a council of bishops to tackle the problem. Emilian of Cyzicus said to him: ‘If there is an ecclesiastical problem, as you say, Emperor, let it be resolved in the Church, as is the custom… and not in the Palace,’ to which Leo remarked that he also was a child of the Church and that he could serve as an arbiter between the two camps. Michael of Synada then said to him that ‘his arbitration’ was in fact a ‘tyranny’; others reproached him for taking sides. Without batting an eyelid, Euthymius of Sardis invoked eight centuries of Christian icons and angered the emperor by reusing a quotation from St. Paul that had already been used by John of Damascus: ‘Even if an angel from heaven should preach to us a gospel different from the one that you have received, let him be anathema!’ (Galatians 1.8). The ‘ardent teacher of the Church and abbot of Studion’ Theodore was the last to speak: ‘Emperor, do not destroy the stability of the Church. The apostle spoke of those whom God has established in the Church, first as apostles, secondly as prophets, and thirdly as pastors and teachers (I Corinthians 12.28)…, but he did not speak of emperors. You, O Emperor, have been entrusted with the stability of the State and the army. Occupy yourself with that and leave the Church, as the apostle says, to pastors and teachers. If you did not accept this and departed from our faith…, if an angel came from heaven to preach to us another gospel, we would not listen to him; so even less to you!’ Then Leo, furious, broke off the dialogue to set the persecution in motion.”

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

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!

266 Dagron, op. cit., pp. 198-199.
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)” .267 And it was the triumph of Studite rigorism – on this issue, at any rate – that determined the attitude of the patriarchs to the emperors after the final Triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm in 843. For Patriarchs Methodius, Photius and Ignatius all quite consciously tried to exalt the authority of the patriarchate in relation to the empire.

However, in order to justify this programme, they needed a biblical model. And just as the Emperor Leo had used the figure of Melchizedek, both king and priest, to justify his exaltation of the role of the emperor, so Patriarch Photius used the figure of Moses, both king (as it were) and priest, to exalt the role of the patriarch.268 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.” 269

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 anathematised together with its author. But it 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.

268 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 Mekhizedek, 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).
269 Dagron, op. cit., p. 234.
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 anathematised the *Filioque* and firmly restricted the Pope’s jurisdiction to the West.

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

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

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


272 Quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 95.
law, the emperor himself fell under its force and he was bound to observe it.”

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

The Emperor is the living law, says the *Epanagoge*, only when there is not already a written law: “The Emperor must act as the law when there is none written, except that his actions must not violate the canon law. The Patriarch alone must interpret the canons of the ancient (Patriarchs) and the decrees of the Holy Fathers and the resolutions of the Holy Synods” (*Titulus* III, 5).

In fact, as Dagron writes, “The emperor is defined as a ‘legitimate authority’ (εννομος επιστοσια), 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 (εικον θεου Χριστου και εμψυχος διερην και λογον χαρακτεριζουσα την αληθειαν)... Everything that the patriarch gains, he steals from the emperor. In place of the emperor traditionally called – as in the letter of Theodore the Studite – ‘imitator of Christ’ there is substituted a patriarch called the image of Christ, and in place of the emperor as the living law – a patriarch as the living truth... The idea of the emperor-priest, which was condemned in the person of Leo III, is succeeded by the prudent but clear evocation of a patriarch-emperor, or at least of a supreme priest to whom revert all the attributes of sovereignty. If he is the living image of Christ, the patriarch participates like him in the two powers. He is a New Moses and a New Melchizedek.”

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

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274 Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 42.
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 the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and in the definitions of salvation through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Titulus II, 5). “It particularly belongs to the Patriarch to teach and to relate equally and without limitations of both high and low, and be gentle in administering justice, skilled in exposing the unbelievers, and not to be ashamed to speak before the face of the Emperor about justice and the defence of the dogmas” (Titulus III, 4). “The Emperor is bound to defend and strengthen, first of all, all that which is written in the Divine Scriptures, and then also all the dogmas established by the Holy Councils, and also selected Roman laws” (Titulus II, 4).

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

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

This power was seen as extending even over the other patriarchates of the East. Thus Dmitri Shabanov writes: “As the editor of the Nomocanon in 14 Tituli... St. Photius often writes that on the territories of the East the Patriarch of Constantinople has all the canonical rights that the Roman Pope has on the territories of the West. For example, in Titulus I, 5 and in Titulus VIII, 5 of the Nomocanon in 14 Tituli St. Photius writes directly that Constantinople has the prerogatives of the old Rome and is ‘the head of all the Churches’ of the oikoumene, that is, of the Roman Empire...
“According to 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.”

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. 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. 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 which emphasised the traditional value of symphony between the two

277 Dagron, op. cit., pp. 240, 241; Shabanov, op. cit.
278 Dagron, op. cit., p. 239.
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 Emperor, in the latter.

**Church Canons vs. Imperial Laws**

As we have seen, it was a fundamental principle both of Justinian’s and of Photius’ legislation that Church canons should always take precedence over imperial laws. As this principle became more generally accepted, more areas of what had been considered purely secular life, having little or nothing directly to do with the Church, came under the influence of the process of “enchurchment”. This process was expressed in several new requirements: that the emperors themselves should be anointed in a special Church rite\(^\text{279}\); that marriages take place in church, and in accordance with the canons; and that lands and monies donated by individuals to the Church should never be secularized, but should ever remain under the control of the Church. Thus one of the novellas of Emperor Alexis Comnenus said that it was wrong to forbid a slave a Church marriage in a Christian State, for in the Church a slave is equal to a lord. Again, there were cases of trials of murderers, not according to the civil codex, but in accordance with the Church canons: the criminal besought forgiveness on his knees and was given a fifteen-year penance of standing among the penitents at the Divine Liturgy.\(^\text{280}\)

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...

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\(^{279}\) 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.

\(^{280}\) Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 102.
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 anathematised 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.281

St. Photius faithfully followed St. Theodore’s teaching: when Basil I came to power after murdering his predecessor, he accepted him as emperor, but refused to give him communion. But he was deposed for this, and was deposed again by Basil’s son, Leo the Wise, who shifted the balance of Church-State relations back towards caesaropapism, saying: "from now on the emperor’s care extends to everything, and his foresight (προοιμία, a word which can equally well mean the ‘providence’ of God) controls and governs everything.”282 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”.283 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”284, 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

281 Zzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 89-93.
282 Dagron, op. cit., p. 36
284 P.G. 91.197.
from God, and that he was leaving because the Emperor was making the
government of the Church impossible.

The Emperor retaliated by exiling Nicholas and putting his friend
Euthymius on the patriarchal throne, who permitted the fourth marriage,
saying: “It is right, your Majesty, to obey your orders and receive your
decisions as emanating from the will and providence of God”\textsuperscript{285} However, after the death of Leo in 912, Euthymius was imprisoned and St. Nicholas was
restored to the patriarchate. Finally, in the \textit{Tome of Union} (920), fourth
marriages were condemned as “unquestionably illicit and void”, and third
marriages permitted only by special dispensation. At the same time, “the
Emperor’s child by his fourth marriage, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, was
legitimized and succeeded to the Empire. Thenceforth Patriarchs issued their
own rules about marriages and grounds for divorce; and the emperors did
not intervene.”\textsuperscript{286}

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
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?”\textsuperscript{287} 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”.\textsuperscript{288}

\textsuperscript{285} \textit{Life of Euthymius}, quoted in Wood, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{286} Vasiliev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 334; Runciman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{287} Zyzykin, \textit{op. cit.}, part I, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{288} St. Nicholas, “Epistle 32”, \textit{P.G.} 111: 209-213; Fr. George Poullas, “Indestructible Towers”,
The Question of Legitimacy

Another area in which imperial might came up against ecclesiastical right was the very important one of imperial legitimacy and succession. 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 centuries; and even late into the Christian period, Roman emperors were so often overthrown by force that J.B. Bury, following Mommsen, called the government of Byzantium “an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution.”

Dagron has shown the complexity of the Byzantine concept of legitimacy: one could become emperor by dynastic succession from father to son, by being “purple-born (πορφυρογεννητος)” 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. Although a usurper would naturally be considered to be the very opposite of a legitimate ruler, he could nevertheless be seen as expressing God’s transfer of power from an unworthy man to one more worthy, as when He “repented” of His choice of Saul and chose David instead.

The comparison between the Byzantine idea of legitimacy and the Chinese “mandate of heaven” is not completely frivolous. For in the Chinese system, as Roberts writes: “Confucian principles taught that, although rebellion was wrong if a true king reigned, a government which provoked rebellion and

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289 For example, in 602 Phocas brutally murdered the Emperor Maurice, and was recognized as the new emperor (Pope Gregory I even heaped praises on him!). Phocas proceeded to “establish bloody terror in the empire (602-610). One contemporary cites the story of a certain man who cried out to God: ‘Why did You send Your people such a blood-thirsty wolf?’ And the Lord replied to him: ‘I tried to find someone worse than Phocas, so as to punish the people for its self-will, but was unable. But don’t you question the judgements of God’ (Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 439).
291 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”,
292 Dagron, op. cit., chapter 1.
293 “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).
could not control it ought to be replaced, for it was ipso facto illegitimate.”

Similarly in the Byzantine system, as Lemerle writes, “usurpation... has... almost a political function. It is not so much an illegal act as the first act in a process of legitimation... There is a parallelism, rather than an opposition, between the basileus and the usurper. Hence the existence of two different notions of legitimacy, the one ‘dynastic’ and the other which we might call (in the Roman sense) ‘republican’, which are not really in conflict but reinforce each other: the second, when the usurper fails, reinforces thereby the first, and when he succeeds, recreates it, whether the usurper attaches himself to the dynasty or founds a dynasty himself.”

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

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.”

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294 Roberts, op. cit., p. 360.
298 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, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 213).
Sometimes the usurper was crowned, provided certain conditions were fulfilled. Thus when Nicephorus Phocas was murdered on December 11, 969 by his successor, John Tzimiskes, Patriarch Polyeuctus declared that he would not allow the Emperor to enter the church as long as he had not expelled the Augusta from the palace and had not named the murderer of the Emperor, whoever he might be. Moreover, he demanded the return to the Synod of a document published by Nicephorus in violation of justice. The point was that Nicephorus, either intending to remove certain violations of the sacred rites that had been allowed, in his opinion, by certain hierarchs, or wishing to submit to himself even that in the religious sphere which it was not fitting for him to rule over, had forced the hierarchs to compose a decree according to which nothing in Church affairs was to be undertaken without his will. Polyeuctus suggested that the Emperor carry out all (this); in the contrary case he would not allow him to enter the holy church. (John) accepted the conditions; he removed the Augusta from the palace and exiled her to an island called Protos, returned Nicephorus’ decree to the Synod and pointed to Leo Valans, saying that he and nobody else had killed the Emperor with his own hand. Only then did Polyeuctus allow him into the holy church and crown him, after which he returned to the Royal palace and was hailed by the army and people.

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 recognise 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. 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 fulfilment 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.

299 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.
300 Leo the Deacon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 99.
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.”

But if this resolved the question of Tzimiskes’ legitimacy, it did not wipe out his sin. The best the Byzantines could come up with here was the theory – propounded by the thirteenth-century canonist Balsamon - that the emperor’s anointing washed out all his previous sins! 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 “Wo! 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.

“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 characterises 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

301 Morris, in Magdalino, op. cit, p. 205.
302 Fomin and Fomina, op. cit, p. 99.
303 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/zyzykin.htm, p. 29 (in Russian)).
‘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...”\textsuperscript{304}

\textbf{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 be Roman or to take the place of the Roman emperor. The first Christian kingdom that posed a direct challenge to the New Rome of Constantinople was that of Charlemagne. As we shall see in the next chapter, from the Byzantine point of view, Charlemagne might be an “emperor” (\textit{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 – and much more threatening to the real power of the Roman emperors – was provided by the Bulgarian tsars.

Early in the 860s Khan Boris of Bulgaria was converted to the Orthodox faith by the famous Greek bishop St. Methodius. Methodius with his brother St. Cyril had originally been invited to the court of Prince Rostislav of Moravia, but the German bishops of Passau and Salzburg persuaded Pope Stephen V to ban Slavonic as a liturgical language (reversing the decision of his predecessor, John VIII), and so St. Methodius and his disciples had been forced to flee to Bulgaria. In 865 Boris was baptized, probably by St. Photius, and took the name Michael after his godfather, the Emperor Michael. In this way the foundation was laid, not only of the Christianization of Bulgaria, but also of the unification of its two constituent peoples, the Bulgar ruling class and the Slavic peasants, who had been at loggerheads up to that time.

However, Tsar Boris-Michael wanted the Bulgarian Church to be autonomous, a request that the Mother Church of Constantinople denied. So, taking advantage of the rift that was opening up between the Eastern and Western Churches and empires, he turned to Pope Nicholas I with a series of questions on the faith and a request that Bulgaria be given a patriarch. The Pope did not grant the latter request, but in other respects (for example, in relation to permissible food and clothing) he showed greater flexibility than the Byzantines\textsuperscript{305}, 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.

\textsuperscript{304} Dagron, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 38, 39.
\textsuperscript{305} Dvorkin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 574.
Since the Bulgarian Church was clearly within the jurisdiction of Constantinople, the Pope’s mission to Bulgaria was already a canonical transgression and a first manifestation of his claim to universal dominion in the Church. It would never have happened if the West had recognised the authority of the East Roman Emperor, as the Popes had done in earlier centuries. The same could be said of the later expulsion of Saints Cyril and Methodius from Moravia by jealous German bishops – these were all fruits, in the ecclesiastical sphere, of that division that had first begun in the political sphere, when the Pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans.

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

However, the virus of national self-assertion had been sown in Bulgaria almost simultaneously with the Christian faith, and during the reign of St. Boris’ youngest son, Symeon, Bulgaria was almost continuously at war with the Empire. Autonomy for a native Bulgarian Church was now no longer the issue: the Bulgarian khans now wanted to take the place of the Byzantine emperors. Thus Symeon assumed the title of “tsar of the Bulgarians and the Romans” and tried to capture Tsargrad (Constantinople).

St. Nicholas the Mystic vigorously defended the authority of the East Roman Emperor. “The power of the Emperor,” 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”.

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

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However, after the death of Peter, in about 971, the Bulgarian kingdom was conquered by the Byzantines), as a consequence of which the local Bulgarian dioceses were again subjected to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. There was a resurgence of Bulgarian power in Macedonia under Tsar Samuel, who established his capital and patriarchate in Ohrid. But this did not last long either. In 1014 the Bulgarian armies were decisively defeated by Emperor Basil “the Bulgar-slayer”, leading to the end of the Bulgarian empire and its re-absorption into the Roman Empire. The Ohrid diocese’s autocephaly was still recognised, 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.”307 Perhaps; and yet the idea that each nation-state has to have its own independent church was a new one in the history of Christianity. De facto, as a result of the conquest of certain parts of the Roman Empire by barbarian leaders, independent national Churches had sprung up in various regions, from Georgia in the East to England in the West. But the idea of a single Christian commonwealth of nations looking up to its father in God, the Christian Roman Emperor, was never completely lost; and there was still the feeling that de jure all Christian nations owed him some kind of allegiance. We 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 in the Arabian kingdom Himyar in the far south-east, where the anointing was carried out by an Italian bishop owing allegiance to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople but in Aachen. It was the Bulgarian emperors who made the first serious breach in this internationalist ideal; for they called their kingdom, not by the internationalist name of Rome, but “the kingdom of the Bulgarians and the Greeks” – in other words, a national kingdom composed of two nations, with the Bulgarians as the dominant ethnic element. Coups by individuals were commonplace in Byzantine history: the attempt to place one nation above all others was new...

