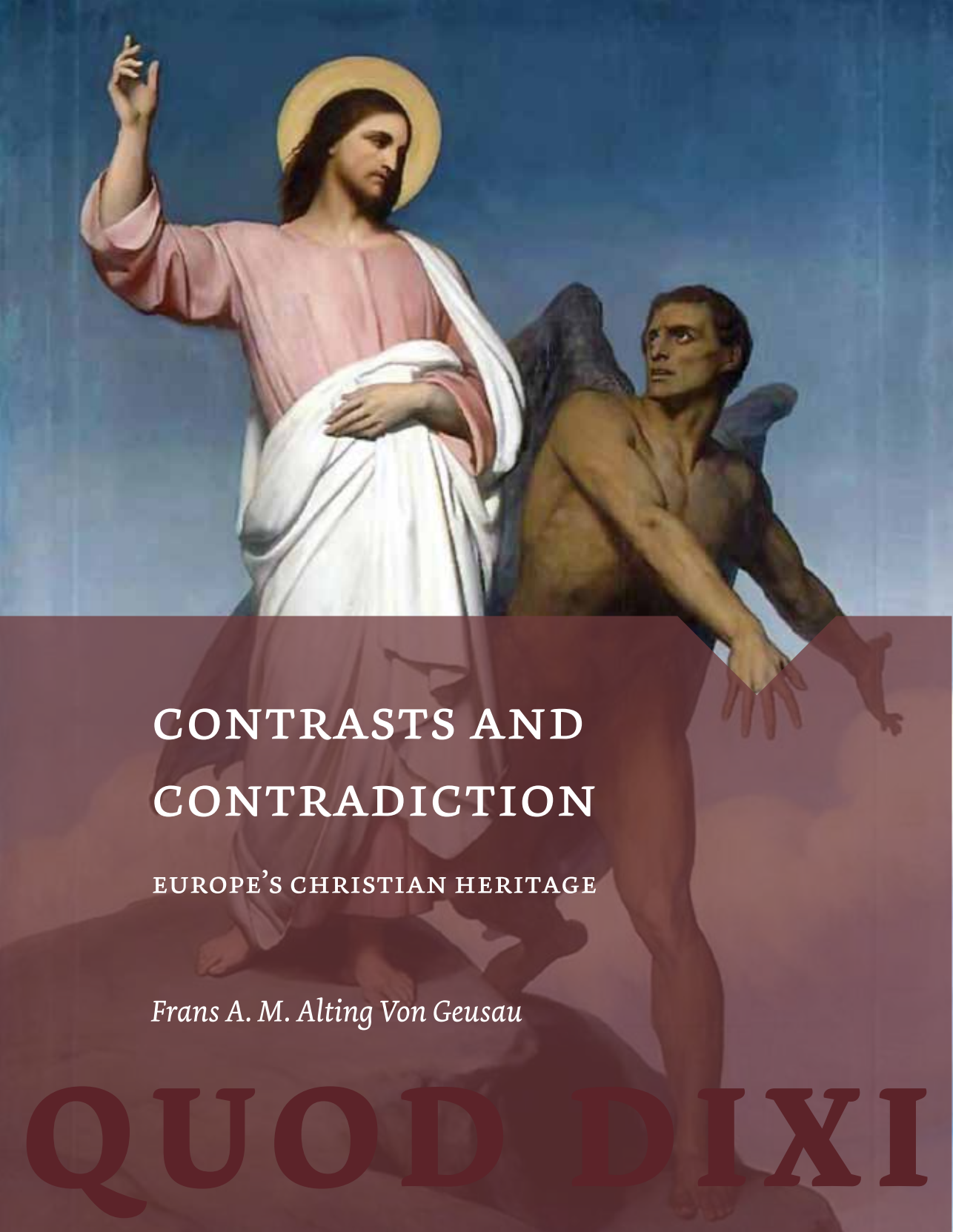




CONTRASTS AND CONTRADICTION

EUROPE'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

Frans A. M. Alting Von Geusau

QUOD DIXI

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*In gratitude to my dearest wife, now in heaven,
Dedicated to our children, (great)grandchildren
With Faith, Hope and Love, we pray for peace.*

I sincerely thank Daan Rutten (library Tilburg University), his staff and Meike Robaard for correcting the text of my manuscript.

