

ORTHODOXY
AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

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PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS

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POLITICAL THEOLOGY



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

ORTHODOXY AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY
Doxa & Praxis series

Translated from the Greek by FR GREGORY EDWARDS

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*To His All-Holiness
The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,
For the Anniversary of His 50 Years of Ministry
And 20 Years of Patriarchal Diakonia,
For His Fervent Ecumenical Commitment,
And His Actions and Public Addresses
On Behalf of the Environment,
Social Justice, and Religious Tolerance*

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PREFACE

One of the main features of Eastern Orthodox theology and liturgical experience is its vision of the catholic/holistic transformation and salvation of the whole creation, of the cosmos and humankind, and therefore the transformation of history, which has been assumed in the deified flesh of the Son and Word of God. Just as Christ assumed the whole human person and the entirety of human nature, so should the church seek to assume –and then to transform and save– the whole human (body and soul, spirit and matter), as well as every aspect of his or her life (including the political, social, and economic aspects of this life, not just the spiritual or religious).

But this is not always the case when we come to the Orthodox Church, which, primarily for historical reasons, could not provide an adequate public witness of its eucharistic and eschatological self-consciousness, of its experience of the active expectation of the reign of God, and of the implications this expectation has for the “political” realm, viz. the Gospel commandments for social justice and solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the victims of history.

The aim of this book, therefore, is to study the relationship between Orthodoxy and political theology. Taking as its starting point the invention of “political theology” by the German conservative philosopher of law Carl Schmitt, followed by the leftist turn in political theology initiated by theologians such as Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, Dorothee Sölle, and Latin American liberation theology, this work proposes to examine the reasons for which Orthodoxy –with few exceptions– has not developed a “political theology,” in the liberating and radical sense

of the term. It looks also to understand why prominent Orthodox theologians have underestimated, or even misunderstood, the meaning and content of political theology, or why the idea of the “theological or Christian left” has not developed in the Orthodox milieu, as it has in many countries of Western Europe and America. This book then tries to gather the elements and premises of an Orthodox approach to political and liberation theology, based mainly on the eschatological understanding of the church and its eucharistic constitution, on the biblical texts and the patristic tradition, and on the works and major contributions of contemporary Eastern Orthodox theologians, especially those of the Diaspora.

The two main parts of the present book were initially published separately, but constitute a continuum of thought which has been reviewed and edited in order to suit the present work. The first text (“Orthodoxy and Political Theology”¹) was originally presented in the framework of an international graduate student seminar entitled: “Biblical Liberation Theology, Patristic Theology, and the Ambivalences of Modernity.” This seminar was co-organized by the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, the Faculty of Theology of Heidelberg University, and the School of Theology of Thessaloniki University, and was hosted by the Volos Academy for Theological Studies in Volos, Greece, on May 28-30, 2009. A collective volume resulted from this seminar, and has been published in Greek by “Indiktos Publications” in Athens, in 2012. My text appears here for the first time in English, translated with solicitude and thoughtfulness by Fr Gregory Edwards. The second text of the present book (“Eschatology and Politics”), also initially

1. Sections of this text were initially translated by Dr Haralambos Ventis.

appeared in Greek, as my personal contribution to the Festschrift volume dedicated to Elder Aimilianos of Simonos Petras (on Mount Athos).² It appears here for the first time in English in this fine translation prepared by Fr Gregory Edwards.

Before closing this Preface, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the many people who helped me develop and prepare this book, particularly Fr Gregory Edwards, Dr Ulrich Duchrow, Dr Petros Vassiliadis, Dr Stelios Tsompanidis, Dr Norman Russell, Dr Daniel Ayuch, Dr Aristotle Papanikolaou, Dr Haralambos Ventis, Matthew Baker, MTh, and Nikos Asproulis, MTh. Special thanks are due to my Lebanese friend Amal Dibo, from the American University of Beirut, for her warm hospitality in Beirut during the Bright Week of Easter of 2012, when this book was finished.

I dedicate this book to His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for his fervent ecumenical commitment, and his active engagement on behalf of the environment, social justice, and religious tolerance. It is our very humble attempt to recognize what he has done over many years for the witness and presence of Orthodoxy in the changing contemporary world.

Volos-Beirut, Easter 2012
PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS

2. PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS, “Eschatology and Politics,” in: *Synaxis Efcharistias, Festschrift volume for Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra*, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2003, pp. 483-527 [in Greek].

PART I
ORTHODOXY AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

CHAPTER 1
THE THEOLOGY OF POLITICS

Although political theology seems to be the chief means by which Christians understand their role in the larger world, it has not always had an illustrious history. To my knowledge, the term “political theology” was first used in Carl Schmitt’s work of the same title, which was published in 1922. This is not to imply that elements of political theology are absent in the preceding scholarship, or that traces or examples of political theology cannot be discerned throughout the history of the church, earlier as well as more recent. In his small but now classic book *Political Theology*,¹ the conservative Roman Catholic German philosopher of law, Carl Schmitt, who adhered to National Socialism and whom Jacob Taubes called the “apocalyptician of counterrevolution,”² held that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts.” And this “not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these

1. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. by George Schwab, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985 (1st German edition 1922, 2nd 1934); Greek translation with notes and postface: Panayiotis Kondylis, Athens: Leviathan Publications, 1994.

2. JACOB TAUBES, *The Political Theology of Paul*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann, in conjunction with Horst Folkers, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, and Christoph Schulte, transl. by Dana Hollander, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 69.

concepts.” For example, when referring to “emergencies” (that is to a deviation or aberration, as Schmitt would have it, from institutional normalcy), he maintains that “the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology.”³ Hence, Schmitt consistently upholds a structural analogy between the fundamental concepts of a state based on law, on the one hand, and theology as well as metaphysics, on the other.

This leads Schmitt to insist rather doggedly on accord between the social structure of any particular era and its metaphysical worldview. In his own words, “the idea of the modern constitutional state triumphed together with deism,⁴ a theology and metaphysics that banished the miracle from the world. This theology and metaphysics rejected not only the transgression of the laws of nature through an exception brought about by direct intervention, as is found in the idea of a miracle, but also the sovereign’s direct intervention in a valid legal order.” According to Schmitt, “the rationalism of the Enlightenment rejected the exception in every form. Conservative authors of the [French] counter-revolution who were theists could thus attempt to support the personal sovereignty of the monarch ideologically, with the aid of analogies from a theistic theology.”⁵

3. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, English translation, p. 36.