St. Vladimir the Great

In 860 a new nation which St. Photius called “Ros” (ῬΩΣ)308 appeared in the water surrounding Constantinople and ravaged the suburbs. These came

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308 The word ῬΩΣ appears in Ezekiel 38.2, as part of the coalition of powers called “God and Magog” coming against Israel “from the extreme parts of the north” in the last times. Several interpreters identified ῬΩΣ with Russia. See Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, Sobranie Pisem (Collected Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 840 (in Russian).
from Russia, but were probably Scandinavian Vikings by race (the Finns call the Swedes “Rossi”, and the Estonians “Rootsi”, to this day). Through the grace of the Mother of God the invaders were defeated, and in the treaty which followed the ceasefire the Russians agreed to accept Christianity. A large number of Kiev merchants were catechized and baptized in the suburb of St. Mamas. Later, St. Photius sent a group of missionaries with a Bishop Michael at its head to catechize and baptize in Kiev itself (he may also have sent St. Methodius). Michael began to preach the word of God among the pagans, and at their demand worked a miracle: he ordered a fire to be kindled and placed in it a book of the Gospels, which remained unharmed.

Many were then converted, including Prince Askold of Kiev, who was baptised with the name Nicholas and opened diplomatic relations with Constantinople in 867.

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.”

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.”

As I. Solonevich notes, 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

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309 The feast of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was instituted to commemorate the City’s miraculous deliverance (October 1).
312 St. Photius, in P.G. 102, 736-737.
between the Britons and Saxons and the eventual conquest of most of England by the pagans, in Russia it led, without bloodshed, to the foundation of a strong and stable State, in which the Germanic element was quickly swallowed up by the Slavs.

Thus by inviting the Vikings to rule over them, the Russian Slavs triumphed at one stroke over egoism and self-will in both the individual and the national spheres. As New Hieromartyr Andronicus of Perm wrote: “At a time when, in the other peoples of Europe, the power of the princes and kings was subduing the peoples to themselves, appearing as external conquerors of the disobedient, but weak, - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and ourselves placed the princes, the prototypes of our tsars, over ourselves. That is how it was when Rurik and his brothers were 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”. 315

Of course, the consolidation of the victory, and the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, required many more centuries of spiritual and political struggle as the 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.

“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.”316

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.

315 St. Andronicus, O Tserkvi, Rossii (On the Church and Russia), Fryazino, 1997, p. 132 (in Russian).
Like any other historical people, the Russian nation is a child of her Church. Greece and Rome, on accepting Christianity, brought to the Church their rich pagan inheritance. The German peoples were already formed tribal units at the moment of their reception of Christianity, and they preserved quite a lot of their pagan past, especially in the sphere of national and juridical ideas, in Christianity. But we – the Russian Slavs – had absolutely nothing before our acceptance of Christianity: neither state ideas, nor national consciousness, nor an original culture. The Eastern Slav pagans did not even have their own gods – the whole ancient Russian pantheon consisted of foreign divinities: Perun was a Lithuanian divinity, Khors – a Scythian-Sarmatian one, Moksha and Veles were Finnish gods. None of them even had a Slavic name. The Russian people gave their untouched soul to Christianity. And the Church gave everything to the Slavs, so that already one generation after the reception of Christianity, under Prince Yaroslav, we were no poorer in a cultural sense, but rather richer than the majority of our neighbours…”

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

Like Moses, St. Vladimir, the baptiser of Russia, was expelled from his homeland in his youth. But in 980 he returned and conquered Kiev. After a period of fierce idolatry, during which he put to death the first martyrs of Russia, Theodore and John, he repented and led his people out of the Egypt of idolatry and through the Red Sea of baptism in the Dniepr on August 1, 988, and thence into the inheritance of the promised land, the new Israel of “Holy Russia”, which had been all but evangelised by his death in 1015.

In view of this, the usual epithet of “new Constantine” granted to the kings of new Orthodox nations was more than usually appropriately applied to St. Vladimir, as Metropolitan Hilarion applied it in his famous Sermon on the Law and Grace in about 1050. Indeed, Russia was not only an offshoot of Christian Rome, like Bulgaria or Georgia. Through her racial and dynastic links with Western Europe (especially the Anglo-Scandinavian north-west), Russia became the heir of what was left of the Old, Orthodox Rome of the West, regenerating the ideal of the Symphony of Powers just as it was being destroyed in the West by the heretical Papacy. And by her filial faithfulness to Byzantium, as well as through the marriage of St. Vladimir to the purple-born

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318 However, according to D. Rybakov, St. Olga received Holy Baptism at the end of 944 in Kiev, possibly together with her husband, Great Prince Igor. See Vestnik I.P.Ts. (Messenger of the True Orthodox Church), № 2 (12), April-June, 1998, p. 43 (in Russian).
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. Thus Vladimir was not a “new
Constantine” in the conventional sense attached to all founders of new
Christian dynasties in the early Middle Ages. His kingdom evolved from
being a part of the New Rome into being its reincarnation or successor or heir. In
fact, it was the Third Rome in embryonic form\textsuperscript{319}…

But 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…”\textsuperscript{320} 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…

\textit{The Rights of the Orthodox Autocrat}

By the year 1000 almost the whole of Europe, with the exception of the
Baltic lands in the north, and Moorish Spain in the south, was Orthodox
Christian in faith and ruled by monarchies modelled on the Byzantine
autocracy. It is therefore fitting at this stage to summarize the theory of the
Orthodox autocracy – the only Christian political theology of the first
Christian millennium - in its most important aspect, that of Church-State
relations.

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”\textsuperscript{321}…

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

\textsuperscript{319} Vladimir minted coins showing himself in imperial attire (Vladimir Volkoff, \textit{Vladimir the
\textsuperscript{320} St. Photius, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. 1, p. 123.
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.”

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. 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,” 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 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 Symeon 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

323 Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse, Sem’ Vselenskikh Soborov (The Seven Ecumenical Councils), Moscow, 1996, p. 11 (in Russian).
324 Averky, op.cit., p. 71.
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.”\(^{325}\)

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 recognised 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].’”\(^{326}\)

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 personally accepts the individual now consecrated as his own pastor whom God has chosen for him.”\(^{327}\)

“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

\(^{325}\) Runciman, op. cit., p. 27.

\(^{326}\) Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 116, 117.

\(^{327}\) Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 322-323.
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].”\textsuperscript{328}

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: печаляование). “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 75\textsuperscript{th} 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.”\textsuperscript{329}

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 State; these laws recognised 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 recognised as being bound up with the priestly rank.”\textsuperscript{330}

“In reviewing Byzantine ideas on royal power, we must recognise 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 recognise 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,

\textsuperscript{328} Zyzykin, \emph{op. cit.}, part I, pp. 120-121.
\textsuperscript{329} Zyzykin, \emph{op. cit.}, part I, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{330} Zyzykin, \emph{op. cit.}, part I, p. 137.
being subject thereby to the canons which established the Church as a Divine institution having its own legislation, administration and court…”  

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 the Christian faith, as represented by the Patriarch. For, as King Boris III of Bulgaria said: “Every true social order is based on the moral order” – the order ordained by God through the Church.

The Slide towards Absolutism

We have seen that political power, even Christian political power, was always 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, and the 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 find this ambiguous assessment in, for example, St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022), who, 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

331 Zyzykin, op.cit., part I, p. 139.
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”.

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 Psellus, 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. Then, “losing all shame,” according to Psellus, “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

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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’.”

The difference between East and West consisted in the fact that while deviations from the “symphonic” norm of Church-State relations were common in the East and the West, 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.” 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 fullfiller 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.”

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.\footnote{Emperor John Comnenus, in A.P. Lebedev, \textit{Istoricheskie Ocherki Sostoinia Vizantijsko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church)}, St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 101 (in Russian).}

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.\footnote{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, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105).}

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 \textit{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."\footnote{Dagron, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 259-260.}

The meaning of the term "epistemonarch" here is obscure.\footnote{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 \textit{Svt. Grigorij Palama}, St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 166-167 (in Russian).} However, even if the meaning of the term is obscure, the use to which the emperors put it – to justify their ever-increasing interference in ecclesiastical affairs – is not. 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."\footnote{Dagron, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 261. See Sokolov, \textit{op. cit.}}

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.”\textsuperscript{343} 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.”\textsuperscript{344}

And yet they did not always get their way. The extent, but also the limits, of the Emperor’s power were strikingly illustrated by a debate that took place towards the end of the reign of Manuel I. The Emperor convened a Council in order to strike out the following words found in the rite for the reception of Muslims to Orthodoxy: “Anathema to the God of Mohammed, about whom Mohammed says that... He does not beget and is not begotten, and nobody is like Him.” However, the hierarchy did not want to strike out this phrase. Then the Emperor “issued a second decree, in which he again insisted on his opinion and then appointed another Council in Scutari, where the Emperor had withdrawn because of illness to make use of the pure country air. Thither the Emperor summoned the Patriarch and Bishops, but Manuel because of his illness could not enter into personal conversation with the Fathers: the matter was conducted through the Emperor’s beloved secretary. The latter in the person of the Emperor presented two papers to the Council. These were, first, a document in which Manuel set out his point of view on the question being debated, and secondly, his letter to the Patriarch. The Emperor demanded that the Bishops should sign the indicated document. And in the letter he in every way reproached the Patriarch and Bishops for their stubbornness and defiance, even threatening to convene a Council in which he wanted to entrust the presidency to none other than the Pope of Rome (it can be understood that the Pope in this letter served for Manuel only as a kind of scarecrow). In the same letter to the Patriarch the Emperor wrote: ‘I would be ungrateful to God if I did not apply all my efforts so that He, the true God, should not be subjected to anathema.’ But the Patriarch and Bishops even now did not want to share the Emperor’s opinion. On this occasion the noted Eustathius, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, spoke out with special zeal against the Emperor’s demands. He was a man of wide learning, distinguished by the gift of eloquence. He heatedly declared: ‘I would consider myself completely mad and would be unworthy of these hierarchical vestments if I recognized as true some Mohammedan God, who was his guide and instructor in all his disgusting deeds.’ The unusual boldness with which Eustathius began to oppose the Emperor horrified everyone. The hearers almost froze at these words of Eustathius. The Emperor’s secretary immediately set off to inform Manuel about his. The Emperor was indescribably amazed and considered himself deeply offended by Eustathius’ words. He said: ‘Either I shall justify myself and prove that I do not believe in a God that is the teacher of all impiety, and then I shall subject him who vomits blasphemy against the Anointed of God to merited punishment, or I shall be convicted of glorifying another God, and not the true one, and then I will be grateful that I have been

\textsuperscript{343} Acropolites, Chronicle, ch. 53; in Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{344} Gregoras, \textit{History of Byzantium}, VIII, 2; in Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
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 criticise 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.”

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.”

According to Balsamon, as Dagron summarises 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...

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346 Balsamon, Interpretation of the 69th Canon of the Council in Trullo, in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 97.
“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 recognised 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 (ιεροσυλή) 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.’

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

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

347 Dagron, op. cit., p. 267; Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 120.
Episcopal sees and bishops to the dignity of metropolias and metropolitans… His decrees have the force of canons." 349

Ostrogorsky characterises the ideas of Balsamon and Chomatianos as "merely echoes of old and antiquated ideas". 350 But these old ideas, dressed up in new, pseudo-canonical forms, were still dangerous…

Thus Dagron writes: “Insensibly we have passed from one logic to another. The rights of intervention recognised by the Church for the emperor are no longer considered as exceptional privileges, but as a manifestation of the quasi-episcopal nature of imperial power. Taken together, they give the temporal power a particular status, and force one to the conclusion that if the emperor is not strictly speaking a cleric ‘after the order of Aaron’, he is not in any case a simple layman. By contrast with a purely juridical conception, Balsamon sketches, not without prudence, a charismatical conception of imperial power. He suggests that [the emperor’s right of] ‘promoting’ the patriarch is not only the [right of] choosing from a list of three names which is in principle submitted by the assembly of metropolitans, or of imposing his choice on the same assembly in the case of disagreement, as is envisaged in a chapter of the Book of Ceremonies: it is above all [the right of] ‘creating’ him – before the religious consecration in which the metropolitans proceed to Hagia Sophia on the following Sunday, either by invoking the Holy Spirit, as Balsamon says, or by using the somewhat more neutral formula preserved by the ceremonial of the 10th century: ‘Grace Divine and the Royalty that we have received from it promote the very pious person before us to the rank of patriarch of Constantinople.’ The ‘designation’ of the patriarch would be a political prerogative, just as the carving out of dioceses and the promotion of Episcopal sees, to which the emperor has the sovereign right to proceed for a better harmony between the spiritual and the temporal powers; but his ‘promotion by invocation of the Spirit’ is a religious, if not a liturgical act, which only a charisma can justify…” 351

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

351 Dagron, op. cit., p. 271.
Again, he wrote: “The emperor is subject neither to the laws nor to the Church canons”. 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.

And this is what in fact happened; for the dynastic history of the late twelfth century was bloody and chaotic even by Byzantine standards, as emperors disposed of each other, and the people lost all respect for an emperor once he had been overthrown. For example, Andronicus I Comnenus came to the throne through violence, and exiled Patriarch Leontius II of Jerusalem for rebuking him for his unlawful marriage. But he was overthrown, tortured and killed by Isaac II Angelus. As for the people, 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”.

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’…”

Isaac Angelus deposed several patriarchs. And he said: “The Emperors are allowed to do everything, because on earth there is no difference in power between God and the Emperor: the Emperors are allowed to do everything, and they can use God’s things on a par with their own, since they received the royal dignity itself from God, and there is no difference between God and them.” Isaac ascribed to himself the power to correct what was done in the Church contrary to the Church canons. Moreover, the encomiasts blasphemously addressed Isaac as “God-like” and “equal to God”!

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352 Balsamon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 120.
353 Balsamon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 120.
354 Nicetas Choniates, The Reign of Isaac, III, 7; quoted in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95.
357 Isaac, Novella de electionibus pontificum (Law on the Election of Bishops), P.G. 135: 440; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95. However, Isaac could sometimes act impeccably in relation to the Church hierarchy. See the two novellas he issued in September, 1187 (Sokolov, op. cit.).
When the Emperors exalted their dignity to the level of Divinity in the image of the pagan tyrants, and the people trampled on them in spite of the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed”, everything began to fall apart: both the Bulgarians and Wallachians under Peter and Asen and the Serbs under Stephan Nemanya rebelled, and then the crusaders took advantage of the chaos to seize the City in 1204...

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...”

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 the situation one or two centuries earlier – and a regression made worse by the fact that there now existed a “canonical” argument for the absolutism of the emperors, and the relation of many in Byzantium to the emperors was nothing short of idolatrous. Thus twelve years after the fall of the City, Nicetas Choniates wrote: “For most of the Roman Emperors it was quite intolerable merely to give orders, to walk around in gold clothes, to use the public purse as their own, to distribute it however and to whomever they wanted, and to treat free people as if they were slaves. They considered it an extreme insult to themselves if they were not 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...”

360 Nicetas Choniates, The Reign of Manuel, VI, 31; quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 120; Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95.
The Nicaean Empire and the Sacrament of Royal Anointing

After the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204, asks Hieromonk (now Bishop) Dionyius, “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’. 361

So Romanity survived. In Nicaea the Lascarid Emperors preserved and nurtured the strength of the Roman power in exile. And then the first of the

Palaeologi, Michael, reconquered the City in 1261, enabling an independent Orthodox Empire to survive, albeit in a severely truncated form, until 1453.

What had changed to turn the wrath of the Lord to mercy? Leaving aside the basic and most essential condition for any real turn for the better - the repentance of the people, - we may point to an institutional or sacramental development that strengthened the autocracy while at the same time restoring the Patriarch to a position of something like equality with the Emperor. This was the introduction, at the coronation of Emperor Theodore I Lascaris, of the sacrament of imperial anointing – visible anointing with holy oil, at the hands of a patriarch - into the imperial inauguration rite...

It had taken several centuries for the enthronement of the emperor to acquire this strictly ecclesiastical character. 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…”

Ostrogorsky describes the fully-fledged rite of crowning plus anointing 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 unfaillingly 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.”