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PREFACE

When German troops invaded our peaceful and neutral country in May 1940, I was six years old. We lived through the Second World War and the Cold War thereafter. Contributing to peace and reconciliation in Europe, in the world and between Christians, motivated me in my studies, my teaching, research and extracurricular activities. I also wanted to become a loving husband and father in a great family! The post-war years were marked by repair and renewal; we looked forward and preferred to leave the past behind. The Cold War required two years of compulsory military service.

It took us well into the 1960's before we began to look back to the horrors of the Second World War and in particular the Holocaust. The search for an answer as to why and how this could have happened, has dominated my life as a catholic scholar ever since. Anti-Semitism has deep roots in Europe's Christian heritage and is at the origin of many serious conflicts.

This valedictory book reflects on its history and consequences. It tries to find

answers to two more questions troubling me for a long life-time: Where to find the Christians who are true signs of contradiction? And why is Europe's Christian history so deeply marked by divisions, conflicts, and wars? I did additional research and brought in what I had learned in a long and active life, with no pretence to theological expertise. My reflections bring no scientific treatise, although written by a former scholar. My Valedictory Book includes relevant poems, stories, errors and ironies in history and personal experiences, often more telling than mere scientific analyses.

I am profoundly grateful to my dearest wife who, until the end of her life (on 19 February 2024) allowed me to continue reading and writing while taking care of her, as I did for all these years.

I like to challenge self-righteousness, fixed doctrine and organized forgetting in history, conscious as I am of living in a small corner of the evolving and expanding universe, in which even the Sun is not in the center!

Frans A.M. Alting von Geusau

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INTRODUCTION: IN HUMAN HANDS

On the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, somewhat to the side, stands a small monument dedicated to the Ascension of Jesus. The Chapel of the Ascension, owned by the Islamic *Waqf* (Arab for “endowment”) of Jerusalem, is guarded by a young local boy, who, upon request, shows the footprint of Jesus on the rock. The rock, he says, contains the right foot-print of Christ; the section of the rock bearing the left foot-print was taken to the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in the Middle Ages. The guard explains that the footprints were left by Jesus as he ascended to Heaven. The rock is venerated by the Christian faithful as the last point on earth touched by Jesus Christ - quite a strong touch apparently as it left its imprint in solid rock!

Myth or Memory? We shall never know. The Ascension is recorded by Luke in his gospel (24, 50-53) and the Acts of the Apostles (1, 10-11). In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes that Jesus appeared “last of all to him” on the road to Damascus – that is to say, at least two years after the Ascension to Heaven.

Jerusalem was laid waste, the temple destroyed by the Romans in 66-70 C.E., and again in 135 C.E. “Holy places” were discovered in 326 C.E. by Queen Helena, mother of Roman Emperor Constantine, when it was no longer forbidden to worship openly, and when the ruler needed new religious symbols to enhance his stature. On his orders, the Holy Sepulcher Church was built on the Rock of Golgotha.

Ever since, Jerusalem and her memorials were constructed, destroyed, and reconstructed many times over, reflecting the long history of conflicts between – and within – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Just as much, they reflect the vanity of rulers, irrespective of their religion. Jerusalem is the Capital of Memory, where everybody has a past and nobody allows anyone else a future. “The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams – It’s hard to breath. Hatred is also a form of prayer, as is fear”, wrote Amos Elon.¹

The memorial chapel is an odd place. It is owned by those who don’t believe in Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension. It is located on the Mount of Olives, conquered and annexed by the State of Israel in 1967, following its victory over the armies of Jordan, Syria and Egypt in the third war for its survival (1947, 1956, 1967) – while its Jewish citizens are still waiting for the Coming of the Messiah.