4. According to the idea of deism, God, having created the world and then instituted natural determinism, no longer intervenes in its function. Theism, on the contrary, assumes this kind of intervention. See PANAYIOTIS KONDYLIS’ notes in his Greek translation of Carl Schmitt’s, *Political Theology*, p. 117, note 51.

5. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, English translation, pp. 36-37. Cf. GIORGIO AGAMBEN’S critical remarks in his essay: *Stato di eccezione*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri Editore, 2003.

Carl Schmitt, in fact, goes so far as to argue that “in the theory of the state of the seventeenth century, the monarch is identified with God and has in the state a position exactly analogous to that attributed to God in the Cartesian system of the world. According to [Frederic] Atger, “The prince develops all the inherent characteristics of the state by a sort of continual creation. The prince is the Cartesian god transposed to the political world”⁶ In line with this perspective, Schmitt gladly extends René Descartes’s syllogism, according to which “the works created by several masters are not as perfect as those created by one. ‘One sole architect’ must construct a house and a town; the best constitutions are those that are the work of a sole wise legislator, they are ‘devised by only one’; and finally, a sole God governs the world.” Thus, for obvious reasons, which are connected to his opposition toward parliamentary democracy and the spirit of dialogue, Schmitt rushes to adopt Descartes’s position, which says that “It is God who established these laws in nature just as a king establishes laws in his kingdom.”⁷ Schmitt, moreover, does not fail to pinpoint the contradiction between the tendency – already established in the 19th century – for dialogical participation and other similar democratic institutions on the one hand (which he is quick to attribute to a theology of immanence, while deliberately skipping any references to Trinitarian theology and its vision of interpenetration), and the 17th-18th century understanding of God, on the other hand, which upholds “his transcendence vis-à-vis the world,”⁸ just as to that period’s philosophy of state belongs the

6. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

7. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, p. 47.

8. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, p. 50.

notion of the transcendence of the sovereign vis-à-vis the state. As Schmitt famously wrote at the beginning of *Political Theology*, “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”⁹

Among the multitude of concepts that built up and lent support to Schmitt’s theory, such as sovereignty, decision, exception, state of emergency, ruler, sovereign, sovereign dictatorship, prescribed dictatorship, friend-foe, etc., a key concept which directly concerns us here is that of Representation, which is intimately related to the theory of the ruler and the concept of “decision.” According to Schmitt, because God is no longer visible, he has resolved to transfer, permanently and completely, the supreme authority for decision-making on all worldly and spiritual affairs to his human representative on earth. This idea, which is so central to Schmitt’s work, renders even more obvious his affinity for

9. CARL SCHMITT, *Political Theology*, p. 5. On all these issues, see also the following works of Carl Schmitt: *The Concept of the Political*, transl. by George Schwab, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007; *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, transl. by G. L. Ulmen, New York: Telos Press, 2007; *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, transl. by George Schwab, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008; *Political Romanticism*, transl. by Guy Oakes, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986; *La dictature*, traduit de l’allemand par M. Köller et D. Séglard, Paris: Seuil, 2000; *La valeur de l’état et la signification de l’individu*, traduction et notes par Sandrine Baume, Genève : Librairie Droz, 2000; *State, Movement, People: The Triadic Structure of the Political Unity*, transl. Simona Draghici, Corvallis: Plutarch Press, 2001; *Constitutional Theory*, transl. by Jeffrey Seitzer, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008; *Legality and Legitimacy*, transl. by Jeffrey Seitzer, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004; *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, transl. by Ellen Kennedy, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

monarchical/authoritarian regimes, and for a kind of “theology of empire” or a theological justification of monarchy similar to what was first worked out by Eusebius of Caesarea, as we shall see below. It is noteworthy that Schmitt remained fundamentally anti-Trinitarian and exclusively monarchical in his theology, because he considered the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity to be both problematic and threatening for the status quo. This is because, notwithstanding its parallel commitment to safeguarding the unity of God, the concept of the Trinity introduces difference and dialogue among the three divine persons, which are not conducive to a pro-royalist perspective. In his rejection of Trinitarianism as a threat to the monarchy, Schmitt follows along the lines of Hobbes’ pro-Arian theological standpoint. Such a radical absolute monotheism, which subordinates the Son to the status of a creature, is inherently absolutist as well as arbitrary. In light of these attributes, it is far from accidental that radical monotheism was immediately adopted by both the Western and the Eastern emperors of the Roman Empire, who readily saw themselves as substitutes for a created Christ. It is believed that this particular version of “political theology,” which was worked out by the equally pro-Arian bishop of Caesarea Eusebius – regarded by many as the founder of church history – served as the cornerstone of so-called Byzantine caesaropapism since, in the political ideology which sprung from it, the emperor was looked upon as God’s representative on earth, and as an “equal to the apostles” who exercised a political function.¹⁰ It should be kept in mind

10. For analysis and evidence, see FRANCIS DVORNIK, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy. Origins and Background*, Washington, DC: The Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Trustees for Harvard

that Byzantine theocracy and *synallelia* (mutual cooperation) which, according to many contemporary Orthodox theologians, is the appropriate model for church-state relations, is inconceivable apart from this significant theological shift.¹¹

In light of all the above, it should hardly be surprising that Schmitt was acutely hostile to eschatology, inasmuch as it implies an openness to the future, a hope and an expectation for a renewed and more just future, and a world of forgiveness and reconciliation; likewise, there is no paradox in the fact that he “associates... liberal/social democracy and the notion of progress in general with the Anti-Christ.”¹²

University, 1966, especially, v. II, pp. 614ff.; GERHARD PODSKALSKY, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, München: Fink Verlag, 1972; HÉLÈNE AHRWEILER, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975; STEVEN RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977. See also the recent work of JOHN ANTHONY MCGUCKIN, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008, pp. 380-398, where we see a more cautious and balanced approach to the question we deal with here. See also SAVAS AGOURIDES, “The Roots of the Great Idea,” in Agourides, *Theology and Society in Dialogue*, Athens, 1999, pp. 15-22 [in Greek]; THANOS LIPOWATZ, *Political theology and modernity*, in THANOS LIPOWATZ-NIKOS DEMERTZIS-VASSILIKI GEORGIADOU (eds), *Religions and Politics in Modernity*, Athens: Kritiki, 2002, pp. 122-124 [in Greek].

11. The term *synallelia* draws its origin from the Byzantine political model, and serves, especially in the Orthodox context, to designate the special relationship between Church and state. It refers to the loyal and mutual cooperation between these two distinctive institutions for the sake of the people, who are simultaneously members of the Church and subjects or citizens of the state.