The very late appearance of the fully-fledged rite, including anointing requires some explanation... Dagron considers that the Theodore Lascaris' anointing by the patriarch in Nicaea in 1208 was modelled on the westerners' anointing of Baudouin I in Constantinople in 1204. It both bolstered imperial power and strengthened the position of the Church in relation to imperial power: “Far from the historical capital, in the modest surroundings of Nicaea, it would have appeared necessary to 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 Laskaris, who was not yet officially emperor, fixed a date that would allow the new titular incumbent to proceed to the ‘habitual’ date, that is, during Holy Week [Holy Thursday, to be more precise], for the making of holy chrism (το θεσμον του μυρου χρισμο). 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.”

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

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

There is in fact little agreement about the date at which this sacrament was introduced in Byzantium. According to Fomin and Fomina, (op. cit., vol. I, p. 96), it was introduced in the ninth century, when Basil I was anointed with the chrisms oil or with olive oil (P.G. 102.765); according to M.V. Zzyzykin (Patriarkh Nikon (Patriarch Nicon), 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 (op. cit., 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.

latter. Subjects were much bolder in deciding on conspiracies against one whom they did not see as having been consecrated by native religion”.\footnote{Zosimas, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. 1, p. 118.}

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 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 in the 12th or 13th century. After all, the pagan emperors had been recognized by Christ and the apostles although they came to power independently of the Church. The Roman Empire was believed to have been created by God alone, independently of the Church. As the Emperor Justinian’s famous \textit{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 in Byzantium 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 him in Thessalonica in 1225 or 1227.

According to Vasiliev, “he crowned and anointed Theodore who ‘put on the purple robe and began to wear the red shoes’, distinctive marks of the Byzantine basileus. One of the letters of Demetrius shows that his coronation and anointment of Theodore of Epirus was performed ‘with the general
consent of the members of the senate, who were in the west (that is, on the territory of Thessalonica and Epirus), of the clergy, and of all the large army.' Another document testifies that the coronation and anointment were performed with the consent of all the bishops who lived 'in that western part'. Finally, Theodore himself signed his edicts (chrysobulls) with the full title of the Byzantine Emperor: 'Theodore in Christ God Basileus and Autocrat of the Romans.'

Moreover, 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 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."

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-hierarch 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?"

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In reply, Archbishop Demetrius pointed to the necessity of having an emperor in the West in order effectively to drive out the Latins. Theodore Angelus had carried out his task with great distinction, and was himself of royal blood. Besides, “the Greek West has followed the example of the East: after all, in despite of ancient Constantinopolitan practice, an emperor has been proclaimed and a patriarch chosen in the Bithynian diocese as need has dictated. And when has it ever been heard that one and the same hierarch should rule in Nicaea and call himself patriarch of Constantinople? And this did not take place at the decree of the whole senate and all the hierarchs, since after the capture of the capital both the senate and the hierarchs fled both to the East and the West. And I think that the greater part are in the West…

“For some unknown reason you have ascribed to yourself alone the consecration of chrism. But it is one of the sacraments performed by all the hierarchs (according to Dionysius the Areopagite). If you allow every priest to baptise, then why is anointing to the kingdom, which is secondary by comparison with baptism, condemned by you? But according to the needs of the time it is performed directly by the hierarch next in rank after the patriarch, according to the unfailing customs and teaching of piety. However, he who is called to the kingdom is usually anointed, not with chrism, but with oil sanctified by prayer… We had no need of prepared chrism, but we have the sepulchre of the Great Martyr Demetrius, from which chrism pours out in streams…”

Nevertheless, in the end it was the anointing from the true first-hierarch of the Church that gave the victory to the Lascarids. And so this sacrament, which, as we have seen, was so critical in strengthening the Western Orthodox kingdoms at a time when invasions threatened from without and chaos from within, came to serve the same purpose in Eastern Orthodoxy… In any case, the power of the Angeli was crushed by the Bulgarian Tsar John Asen. Then, in 1242, the Nicaean Emperor John III Vatatzes forced Theodore Angelus’ son John to renounce the imperial title in favour of “despot”. And four years later the Emperor John conquered Thessalonica. 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

370 Archbishop Demetrius, in Uspensky, op. cit., p. 413.
371 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.” (op. cit., p. 212)
Macrides writes: “Their style of rule was partly a response to limited resources, partly to exclusion from Constantinople, the natural setting, and also a reaction to the ‘sins’ which had caused God to withdraw his support from the Byzantines. John III Vatatzes and his son Theodore II ruled as if New Constantines had never existed. To rephrase Choniates’ words of criticism for the twelfth-century emperors: John III and Theodore II did not wear gold, did not treat common property as their own nor free men as slaves, nor did they hear themselves celebrated as being wiser than Solomon, heroic in strength, God-like in looks. Contrary to the behaviour of most emperors, John did not even have his son proclaimed emperor in his lifetime, not because he did not love his son, nor because he wanted to leave the throne to anyone else, but because the opinion and choice of his subjects was not evident. John was an emperor who 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...”

In relation to the patriarchate, too, the Lascari 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

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[373] 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, No 6, November-December, 1982, p. 44).
persuasion ended in a tiff, and Blemmydes left Nicaea for his monastery. 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 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...”

The Serbian Symphony

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 Byzantine Autocracy. 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

374 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.)
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*.”

The Serbs did not betray the trust that had been placed in them. They proceeded to create one of the most perfect examples of Church-State symphony in Orthodox history. And 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, the son, St. Savva, enshrined the ideal in his *Zakonopravilo* or *Korničija*, “a code,” as Dmitrije Bogdanovic 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 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 symmetry 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 *oeccumene* – and which was, moreover, at variance with the dogmatic doctrine of the Council as the supreme organ of Church authority,

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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…”

“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 theodulìa [the service of God]; the other by theocracy.

“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 theodulìa. 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.”

“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

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377 Bogdanovic, “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.

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…”

The Crisis of Byzantine Statehood

The Nicaean Empire was a period of spiritual recovery for the Byzantines, 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 was a serious blow. And an outbreak of the Black Death, which, according to one source, killed most of the inhabitants of Constantinople, further undermined the strength of the State. Still more serious were the divisions that were opening up within Byzantine society, in which the very foundations of the Orthodox autocracy were questioned for the first time. These took place during a social revolution of the poor against the rich in Adrianople and Thessalonica, where sharp divisions in wealth were exacerbated by the feudal system that had been introduced by the Latin crusaders. This revolution


380 “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 harassed 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 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)
betrayed, according to Diehl, “a vague tendency towards a communistic movement” and in its final wave forced the abdication of Emperor John VI in 1354. St. Gregory Palamas defended the principle of autocracy against the political “zealots” (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 the rulers: “Judge a righteous judgement’ (Zechariah 7.9) and 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.”

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 was at war with his brother, Andronicus V; 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 - Ivan Solonevich calculated that in 74 out of 109 Byzantine reigns, the throne was seized by a coup. The period of the Nicene 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.

381 Quoted in Vasiliev, op. cit, p. 684.
384 St. Gregory Palamas, Homilies; quoted in D.I. Makarov, op. cit, p. 400.
385 Solonevich, op. cit, p. 77.
386 We can see that the Byzantines had not lost the consciousness that “rebellion is as the sin of divination” (I Kings (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 anathematisation 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).
We have seen that the Byzantines never had an agreed system of imperial legitimacy and succession. However, the failure to solve the question of legitimacy was not the only cause of the weakness of the Byzantine system. L.A. Tikhomirov points to another, still deeper one: 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
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.” 387

The Sultan’s Turban and the Pope’s Tiara

In 1369 Emperor John V Palaeologus, went to Italy and became a Roman
Catholic. But there was no rebellion, as in the time of Michael VIII. And the
reason for that is revealing...

The reason is 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
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

387 Tikhomirov, op. cit., p.163.
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.”

“As an Emperor,” continues Runciman, “John V was incompetent and almost impotent. The Turks were overrunning all his territory and exacting tribute from him. [In 1396 the Byzantine armies suffered a crushing defeat at Nicopolis, and Sultan Bayezid began a siege of Constantinople. The City was saved at this time by the intervention of the Mongols under Tamerlane in the Turkish rear.] He himself in a reign of fifty years was three times driven into exile, by his father-in-law, by his son and by his grandson. Yet, as the concordat shows, he still retained prestige enough to reaffirm his theoretical control over a Church, many of whose dioceses lay far outside of his political control. 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…”

The concordat was a truly shameful document, which subordinated the Church to the State in a truly caesaropapist manner. 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 dominion of the infidel Turks to that of the heretical Latins. For in religious

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388 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 122-123.
matters the Turks were more tolerant than the Latins. Moreover, submission to the Turks would at least have the advantage of making the administration of the Church easier – in the present situation, the bishops under Turkish rule were separated from their head in Constantinople and were distrusted because that head lived in a different state...

Igumen Gregory Lourié writes: “It was precisely in the 14th century, when immemorial Greek territories passed over to the Turks, and some others – to the Latins, that there was formed in Byzantine society those two positions whose struggle would clearly appear in the following, 15th century. It was precisely in the 14th century that the holy Fathers established a preference for the Turks over the Latins, while with the humanists it was the reverse. Neither in the 15th, nor in the 14th century was there any talk of union with the Turks – their invasion was thought to be only an evil. But already in the 14th century it became clear that the Empire would not be preserved, that they would have to choose the lesser of two evils. In the capacity of such a lesser evil, although a very great one, the holy Fathers were forced to make an irrevocable decision in favour of the Turks, under whose yoke it was possible to preserve the Church 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...”

Of course, the victory of the Turks would be a terrible disaster. But the victory of the Latins would be an even greater disaster, since it might well signify the end of Greek Orthodoxy. Nor, said the Zealots, would buying the

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391 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)
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 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…”392

*The Council of Florence*

As the political and military position of the Empire grew weaker, the pressure on both emperors and patriarchs to compromise with the faith became stronger. Negotiations with Rome dragged on, “held up partly”, as Runciman writes, “by the Pope’s difficulties with the leaders of the Conciliar movement [in the West] and partly by the uneasy situation in the East. At one moment it seemed that a Council might take place at Constantinople; but the Turkish siege of the city in 1422 made it clear that it was no place for an international congress. Manuel II [whose advice to his son had been: not to break off negotiations with Rome, but not to commit himself to them] retired from active politics in 1423 and died two years later. His son, John VIII, was convinced that the salvation of the Empire depended upon union and tried to press for a Council; but he was unwilling at first to allow it to take place in Italy; while the Papacy still had problems to settle in the West. Delays continued. It was not until the beginning of 1438 that plans were completed and the Emperor arrived with his delegation at a Council recently opened in Ferrara and transferred to Florence in January 1439.”393

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.”394 And yet he meekly followed the same Emperor to Florence and submitted to his instructions. Moreover, he was prepared to make critical concessions on the issue of the Filioque, agreeing with the Latins that the prepositions “through” and “from” meant the same. In any case, he died before the Council had ended.

The need for western military help was not the only factor that propelled the Byzantines to Florence. Another was the idea, dear to the humanists whose influence was increasing in Byzantium, that Greek culture was so precious that it had to be preserved at all costs. But “Greek culture” for the humanists meant the pagan culture of Classical Greece, 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. So better for the humanists the pope’s tiara than the sultan’s turban…

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393 Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.
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 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.”

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).”\textsuperscript{396}

And so many factors – obedience to the emperor, fear for the fate of Hellenism, genuine hopes of a reunion of Christendom - combined to undermine the resistance of most of the Greeks to the union with Rome, which involved surrender to almost all the pope’s demands, including the inclusion of the \textit{Filioque} and papal supremacy.

“In the end, weary of it all, longing to get home and, it was said, deliberately kept short of food and comforts, the whole Greek delegation, under orders from the Emperor and in obedience to the concordat of their Church with John V, signed the decree of union, with the exception of Mark Evgenicus [Metropolitan of Ephesus], and, it seems, of [the pagan philosopher] Plethon, who disliked the Latin Church rather more than the Greek. Mark was threatened with deposition; and, after retiring for a while to his see of Ephesus, in Turkish territory, he submitted to pressure and abdicated.”\textsuperscript{397}

St. Mark’s motto was: “There can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith.”\textsuperscript{398} 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.”\textsuperscript{399} On the day of his death he 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

\textsuperscript{396} Meyerodorrff, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{397} Runciman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 109. Bishop Isaiah of Stavropol, the Bishop of Tver and Bishop Gregory of Georgia secretly left the city to avoid signing. George Scholarius, the future patriarch, together with John Evgenicos, St. Mark’s brother and the Despot Demetrius also left earlier without signing. And the signature of Methodius of Lacedaemon is nowhere to be found… (\textit{The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy}, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, p. 466)
\textsuperscript{398} Constantine Tsipanlis writes: “In the eyes of Mark even the complete political extinction of the Byzantine State was not as important as the preservation of the integrity of Orthodoxy” (\textit{Mark Eugenicus and the Council of Florence}, New York: Kentron Vyzantion Erevnon, 1986, p. 60).
\textsuperscript{399} Fomin & Fomina, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, p. 124.
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.”

Mark “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
Mammas, 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 served
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 Eugenicus 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.

400 P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a.
“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 [uniate] Church of Constantinople could provide little help for the people. Its provincial 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 Mammas, 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?”

The Fall into Absolutism

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

401 Runciman, _op. cit._, pp. 109-110, 159-160. Gennadius hid himself, 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.” (quoted by Sir Edmund Gibbon, _The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire_, ed. J. B. Bury, VII, 176)
commonwealth of States between the Slavs and the Greeks, or, most plausibly, the betrayal of the Faith at the Council of Florence in 1439...

And yet there is something not quite convincing in these explanations. Or rather, while undoubtedly valid up to a point, they fail, individually and collectively, to explain why the Fall took place precisely at this time. After all, the Byzantines had suffered similar disasters on previous occasions. Anatolia had been lost to the Arabs in the seventh century, and again to the Seljuks in the eleventh century - but they had recovered. Before 1204 trade had been in the hands of the Venetians - but they had recovered. Social rest had been rife at the end of the Comnenan period, and again in mid-fourteenth century Thessalonica - but they had recovered. The Black Death afflicted 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 1439 was rejected almost immediately by the people, and was officially rejected by the hierarchy in 1454 and again in 1484.

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

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

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The clue to the conundrum lies in the fact that, in spite of seeing the falseness of the union, and even while refusing to visit the churches where the Pope was commemorated, the Byzantines followed their uncrowned and unanointed, uniate and apostate emperor to the final, bitter end... For the last emperor, Constantine XI, was a uniate, and was not even crowned in Constantinople, but in Mystra, because of the opposition of the zealots of Orthodoxy. Even after he returned to Constantinople in 1449 he was never officially crowned.

This is ironic indeed. As noted above, the Byzantines were extraordinarily free in disposing of their sovereigns. But they were not overthrown because they had betrayed the Faith. They were killed or mutilated simply because, in the opinion of some army commander, they were bad rulers. And the Church and the people usually acquiesced in the deed...

K.N. Leontiev tried to defend the Byzantines: “They drove out the Caesars, changed them, killed them. But nobody touched the holiness of Caesarism itself. They changed the people, but nobody changed its basic organization.”

But was he correct? Was Caesarism truly seen as holy? Is not the truth rather that the Byzantine attitude to the imperial power veered, for most of its history, from one unchristian extreme to the other, from the extreme of idolatry (the emperor as god) to the extreme of sacrilege (the emperor as a mere mortal, who could be removed by force if “the mandate of heaven” deserted him)? In neither case was the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed ones” (Psalm 104.15) seen as applying to emperors, and emperors continued to be slaughtered right until the first Fall of the City in 1204.