In Jerusalem – holy Capital for the Jews, consisting of places holy to representatives of a variety of Christian Churches and the Islam – possession appears to be more important than the profession of one’s faith. The City reflects four tragedies of religious division – between Christians and Jews, Christians and Muslims, the Orthodox East and Latin West, and Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Descending from the Mount of Olives towards the old town of Jerusalem, one passes the place where Jesus is said to have shed tears over the city, and the garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed before being arrested. What is left of the Temple to the Jewish people is the Western Wall. On the Temple Mount, controlled by the Waqf, lie the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque. The Rock itself was the holy of holies to the Hebrew Temple, the Rock of Moriah on

¹ Amos Elon, *Jerusalem City of Mirrors*. Flamingo 1996. P. 62.

which Abraham did not sacrifice his son Isaac. For Muslims, it is the Rock from which Mohammed made his mystical return flight to heaven.

Descending towards Golgotha (now inside the Old town), one reaches the oldest Christian Holy Place, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Inside, Catholic, Orthodox, Armenian and Ethiopian Christians continue to quarrel with each other over parts of the building; the key to its entrance is held by a Muslim family to keep the peace among them. One wonders... Christians believe that the Sepulcher has been empty since the Resurrection of Jesus-Christ!

In April 1846, Catholic and Orthodox Easter fell on the same day. The dispute over who should be the first to announce Christ’s Resurrection in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher turned into a violent brawl between the Latin Franciscan custodians and the Orthodox Greek monks. Forty people died. The fighting monks embodied not only the East-West Schism but also the empires behind them. Russian Tsar Nicholas I of Moscow (then called the “Third Rome”) wanted to extend Russian control over the holy places in the City and over the Slavic people living in the Balkans. Imperial France supported the Holy See and the Franciscan custodians. Pope Pius IX restored the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1847². The British Empire supported the Evangelists and the Jews who wanted to return to the Ottoman region of Palestine. The brawl was part of the growing conflict between the British, French, and Russian Empires over the future of the declining Ottoman Empire, leading to the Crimean War of March 1853.³

Rather than “The City of Peace” on earth, Jerusalem is instead the tinderbox of imperial dreams, wars, and violent conflicts between the deeply divided adherents to the belief in one God. Much must have gone horribly wrong if, after more than twenty centuries, Christian leaders are still fighting over the holy places, Islamic rulers still want to dominate the City, and Palestinians claim it as their capital.

² After the Great Schism of 1054, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem belonged to the Orthodox Church. After the First Crusade, the Orthodox Patriarch was expelled. A Latin Patriarchate existed from 1099 – 1187, whereafter the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch came back.

³ Cf. Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem. The Biography*. Weidenfeld&Nicolson. London 2011, p. 331ff. Jean-Francois Colosimo, *La Crucifixion de l’Ukraine*. Editions Albin Michel, Paris 2022.

Jews have been hated and persecuted for Jesus' Crucifixion in Christian Europe since the beginning of the Second Century, causing lasting divisions. But why? After all, it was the Roman Consul Pontius Pilate who, in response to mobs mobilized by the Sanhedrin, decided to have Jesus flagellated, humiliated, and crucified. Why the Orthodox and Catholic Churches persisted in this "error," with lasting consequences, is dealt with in Chapter 3. This two millennia old doctrinal error is at the root of this book; why could this happen? And what should these Churches learn from it? These questions are important. The division between Christians and Jews is at the origin of subsequent divisions, discussed in chapters 4 to 6,

The wars with Islam, since 632 CE, are still with us today and have been sources of violent conflict and cruel warfare throughout the centuries, the cruel 2023 war between Hamas and Israel being but the latest example.

When Constantinople became the Capital of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the vast and complex Christian world, stretching deep into Asia, was about to be forgotten and the first steps were taken towards the Great Schism between the Orthodox East and the Latin West, consummated in 1054. The depth of this division has been a source of wars up until our twenty-first century, with the Russian Putin's and Patriarch Kirill's "holy war" against Ukraine, Europe, and the West, being one of the darkest acts of aggression in modern history.

The next great division is the conflict within the Western world between the Latin Church and the Churches of the Reformation, initiated by Marten Luther in 1517. It resulted in more than a century of cruel warfare throughout Europe, ending with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. These divisions are further fueled by conflicts between national churches in each of the many different Christian denominations and by doctrinal conflicts within each of them. For more than 2000 years, all of this happened despite Jesus' command "to love one another" and His ardent prayer "that all may be one as You, Father, are in me, and I in You" (John 15, 17 and 17, 21).