12. THANOS LIPOWATZ, “Political Theology and Modernity,” pp. 122-123.

In this ultra-conservative, pro-royalist vision of his, which ultimately resulted in the theoretical justification and even espousal – for a time – of Nazism and dictatorship, Carl Schmitt incorporated the ideas of major French Catholic apologists of the counter-revolution, such as de Maistre and Boland, as well as the Spanish conservative Catholic theorist Donoso Cortés.¹³ For all these figures, the Enlightenment, as well as modernity and the whole notion of human rights, represent an absolute evil and humanity’s fall, indeed the “original sin” of modern democracy.¹⁴ It is from these intellectuals that Schmitt borrows the identification of “royalism” with “theism” and Christianity, as well as his overall militant opposition to democracy and political liberalism.¹⁵ In

13. Schmitt dedicates the fourth and final chapter of the book to these thinkers; see “On the Counterrevolutionary Philosophy of the State,” (pp. 53-65). See also Panayiotis Kondylis’s comments in his “Postface,” in the Greek edition of Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, pp. 166ff. Cf. also, THANOS LIPOWATZ, “Political Theology and Modernity,” pp. 119ff. [in Greek]; JACOB TAUBES, *The Political Theology of Paul*, pp. 67-68.

14. THANOS LIPOWATZ, “Political Theology and Modernity,” p. 119 [in Greek]. A study is needed on the relationship between the work of the Russian philosopher of the diaspora Nicholas Berdyaev (with his well-known Christian and revolutionary sympathies) and these philosophers (particularly de Maistre). On this point, Hugo Ball’s critical approach to Schmitt’s political theology is of some interest; Ball is well known for his interest in Byzantine Christianity and patristic thought. See H. BALL, “La théologie politique de Carl Schmitt,” traduit et annoté par ANDRÉ DOREMUS, *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, janvier, 2004, pp. 65-104. See also ANDRÉ DOREMUS, “La théologie politique de Carl Schmitt vue par Hugo Ball en 1924,” *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, janvier, 2004, pp. 57-63.

15. For an initial survey, see among many others Panayiotis Kondylis, *Postface*, in the Greek version of Carl Schmitt’s, *Political Theology*, pp. 166-169,

line with this commitment, Schmitt went so far as to declare, as late as 1962 (in the context of a series of lectures that he gave in Pablona and Saragosa, under Franco's reign), that the Spanish civil war was "a war of national liberation sponsored by the international communist movement."¹⁶

Here I should mention, however, that Carl Schmitt's active involvement in Nazism and National Socialism (initially as a legal advisor to the National Socialist Party and subsequently to the Nazi regime, as an advisor to the state and as an official theorist of right during the first years of the Nazi regime, but also as president of the Union of National Socialist Attorneys, editor-in chief since 1934 of the *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* and last but not least, as lead organizer of anti-Jewish congresses that sought to purge German laws of every trace of the Jewish spirit), represents an enormous issue that far exceeds the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say simply that his involvement was not so much the result of racial prejudices but was spawned rather from a religiously motivated

note 22, which contains extended quotations from the works of these and other thinkers.

16. CARL SCHMITT, *Theory of the Partisan*, p. 56. The two lectures he delivered in Spain are published here in a more developed form. From the above, it should be obvious why Carl Schmitt became – and continues to be – a source of fascination in right, far-right, and pro-monarchy environments. What was, perhaps, not anticipated – but which can be explained (although we cannot delve into it here) – is the allure that his thought and political theory seem to have also in far-left, usually anti-parliamentary, environments, as well as among the ranks of the New Left. For an introduction to this discussion, see Jean-Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Postwar European Thought*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

opposition to Judaism. This subtle distinction may help explain why, as early as 1936, the Nazi regime, skeptical of the sincerity of his anti-Semitism, denounced him as an opportunist, removed him from a number of important positions, and stripped him of several titles and distinctions they had bestowed on him.

With regard now to the whole issue of modernity, it should be sufficiently evident, I believe, that both Schmitt's *political theology*, and his theory concerning the state of emergency, are inconceivable outside the context of modernity and secularization (in the sociological sense of the term), even if only in terms of a reaction or a staunch denial of modernity and secularism. Schmitt's political theory, relying as it does on arguments drawn from the philosophy and theory of right – while also speaking on behalf of Christianity, theology, and even metaphysics – reflects a clearly anti-modern standpoint. Here it is worth mentioning that Schmitt faced serious criticisms of his work, initially from Hans Kelsen,¹⁷ and some decades later from Hans Blumenberg,¹⁸ both of whom took a more positive approach to Christianity's relationship with secularization and modernity. Likewise, his pro-Arian,

17. HANS KELSEN, "Gott und Staat," *Logos*, 11 (1922-23), pp. 261-284, and a new edition: HANS KELSEN, *Staat und Naturrecht: Aufsätze zur Ideologiekritik*, hrg. E. Topitsch, Munich: Fink Verlag, 21989, pp. 29-55. Cf. Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, pp. 66-67.

18. HANS BLUMENBERG, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, transl. by Robert M. Wallace, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg's remarks in "Christianity as the Legitimacy of the Modern Age: Thoughts on a Book by Hans Blumenberg," in W. PANNENBERG, *Basic Questions in Theology*, v. 3, London: SCM Press, 1973, pp. 178-191; and THANOS LIPOWATZ, "Political theology and Modernity," pp. 137-141 [in Greek]. Cf. also, JACOB TAUBES, *The Political Theology of Paul*, pp. 68-69.

anti-Trinitarian view, which as we saw was directly related to his royalist, anti-democratic proclivities, was bound to be refuted both theologically and politically by the German theologian Erik Peterson – a convert to Roman Catholicism from Protestantism who was well-known for his studies on early Christianity and patristic thought – in his 1935 classic *Monotheismus als politisches Problem*,¹⁹ in which he emphasizes that Christianity does not permit belief in the Trinity to provide a moral rationale or theoretical justification for authoritarian politics of domination and control.