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403 Pope Nicholas V wrote to him: “From this man [the imperial legate, Andronicus Vryennios] and from your own letters, we have learned that you desire union and accept the synodal decree” (P.G. 160, 1201B). See “The Long-Awaited King”, Orthodox Christian Witness, May 7/20, 1979. And Bishop Leonard of Chios wrote: “Through the diligence and honesty of the said Cardinal, Isidore of Kiev, and with the assent (if it was not insincere) of the emperor and the senate, the holy union was sanctioned and solemnly decreed on December 12th, the feast of Saint Spirodon, the bishop” (quoted in Judith Herrin, “The Fall of Constantinople”, History Today, vol. 53, № 6, June, 2003, p. 15). St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite believed that Constantine was not a uniate and therefore inscribed him in some calendars. But there appears to be no doubt that he was a uniate, having received communion from Cardinal Isidore a few hours before his death, and therefore cannot be counted as an Orthodox saint. Lebedev writes: “Whatever might be said in his defence, nevertheless the last Orthodox Byzantine Emperor was a traitor to Orthodoxy. His betrayal is the more shameful the less it was sincere. Here are the words by which the Emperor and those who thought like him tried to pacify the crowd which did not want the union; 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).

404 Tsipanlis, op. cit., p. 74.

But then, under the impact of that terrible tragedy, attitudes began to change. Emperor Theodore I Lascaris received the physical sacrament of anointing to the kingdom for the first time in Byzantine history – over six centuries since the sacrament had first been used in the barbarian lands of the British Isles, on the one hand, and Southern Arabia, on the other. And the effects were felt immediately: the Lascarid dynasty was the most pious and effective in Byzantine history, even if – and perhaps partly because - their rule was exerted in the more modest conditions of Nicaean exile and not in the pomp and splendour of Constantinople.

Moreover, emperors were no longer killed by their own people… However, with the last Byzantine dynasty, that of the Palaeologi, this apparent improvement in morals was compromised by what amounted to a deviation from the faith. For the emperor was now the Anointed one – both physically and spiritually, and as such he was untouchable…

With the signing of the concordat between the Church and the uniate Emperor John V, the Emperor had a control over the Church that the iconoclast emperors could only have dreamed of. Moreover, nobody had twisted the Church’s arm: the hierarchs had surrendered their power voluntarily and without compulsion…

From now on, even if the emperor betrayed the Faith he could not be removed – or, if some still thought he should be removed, nobody called on the people to do it. Thus Michael VIII died a uniate, and was cursed after his death – but he was not removed in his lifetime. John V submitted to Rome – and remained on the throne. John VIII signed the unia in 1439 – and kept his throne. Constantine XI remained faithful to the unia – and kept his throne until an unbeliever killed him and captured it...

And so the emperors were no longer seen as gods, as in pagan times. Nor did they have pretensions to be priests, as in the times of the iconoclasts. And yet for all practical purposes they were god-kings and king-priests. For they were untouchable. In fact, they were the lynch-pin upon which the whole Byzantine system of government, both political and ecclesiastical, rested; for as Patriarch Anthony said, “it is impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor”.

And yet this was not true, as the patriarchs knew better than anybody else. For whereas, in late Byzantium, the emperor’s ever-decreasing rule extended over Constantinople, Thessalonica and the Peloponnese, and little else, the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch was truly universal in the Orthodox world, extending far beyond the bounds of the Empire – to Serbia in the West, to Russia in the north, and to the Turkish-occupied lands in the East.
So why did the powerful patriarchs fawn on, and bow down to the almost powerless emperors? The paradox is explained by the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was increasingly Greek in its orientation – and Greek hopes centred exclusively on the Empire, and specifically on Constantinople. In 1204 the patriarchs had been prepared to fight on even after the fall of the City – and had constructed a viable and prosperous realm outside it. But not now... In a previous age, they might have blessed and supported a *translatio imperii* to some foreign land that was still devoted to the ideals of the Christian Empire – Romania, perhaps, or Moscow. But not now...

The fatal weakness of the Byzantines had been their placing the security of the Empire above that of the Church, the earthly kingdom above the Heavenly Kingdom. Like Judah in the time of Jeremiah, they tried to play off one despotic power against another – and lost to both. Unable to present a truly Catholic – in the sense of universal, non-nationalistic - vision of Christian society to the world, the Byzantines fell into a false union with, and submission to, the West with its heretical, but more explicitly universal vision. And so, in becoming Latins, they ceased to be true Romans, whose whole glory, even when their dominion was no longer universal, lay in their *universal vision* – as Solomon said, “where there is no vision, the people perish” (*Proverbs* 29.18). Thereafter, their successors no longer called themselves Romans, but Greeks: only their Turkish conquerors kept the memory in the phrase *Millet Rum*, where *Rum* means “Rome”.

Great-Prince Basil of Moscow had been right when he wrote to Patriarch Anthony IV: “We have a Church,” he said, “but we do not have an emperor”. For the emperor was such only in name... 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 vision of Christian Rome had been narrowed to a terribly debilitating concentration on one speck of human dust. And so, in order that this extreme narrowness of vision should not contract to complete blindness, the Lord in His great mercy removed even that speck from their sight...

*The Fall of Constantinople*

The last step in the apostasy came in December, 1452: a uniate liturgy in which the Pope was commemorated was celebrated by Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev in Hagia Sophia.
With both emperor and patriarch heretics, and the holiest shrine in Orthodoxy defiled by the communion of heresy, the protection of the Mother of God deserted the Empire, which had ceased to be the instrument of God’s purpose in the world, and allowed it to be conquered by the Turkish Sultan Mehmet II…

And so on the morning of May 29, 1453, writes Andrew Wheatcroft, “after fifty-three days of desperate resistance, the Ottoman janissaries broke through the walls into the city. By custom they were entitled to three days of looting in any city they had taken by storm. At first they killed everyone they found alive. From the Church of St. Mary of the Mongols high above the Golden Horn, a torrent of blood rained down the hill towards the harbour. The soldiers broke into the churches, ripping out the precious objects, raping or killing anyone who caught their fancy. In the afternoon the sultan made his formal entry, and went directly to the Church of the Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia. There he ordered an end to the pillage and destruction and directed that the great church should become the chief mosque of the city. Ducas, in his *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, records the day:

“‘He [Mehmed] summoned one of his vile priests who ascended the pulpit to call out his foul prayer. The son of iniquity, the forerunner of Antichrist, ascending the holy altar, offered the prayer. Alas, the calamity! Alack, the horrendous deed! Woe is me! What has befallen us? Oh! Oh! What have we witnessed? An infidel Turk, standing on the holy altar in whose foundation the relics of Apostles and Martyrs have been deposited! Shudder, O sun! Where is the Lamb of God, and where is the Son and Logos of the Father Who is sacrificed thereon, and eaten, and never consumed?

“Truly we have been reckoned as frauds! Our worship has been reckoned as nothing by the nations. Because of our sins the temple [Hagia Sophia] which was rebuilt in the name of the Wisdom of the Logos of God, and is called the Temple of the Holy Trinity, and Great Church and New Sion, today has become an altar of barbarians, and has been named and has become the House of Muhammad. Just is Thy judgement, O Lord.’”

However, we must not forget those Byzantines who remained true Romans to the end: St. Mark of Ephesus, his disciple Gennadius Scholarius and the metropolitans who signed the unia but later renounced their signatures. Concerning the latter Michael Ducas records that, on returning from the council of Florence, “as the metropolitans disembarked from the ships, the citizens greeted them as was customary, asking ‘What of our business? What of the Council? Did we prevail?’ And they answered: ‘We have sold our faith; we have exchanged true piety for impiety; we have betrayed the pure Sacrifice and become upholders of unleavened bread…’”

407 Quoted in Norwich, op. cit., p. 388.
Everyone lost when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. 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, mainly Italy, taking their learning and their 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, whom the Westerners were eager to read. The true heroes of Byzantium did find admirers and imitators; but they were to be found, not in the Mediterranean homeland of Roman Christian civilisation, but in the north – in the mountains of Romania, and, especially, in the forests of Russia.

Here Romanitas, the ideal of Christian Statehood, remained intact; for it was the Russians who were that “third God-chosen people” of the prophecy; 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.


III. THE WESTERN REVOLUTION: PAPIST ABSOLUTISM

And upon her forehead was a name written: Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.

Revelation 17.5.

Charlemagne and the Papacy

For centuries, and in spite of the intermittent expression of papist ideas, the Roman Papacy had seen itself as part of the Eastern Empire and a vital link with the other 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 eight 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, still commemorated them at the Liturgy, and still used the emperors’ coinage. East and West still constituted one Christian world... Moreover, the interdependence of East and West was emphasized in 732 when Charles Martel, the Frankish leader, defeated the Arab Muslim armies at Poitiers, thereby saving not only the West from Muslim domination, but also giving vital relief to the beleaguered Byzantines.

However, the relationship began to undergo increasing strain when the Lombards penetrated further south into Italy, and Leo, occupied with his enemies in the East, offered no military support. The Popes in desperation looked for other defenders, and found them, eventually, 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 popes408 – 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

408 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).
to rule”. Zachariah took the hint and blessed the deposition of Childeric III and the anointing of Peppin by St. Boniface in his place.

We may wonder whether Zachariah was right to interfere in the politics of the West in this way. Be that as it may, his successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly increased the links with “the most Christian king of the Franks”. Having been deserted by the Emperor Leo 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”, reconsecrated 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. 409 Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor’s regnal year, and began to issue their own coins. 410

Peppin 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 – the beginning of the Papal States and the role of the Popes as secular as well as spiritual rulers.

At about this time the forgery known as The Donation of Constantine was concocted by someone in the papal chancellery. This alleged that Constantine the Great had given his throne to Pope Sylvester and his successors because “it is not right that an earthly emperor should have power in a place where the government of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by the heavenly Emperor”. For this reason he moved his capital to the New Rome, Constantinople. “And we ordain and decree that he [the Roman Pope] shall have rule as well over the four principal sees, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as also over the Churches of God in all the world. And the pontiff who for the time being shall preside over the most holy Roman Church shall be the highest and chief of all priests in the whole world, and according to his decision shall all matters be settled.” 411

Now Fr. John Romanides argues that the purpose of this forgery was to prevent the Franks from establishing their capital in Rome. Much more likely, however, is that its immediate purpose was directed, not against the Franks, - who, after all, were Orthodox and great benefactors of the papacy, - but

411 Translated by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, Documents of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 52.
against the heretical emperor in Constantinople, being meant to provide a justification for the papacy’s stealing of the exarchate of Ravenna from the emperor in exchange for his earlier depredations. But in the longer term its significance was deeper: it represented a quite new theory of the relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical powers. For contrary to the doctrine of the “symphony” of the two powers which prevailed in the East and the Byzantine West, the theory encapsulated in the Donation essentially asserted that the head of the Roman Church had a higher authority, not only than any other “priest”, but also than the head of the Empire; so that the Emperor could only exert his authority as a kind of vassal of the Pope...

Of course, there is an inherent contradiction in this theory. If it was St. Constantine who gave the authority to St. Sylvester, then the ultimate authority in the Christian commonwealth rested, not with the Pope, but with the Emperor. But this consequence was ignored in the face of the urgent necessity of finding some justification for the papacy’s expansionist plans. 412

In 768, King Pepin’s son, Charles, later known as Charlemagne, ascended the throne. He 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. Nor were his achievements limited to the military and the secular. He promoted education and art, held twice-yearly Synods of his bishops and nobles, suppressed heresy and did his best to weld the very varied peoples and customs of his far-flung realm into a multi-national whole.

Charlemagne’s empire was seen by the Franks as a resurrection of the Western Roman Empire. According to his English adviser, Deacon Alcuin of York, Charlemagne, like King David, combined the functions of royal leadership and priestly teaching in order to guide his people to salvation. 413 This exalted view of his kingly role was shared by as early as 775 by Cathwulf, who wrote to Charlemagne, comparing his role to that of the Father, and that of 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.” 414 Again, in 794 Paulinus of Aquileia called him “king and priest”.

412 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.)


414 Canning, op. cit., p. 49.
So Caesaropapism was threatening to re-establish itself in the West – with the same results for the purity of the faith as under the caesaropapist emperors of the East... The critical point came with the election of a new Pope, Leo III. Leo was no supporter of the idea of the “king-priest”. 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 anathematised by Leo, who wrote that such a priest-king was like Julian the Apostate...

Nevertheless, he needed the support of Charlemagne, whatever he called himself. 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...”

Now Charlemagne’s biographer Einhard claims that he would never have entered the church if he had known what the Pope was intending to do. And there is evidence that in later years Charlemagne drew back from too sharp a confrontation with Constantinople, dropping the phrase “of the Romans” while retaining the title “Emperor”. Moreover, he dropped his idea of attacking the Byzantine province of Sicily. Instead he proposed marriage to the Byzantine Empress Irene (or perhaps it was her idea), hoping “thus to unite the Eastern and Western provinces”, as the chronicler Theophanes put it - not under his sole rule, for he must have realised that that was impossible, but perhaps on the model of the dual monarchy of the fifth-

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century Roman empire. In any case, all these plans collapsed with Irene’s overthrow in 802…

In fact, the ultimate gainer from Charlemagne’s coronation in 800 may well have been, not the emperor, but the Pope. 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 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 perceive 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.”

The increased power of the papacy after 800 is confirmed by Andrew Louth, who writes: “The Constitutio Romana sought to establish a bond between the Frankish Empire and the Republic of St. Peter, but it was a very different relationship from that which had formerly held between the pope and the Byzantine emperor. The Frankish emperor undertook to protect the legitimacy of the electoral process, but claimed no right, as the Byzantine emperor had done, to confirm the election itself. What we see here, in inchoate form, is a way of protecting the legitimacy and independence of the pope…” So the foundations were laid for the growth of papal power in the political as well as the ecclesiastical spheres as Carolingian power declined later in the ninth century.

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 who presides over the Roman - that is, the Constantinopolitain kingdom.” As Russell Chamberlin writes: “The Byzantines derided the coronation of

419 Herrin, op. cit., pp. 124, 128.
420 Louth, op. cit., p. 81.
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 me 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’.”

422 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 afore-mentioned dignitaries. On you alone the whole safety of the churches of Christ depends.”

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!”

424 But if Charlemagne’s empire was meant to be a restoration of the Western Roman Empire, it must be judged to have failed; for it disintegrated after his death into three separate kingdoms and continued to decline into the tenth century. One reason for this was that he failed to create the political bureaucracy and tax and legal systems which were so important in preserving the Roman Empire. Another reason was the fact that the dukes and counts upon whom his administration critically depended expected to be paid in

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422 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).


land for the services they rendered, so that the kingdom was stable just so long as it was expanding – and the expansionist phase of its history was already over by the 810s. The idea of selfless service to the king just because he was the king, the Lord’s anointed, had to compete with the idea of the aristocratic band of warriors whose leader was elected because of his military prowess and because he promised greater success in war and therefore more plunder than any other leader. The state was not yet fully a res publica, a public thing or possession, in the Frankish consciousness; it was rather the private demesne of the king and those of his nobles who had earned a part of the spoils through their service to him. As Tacitus had written centuries before of the pagan Germans in his Germania: “You cannot keep up a great retinue except by war and violence, for it is to the free-handed chief that they look for the war horse, for the murderous and masterful sphere: banquetings and a certain rude but lavish outfit take the place of salary. The material for this open-handedness comes from war and foray.”

However, the real weakness of Charlemagne’s kingdom was more spiritual than institutional: he took his own achievements, and the weakness of the Eastern Empire (which, since it was ruled at the time by a woman, Irene, was technically vacant according to Frankish law), as sufficient reason to usurp the place of the Basileus in the political sphere and, still more seriously, the place of the Church in the ecclesiastical sphere.

As long as the Eastern Emperors had been iconoclast, while Charlemagne himself remained Orthodox, he could have had some justification for claiming the leadership of the Christian world. But since 787 the Eastern Empire had returned to Orthodoxy while he, through his false council of Frankfurt in 794, had become a heretic! Thus in 794, without consulting the Pope, he convened a council in Frankfurt which, probably on the basis of a false translation.