Why?

"Everything Jesus said was plain and clear" [...]. To this day many of Christ's words are incomprehensible because we are still moral and spiritual neanderthal men. The gospel arrow is aimed towards eternity, and that which we call Christian history is in many ways a series of clumsy and unsuccessful attempts to bring Christianity about."

Alexander Men spoke these words at the inauguration of his new "Open University" in Moscow on September 8, 1990, the evening before his assassination in front of his own house. His remarks on Christian history underline the tragedy of religious divisions. The tragedy of his assassination underlines the deep crisis in post-Soviet Russia, where democratization was attempted in the chaotic 1990's, and the Russian Orthodox Church was allowed to recover and rebuild her churches. When KGB officer Vladimir Putin became prime minister and president, "Soviet" totalitarian repression resumed. The concept of a "Russian World," proclaimed by the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, led to the war of aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and to World War following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

One may wonder how these tragic divisions could reflect the "good news" Jesus-Christ proclaimed according to the four gospels of St. Matthew, Marc, Luke and John.

When Jesus was presented in the Temple, Simeon blessed Him and his parents, prophesising: "*Look, he is destined ...to be a sign that is opposed*". (Luk. 2)

Where do we find His signs of contradiction and witness Europe's Christian heritage? This question is the one I open with in Chapter 1. We truly find it in the early Christian Church with the Apostles, St. Paul in particular. When the Church becomes the Official Church of the Roman Empire, the emphasis shifts towards doctrine and political theology.

The prophetic voice of Dostoyevsky resounds in Chapter 2, by way of his last novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), and leaves us with a most disturbing an-

swer: For the Grand Inquisitor, Jesus must never come back to bother his church. He must leave it in human hands. In Christian Europe, moreover, the wise warning, of the prophet Samuel, against choosing a king, was forgotten. In human hands, history is bound to reflect the fundamental dualism within each of us between good and evil, and the contrasts between rulers and the ruled population, between kings and their subjects. This contrast is sharpened by the third temptation (power over humanity), especially for the rulers following the model of the Roman Empire. This book is structured around these contrasts.

As it concerns the rulers, we focus on the great divisions: on the rejection of the Jewish People (Chapter 3); on the wars with Islam (Chapter 4); on the East-West Schism and the new doctrines of the Latin Church thereafter, and the troublesome rise of “the Third Rome” (Chapter 5); and on the wars of Reformation and Counter-reformation (Chapter 6). Throughout two millennia, the oftentimes violent divisions were nurtured by a political theology as it appeared since the fourth century, in an effort to formulate Church doctrine through a language of force and exclusion in the Ecumenical Councils. Almost unavoidably, political theology, through the Cain-doctrine, East-West Schism, Reformation and religious wars, led to the burning of jews, heretics, and books, to the inquisition and index, and ultimately to totalitarian ideologies (Chapter 7). In the twentieth and twenty first centuries, “Christian Europe” experienced (and continues to live through) the consequences. Millions suffered and perished due to the radical evil of the Totalitarian Regimes of Mussolini, Franco, and Salazar, of Lenin and Stalin’s Communism, Hitler’s National Socialism, and in the early twenty-first century, Putin’s kleptocratic version of totalitarian evil.

The problem of evil

The problem of evil will be the fundamental problem of post-war intellectual life in Europe – as death became the fundamental problem after the last war wrote Hannah Arendt in 1945. She reflected on the two cruel World Wars, started and mostly fought in “Christian” Europe. The fundamental problem of evil directly addresses the Gulag and the Holocaust, an evil with deep roots in European history. How could it possibly be that, in a continent impregnated

by Christian Civilization, such evil could grow almost unchallenged in the twentieth century, and again in the twenty-first century? We have looked at the many faces of evil: from outright torture, sadism, genocide and murder, to complicity, diplomatic silence, collaboration, amnesia, indifference, looking away or profiting from it.