The preceding, rather introductory, portrait of Schmitt and his political theology was aimed at highlighting what strikes me, at least, as an important point. My analysis, despite my radical disagreement with the ideas supported by the German theorist of right, was meant to draw renewed attention to the often neglected, but real, correspondence and analogy between theological and political concepts, and in the last resort between theological and political concepts and structures.²⁰ As I see them, the numerous sides of Schmitt's positions can, for our purpose here, be summed up in the following points: (a) the structural analogy between God and the sovereign, between Christianity and monarchy or empire, and Schmitt's consequent preference for oligarchies and dictatorships, as is indicated by the analogy between

19. ERIK PETERSON, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum*, Leipzig: Henger-Verlag, 1935.

20. For a model and typology of the whole variety of such relationships between theological and political frameworks, see KATHRYN TANNER, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992.

miracles and states of emergency; and (b) his systematic animosity toward and denial of modernity and individual human rights, in other words, to his clear-cut predilection for the medieval, pre-modern context of social organization. This last dimension of his thought suggests that, right from the outset, his discourse on political theology had been seriously handicapped (from the democratic perspective) by its commitment to an authoritarian, medieval past, and a militant call for a return to it, and by denying modernity's achievements, such as the vital distinction between the public and the private spheres (a topic which will occupy us in the fourth chapter of this book).

What one realizes, after a close reading of this conservative German Catholic philosopher of law, is that there is a nearly universal tendency among religious intellectuals to lean toward the far right and authoritarian ideologies in general. Of course, the Greek Orthodox are habitually dismissive of all this on the pretext that this tendency is almost exclusive to western Christendom. This is a popular idea particularly among those Greek Orthodox who trace their roots back to the early '60s, when the consensus emerged that Orthodox Christianity, as a result of our Byzantine past and of our Turkish captivity, was not affected by these developments and is thus largely innocent of the sins of its Western counterpart. Nevertheless, this popular belief, misleading as it is in its simplicity, cannot survive critical scrutiny and, upon closer inspection, we shall see that the East is also mired in similar tendencies.

Going back now to the structural analogy between theology and law as well as theology and politics, in the way that it was set up by Schmitt, we ought to acknowledge, as I just stated, that it is hardly absent in our own tradition. To give but one example,

in the well-known hymn in the second tone from the Christmas Vespers service, which liturgical texts attribute to the nun Casiani, one clearly sees the structural analogy between theological and political concepts along the lines just noted, linking democracy and polytheism on the one hand, and monarchy, monotheism, and Christianity on the other:

When Augustus reigned alone on the earth, the many kingdoms of mankind came to an end; and when you became man from 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 single Godhead; the peoples were enrolled by decree of Caesar; we the faithful were enrolled in the name of the Godhead, when you became man, O our God. Great is your mercy, Lord; glory to you!²¹

On this topic, the observations made by the late Greek Professor Savas Agourides are highly enlightening. Building on Gerhard Podskalsky's work on Byzantine secularized eschatology, to which we have already referred,²² Agourides makes a specific reference to Eusebius of Caesarea and his attempt to link Christianity and monarchy/empire. As Agourides writes:

In order for us to get an adequate grasp of what this is all about, we need to take note of the following: Byzantium, besides inheriting Hellenistic culture and the Roman experience in administration and law-making, was also heir, through Christianity, to the Hebraic, biblical notion of

21. English translation by Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash) at: <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/25decves.htm>

22. GERHARD PODSKALSKY, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, München: Fink Verlag, 1972, p. 41.

the chosen people. Above all, Byzantium incorporated the belief that as a result of Christ's nativity during the reign of Augustus, the biblical hope of *Christ's eternal Kingdom* had been actualized, as it had been predicted by the prophets; however, it was not in the form of a final Jewish kingdom but in the kingdom of the Romans. It is this *religious-political* ideology that remains dominant throughout the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods – never openly or fully declared as such but frequently alluded to in several Byzantine texts. All Byzantine commentary on chapters 2 and 7 of the book of Daniel, in interpreting the four kingdoms which according to Daniel would precede the Kingdom of the Messiah, identified the fourth kingdom with Rome, and declared Augustus' rule, and the Byzantine empire that followed it, to be the Kingdom of the Messiah, Christ. In certain exegetical passages by Eusebius that Nikitas Heracleias preserved in catenae on Luke's Gospel, Eusebius uses the book of Daniel to lump together Roman monarchy, the birth of Christ, and the *fourth kingdom*. For Eusebius, it was crucial – from the Byzantine and Christian perspectives – that Rome had abolished all democracies and multiple authorities and had instituted a “*single sovereign state*,” a political image that conforms to Aristotle's view of the republic. Subsequent writers simply went one step further in identifying Roman rule with the rule of Christ, just as an anonymous interlocutor in Anastasius of Sinai's *Quaestiones et Responsiones* puts it: “Christ brought together all nations and all languages and *made a nation of devout Christians*, a new and proper name held in the hearts of those called Romans.”²³

23. SAVAS AGOURIDES, “The Roots of the Great Idea,” in Agourides, *Theology and Society in Dialogue*, op. cit., pp. 16-17 [in Greek]; cf. idem, “Religious Eschatology and State Ideology in the Byzantine Tradition, the Post-Byzantine Era, and the Modern Greek State,” in Agourides, *Theology and Current Issues*, Athens: Artos Zois, 1966, pp. 53-54 [in Greek].

This particular example, which correlates theology and politics – reversing Schmitt’s course, namely moving from politics to theology rather than vice versa – should cause us to think seriously about the diachronicity, catholicity, and even – dare we say it – the “orthodoxy” of certain parts of Byzantine and Orthodox hymnology in general. And the previously cited example is not a rare occurrence in the course of Byzantine theology and political ideology. Rather, it corresponds to the Byzantines’ secularized political eschatology, which has its roots in theology. We now know, following the work of many respected historians and theologians (for example, Francis Dvornick, Gerhard Podskalsky, Hans-Georg Beck, Hélène Ahrweiler, Georges Florovsky, Savas Agourides), that the Byzantines believed that their state and their society were the materialization of the kingdom of God on earth. Runciman states this quite explicitly at the outset of his classic study *The Byzantine Theocracy*, which he describes as an attempt to give an “account of an Empire whose constitution... was based on a clear religious conviction: that it was the earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven.”²⁴ In this seamless political-theological vision, the emperor stood “in the place of Christ,” and his kingdom was a reflection of its heavenly counterpart. As Agourides notes, “the Byzantine state, particularly from the Justinian era forward, following as it does along the lines of Jewish apocalyptic literature [...] sees itself as the final actualization of Christian hope, as the eschatological prelude to the kingdom of God.”²⁵ In

24. STEVEN RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 1.

25. SAVAS AGOURIDES, “Religious Eschatology and State Ideology in the Tradition of Byzantium, of the Post-Byzantine Era and of the Modern Greek State,” in Agourides, *Theology and Current Issues*, p. 53.