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

Louthe 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 and a form of veneration expressing worship has no natural lexical equivalent. Proskynesis, which in Greek at this time probably carried a primary connotation of bowing down, prostration – a physical act – and latreia, the word used for worship exclusively due to God – a matter of intention – are derived from roots, which in their verbal forms are used as a hendiadys in the Greek version of the second commandment in the Septuagint (προσκυνήσείς… λάτρευσής: ‘you shall not bow down… you shall not worship’: Exod. 20.5). Latin equivalents add further confusion, not least because the Latin calque of proskynesis, adoratio, was the word that came to be used for latreia. But whatever the potential confusion, the distinction explicitly made by the Nicene synod simply collapsed into identity by the faulty translation that made its way to the Frankish court” (op. cit., pp. 86-87).

When, in 792, Charlemagne sent the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in this inaccurate translation to the kings and bishops of Britain, it was supposed that the Fathers of
condemned the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on icon-veneration and introduced the Filioque – the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son – into the Creed.

The Orthodox rejected the Filioque, because: (a) it contradicted the words of Christ Himself about the procession of the Spirit from the Father alone (John 15.26), (b) it involved a change in the Creed, which was forbidden by the Third Ecumenical Council, and (c) it was objectively false, as destroying the monarchy of the Father and introducing a second principle into the life of the Holy Trinity. The Filioque immediately produced conflict between Frankish and Greek monks in Jerusalem. And within the Frankish camp itself; for Alcuin rejected the innovation in a letter to the monks of Lyons, and Pope Leo III had have the Creed without the Filioque inscribed in Greek and Latin on silver shields placed outside St. Peter’s. But Charlemagne did not back down: in a council in Aachen in 809 he decreed that the innovation was a dogma necessary for salvation.

The iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian had undermined the “symphonic” principle of Church-State relations when he had declared that he was “both king and priest”. But now Charlemagne was showing himself to be no less of a caesaropapist than the iconoclasts by his imposition of heretical innovations on the Church. Indeed, the former champion of Orthodoxy and Romanity against the heretical and despotic iconoclast emperors was now well on the way to becoming the chief enemy of Orthodoxy and Romanity through his heresy and despotism, considering, as Romanides puts it, "that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman".

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

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).


could be only one Christian Roman Empire, this meant that the Frankish attempt to usurp the Empire had been defeated – for the time being...

In spite of this, the Franks did not give up their claims. Thus, 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 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.’”

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 the violence of its missionary work, 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.

In the political and cultural sphere the Carolingian empire laid the foundations of the modern West. 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 by means of envy and imitation first into the bourgeoisie, produced the

429 Romanides, op. cit., p. 18.
430 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).
democratic revolution and engendered all these modern phrases about the boundless rights of the person, and then, penetrating to the lower levels of western society, made of every simple day-time worker and cobbler an existence corrupted by a nervous feeling of his own worth). Soon after this we hear the first sounds of Romantic poetry. Then Gothic architecture develops, and soon Dante’s Catholic epic poem will be created, etc. Papal power grows from this time. And so the reign of Charles the Great (9th century) is approximately the watershed after which the West begins more and more to bring its own 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.”

The Rise of the Heretical Papacy

The new relationship between the Roman papacy and the Carolingian empire caused changes in the political ideology of the Franks, on the one hand, who, as we have seen, 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. Frankish caesaropapism soon collapsed; but Roman papocaesarism continued to grow until it claimed supreme authority in both Church and State...

This new stage in the growth of the papist heresy was supported by a forged collection of canons 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 write of the fifth century from whom the pseudo-Isidore borrowed the prologue for his compilation.

“The pseudo-Isidore compiled 70 decretes 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 make the bishops juridically defended 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.”

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, trying to impose his tyranny on everyone, kings and bishops, easterners and westerners. He first waged war against the major metropolitan sees of the West - Archbishops John of Ravenna, Hincmar of Rheims and others. This brought the Franks briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him.

So serious were the tensions that in 862 Emperor Louis II and the dissident archbishops marched on Rome. “As the Frankish army approached,” writes Peter Llewellyn, “Nicholas organized fasts and processions for divine intervention. One of these was attacked and broken up in the street by Louis’ supporters in the city; the crosses and relics, including a part of the True

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432 Dvorkin, Ochiki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, pp. 599-600 (in Russian).
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.”

Nicholas won that particular battle – and promptly opened up the war on other fronts – in Bulgaria, and in Constantinople. In 863 he defrocked St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, in typically papist language. The Frankish Annals of St. Bertin for 864 responded by speaking of “the lord Nicholas, who is called pope and who numbers himself as an apostle among the apostles, and who is making himself emperor of the whole world”. 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

433 Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, pp. 274-275. The archbishops of Trèves and Cologne wrote to Nicholas: “Without a council, without canonical inquiry, without accuser, without witnesses, without convicting us by arguments or authorities, without our consent, in the absence of the metropolitans and of our suffragan bishops, you have chosen to condemn us, of your own caprice, with tyrannical fury. But we do not accept your accursed sentence, so repugnant to a father’s or a brother’s love; we despise it as mere insulting language; we expel you yourself from our communion, since you commune with the excommunicate; we are satisfied with the communion of the whole Church and with the society of our brethren whom you despise and of whom you make yourself unworthy by your pride and arrogance. You condemn yourself when you condemn those who do not observe the apostolic precepts which you yourself are the first to violate, annulling as far as in you lies the Divine laws and the sacred canons, and not following in the footsteps of the Popes your predecessors...” (in Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1867, p. 305, note).

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

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...)

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.

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, Nicholas’ successor, Hadrian II, rejected the Photian Council’s decree 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.” 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, and condemned Nicholas, in 867.

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436 Nicholas I, in Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit. pp. 103, 104-105.
In 872 Hadrian II was succeeded by John VIII. 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, and reaffirmed the original text of the Nicene Creed without the Filioque, explicitly condemning all additions to it. So a Roman Pope formally recognised that he had no jurisdiction in the Eastern Church and that the Filioque was a heresy!

Pope John 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…”

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.

Thus was the Papist heresy crushed – for the time being. However, the serpent lay bruised, 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 power of the anointed kings. Here the picture was mixed. On the one hand, by the late ninth century the monarchy in West Francia, modern France, was collapsing. 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. And in East Francia, modern Germany, Carolingian kinship survived and gained in strength under the tenth-century Ottonian dynasty.

The Growth of Feudalism

Before studying these kingdoms, however, we need to study a certain important socio-economic changes that were taking place in western Europe in this period... Chris Wickham invokes five. “First, in some non-Carolingian regions, the ninth and tenth centuries were the period in which landowning itself developed, and a really wealthy aristocracy emerged for the first time. Secondly, in Carolingian Europe, aristocrats and churches gained property, by force or otherwise, from their landowning peasants. Thirdly, dependent peasants, tenants, faced increasing rents and greater control exercised over their labour. Fourthly, peasants were increasingly excluded from the public world of the army and assembly, and thus from the purview and interest of kings. Fifthly, in some parts of Europe (notably France, but also much of Italy), this exclusion was, already by 1000, coming to mean the direct subjection of peasant communities to the judicial control of local lords, in the framework of the seigneurie banale...”

This subjection of peasant communities to local lords, as opposed to kings, is known as feudalism... Now the word “feudalism” comes from the Latin *feuda*, or “fief”, which means a piece of land held in exchange for service to a lord. It arose in part as a defensive reaction to the Viking invasions, but also as a result of the other social changes listed above.

Authorities differ on how early feudalism began, and how widespread it became in this period. In England, for example, there appears to have been no feudalism until after the Norman Conquest. But in many parts of western Europe the process was already well under way in the tenth century.

The first result 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, “alodial” 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.

Feudalism ate into the king’s power in two ways: first, the kings’ 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

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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 Meersen 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.441

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

“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

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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.”

One of the worst aspects of feudalism was the fact that the Church, too, was bound up in the feudal nexus. 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 bishops was always consecrated by another bishop, generally the metropolitan (archbishop).”

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

443 Comby, op. cit., p. 131.
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.”

The control exercised by feudal lords over clerical appointments was symbolised by the ceremony of “lay investiture”, whereby the lord endowed the cleric with a ring, signifying the cleric’s entry into feudal tenure of a church or lands. Such a ceremony was distinct from ecclesiastical ordination. But in practice the power inherent in lay investiture determined who should be ordained (and for how much).

“The hastily ordained and ‘invested’ clerk was often altogether unworthy (if 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…”

The development of feudalism was aided by the pressure of the German land law system, “the 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

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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.

"...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…”

**The German Monarchy**

With so many bishops compromised by their (involuntary) involvement in the feudal system, there was only one force in society that could save it from the morass of feudalism – the Orthodox monarchy. And the one country in Western Europe where the monarchy was still strong enough to ward off feudalism for the time being was England. But England was far from Rome: more important for the development of the West was Germany.

Just as the English autocracy arose out of the successful struggle with the Vikings, so the German 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 Salian monarchy, which, while not quite 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.” As he wrote to Bruno, “you have both priestly religion and royal strength”. This failure to see any essential division between Church and State was a consequence of the feudal Weltanschauung.

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446 Papadakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22, 23.
The system of government through bishops had the advantage, from the king’s point of view, that he could appoint the bishops, who, since they could not marry, could not found hereditary dynasties that might challenge his power at a later date. Moreover, he 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, as we have seen, 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 or ecclesiastical provinces. 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.

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.”

In Rome, meanwhile, we enter the period of the deepest degradation in the eternal city’s pre-schism history - the so-called “pornocracy” of Marozia, an evil woman who with her mother Theodora made, unmade, lived with and begat a series of popes. However, in 932 Marozia’s son Alberic, marquis of Spoleto, imprisoned his mother, took over the government of Rome and gave it a short period of peace and relative respectability. But in 955 Alberic 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.

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450 It has been suggested by J.N.D. Kelly that this was the origin of the legend of the female Pope Joan (*The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, quoted in Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 207).
In front of the high altar of the mother church of Christendom, he even toasted the Devil…” 451

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

Otto gained the Byzantines’ recognition of his imperial title, and persuaded them to send Princess Theophanou, the niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, to be the bride of his son, Otto II. The marriage was celebrated in Rome in 972. Theophanou then introduced another Byzantine, John Philagathos, as godfather of her son, Otto III; he later became head of the royal finances and finally - Pope (or antipope) John XV. This led to a sharp increase in Byzantine influence in the western empire452, and the temporary eclipse of the new papist theory of Church-State relations. Thus in an ivory bas-relief Christ is shown crowning Otto II and Theophanou - a Byzantine tenth-century motif expressing the traditionally Byzantine concept of Church-State symphony. 453

452 Holland, op. cit., pp. 75-76. Byzantine influence had already been increasing under Alberic, whose “insistence on the forms of Byzantine administration and court hierarchy... checked the growth of any real feudal devolution of government such as the rest of Europe [outside Rome] was experiencing” (Llewellyn, op. cit., p. 307).
453 “The image,” as Jean-Paul Allard writes, “was more eloquent than any theological treatise. It illustrated a principle that the papacy and the Roman Church have never accepted, but which was taken for granted in Byzantium and is still held in Orthodoxy today: Christ and Christ alone crowns the sovereigns; power comes only from God, without the intercession of an institutional representative of the Church, be he patriarch or pope. The anointing and crowning of the sovereign do not create the legitimacy of his power; but have as their sole aim the manifestation of [this legitimacy] in the eyes of the people.” ("Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d’Albe", in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, Regards sur l’Orthodoxie (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997, p. 39 (in French).
In 991 Princess Theophanou died and the young Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. He “dreamed of reuniting the two empires [of East and West] into one one day, so as to restore universal peace – a new imperial peace comparable to that of Augustus, a Roman Empire which would embrace once more the orbis terrarum before the end of the world that was announced for the year 1000.” To signify that the Renovatio Imperii Romani (originally a Carolingian idea) had truly begun, he moved his court from Aachen to Rome, and began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor for the hand of a daughter or niece of the basileus, which union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner.

The plan for union with Byzantium was foiled. But Otto sought the advice of holy hermits, and Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court. And when Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999 and took the name Sylvester II, he revived memories, in those brought up on the forged Donation of Constantine, of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.

However, Sylvester loved the true symphony, not the forged variety: in 1001 he inspired Otto to issue an act demonstrating that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. Moreover, this very unpapist 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.”

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

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454 Allard, op. cit., p. 40
455 Both the Greek Nilus of Calabria and the Germanic Romuald of Ravenna (Holland, op. cit., pp. 120-121, 125-126). See also Louth, op. cit., pp. 277-281.
457 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).
Otto and Sylvester imitated the Byzantine concept of a family of kings under the Emperor. Thus they handed out crowns to King Stephen of Hungary and the Polish Duke Boleslav. And in a Gospel book made for Otto in about 1000 four states – Roma, Gallia, Germania and Sclavinia (Poland) – are represented as women doing homage to him.

The forty-year Ottonian period in the history of the papacy has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. According to Voltaire in his Essay on History and Customs (chapter 36), and some later writers, “the imprudence of Pope John XII in having called the Germans to Rome was the source of all the calamities to which Rome and Italy were subject down the centuries...” However, an unprejudiced view that tries to avoid racial stereotypes must accept that the intervention of the German monarchy in Roman affairs – until at least the death of Otto III in 1002 – was not wholly unbeneficial. Someone had to put a stop to the scandalous degeneration of the first see of Christendom. And if the Ottonian emperors did not finally succeed in cleansing the Augean stables, it was hardly their fault alone.

The rivalries between the Roman aristocratic families, - which were only partly influenced by the desire to keep Rome free from foreigners, - appear to have made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. The Ottonians at least seem to have had good intentions, and the partnership of the German-Greek Otto III and the Frankish Sylvester II looked on the point of restoring a true unity between the Old and the New Romes. Indeed, for a short period it even looked as if Byzantinism might triumph in the West... “But the Romans,” writes Chamberlin, “rose against [Otto], drove him and his pope out of the city, and reverted to murderous anarchy. He died outside the city in January 1002, not quite twenty-two years of age. Sylvester survived his brilliant but erratic protégé by barely sixteen months. His epitaph summed up the sorrow that afflicted all thoughtful men at the ending of a splendid vision: ‘The world, on the brink of triumph, in peace now departed, grew contorted in grief and the reeling Church forgot her rest.’ The failure of Otto III and Sylvester marked the effective end of the medieval dream of a single state in which an emperor ruled over the bodies of all Christian men, and a pope over their souls.”

460 Louth, op. cit., p. 249.
461 Cyriaque Lampryllos, La Mystification Fatale (The Fatal Mystification), Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1987, pp. 59-60 (in French). No doubt Romanides (op. cit.) with his fiercely anti-Frankish and pro-Roman views would agree with that verdict, in spite of the fact that the Germans were not strictly Franks and were even victims of them (the Saxons had been conquered by the Franks in the eighth century).
462 Thus in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, said that if Pope John XV had no love and was puffed up with knowledge, he was the Antichrist... See John Eadie, “The Man of Sin”, in Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.
The Germans and the Filioque

There were many reasons for the schism of the Western Church, but the most important were four innovations, one theological, two liturgical and one politico-ecclesiological, which the Church of Rome introduced into the life of the Church and which were rejected by the Eastern Patriarchates. The first of these, as we have seen in our discussion of St. Photius the Great, was the introduction of the word Filioque, meaning “and from the Son”, into the Nicene Creed, so that the article on the Holy Spirit read: “And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son". Although this theological innovation remained the most important difference between East and West, it was not the centre of attention at the moment of the schism in the mid-eleventh century. That position was occupied by the 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. 464 Although these innovations would at first sight appear to be of less than fundamental importance, their symbolical importance was very great. For since the leaven represented the soul of Christ, its removal by the Papists signified the replacement of the living Christ by a soulless corpse.465 And in removing the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who according to the Orthodox accomplishes the change of 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.”