When writing about evil, we refer to something that did not necessarily happen. The Gulag, the Holocaust and the Ukrainian genocide could have been avoided. The “good” could have prevented, or at least contained, the “evil”. Given its deep roots, the Christian content of European Civilization is directly at issue. The answer to the question is most disturbing and became a leading question in writing this book. From the second century onwards, Christian thought has been dominated by anti-Judaism, challenged only within the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1960’s. That is: sixteen centuries of evil, presented as official church doctrine. Anti-Judaism stands at the origin of anti-Semitism and many conflicts, divisions and conflagrations thereafter, none of them unavoidable.

With the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325, presided over by Emperor Constantine, the question of orthodoxy in the new faith was politicised and thus became a source of exclusion, violence, and oppression.

The politicisation of the Good News in a new political theology, can be called the original sin of the Christian Churches. This sin may well be responsible for “the centuries of blindness (that) have cloaked our eyes.”⁴ The evil it has caused becomes visible in how Jews and so called “heretics” have been mistreated from the fourth century onwards, and in the endless wars fought in “Christian Europe”, including the current Third World War.

Signs of Contradiction

Christian Churches, nevertheless, did offer guidance and means for living the faith and practicing the mission to be a sign of contradiction. In the Chapters 8-11, I selected a few major examples “from below” through which a true Chris-

⁴ Words from Holy Pope John XXIII, quoted in Chapter 3 *infra*.

tian Civilization could evolve, prosper and survive. The first one deals with the Christian Family as a sign of contradiction in Chapter 8. The second one is the conversion of the Word of God into the sacred spaces of beautiful churches and into holy life in Chapter 9. In the following two Chapters the theme is Creed and Creativity: Saints in Chapter 10, from Catharina of Alexandria and with St. Benedict as the central person and Patron of Europe, to Edith Stein and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Chapter 11 describes how the faith in Christ has been a continuing source of creativity in education, the arts, in literature and in science; from Dante, Michelangelo, Bach and Beethoven, Copernicus and Darwin, to Teilhard de Chardin in the twentieth century. Such personal and inspired creativity proved irrepressible, even by “true” doctrinal power. Chapters 8 – 11 are uplifting counterpoints to chapters 3 – 6. They have no pretence to be historical; they offer witnesses of faith and provide edifying stories that I found most inspiring. In Chapter 12, we look at our twenty-first century, yet again a time of world war in Europe and the Middle-East.

The quote from Alexander Men can serve as a reminder: What “we call Christian history is in many ways a series of clumsy and unsuccessful attempts to bring Christianity about.” From the highest authority figure to the simplest citizen, “without a history” we must, in humility and mercy, accept our own faults and fallibility. In human hands, nobody is infallible. The claim to infallibility, to being the only true or orthodox church⁵ and top-down revelation, breeds self-righteousness, vice, organised forgetting, intolerance and war. A Church claiming it can’t err, risks locking itself up in its own truth and it might take centuries, if it happens at all, for such a church to recognize its own errors and sins. In the Orthodox Churches, political theology was sustained by the symphony between state and church. In the Latin Church, political theology caused the creation of an Ecclesiastical State, the claim to supreme power after the East-West Schism, and the centralisation of Church authority after the loss of the Ecclesiastical States in the Nineteenth Century. The *aggiornamento*, launched by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, initiated remembering, reform and renewal. All Christian Churches still must come to terms with their own original sin of political theology and its consequences.

⁵ *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, as the full doctrinal sentence was.

After the half century of “radical evil,” the time had come in the Roman Catholic Church for an Ecumenical Council greater than doctrine, a Council which would shift the emphasis from the political theology of imposition and exclusion to a charismatic theology of *aggiornamento*, witness, inclusion, and mercy.