this perspective, we are clearly facing a peculiar form of “realized eschatology” (of the political or secular sort) which seems to have largely lost the tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” that is, between the first and the second coming of Christ, his resurrection and the expectation of our own resurrection and the recapitulation of history, which will signal our personal incorruptibility and the end of the reign of death. Such a perspective loses sight of the “in between” and the “till then,”²⁶ of the vital interim period set between the two major Christian milestones, the resurrection of Christ and the awaiting of our own coming resurrection. This serves as the criterion for the choices and values of every Christian, whose priorities are determined on the basis of the *eschaton*. Christians are “aliens and exiles” (1 Pt 2:11), moving continuously toward the *eschaton*²⁷, in accordance with the biblical injunction to be “in the world, but not of the world.” Again what we lose, as Christians, is our focus on and our orientation toward the anticipated new world, from which the present takes its identity and hypostasis, its meaning and its purpose. In light, then, of this absence of biblical eschatology and active anticipation and openness toward the future, even the second coming of Christ itself is reduced to a mere confirmation that the kingdom of God has been already realized with Byzantium. Hence we are faced here with a peculiar political theology, a political eschatology, or an eschatological ideology concerning the state.²⁸

In the case of Byzantium, to recall Carl Schmitt’s exegeses, we

26. SAVAS AGOURIDES, “Religious Eschatology,” p. 53.

27. Cf. “but our citizenship is in heaven” Phil 3:20; and “for here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” Heb 13:14.

28. SAVAS AGOURIDES, “Religious Eschatology,” p. 53.

have a religious form of eschatology, an image of the final form of history, which is identified with a historical political entity, that of the Byzantine empire. Eusebius of Caesarea is considered the founder of this peculiar political theology, but he seems to have been antedated by Christian writers such as Justin, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Athenagoras, Melito of Sardis, Origen, Tertullian, Lactantius, Theodoret of Cyrhus, and later the chroniclers George the Monk (also known as George the Sinner), Leo Grammatikos, Theodosius Melitenos, George Kedrenos, and John Skylitises.²⁹

As Runciman notes, “it is significant that Eusebius was Subordinationist in his theology of the Trinity. It was easy for him to stretch his Subordinationism to include the Emperor as a sort of earthly emanation of the Trinity.”³⁰ For Eusebius – who provided the theological justification for the idea of a Christian empire and the divine mission of the emperor – the political unity and the religious unity of the Roman/Byzantine Empire are directly connected; the greatness of the empire and the triumph of Christianity go hand in hand. In this perspective, Christ is seen as “the Lord of the world” and “the ruler of the nations,” whose icon on earth is the emperor as the servant of God: according to Eusebius’ Arian/Subordinationist-inspired vision, God the Father has given leadership of the world to the Son-Word, who in turn transfers it to the worldly king/emperor, whose kingdom reflects the kingdom of the Son-Word. This explains why in the course of an honorary address to Constantine the Great, Eusebius declared that Constantine was an icon of the universe, an imitator of Christ the Word, and a reflection of the relationship be-

29. FRANCIS DVORNIK, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, v. II, pp. 611ff.; SAVAS AGOURIDES, “The Roots of the Great Idea,” p. 16.

30. STEVEN RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, p. 24.

tween God the Father and the Son and Word of God.³¹ Here the sanctification of secular authority and the idolatrous divinization of the state is obvious, as is also the incorporation of pagan Hellenistic and Eastern models into the Christian worldview. Erik Peterson, in his classic work, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* (1935), argued that this politico-religious ideological construct was not, in fact, Christian, and, as I already mentioned, he explicitly opposed Schmitt's theories, which interestingly enough, Peterson pejoratively terms "political Arianism."³² Peterson not only connects the emperors' sanctification with the influx of non-Christian influences (Hellenistic, Jewish, and Roman), but also, on the basis of Trinitarian doctrine, goes so far as to dispute the very foundations of Schmitt's political theology. In essence, Peterson suggests that the authentic political teaching of Christianity – based, as it is, on the Trinity – should actually undermine the unholy union of religion and politics, instead of providing it with theological support. According to Peterson, the Christian belief in the Trinitarian God leads to the denial of every sort of political domination and ultimately shatters all illusions about "political theologies" of Carl Schmitt's sort.³³ It is to be noted, also, that the Eusebian perspec-

31. SAVAS AGOURIDES, "The Roots of the Great Idea," p. 16.

32. On this connection between the Byzantine political ideal and Arianism, represented primarily by Eusebius, cf. particularly the study by ANN ELIZABETH MILLIN, *Byzantine Political Theology and Arian Christology*, Vanderbilt University, 1985.

33. See ERIK PETERSON, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum*, Leipzig: Henger-Verlag, 1935. See also the English translation: ERIK PETERSON, "Monotheism as a Political Problem: A Contribution to the History of Political Theology in the Roman Empire," in his: *Theological Tractates*, edited, translat-

tive met, time and again, with resistance in the Eastern part of the empire, where church Fathers and monastics, without denying the sacralization of imperial power and its Christological basis, opposed the imperial demands for the church's subjugation to secular authority and, more importantly, the imperial attempts to intervene in theological and doctrinal issues. And we must not forget that, alongside the cooperation of the church and state in Byzantium, a continual dialectical tension seems to pervade the relationship between spiritual and secular authority, as exemplified by the patriarch and the emperor, or the church (mainly monasticism) and the empire.³⁴

But to return to Schmitt's thesis and its kinship to fascism, the far right and similarly authoritarian or oligarchic models of government, we ought, besides Byzantine political theology, to make an additional reference to a widespread Greek "pro-Orthodox movement" which, while it certainly lacks full ideological consistency, still exercises a considerable influence in Greece and – as

ed, and with an introduction by Michael J. Hollerich, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011 and the French translation: *Le monothéisme: un problème politique et autres traités*, traduit de l'allemand par Anne-Sophie Asstrup avec la collaboration de Gilles Dorival pour le latin et le grec, Paris: Bayard, 2007. Cf. J.-C. Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation: théologie politique et philosophies de l'histoire de Hegel à Blumenberg*, Paris: Vrin, 2002.