However, it is the fourth, politico-ecclesiological innovation that is the most fundamental. As we have seen, in the Council of Constantinople in 879-880, the theory that the Pope has jurisdiction over all the Churches in the world was rejected by the delegates, including those of Pope John VIII. However, the two hundred years that followed that Council not only did not see a quenching of the ambitions of the Popes, but rather an increase in those ambitions to the point of megalomania, to the point that they asserted the theory that the Pope is to the Church and Christian society as a whole what the head is to the body – the unimpeachable and infallible Sovereign.

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464 As even the Papists admit, the epiclesis was present in all the ancient liturgies. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05502a.htm
465 Thus the Monk Nicetas Stethatos, of the Studite monastery in Constantinople, wrote to the Latins: “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…?” (in Jean Comby, How to Read Church History, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 132).
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, however distinguished and holy, 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”. With the Holy Spirit lowered to a position below that of the Son, and the Pope raised to a position, if not equal to Christ, at least immediately below him, 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”466.

The theory of papal infallibility was not expressed in a fully explicit manner until the eleventh century. Before then we have an accumulation of grandiloquent epithets, which were seen simply as rhetorical devices by the majority. That they were not taken literally is evident from the fact that some Popes were condemned as heretics – for example, the Monothelite Pope Honorius I was anathematised by the Sixth Ecumenical Council, and this anathematisation was confirmed by later Popes. 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’ is a forerunner of the Antichrist”.467

Until about 600, the development of Papism was inhibited, as we have seen, by the fact that the Popes were subjects of the Byzantine Emperors, 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 Iconoclasism. 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 forgeries created in the papal chancellery in the previous century – the Donation of Constantine and the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals – enabled the Popes to propagate the papist heresy of the unimpeachable power of the papacy over all bishops, and even over kings.

467 St. Gregory the Great, Epistle 33.
However, after the anathematization of the Filioque by the Council of Constantinople, which was 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. But then decline set in again. For “suddenly,” writes 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.”\textsuperscript{468} Not that the Roman Popes for the papacy were paragons of virtue - the previous century had shown that they usually were far from that: 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.”\textsuperscript{469}

Lampryllos writes: “After the death of this pope, 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.”\textsuperscript{470}

According to Sir Steven Runciman, the Roman addition of the Filioque was hateful to the Greeks for purely political reasons, since it represented the triumph of German influence in Rome.\textsuperscript{471} Certainly, the German emperors imposed the heretical Filioque, and their own German candidates to the papacy, on a basically unwilling Roman populace. However, the purely theological zeal of the Byzantines must not be underestimated.

\textsuperscript{468} Papadakis, \textit{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).

\textsuperscript{469} Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, introduction to Lampryllos, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{470} Lampryllos, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 65-66.

The Reform Movement

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 German 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.”472

Emperor Henry replaced Benedict with another German, and then, when he died, with yet another, Leo IX. However, Leo, though a Lorainner from Toul and a distant cousin of the Emperor, was no pawn of the German Reich. During his reign German caesaropapism turned into German papocaesarism, with dramatic and long-lasting consequences for the whole of Christendom…

As Bishop of Toul, Leo had come under the influence of a network of monasteries under the leadership of the great Burgundian abbey of Cluny, founded by Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine in 910. The Cluniac monasteries were not Eigenkirchen, but “stavropegial” foundations independent of the control of any feudal lord. As such, they had assumed the leadership of a powerful reform movement directed against the corruptions introduced into the Church by the feudal system, and had had considerable success in this respect.473

The Cluniacs, writes Jean Comby, “restored the main principles of the Benedictine Rule: the free election of the abbot, independence from princes

473 The founder of the movement, Abbot Odo of Cluny, had even been appointed archimandrite of Rome by Alberic with authority to reform all the monastic houses in the district (Llewellyn, op. cit. p. 309).
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.\footnote{Comby, op. cit., pp. 140-141.}

Pope Leo introduced the principles of the Cluniac movement into the government of the Church – but with results that went far beyond the original purposes of the movement, and which were finally to tear the whole of the West away from New Rome and the Byzantine commonwealth of nations.

"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 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.

“By contrast, in the Christian East, as in primitive Christianity, a wholly celibate priesthood never became the norm...”\footnote{Papadakis, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34, 36-37. Peter de Rosa (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 420) 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...”}

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 - with the exception of the element of clerical celibacy - a laudable and necessary programme. But the increasing distance it placed between the clergy and the 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 clerics who entered the service of the papacy at about this time, Cardinal 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 clerical lords – or rather, to just one clerical lord, the Pope. For, as Ranson and Mott write, “in many respects, in its structure the papacy is nothing other than the religious form of feudalism...”\footnote{Ranson and Motte, in Lampryllos, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.}
The Schism of 1054

The problem was that by the middle of the century Church and State were so deeply entangled with each other that nobody, on either side of the quarrel, 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. Thus 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 West, the papacy needed to secure its rear in the East, in the south of Italy. There an upstart, newly Christianized, 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. Since the German Emperor could not come south to help him, Leo now decided to try and forge an alliance with the Byzantines against the Normans, and sent Cardinal Humbert and two others (one was the future Pope Stefan IX) to Constantinople as his envoys.

This was always going to be a difficult mission, because there were tensions between Rome and Constantinople on ecclesiastical questions. In 1053, Patriarch Michael Cerularius had criticised certain liturgical practices of the Latins in a letter to Bishop John of Trania, and had asked the latter to convey his views to Pope Leo IX. In September of the same year the Pope replied: “In prejudging the 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’…”

“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 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 without stumbling. 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).’”

477 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 106.
But the most interesting part of Leo’s pretensions was his claim to have royal as well as priestly power. Thus he 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 romanæ et apostolicae sedis).’”

“Of much greater importance and interest in the given letter,” continues Lebedev, “are the very new papal ideas about his secular lordship, which are developed by the Pope in his letter to Cerularius and which 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 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 want 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 adored as our patricians and consuls are adored. 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 adored 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.”

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

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480 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 3-5.
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.” 481 This was hardly calculated to mollify the Byzantines, and things were made worse when Humbert called them pimps and disciples of Mohammed. As a consequence, they refused to enter into negotiations with the papal legates about an alliance against the Normans.

On July 16, 1054 the papal legates marched into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and placed a bull of excommunication on the altar, anathematizing the Church of Constantinople and accusing her of every possible heresy in a “fantastically ignorant” document. 482 Four days later, on July 20, Patriarch Michael convened a Council which excommunicated the legates— but for their bad behaviour rather than heresy. 483 “O you who are Orthodox,” said the Patriarch, “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, as he said a little later, “the Pope is a heretic.” 484

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. 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, 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...” 485

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. Many have doubted that this was the real cut-off point. Thus it has been point out that a Byzantine council of 1089 acted as if the schism of 1054 had not taken place. 486 Again, Dvorkin writes

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481 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 7.
482 Alexander Dvorkin, Ocherki po Istoriі Vselelnskoj Pravoslavnnoj 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 he could simply have been quoting from 1 Corinthians 16:22.
483 Dvorkin, op. cit.
486 Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
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.”

But the balance of evidence remains in favour of the traditional dating.

The momentous event of the Great Schism was heralded in the heavens. “Arab and Chinese astronomers recorded the appearance of the bright Crab Supernova in 1054. At X-ray and gamma-ray energies above 30 KeV, the Crab is generally the strongest persistent source in the sky today.”

The Fall of the English Autocracy

In 1059 Pope Nicholas sealed the political break with Constantinople when he entered into alliance at Melfi with the Normans. 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 recognise as her official guardian any other power than the Roman Emperor, from whom, according to the forged Donation of Constantine, 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 nation of Viking origin but French speech and culture that had recently seized a large swathe of German and Byzantine land in Southern Italy. The Pope legitimised this 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.”

489 Dr. Jerjis Alajaji, personal communication, March 22, 2010.
"Thus after 1059 the Norman conquests were made progressively to subserve the restoration of the Latin rite and the extension of papal jurisdiction in southern Italy." \(^{491}\) The losers here were both the German Emperor and the Emperor of New Rome. And in 1061 Guiscard’s younger brother Roger conquered Sicily from the Saracens, 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”. \(^{492}\)

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, whence the papal assault on that other fortress of old-style Orthodox Autocracy, England, would soon be launched. Thus in 1055, the year after Duke William of Normandy seized effective control of his dukedom by defeating a coalition led by his lord, King Henry I of France, 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” \(^{493}\) – 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. \(^{494}\) 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 single feudal fief under William 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

\(^{491}\) Douglas, op. cit., p. 155.
\(^{492}\) Holland, op. cit., p. 356.
English throne. So when he broke his oath and became king himself, William decided to invade – 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?

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. 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

495 The nearest parallels to Nicholas’ action are the following: (i) as early as 633 the Fourth Council of Toledo had condemned the Visigothic King Suinthila 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 Suinthila 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)
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 Godwinesson took the throne of England with the consent of the leading men of England but without the consent of the man to whom he had once sworn allegiance, Duke William of Normandy.

Professor 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 Godwinesson 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. 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.”

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 regularised 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

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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).
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 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 beleagured 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.

“Alexander’s fiat was a diplomatic triumph, too, as papal endorsement for the Normans made it difficult for other powers to intervene on Harold’s side. William also pre-empted one of the potential sources of support for the Anglo-Saxons by sending an embassy to the emperor Henry IV; this, too, was notably successful, removing a possible barrier to a Europe-wide call for volunteers in the ‘crusade’.”

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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 dead⁴⁹⁸, William’s suit presented Hildebrand with the opportunity for the “holy war” he had wanted for so long.

William and his 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, and then marched south to meet the Normans with the minimum of rest and without waiting for reinforcements. The reason for this, 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 must be fought 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."⁴⁹⁹

Hastings was the prelude for the greatest genocide in European history to that date. According to one source, every fifth Englishman was killed⁵⁰⁰, and even if this figure is an exaggeration, Domesday Book (1086) shows that some parts of the country were a wasteland 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 after him, most of the English bishops), and formally integrated conquered England into the new Roman Catholic empire of Western Europe.

The Norman Conquest was, in effect, the first crusade of the “reformed” Papacy against Orthodox Christendom. For, 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

⁴⁹⁸ He prophesied on his deathbed that England was under God’s curse and would soon be invaded by demons (Anonymous, Vita Aedwardi Regis (The Life of Edward the King), edited by Frank Barlow, Nelson’s Medieval Texts, 1962).
⁵⁰⁰ Fr. Andrew Phillips, Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church, English Orthodox Trust, 1996, p. 27.
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 results that still survive. The Norman Conquest of England may thus in one sense be regarded as but part of a far-flung endeavour..."501

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...”502 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 Godwineson 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.”503

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..."

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 papocaeasarist totalitarianism of Hildebrand beget the caesaropapist totalitarianism of William the Bastard...

The absolute nature of William's control of the Church was vividly expressed 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."504

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." In the same letter he pointedly called Archbishop Lanfranc "my vassal" (i.e. not the Pope's!). The Popes therefore had to wait until William's death before gradually asserting their personal control over the English Church... 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 Gregorian Revolution**

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 poor rebels, the so-called “Patarenes”, who rejected it and threatened married priests 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. The matter was complicated by the fact that Archbishop Guy had been invested by Emperor Henry III.

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. “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 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’.”

Sixty years before, Otto III had bombastically claimed that he had “ordained and created” the Pope. Now the wheel had come round full circle: it was the Pope who created the Emperor...

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505 Quoted in Douglas & Greenway, *English Historical Documents*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, p. 647.
506 Another complication was the fact that Milan was a see with very un-papist attitudes. This could be traced back to the fact that its most famous incumbent, St. Ambrose, 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.
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…”

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, 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

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508 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)
happened, papacy and empire, those twin pillars of Christendom, were at open loggerheads..."509

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.”

In April, 1073, Pope Alexander II died. “The people of Rome, rather than wait for the cardinals to nominate a successor, were soon taking the law into their own hands. They knew precisely whom they wanted as their new pope: ‘Hildebrand for bishop!’ Even as Alexander was being laid to rest in the Lateran, the cry went up across the whole city.”510 So a democratic revolution in the Church brought to power one of the greatest despots in history...

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

509 Holland, op. cit. p. 347.
510 Holland, op. cit. pp. 348-349.
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.”\(^{511}\)

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.”\(^{512}\)

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?”

\(^{511}\) De Rosa, op. cit., pp. 65, 66.  
\(^{512}\) Canning, op. cit., pp. 96, 97.
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?”

Hildebrand’s attitude to political power was almost Manichaean in its negative intensity. Manichaeism, a dualistic heresy that saw physical nature as evil, arose in Persia and had a most varied history after the execution of its founder, Mani, in 276. It spread west to the Roman Empire, where St. Augustine was a Manichaeen before he became a Christian. Towards the end of the first millennium it reappeared as the sect of the Paulicians in Asia Minor, then as the Bogomils in Bulgaria and Bosnia, then as the Cathars in southern France. It survived in southern China until the 16th century. Hildebrand’s attitude was Manichaein 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 Manicheeism 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”.

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

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513 Quoted in Canning, op. cit., pp. 91-93.
514 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 69.
515 Peter Damian, Letter 8, 2, P.L. 144, 436.
Caesar of the things that are Caesar’s – because he considered himself to be Caesar! In Gregory’s view rulers had no right to rule unless he gave them that right. The corollary of this was that the only rightful ruler was the Pope. For “if the holy apostolic see, through the princely power divinely conferred upon it, has jurisdiction over spiritual things, why not also over secular things?”

Thus to the secular rulers of Spain Gregory wrote in 1077 that the kingdom of Spain belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church “in rightful ownership”. And to the secular rulers of Sardinia he 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, make every possible effort to snatch the kingdom of France from his possession.”

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’s vassals, Duke William of Aquitaine, and invited him to threaten the king. The king backed down...

This power was demonstrated to a still greater extent in his famous dispute with Emperor Henry IV of Germany. It began, 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…”

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

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517 Holland, op.cit, p. 362.
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.’”

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 digniry as king without hope of recovery”.

In January, 1076, Henry convened a Synod of Bishops at Worms which addressed Gregory as “brother Hildebrand”, demonstrated that his despotism had introduced mob rule into the Church, and refused all obedience to him: “Since, as thou didst publicly proclaim, none of us has been to thee a bishop, so henceforth thou shalt be Pope to none of us”. 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.”

Gregory retaliated in a revolutionary way. In a Synod in Rome he declared the emperor deposed. Addressing St. Peter, he said: “I withdraw the whole kingdom of the Germans and of Italy from Henry the King, son of Henry the Emperor. For he has risen up against thy Church with unheard of arrogance. And I absolve all Christians from the bond of the oath which they have made to him or shall make. And I forbid anyone to serve him as King.”

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518 Holland, op. cit., p. 365.
520 Holland, op. cit., p. 368.
521 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 114.
By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory "effectively," as Robinson writes, "sanctioned rebellion against the royal power."\(^{522}\)

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."\(^{523}\) 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 – or State above all States. 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."\(^{524}\)

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."\(^{525}\)

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..."\(^{526}\)

\(^{522}\) Robinson, op. cit., p. 175.
\(^{523}\) Wenrich of Trier, Epistola Hilthebrando papae (1081).
\(^{524}\) F.M. Dostoevsky, The Diary of a Writer (August, 1880).
\(^{526}\) Robinson, op. cit., pp. 177, 178.
This was power politics under the guise of anti-politics; but it worked. 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 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”.527

For some years, Gregory hesitated to come down completely on the side of 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.”528

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. In 1084 Wibert was consecrated Pope Clement III and in turn crowned Henry as emperor. Gregory fled from Rome with his Norman allies and died in Salerno in 1085.529

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 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

527 Holland, op. cit., p. 376.
528 Quoted in Robinson, op. cit., p. 177.
529 Canning, op. cit., pp. 90, 91.
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 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…”

It can easily be seen how ideas like these could develop into a full-blown theory of popular sovereignty, and even into the theory of the social contract. Indeed, in the Investiture Contest we see in embryo the whole tragedy of the

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530 Canning, op. cit. pp. 104-105.
further revolutionary development of Western civilization.\textsuperscript{531} For it was here, 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…”\textsuperscript{532}

\textbf{The Crusades}

When Pope Gregory was lying on his death-bed, an exile in Salerno, he said: "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity," he said; "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 outside, 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 South and the East.