Salvation and the problem of power over men and women in the thought and words of Romano Guardini

For European Christians, learning from history is based on our recognition that we are – in Romano Guardini’s words – redeemed by way of Jesus’ Crucifixion, and not by way of the institution of God’s Kingdom on earth. As he wrote: “The first unlimited possibility has been lost. Salvation now becomes identified with sacrifice. Thus God’s kingdom does not come as it was meant to, in open history-revolutionizing fulfillment; it is to remain to the end of time suspended in the process of coming – its acceptance or rejection, progress or retrogression depending on the response of the individual or group in every period of world history.”⁶

The institution of God’s Kingdom is reserved for Jesus’ “Second Coming” at the end of times. In the meantime, we Christians live in the end-time in which the third of the three temptations continues to “hold captive forever the conscience” of mankind: “The devil then took him up a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, promising: All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage before me.”⁷

Romano Guardini devoted two of his shorter works to the problem of power in the modern and postmodern world.⁸ From “*Power and Responsibility*”, I quote from the third chapter, in which he pinpoints the four major dangers of power:

“**First** and most obvious is the danger of violent destruction. There still seem to be people who set their hopes on war. The destruction of human

⁶ Romano Guardini, *The Lord*. P. 245. Regnery Publishing 2012. Cf. Chapter 1 above.

⁷ Cf. (Matthew, 4, 8-9) Chapter 2, supra.

⁸ *Das Ende der Neuzeit; Die Macht*. In English translations: *The End of the Modern World and Power and Responsibility*.

life and talents, of economic and cultural goods which a new war would involve, surpasses understanding, still worse would be the spiritual losses. The last remnants of spiritual-ethical order, of respect for man, of character and inner security, would crumble. The result would be a long-lived attitude of belief solely in violence and trickery: nihilism fulfilled.”

Warfare has been a permanent feature in European history. Peace and a decent world order never materialized, not even after two devastating wars in the twentieth century and the invention of the atomic/nuclear weapons of mass-destruction.

Second, “Not so directly tangible, but looming on all sides is another danger. Man is acquiring ever more power over man, an ever profounder influence over him physically, intellectually, spiritually; but how will he direct that influence? One of the most terrible lessons which those whose cultural roots reach back before World War I had to learn, was that in concrete existence the spirit is much weaker than they had supposed. They were convinced that its influence was direct, hence that it must inevitably triumph over violence and cunning. “The human spirit cannot be suppressed for long.” “Truth will prevail.” “The real values will win in the end.” At the very least, this idealistic notion of the spirit’s immediacy and protective faculties was false.

Those who entertained it had to learn the hard way how far the power of the state with its public-conditioning organs reaches, and to what terrifying degree it is possible to cripple the spirit of the Individual, confuse the norms of the valid and the just.

Instead of “everything turning out all right,” the dignity of truth and the loftiness of justice; human dignity; the inviolability of man’s spiritual and physical being; freedom of the individual, of personal enterprise; the right to private opinion; freedom of speech; the trustworthiness of public servants, not only in regard to the letter of their instructions, but also to the spirit behind them; the freedom of science, art, education, medicine each to be answerable to its own deepest purpose, which of these was not de-

stroyed? Have not violence and deceit become established practice?

And let us have no illusions: these things took place not only in the temporary confusion of anarchy, but within the studied pattern of theoretical and practical systems, carefully prepared.

Can, then, the spirit fall sick? [...] On what does its health depend? Plato, and later the fullness of Revelation. St. Augustine, already made this clear: the health of the spirit depends on its relation to truth, to the good and the holy. The spirit thrives on knowledge, justice, love, adoration; not allegorically, but literally. What happens when man’s relation to these facets is destroyed? Then the spirit sickens. And not, instead, as soon as it errs or lies or is guilty of an injustice. It is difficult to determine just how many of these “exposures” to disease the spirit can withstand before it succumbs to that inner blindness, that destruction of all proficiency, which are symptoms of overarching spiritual decline.

However, this much is certain: once truth *as such* loses its significance; once success usurps the place of justice and goodness; once the holy is no longer perceived or even missed, the spirit is stricken indeed. What occurs thus, is no longer a matter for psychology; then no therapeutical measures help; the only thing that can save is conversion, metanoia.

Seen from this vantagepoint, how heavily do they weigh, the twelve-year experiment in Germany and the one almost four times older in the East? Yet one of these systems did last twelve years, and what brought it down came not from within but from without. The other⁹ has outlasted decades, growing mightily all the while. We dare not underestimate the historical power of such experiments; still less, as the whole fabric of our present-day life, with its rationalization and mechanization, its techniques of forming public opinion, and its control of education, is a tempting preparation for outright imitation. It can be an attractive temptation, even when specifically accepted and expressed Ideas apparently oppose it, for usually it is the enemy who dictates the methods, and methods are often stronger than ideas.”