34. On this particular point, see the penetrating analysis by GEORGES FLOROVSKY, "Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert," in *Christianity and Culture*, Vol. 2 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1974, pp. 67-100, which highlights the complexity and ambivalence in the relationship between imperial power and Christian imperatives, and more generally of church-state relations in Byzantium.

far as I know – in other Orthodox countries as well. This movement is comprised of a number of significant figures from theology, the social sciences, literature and the arts, and is, at least *in part*, related to the spirit of the theological generation of the '60s and the so-called neo-Orthodox movement (a return to the tradition of the Fathers, a return to the people, Greek uniqueness, and a radical critique and rejection of the West, the Enlightenment, modernity, etc.). Well-known representatives of this Greek “pro-Orthodox” movement include, among many others (and despite serious divergences among them), Kostis Bastias, Panayiotis Christou, Metropolitan Dionysius of Trikis and Stagon, Dimitrios Tsakonas, Dimitrios Thiraios-Koutsoyannopoulos, Fr John Romanides, Fr Theodore Zisis, Athanasios Angelopoulos, and others (not to mention the late archbishop of Athens Hieronymus Kotsonis or the former rector of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and former professor of its Theological School Evangelos Sdrakas, neither of whom, however, shared the same concerns with the above mentioned pro-Orthodox scholars or the generation of the '60s). A common thread uniting these individuals is their affiliation with the far right and particularly with the dictatorial regimes of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1941) and Georgios Papadopoulos/Dimitrios Ioannidis (1967-1974), and their ideological descendants. Of course, a thorough examination – both on a historical level and a theological one – of this movement's special links to the far right and related authoritarian regimes is still pending. By contrast, the more “popular” and visible manifestation of the phenomenon in question, mainly the steadfast loyalty of the pietistic religious movements (mainly “Zoe”) to the monarchy, the far right, and the post-civil war police state in Greece, has been widely discussed in the autobio-

graphical works of Christos Yannaras,³⁵ George Ioannou,³⁶ and more recently Dimitrios Pallas.³⁷ Also pending is a theological study – as opposed to the historical and sociological work that has already been done – on the difficulty traditionally Orthodox countries seem to face in incorporating the principles of political liberalism, democracy, and human rights, as well as their continued yearning for pre-modern/medieval forms of social stratification. Some churches, such as the Church of Russia, have openly pro-royalist sentiments (which even went so far as to canonize the last Tsar and his family), as do many of the Orthodox people and their leaders in the Balkans (for example, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia). We Orthodox prefer to keep silent on these issues rather than talk openly about them, thereby avoiding the painful and difficult – from a theological point of view – question of whether this is due to accidental, unfortunate choices on the part of historical Orthodoxy, or, in contrast, whether this tendency reflects an intrinsic problem lying at the very heart of the Orthodox Christian tradition, which makes it incompatible with democracy and political liberalism, and which encourages and facilitates this permanent nostalgia and yearning for pre-modern authoritarian regimes.³⁸

35. CHRISTOS YANNARAS, *Ideas as a Refuge*, Athens: Domos, 1987, and the new edition published by Ikaros, 2001 [in Greek]

36. GEORGE IOANNOU, “*And Christ Our Commander...*”: *The Refugees’ Capital*, Athens: Kedros, 1984, pp. 113-181 [in Greek].

37. DIMITRIOS PALLAS, *Orthodox Christianity and Tradition: An Autobiographical Essay. With an Appendix on the April 21, 1967 Dictatorship*, Edited, with an introduction and notes by Olga Gratziou, Heraklion: University of Crete Press, 2005 [in Greek].

38. See the interesting analysis of NIKOLAS K. GVOSDEV (*Emperors and Elec-*

Apart from the sincerity and the willingness for self-criticism that must accompany our approach to these sensitive, and indeed painful, questions, what is most needed for them to be answered is a thorough theological analysis, although not simply of the “religious” kind. I contend that this much-needed theological analysis must include those elements that make up the backbone of Christianity – the doctrine of the Trinity as well as the Incarnation.

As we know, traditional societies, in both East and West, were based on the sacralization of the mechanisms of authority and dom-

tions: Reconciling the Orthodox Tradition with Modern Politics, New York: Troitsa Books, 2000), who, while perhaps idealizing some elements, believes that Orthodox Christianity’s social and political values, as well as the theological notions of conciliarity and person, not only do not prevent democratic institutions and the democratic modern culture which continue to emerge in the traditionally Orthodox areas, but actually favor them. For a radically different assessment, see SAMUEL HUNTINGTON’s classic work, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49. Cf. also the sometimes stinging criticism of SABRINA P. RAMET, “The Way We Were – and Should Be Again? European Orthodox Churches and the ‘Idyllic Past’,” in: Timothy A. Byrnes-Peter J. Katzenstein (eds), *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 148-175. Cf. PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2007, pp. 102-103 [in Greek; English translation (by Elizabeth Theokritoff) forthcoming by St Vladimir’s Seminary Press]. For the origins and the ideological background of the Greek far-right and its authoritarian-paternalist regimes and their interpretation of Christianity, Byzantium, and the conservative traditional values (homeland, religion, family, work, order, discipline, security, national unity, etc.), as well the tri-partite conspiracy of Communism, Zionism, and Freemasonry, see DESPINA PAPADIMITRIOU, “The Far-Right Movement in Greece, 1936-1949. Origins, Continuity, and Fractures,” in HAGEN FLEISCHER (ed.), *Greece ’36-’49. From Dictatorship to Civil War: Breaks and Continuities*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 2003, pp. 138-149 [in Greek].

inance, on the authoritarian version of a mingling of the religious and the cultural/political, and on a particular understanding of a sacred narrative, a sacred text, law, or even sacred tradition – in this case, the Christian tradition. They thus internalized the element of authority and heteronomy to such an extent that they made it an inseparable part of the static and established theistic/theocratic, hierarchical, medieval model. The (largely willing) acquiescence of the church and theology in this process, where there was obviously a reciprocal negative influence between theology and society, often led to a theology of authority and heteronomy, which in turn bolstered the sacralization of power and the corresponding understanding of religion in terms of power; the church was imposed on society externally and from above, and social prohibitions of all sorts were made sacred. All this basically rolled back the hard-won “gains” of Trinitarian theology and the Incarnation, and negated the scandal of the Cross and the mystery of the empty tomb. The fundamental implication of Trinitarian theology was thus forgotten: the notion that the very being of God is communion and love, that the Trinitarian God himself exists only as an event of communion and love.³⁹ Reference to God the Father, instead of pointing to liberating and loving Fatherhood,⁴⁰ ended up referring to a divine policeman upholding the established order, a punitive and vengeful God in the mold of Freud’s “sadistic father” syndrome.⁴¹ Theology

39. Cf. JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985.

40. Cf. OLIVIER CLÉMENT, *Conversations with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, trans. Paul Meyendorff. Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997, p. 117.