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 appealed to all Christians to free Jerusalem from the Saracens, and placed his own legate, a bishop, at the head of the Christian forces.

\textsuperscript{531} As the Russian poet F.I. Tiutchev wrote in 1849: “The revolution, which is nothing other than the apotheosis of that same human I having attained its fullest flowering, was not slow to 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 recognised 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…” (“Papstvo i Rimskij Vopros” (“The Papacy and the Roman Question”), in \textit{Politicheskie Slat'i (Political Articles)}, Paris: YMCA Press, 1976, pp. 57-58 (in Russian)).

\textsuperscript{532} Holland, \textit{op.cit.} p. xxii.
Urban saw the crusades as a “Christian” solution to problems thrown up by the new feudal, militarist 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:

“‘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.”

The first Crusade of 1098-99 was a watershed in relations between East and West. Although the proclaimed enemies of the Cross, the Muslims and Jews, were duly slaughtered en masse at the capture of Jerusalem, those who suffered most in the long-term were those who were supposed to be being liberated – the Orthodox Christians of the Orient. Latin kingdoms with Latin patriarchs were established over Orthodox populations in Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus and, most bloodily and shockingly, in Constantinople itself during the Fourth Crusade of 1204. In general, the thirteenth century represented a nadir for Orthodoxy and the zenith of Papism.

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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 (+1219), who once said of a Latin attempt to reconquer Jerusalem: “It is similar to the wolves coming to chase away the dogs...”

The Pope also encouraged crusades against the pagan Slavs and Balts of the Baltic Sea coast. As in the Mediterranean, these campaigns were marked by extreme militarism, an eye for commercial exploitation and anti-Orthodoxy. Thus Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg is described as having colonised 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.”

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.” Both the religion and the nation were destroyed... For, as Bernard stressed in his In Praise of the New Knighthood, “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.” Even the Orthodox Russians were considered to be in need of this militaristic kind of conversion. Thus Bishop Matthew of Crakow wrote to Bernard in 1150, asking him to “exterminate the godless rites and customs of the Ruthenians”.

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

537 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 65. Bernard preached the necessity of the second crusade, in which he expressed “bloodthirsty anti-Greek fulminations”, in Runciman’s phrase (op. cit., p. 100).
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 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...”

The crusades were rightly 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, - 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.

Paradoxically, the most successful of the crusades was that led by the German Emperor Frederick II. “He was ‘alone of all the Crusaders who 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...”

**The Apotheosis of Papism: Innocent III**

The climax of the Crusades 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 throne of Hagia Sophia.

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The pope at the time was Innocent III, probably the most powerful and imperialist pope in history. His imperialist claims had been obvious as early as 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.”

Nor did Innocent in private soften the force of these publicly proclaimed 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.” 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 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 was 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. In accordance with this teaching, Innocent intervened vigorously in the election of the German Holy Roman Emperors. Thus he 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”. But within a year he had excommunicated him...

Innocent was no less high-handed in his relations with the other monarchs of the West. Thus when King John of England disagreed with him over who should be archbishop of Canterbury, the pope, determined to break the king’s resistance, 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! 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 Ireland to the papacy, and the payment of an annual rent of a

542 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 67.
543 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 68.
544 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 instil 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
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”.\textsuperscript{545}

This enraged King Philip, however; for he was now ordered to abandon his preparations for war, in that he was not allowed to invade what was now, not English, but papal soil. Moreover, the abject surrender of John to the Pope, and the oath of fealty he made to him, aroused the fears of the English barons, whose demands led to the famous Magna Carta of 1215, which is commonly regarded as the beginning of modern western democracy. Thus the despotism of the Pope elicited the beginnings of parliamentary democracy….

Now Magna Carta was a limitation of royal, not papal power. Nevertheless, it affected the papacy, too, first because England was supposed to be a papal fief, but more importantly because it set a dangerous, revolutionary precedent which might be used against the Pope himself. And so Pope Innocent III “from the plenitude of his unlimited power” condemned the charter as “contrary to moral law”, “null and void of all validity for ever”, absolved the king from having to observe it and excommunicated “anyone who should continue to maintain such treasonable and iniquitous pretensions”. But Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury refused to publish this sentence. 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.”\textsuperscript{546} We shall return to this concept of natural law, which presented a challenge to the papacy’s claims of the greatest significance…

Innocent also intervened in France, when in 1209 he gave an expedition against the Cathar (Albigensian) 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 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 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…”\textsuperscript{547}

\textsuperscript{545} De Rosa, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{546} De Rosa, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{547} Ehrenreich, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 172.
This slaughter was legalised at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which declared it right and 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.”548

The theological justification for the extermination of heretics was given some years later by Thomas Aquinas: “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.”549

The Inquisition was officially founded by the Pope in 1233. The Dominicans were entrusted with the task of eradicating heresy, calling in the secular authorities if necessary.550 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.”551

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.”552 And yet

548 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 147. Compare this ferocity with the words 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” (in Comby, op. cit., p. 167).
551 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 164.
552 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 171.
Orthodox Spain before the schism in the eleventh century had already, according to Guizot, 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.”

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.”

The Fourth Lateran council, which assembled bishops and representatives of every power in Europe and the Mediterranean basin, represents the highwater mark of the papal despotism. For in it every decree of the Pope was passed without the slightest demurring or 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...” Five centuries later, the Roman Church was still preaching the same doctrine. Thus Cardinal Bellarmine, in his book De Romano Pontifice, wrote: “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.” Thus did the Roman Church consciously and completely openly declare that truth is not truth, or goodness goodness - if the Pope so decrees. Later, during the Reformation, the Pope would be replaced by the People as the ultimate arbiter of truth and goodness. Thus both Catholics and Protestants denied the only “pillar and ground of the truth”, which is “the Church of the living God” (I Timothy 3.15).

The Unia

The papacy tried to subdue the Orthodox East to itself not only by force, through the crusades, 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.

554 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 177.
555 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 73.
556 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 52.
However, these early negotiations came to an abrupt end after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. The Latins tried to impose their faith on the Greeks, but were in general repulsed with hatred. Even the Pope, Innocent III, recognised 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 retables from the altars, breaking them into pieces to divide among themselves, violating the sanctuaries and carrying off crosses and relics.”  

Spiros Vryonis writes: “A number of the Greek bishops… 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.”

The Pope was right that the Greeks would now hate the Latins. But he was wrong in thinking that for that reason they would not seek the union of the Churches. For as their empire grew weaker and smaller, and then went into exile in Nicaea after 1204, the Greeks’ attachment to it grew, until they were ready to trade the purity of the faith for the continuance of the empire. Thus the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I Lascaris unsuccessfully attempted to convene a Council of the Orthodox 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.

“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.”

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 venerated 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 unia 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.\textsuperscript{560}

However, there were ominous signs. Although, while still regent, he had flattered the hierarchs, said 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\textsuperscript{561}, - on ascending the throne, he changed course in a caesaropapist direction... Even from an external point of view, he was closer to the luxuriously of the caesaropapist Angeli rather than the modesty of the more Orthodox Lascari: "Palaeologus openly set out on the old path of the Comneni and Angeli. Not only was the capital returned, but the old order, the demands and expenses of the antiquated world order that had lived out its time, was also re-established..."\textsuperscript{562}

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 [Lascaris], 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..."\textsuperscript{563}

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

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\textsuperscript{561} Uspensky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 486.
\textsuperscript{562} Uspensky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 494.
\end{flushright}
making an attempt on the emperor’s life. In vain did the emperor embrace the knees of the patriarch: Arsenius pushed him away and went off to his cell. Then the emperor began to complain: ‘The patriarch is ordering me to abandon State affairs, not to collect taxes, and not to execute justice. That is how this spiritual doctor heals me! It is time to seek mercy from the pope’. The emperor began to seek an occasion to overthrow Arsenius, but the patriarch’s life was irreproachable. The emperor gathered several hierarchs in Thessalonica and summoned Arsenius to a trial, but he did not come. The obsequious hierarchs tried to demonstrate that the disjunction of the ‘soul of the State’ from the Church was a disease that threatened order… Palaeologus decided to get rid of Arsenius whatever the cost. Having gathered the hierarchs, he laid out to them all the steps he had taken to be reconciled with the patriarch. ‘It seems that because of my deed he wants me to abandon the throne. But to whom am I to give the kingdom? What will be the consequences for the empire? What if another person turns out to be incapable of such a great service? Who can guarantee that I will live peacefully, and what will become of my family? What people ever saw the like, and has it ever happened amongst us that a hierarch should do such things without being punished? Doesn’t he understand that for one who has tasted of the blessedness of royal power it is impossible to part with it except together with his life? Repentance is decreed by the Church, and does it not exist for emperors? If I don’t find it from you, I will turn to other Churches and receive healing from them. You decide.’”

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.”

Meanwhile, the Emperor was trying to achieve 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

564 Uspensky, op. cit., pp. 510, 511.
565 Dagron, Empereur et Prêtre (Emperor and Priest), Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 262
needed the help of the Pope against his western enemies, especially Charles of
Anjou – which help could be bought only at the price of a unia.

Both the people and the Church were against the idea. They were not
prepared to place the nation above the faith, and began to turn against the
Emperor. Even “the emperor’s spiritual father Joseph went over to the
opposition, counting on ascending the patriarchal throne. He began to advise
the emperor that Germanus was not able to absolve him from the curse
placed on him by Arsenius, and the emperor sent Joseph to Germanus to
persuade him to leave voluntarily. When Germanus was convinced that this
advice came from the emperor, he departed for the Mangana monastery…

“Joseph achieved his aim and occupied the patriarchal throne for seven
years (1267-74)... The removal of the curses from the emperor – his first task –
was carried out with exceptional triumphalism. In the presence of the Synod
and the court the emperor crawled on his knees, confessing his sin, the
blinding of Lascaris. The patriarch and hierarchs one by one read out an act
of absolution of the emperor from the excommunication laid upon him…”

“But the Emperor’s humiliation did not satisfy Arsenius’s adherents. The
ascetic element in the Church, based mainly the monasteries, always
suspicious of the court and the upper hierarchy, believing them to be sinfully
luxurious and overinterested 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 tired 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…”

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.” 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

566 Uspensky, op. cit., p. 513.
567 Runciman, op. cit., p. 69.
568 Papadakis, The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s
been reconciled too easily with the Arsenites and broke communion with the official Church for a period.\textsuperscript{569}

Restored to communion with the Church, and with the anti-uniate 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…”\textsuperscript{570}

The unia was signed at Lyons in 1274 by a delegation led by the ex-Patriarch Germanus. The emperor conceded all the dogmatic points (the Filioque, unleavened bread, the pope’s supreme authority) without argument and promised to help the pope in his next crusade. In exchange the pope promised to stop his enemies, especially Charles of Anjou, from invading the Greek lands. However, the compromise proved to be unnecessary. In 1282 a successful rebellion by the Sicilians against Charles (without the help of the new pope, who backed Charles) removed the threat of invasion.

Many of the opponents of the unia were now imprisoned. One of these was the future patriarch John Beccus, who was released after being persuaded of the rightness of the uniate cause by the emperor. But the Church as a whole offered strong resistance. “Two parties were formed,” writes Fr. Ambroise Frontier: “the Politicals or Opportunists, who strangely resemble the Ecumenists of today, and the Zealots, who were especially strong in Thessaloniki.\textsuperscript{571} 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


\textsuperscript{570} Dagron, op. cit., p. 263.

\textsuperscript{571} “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.)
Zographou, who chastized the Emperor Michael Palaeologus, the latinizer and his Patriarch Beccus, and died, through burning in the tower of their monastery. Yes, 26 monks died, burned in the tower of their monastery, others were drowned in the sea in front of Vatopedi and Iviron. At Karyes, the capital of Mount Athos, both laity and monks were beheaded. These Martyrs assured the victory of Orthodoxy by their sacrifice and with their blood washed away the shame of the treason of Lyons.

“To please the new Pope, Nicholas III, the servile Emperor ordered Isaac of Ephesus to accompany the papal legates through the prisons of Constantinople to show him the imprisoned Orthodox. Some had been tortured, others had their hands and feet cut off, others their eyes punctured and others their tongues ripped out. It is a fact: Christ is not discussed, He is confessed…

An anti-uniate council was in Thessaly, which anathematized the pope, the emperor and his uniate 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.”

“On December 11, 1282, Michael died, hated by his people. His wife, Empress Theodora and his son and successor Andronicus II Palaeologus refused to give him burial and Church honors. Andronicus II officially denounced the union and restored Orthodoxy. He sent edicts to all parts of the Empire proclaiming an amnesty for all those who had been exiled or imprisoned because of their zeal for the Church.

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572 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 (see his Life in Living Orthodoxy, vol. XII, № 4, July-August, 1990, p. 15). (V.M.)

573 Monk Kallistos Vlastos, Dokimion istorikon peri tou skhismatos tis dutikis ekklesias apo tis Orthodoxou Anatolikis (Historical Treatise on the schism of the western church from the Orthodox East), Mount Athos, 1991, p. 109 (in Greek).

574 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 presume to commemorate the soul of my lord and spouse in any way.” (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, The Prologue from Ochrid, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part 4, p. 59) (V.M.)
“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.’”\(^{575}\)

In the 1330s another, more original attempt to attain the unia with Rome was made: the Italian Greek monk Barlaam was sent by the emperor to Avignon, where he argued for the unia on the basis of agnosticism: the truths of the Faith cannot be proved, he said, so we might as well take both positions, the Greek and the Latin, as private opinions! Pope Benedict was no more inclined than the Byzantine Church to accept such agnosticism, so the attempt failed.

But the more important effect of Barlaam’s philosophizing, in this as in other areas of theology and asceticism, was to elicit a series of Councils between 1341 and 1351, in which the Byzantine Church, led by St. Gregory Palamas, the future Archbishop of Thessalonica, was able to define her teaching in relation to the new currents of thought emanating from the West. In particular, they anathematized the teaching that the grace of God is created. Apart from their dogmatic significance, these Palamite Councils presented an image that was infinitely precious: that of Orthodox bishops convened by a right-believing emperor to define essential truths of the faith and thereby preserve the heritage of Orthodoxy for future generations and other nations...

The Papacy was defeated for the time being. But as the situation of the Orthodox Empire continued to deteriorate in the face of the Turkish onslaught, the temptation to barter their spiritual freedom for political freedom would resurface for the Byzantines...

**Natural Law**

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 heretical papist world-view. This was the idea that *everyone* – even the pope and the emperor – is subject to the law. (As we have seen, Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury used this idea to defend *Magna Carta*.) Thus the *Digest* declared that “law is... something which *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

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575 Frontier, *op.cit*, pp. 11-12.
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’.\(^{576}\)

But what kind of law was meant? There was scope for confusion and contradiction here. For it was another principle of Roman-Byzantine law, as we have seen, 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, freed from the provisions of 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*.

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 practised 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. 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 *potestas 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 Aristotel], but the elevation of man

\(^{576}\) Quoted in R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
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.”

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.” 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.” 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 perversion of the law.”

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…

578 Copleston, op. cit., p. 129.
“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’ 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.”

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 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.”  

“The ruler possesses his sovereignty,” continues Copleston, “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.”

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. 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.’”