41. On the “sadistic father” syndrome, see the theological analysis of OLIVIER

and spirituality have thus lost their paradoxical and antinomic character and regressed to the “religious” authoritarian models which preceded the New Testament. Meanwhile, Christian morality came to be linked conclusively to a spirit of law, to “other-determinism,” and to “virtue” imposed from without. In the Christian, incarnational perspective, however, God does not impose himself as an external authority or through legal coercion. Instead, God comes in the person of Jesus Christ – the incarnate, crucified and risen Son and Word of God – as an inner presence, as *kenosis* and the self-offering of *eros*, and as love and freedom, granting humans reconciliation with God through adoption, and eternal life and union with God, calling them into communion and relationship with him, and offering them the possibility of participating in the mode of life (τρόπος ζωής) of the Holy Trinity. This Trinitarian mode of life is, as Jesus Christ revealed to us, the love and communion of divine Persons who are equal in honor, interpenetrating each other in mutual love. Here we have a perspective determined by the new reality in Christ, the reality of sonship by adoption, and by the call to a relationship and communion with the Trinitarian God which is constitutive of the person, God being at once both the “Other” (*Allos*) *par excellence* and intimately close to human beings through Christ Jesus. And in this perspective, the demand for autonomy is not circumscribed by self-reference and an egotistic, narcissistic self-confidence, but, to borrow from Thanos Lipowatz, relates to the *allonomy* of the finite subject.⁴² In other words, it relates to the

CLÉMENT, *Theology After the Death of God: Essays Toward an Orthodox Response to Modern Atheism*, Athens: Athena Publications, 1973, pp. 53 ff. [in Greek].

42. See THANOS LIPOWATZ, “Modernity and Secularization” [in Greek], in P. KALAITZIDIS (ed.), *State and Church*, Volos Academy for Theological Studies,

subject's free relationship with God, the infinite and absolute "Other," which gives rise to relationality and the *ek-static* character of the person, to a transcendence of individualism, by the opening up the self-sufficient subject and a relationship with every "other" who is the image of the "Other" *par excellence*, the primary "Other."⁴³

However, as important and fundamental as Trinitarian and incarnational theologies are – inasmuch as they are the most decisive hermeneutical keys for working out an authentically Christian response to contemporary political challenges – we are unfortunately forced to admit that even these cannot automatically prompt their social enactment. For, if a correct Trinitarianism – clearly differentiated from the Arian counterpart of Eusebius of Caesarea or Schmitt's anti-Trinitarianism – constituted the necessary theoretical precondition for the emergence of a society based on love, justice, democracy and freedom, then the victory of ecclesiastical Orthodoxy and catholicity in the Ecumenical

Winter Program 2005-06 (under publication), and already in the journal *Nea Hestia*, issue 1837, October 2010. On the way in which adoption relates to the heteronomy-autonomy polarity, see LIPOWATZ, "Political Theology and Secularization," *op. cit.*, pp. 138-140 (including extensive references to Wolfhart Pannenberg's "Die Christliche Legitimität der Neuzeit," *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, Göttingen, 1978). Cf. also the paper by KONSTANTINOS AGORAS, "Sacramental Christology, Cultural Modernity, and the Eschatological Gospel," in Kalaitzidis-Ntontos, *Orthodoxy and Modernity*, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Winter Program 2001-02, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2007, pp. 263-291 [in Greek].

43. The above was inspired by my analysis in: PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82 [in Greek; English translation (by Elizabeth Theokritoff) forthcoming by St Vladimir's Seminary Press].

Councils that concerned themselves with Christology and Trinity should have been translated into social progress and change for Byzantium. Certainly, ecclesiastical Orthodoxy should have paved the way for the spirit of dialogue and self-critical reflection as well as to more democratic and liberal political institutions. True as it may be that, in comparison with the medieval West, Byzantium enjoyed a more democratic political organization that was alien to the feudal system and the system of closed inherited succession, it would still be very difficult to argue for the existence of dialogical processes, much less of democracy and political liberalism in Byzantium. It is not a secret, after all, that the Fathers and theologians who argued for Orthodoxy in the Ecumenical Councils were not widely known for having personally exemplified the spirit of dialogue, liberalism, or tolerance toward other voices. My point is that textual truth does not necessarily result in social renewal, which means that all facile attempts to move, on the basis of certain texts, from theology/ ecclesiology and worship to the realm of culture/politics and state should be treated with suspicion, both methodologically and in terms of their substance.

One could perhaps rightfully retort to my previous analysis that such expectations of correspondence between theory and reality constitute an arbitrary form of political anachronism, a projection of contemporary realities to a distant and very different era. But if we turn to modern Orthodoxy, we will see that it faces similar problems and deficiencies. For example, the wonderful Trinitarianism and personalism of Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon, as formulated in his now classic *Being as Communion*,⁴⁴

44. JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985. See

did not prompt any radical social activity or even awareness either by himself or by other Orthodox clergymen and theologians (with the exception, perhaps, of the response to the ecological crisis, which has occupied both Zizioulas⁴⁵ and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople). The same deficiency can be observed in Christos Yannaras, the other great contemporary Greek theologian and founder of the theology of the person (cf. his *Eros and Person*)⁴⁶: not only does his theological ontology and personalism (both based on sound Trinitarian and Christological grounds) not lead to social activism, or to a struggle for the protection of human dignity, and to solidarity with the victims of history, but, on the contrary, it often encourages, as we shall see below, a flight from history and an undermining of social activity and collective struggles. Zizioulas may have been wise to at least avoid the social and political idealizations of his theology, never identifying it with particular states and cultures. The same, however, cannot be said about Yannaras. Not only does he idealize, socially and politically, the theological texts he sets out to interpret – not only does he glorify entire cultures and societies, such as the Byzantine and the Greek society under Turkish rule, while whole-heartedly condemning other societies such as the medieval West – he can be taken to task, I think, for

also ZIZIOULAS, *Communion and Otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, London-New York: T & T Clark, 2006.

45. See, among many others, JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS, “Preserving God’s Creation: Three Lectures on Theology and Ecology,” *King’s Theological Review*, 12 (1989), pp. 1-5, 41-45; 13 (1990), pp. 1-5.