The revolutionary potential of this doctrine is obvious; and, having made every possible 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 could 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

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582 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 138-139.
583 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 139-140.
584 Canning, op. cit., p. 131.
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, however, 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.” 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, but thereby undermines 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

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of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On the one hand, he upheld the
document 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”. On the other hand, his 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. And yet there is little place in
his system for a 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
only turn to the equally barren and destructive extreme of democracy – rule by
everyman rather than by one.

The Crisis of Medieval Authority: Boniface VIII

The beginning of the fourteenth century witnessed simultaneously the
peak of the papacy’s megalomania and the definitive exposure of its
weakness. Pope Boniface VIII, writes Fr. Seraphim Rose, “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.”

In his struggle against the kings, Boniface VIII made special use of the two
swords metaphor, the last great metaphor of papal power, which had
originally been developed in an anti-papal spirit by Gottschalk of Aachen, a
chaplain of the Emperor Henry IV. Hildebrand, he claimed, “without God’s
knowledge usurped the regnum and sacerdotium for himself. In so doing he
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

586 Canning, op. cit., pp. 132, 133.
587 Aquinas, On Kingship, VII.61.
588 Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr.
the royal would be employed for expelling the enemies of Christ without, and for enforcing obedience to the sacerdotium within.”

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)... Indeed, Prince Roman Mstislavovich 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”.

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.”

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.”

Boniface was in a power struggle with King Philip the Fair of France. And so Unam Sanctam was followed in 1303 by his appointing Albert of Hapsburg

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589 Quoted in Canning, op. cit., p. 99.
592 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 79.
as Holy Roman Emperor with authority over all rulers, including Philip.593  
But an aide of the King of France noted: “The Pope’s sword is merely made of  
words; my master’s is of steel…”594

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…”595 For now the  
papacy came under the domination of the French596, 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 did 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.

Meanwhile, the Hundred Years war was devastating France and England,  
and the Black Death carried away a third to a half of the continent’s  
population. It was a time of black pessimism, apocalyptic speculation and  
reflection on where the West had gone wrong. And of repentance, too: but the  
papacy had undermined the very concept of repentance by its abuses, and the  
spiritual opportunity was lost…

Proto-Protestantism: Marsilius and Wycliff

It is at this point, early in the fourteenth century, that the first serious  
 attempts to work out a non-papist and even anti-papist theology of politics  
were made. The first such attempt was made by Marsilius of Padua. Marsilius  
had worked for Emperor Louis IV and was an eyewitness of his struggle for  
power with Pope John XXII. This impressed upon him the terribly damaging  
effects of competing jurisdictions, and 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.

“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

593 Richard Cavendish, “Boniface VIII’s Bull Unam Sanctam”, History Today, vol. 52 (11),  
594 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 79.
595 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.
596 This was most clearly evident 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.
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.”597

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
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.”598

597 Marsilius of Padua, Defensor Pacis, 1324; in Comby, op. cit., p. 174.
598 Canning, op. cit., pp. 154, 155.
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 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.”

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.” 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

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599 McClelland, op. cit., pp. 141-142.
600 Canning, op. cit., p. 156.
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.” Nevertheless, the democratic and revolutionary potential of his ideas is self-evident...

Paradoxically, while Marsilius was undermining papal authority in a democratic and secularist direction, the pope contemporary with him, John XXII, was – albeit unwittingly – returning the concept of the papacy to its Orthodox origins. When John XXII tried to overthrow a ruling of an earlier pope on the Franciscan order, 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 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…”

Later in the century, the Englishman John Wycliff returned to Marsilius’ theme of the power of secular rulers against the Church, and came to similar conclusions. Thus in his Tractatus de Officio Regis, Wycliff argued that God favoured kingship, since three kings had visited the manger at Bethlehem. The king should be honoured as the vicar of God, and should be honoured even if he was bad. He should study theology and suppress heresy. He should have full jurisdiction over the clergy of his realm. If the Pope tried to diminish his authority, he should be denounced as the antiChrist...

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601 McClelland, op. cit., p. 145.
602 Kirwan, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
“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’. In his opposition to papal interference in English affairs he represented the feelings of his people; but his attempts to establish a secular authority met with popular opposition, and in 1399 he was deposed and his cousin, the usurper Bolingbroke, ascended the throne in his stead. But when Parliament recognised 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’.”

And yet “right given by conquest” is a lesser, and less Divine right than “right given by the anointing of the Church”, that right which Shakespeare described, putting the words into the mouth of Richard II (Richard II, 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.

Two Proto-Democratic Revolutions

The problem for kings was: in opposing (with justification) the overweening power of the heretical papacy, they deprived themselves of ecclesiastical sanction in the eyes of the people, who were therefore more likely to rebel against the king themselves. This is precisely what happened in the most important event of Richard’s reign, the peasant uprising of 1381, which has a good claim to be called the first revolution in European history in which the characteristic ideas of the later democratic and socialist revolutions can already be seen. (The revolution of the zealots in Thessalonica a few decades earlier is another claimant; but it lacked the ideological element present in the English uprising.) The English peasant revolt illustrated the important principle that in the heretical society of the West, the decline in the

603 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.)

authority of the papacy and the rise in the authority of the secular rulers did
not necessarily lead to the resurrection of the idea of the “symphony of
power” characteristic of the earlier, pre-schism age, but rather led to further
rebellions, further assertions of “rights”, on the part of lower classes of society.

The radical author 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 –

When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?”

These words were spoken by “the crazy priest”, as Froissart calls him, John
Ball in his address to the rebels at Blackheath in June, 1381. The continuation
of his speech is worth quoting as perhaps the first clear expression of the
social revolution in European history: “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 brought in among you.”

At his first meeting with the rebels the young king agreed to abolish serfdom 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, the revolution was stopped in its tracks in a remarkable way that is worth recounting in detail...

“Richard,” writes Simon Schama, “must have felt that there was a chance he might not survive, but he agreed nonetheless to a second face-to-face meeting at Smithfield on the Saturday morning [June 15]. Before he left, 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 [and who had had similar challenges to his royal authority]. 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 the 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 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

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major 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…”  

The mystique of the anointed king had saved the day. But it had been a close call, and protests continued...

In Bohemia another revolution broke out under the leadership of Jan Hus, a follower of John Wycliff. Like Wycliff, he was not a social revolutionary so much as a proto-Protestant. A particular target of his wrath was the Pope’s issuing of “indulgences” – the same issue that would launch Luther’s Reformation. He was excommunicated and burned at the Council of Constance in 1415. However, the Czech Hussite rebellion continued, and was put down only with the greatest difficulty and after much bloodshed.

The more radical Hussites were called Taborites. They claimed that for true Christians their ruler could only be 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.

T.L. Frazier writes: “The Taborites 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.’”

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 secularized thought in general. Certainly, there is a red thread of millenarian, utopian 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 revolution in the twentieth-century, not to speak of our own, twenty-first century rebellion against all the foundations of Christian society.

The Conciliar Movement

In 1378 there began the Great Schism in the papacy, with one Pope in Rome and another at Avignon. This conflict between popes, added to that between the popes and emperors, led people to new ways of restoring unity. Thus began the conciliarist movement, which superficially appeared to have much in common with Orthodox ideas on the importance of Councils, but which in fact had more in common with the ideas of Marsilius and William of Ockham than with the Ecumenical 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 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.”\textsuperscript{610} 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.”\textsuperscript{611}

As regards the Church, the Conciliarists considered it to be “composed of the community of the faithful (\textit{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.”\textsuperscript{612}

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


\textsuperscript{611} Thompson, J.W., Johnson, E.N., \textit{An Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1500}, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 966.

\textsuperscript{612} Thomson & Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 967.
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 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…“

Even some cardinals sympathised 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, Scotlan d and Castile continued to recognise Urban, while England, Flanders, most of the Italian states and Emperor Wenceslaus recognised Clement. Eventually, at the council of Constance, a single Pope was agreed on; and by the decrees Sacrosancta (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 Sacrosancta or Haec sancta synodus decree deserves to be quoted at length because of its revolutionary implications: “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.”

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…

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613 Thomson & Johnson, op. cit., pp. 976-977.
614 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 149; Papadakis, op. cit., p. 375. As Nicholas of Cusa summed it up a few years later: “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.” (De concordantia catholica (1433)).
“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 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…”

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. (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 ‘hierarch’. 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, possess ‘the power of the keys’ conferred by Christ to Peter.”616

Nevertheless, 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 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 the whole 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 civilisation – Byzantium. This had been the insight of John Wyclif as early as 1383: “The pride of the Pope 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 Greek and the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 617

Moreover, it was at this time that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel visited the West, and made a considerable impression (but without receiving any help). Tragically, however, at precisely the time that the West was, for the first time in many, looking to the East for spiritual support, the East was looking to the West for military support – and so was seeking unity with the Pope rather than with his conciliarist opponents. And so the invitation to attend the Council of Basle (1431-1438) that was offered to the Greeks 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

616 Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 103.
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, a pope should think not of this world’s treasures but only of those of the world to come.”

Pope Eugene IV rejected the Council’s demand that he attend it. Instead, he convened another council at Ferrara, which was joined by the Greeks and the more pro-papal delegates from Basle. It was at this council (already a “robber” council by western rules) 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. 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 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.”

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.”

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 me, imbued with the spirit of rebellion, presume to appeal to a future council from the Roman

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618 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100.
619 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.” (De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100).
621 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 404.
Pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ... We condemn appeals of this kind as erroneous and detestable.”

Thus the position at the end of the Middle Ages 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 had taken its toll; 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...

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CONCLUSION: AUTOCRACY, ABSOLUTISM AND DEMOCRATISM

_We have no king, because we feared not the Lord._
_Hosea 10.3._

The people of God can be ruled only by God, or by a man directly appointed by God. Rule by God alone is _Theocracy_. Rule by a man appointed by God is sometimes also called Theocracy, but it is more appropriately called, in Lev Tikhomirov’s phrase, “delegated Theocracy”, or _Autocracy_…

A true autocrat is a man who is appointed to rule by God and who strives to rule in obedience to the Church and the commandments of God. Under these conditions God blesses one-man rule unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions. It is God Himself Who places true autocrats on their thrones. For "He sends kings upon thrones, and girds their loins with a girdle" (Job 12.18); "He appoints kings and removes them" (Daniel 2.21); "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).

Contrary to the generally held view, Autocracy is not a form of absolutism. 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.” The true Autocrat is unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions, but he is bound to fulfil the Law of God, and is an obedient son of God’s Kingdom on earth, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The questions arise: What if there is no autocrat appointed by God? What is the nature of absolutist or democratic regimes? Is it permissible to obey a ruler who does not worship the God of Israel?

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623 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, St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 446-447 (in Russian).

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 in the case of 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. 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).

However, the word “authority” here does not apply to rulers who compel the people of God to worship false gods. If they do, 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 he must be resisted, as when the Prophet Elijah rebelled against Ahab and Jezabel, and 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’” – that is, the Autocracy.

The autocrat is distinguished from the absolutist despot, first, in that, 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.

625 Josephus Flavius, Jewish Antiquities, 18, 23; St. Hippolytus of Rome, Philosophoumen, 18-28.
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 Hasmonian combination of the roles of king and high-priest that finally ushered in the end of the Israelite autocracy.

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The autocrat can sin in either of two directions: by becoming a despot on the pagan model, or by becoming a democrat on the Classical Greek model. For, on the one hand, autocratic power is not arbitrary, but subject to a higher power, that of God – as Metropolitan Philaret puts it, the king “freely limits his unlimited autocracy by the will of the Heavenly King”. And on the other, it neither derives from the people nor can it be abolished by the people.

In the period of the Byzantine Autocracy, from St. Constantine the Great to Constantine XI, the main temptation was the temptation to absolutism. This absolutism took two forms: “caesaropapism” in the East and “papacaeasrism” in the West. “Caesaropapism” signifies the intrusion of State power into the realm of the Church, and “papacaeasrism” – the intrusion of the Church power into the realm of the State, by the transformation of the Church’s first-hierarch 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 Monothelitite 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 Orthodox 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 more subtle form under the later Palaeologi in the fifteenth century, Byzantium was doomed.
The final Fall of Constantinople in 1453 may be said to have been 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 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. Thus the sentence of the King of kings was inevitable: “My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh” (Genesis 6.3).

It is time to define more precisely the religio-political heresy of absolutism, which, as we have seen, destroyed the flesh of New Rome in the East, and both the flesh and the spirit of New 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.”

“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, for the absolutist ruler, 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 transferred to him from the people according to the lex de imperio.

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 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.

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 a process of debunking or desacralising kingship: since the authority of the absolutist 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).

627 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 92 (in Russian).
We have seen how both courses were adopted in medieval western history: the first in the struggle between the popes and the “Holy Roman Emperors” for absolute power, and the second in the emergence of the doctrines of natural law, conciliarism and democratism. The second course would appear to be radically different from the first 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.”628

And so absolutism is characteristic of democracy insofar as the *demos* is an absolute power, free from the restraint of any power, 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, or in one election, 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 believe in, let alone 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...

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.”629

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In many ways the collective absolutism of democracy is a more absolute and destructive absolutism than the personal absolutisms of popes and emperors. In the period that we have studied in this book, although many absolutist rulers appeared in both East and West, fundamental changes in society were slow to appear (in the East they did not appear at all). 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 they were prepared to die - or at least, rise up in rebellion. 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 would certainly 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, and the frequent opportunity to remove the ruler at the ballot-box, preclude the possibility of absolutism. However, the close kinship between democracy and absolutism reveals itself in the persistent tendency of democracy, as Plato noted, to pave the way for absolutism. 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; and the democracy of the German Weimar Government - for Hitler.

Thus 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.”

Nor does the return of democracy mean a rejection of all such absolutisms. Thus a statue of Cromwell still stands outside the English Houses of Parliament; Napoleon is still glorified in the modern French republic; and Lenin’s body still graces Red Square in the modern Russian Federation. For

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630 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskai Gosudarstvenost’, p. 92.
these dictators, for all their cruelty and absolutism, were nevertheless in tune with, and carried out the will of, the iconoclastic spirit of democracy, its exaltation of the will of man – any man – over the will of God…

Europe today is dominated by two absolutist democracies: the European Union and the Russian Federation. The European Union is the heir, spiritually and geographically, of Charlemagne’s empire. It pretends to be a democracy, and is in fact made up of genuine democracies. But the democratic element is swallowed up by an unelected Commission that gives directives to all the member-states in a socialist and atheist spirit. The Russian Federation, the heir of the anti-theist Soviet Union, while appearing to have adopted a more Christian form, is returning to the absolutism of Soviet times, only in a less crude form, with a democratic façade and a nationalist ideology. Neither of these states can be the symphonic partner of the truly Orthodox Church. Both of them, separately or in union with each other, could wipe True Orthodoxy finally off its historic heartland, the European continent.

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The restoration of Romaniy, whose central unifying element is the Orthodox Christian autocracy confessing the truly Orthodox Faith, is the most pressing need of our time. Not only the New Rome of Constantinople, but also the Third Rome of Russia, has been destroyed; and, deprived of “him who restrains”, the Orthodox Christian Emperor, the world has been plunged into a state of religious, moral, social and political anarchy on a scale unseen in human history. To the fallen human mind there seems to be no hope, no possibility that the apostasy can be checked, let alone reversed. But “love hopeth all things” (1 Corinthians 13.7), and in love and hope we have attempted, in this book, to present again that vision of Christian Statehood without which the people will perish (Proverbs 29.18).

It was at a similar moment of blackness and despair that the Roman army in York raised on their shields the Emperor Constantine, who proceeded to drive out the tyrant persecutors, and exalt true Christian piety throughout the civilised world. Let us pray to Almighty God, for Whom all things are possible, that He will raise up a New Constantine in our fallen land, that we may sing: “Ye faithful Christian kings, forechosen by divine decree, rejoice. Receiving from God the Precious Cross, make this victorious weapon your glory, for by it the tribes of the enemy that rashly seek battle are scattered unto all ages…”

631 Festal Menaion, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Eight, troparion.

631 Festal Menaion, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Eight, troparion.