46. CHRISTOS YANNARAS, *Person and Eros*, transl. by Norman Russell, Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008; *Proposals for a Critical Ontology*, Athens: Domos, ³1995 [in Greek]; *An Ontology of Relationship*, Athens: Ikaros, 2004 [in Greek].

drawing a direct connection between texts and social reality. In other words, Yannaras habitually jumps from the realm of theology/ecclesiology and liturgics to the realm of culture/politics and state – to such an extent, in fact, that he presents the Byzantine state and its political vision as the embodiment of the doctrinal formulation of Chalcedon, that is, as an example of the assumption of history and the world by the church in the manner of the Chalcedonian adverbs “without confusion,” “unchangeably,” “inseparably,” and “indivisibly,” as the following lengthy passage clearly demonstrates:

Historically, it is true, the widespread influence of the Church's communal ethos – the social dynamism of the eucharistic community – does indeed seem to have been bound up exclusively with the rural or early urban stages of communal life. As a historical example of such influence, we probably have only Byzantium. Medieval western societies, dominated by the feudal system and with extremely sharp class distinctions, make it impossible for us to speak of the eucharistic community as dynamically extended throughout social life and culture. They were certainly societies organized on a religious basis, but had little or nothing to do with the primacy of personal distinctiveness and freedom which constitutes the eucharistic ethos of communion. In Byzantium, by contrast, we have a popular culture which reveals in its every expression and manifestation the absolute priority of the truth of the person, and a way of life which is articulated liturgically, becoming an event of personal communion.

This is not the place to show how, in Byzantine civilization, art, economics, politics and legislation all expressed the attitude of life and the communal ethos of the Church; how they preserved the liturgical understanding of the world and history and the creative “word” or reason in man's relationship with things, a reason which follows from the subordination of individual arbitrariness to the harmony and wisdom in the world.

We may simply state the conclusion that, for a thousand years, Byzantium put into action the dynamic operation of eucharistic communion in the dimensions of the inhabited earth, the *oikoumene*. In Byzantium, the *oikoumene* takes on the mystical depth and dynamic meaning of the word *proslomma*, “that which has been assumed,” as this term is used in the Christology of Chalcedon. The conceptual center of the *oikoumene* is the Church, the supreme manifestation of the Wisdom of God which created the world, the fulfillment in history and dynamic continuation of the event of God’s incarnation, where He assumes the irrationality of natural man so as to transform it into a rational principle of relationship and communion, into the archetypal city, the kingdom of God.

Within this process, there is a hard and fast distinction between the beauty of personal life and communion and the irrational impulses of natural barbarism. But at the same time its scope is unlimited in that the rudeness and disorder of the hordes who are outside this communion have to be assumed and grafted into the liturgy of life. In every aspect of its historical and cultural life, Byzantium brought about the assumption of whatever is natural, irrational or common, transfiguring it into communion and sacred history and God-manhood – into the Church.

With the fall of Byzantium, the social dynamism of the eucharistic community did not disappear; it simply contracted from the bounds of the inhabited world to those of the social and cultural life of *Romiosyne*, the Christian people under the Ottoman yoke. For four whole centuries, local government, local justice, business and credit, associations and guilds in the Greek East under Turkish rule, functioned in a way that revealed a liturgical structure in the community, the priority of personal relationships and the pursuit of communal virtue. The liturgical structure of the enslaved Greek community was expressed with equal clarity in hospitality, popular song, dance, folk costume, architecture and iconography. All these manifestations of life and art serve to reveal a cultural level and ethos unattainable in later times, a real paradigm of

social organization, and a rare sensitivity among the people, despite the absence of formal education.

It is the ethos of *personal* life and relationship, the total exclusion of any impersonal, rationalistic organization, which provides the basis for all aspects of social life. Nowadays we need to be exceptionally cultivated, and perhaps even to undertake special studies, in order to appreciate or even just to follow the amazing level of culture in that humiliated Hellenism. Yet we know that, at that time, this was not the level of a few experts but a general manifestation of popular sensitivity, down to the last village and monastery. The way community life operated during the Turkish occupation was born of the people's need and their virtue. It was the product of the people's ethos, not of theoretical, cerebral principles and axioms. Equally a product of the people's ethos was their completely original and genuine art, their song, their dancing, their costume and their festivals.

The free ethos of enslaved *Romiosyne* remains ultimately a model for a social realization which respects personal uniqueness and manifests the liturgical unity of human coexistence. The high point of this unity is the festival. The life of the community becomes part of the eucharistic cycle of feasts in the Church's life, the daily triumph of the Church over the irrationality of time and corruption. The traditional Greek festival always centered on the Church's commemoration of a saint; it was always a feast-day. Round this ecclesial event, the people joined in fellowship, singing and dancing and eating together. Differences and misunderstandings melted away; people declared their love, and the foundations were laid for new families. To this day, no form of socialism nor any rationally organized popular movement has been able to restore this genuine dimension of the popular festival, or to respond fully to man's deep-seated need for festivals.⁴⁷

47. CHRISTOS YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, transl. by Elizabeth

After the exaltation and glorification of Byzantine civilization and of the period of the Ottoman yoke – in other words, after the idealization of the theological dimension of politics, characteristically represented by Yannaras –, let us now move to explore the political dimension of theology.

Briere, Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, pp. 220-223. See also YANNARAS, "The Challenge of Axionov," *The Modern Greek Identity*, Athens: Grigoris, 1978, especially pp. 205-209 [in Greek]. The above extended quotation from the *Freedom of Morality* prompted YANNIS SPITERIS (*La teologia ortodossa neo-greca*, Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1992, pp. 305-306, n. 51; see also p. 321) to talk about Yannaras' one-sided anti-western stance and his idealization of Byzantium, furnishing passages from other works of this author as well (such as *Truth and Unity of the Church*, Athens: Grigoris, 1977, pp. 129-181 [in Greek; French translation by Jean-Louis Palièrne: *Vérité et unité de l'Eglise*, Grez-Doiceau: Axios, 1989, pp. 75-107]; *Elements of Faith* [*Alphabitari tis pistis*], pp. 223-243 [in Greek; English translation by Keith Schram, London-New York: T & T Clark, 1991, pp. 149-164]). For a critique of Yannaras' antiwesternism cf. also PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS, *Greekness and antiwesternism in the Greek Theology of '60s*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, School of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2008, pp. 398-403 [in Greek]; idem, "The Image of the West in Contemporary Greek Theology," Paper presented at the International Conference: "Orthodox Constructions of the West" Fordham University, New York, June 28-30, 2010 (under publication by Fordham University Press).