⁹ The “other” refers to the totalitarian Soviet Union.

Indeed, the European spirit has been stricken by complicity in evil policies. The list of complicities is a very long one, from active execution to passive indifference.

A third danger is the hold that bare power and violence has over existence. There are things that can well be controlled by rational power: everything connected with inanimate nature, for instance. As soon as we progress to animate nature, it is another story; intuition and sensitivity immediately become essential. And when we reach the human order, all that has to do with education, welfare, culture, and civil services, we find ourselves in territory where everything, to remain human and be spiritually successful, must first pass through the “personal center,” that inmost core of the responsible human heart. The true, the good, and the righteous are realizable only if accepted by living people with internal, genuine conviction, and to bring this about requires reverence, encouragement, and patience. He must respect their freedom, stir their initiatives, awaken their creative centers. Working with the impulses of living persons, he must freely accept all their false starts and detours. The greater a man’s power, the stronger the temptation to take the shortcut of force: the temptation to nullify the individual and his freedom, to ignore both his creative originality and his personal truth; to achieve the desired end simply by force, dismissing what cannot be forced as not worthy of consideration. In other words: the temptation to erect a culture on rational and technical grounds alone. Even spiritually, man is malleable, once dialectics and mass-suggestion, propaganda and Weltanschauung or historical perspective, even legal testimony are undertaken not with respect for truth, but to support predetermined ends.”

A fourth and final danger is that which power holds for those who wield it. Nothing corrupts purity of character and the lofty qualities of the soul more than power. To wield power that is neither determined by moral responsibility nor curbed by respect for the other, results in the destruction of all that is human in the wielder himself.”¹⁰ Power corrupts; totalitarian power corrupts totally.

¹⁰ Romano Guardini, *Die Macht*. Würzburg 1955. Excerpts from: *Power And Responsibility A Course of Action for the New Age*, Translated by Elinor C. Briefs. Henry Regnery Company Chicago 1961, pages 58ff.

Dissolution of the modern worldview

The third chapter of *Das Ende der Neuzeit* deals with the dissolution of the modern worldview.¹¹ The core problem on which life or destruction depends, writes Guardini, is the problem of power over men and women – not the increase of power, but its restraint, its true use. With the growth of power, mankind is again confronted with chaos. To cope with it, three virtues are required: a serious commitment to the Truth (Jesus-Christ); courage in challenging human chaos and untruth; and asceticism, that is, self-control over one’s own power. Guardini’s apocalyptic, eschatological vision in the last paragraphs was strongly influenced by the fear for the use of atomic weapons and the further expanding totalitarian Soviet repression,¹² in the early years of the Cold War. This was well before the era of East-West *détente* and the *aggiornamento* in the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960’s, in which Europe learned to live in the illusion of the longevity of East-West *détente* and Europe’s division.

The last decade of the twentieth century, following the peaceful end of the Cold War and Europe’s East-West division and despite the violent civil war in former Yugoslavia, was a brief period of hope. Such hope was also expressed in Pope John-Paul’s impressive program for celebrating the year 2000.

In Europe and the West, the brief period of hope also showed its darker sides in excessive privatization of public life, globalization for profit, the rise of aggressive, intolerant secularism, and the dismissal of history as irrelevant and obsolete. The notion of the “common good” lost out against private profit, competition, and self-enrichment. Christian principles and family virtues came to be seen as remnants from a bygone era, which should be abolished in the name of postmodern gender ideologies and modern values beyond good and evil.

As I quoted Guardini above, with regards to the second danger of power: “once truth as such loses its significance; once success usurps the place of justice and goodness; once the holy is no longer perceived, the spirit is stricken indeed, ...

¹¹ Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*. Würzburg 1950. English translation: *The End of the Modern World*.

¹² Cf. also: Karl Jaspers, *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen. Politisches Bewusstsein in unserer Zeit*. München 1958.

then no therapeutical measures help; the only thing that can save is conversion, metanoia.” Without such conversion Europeans are too weak in spirit to resist the evil powers rising again in the twenty-first century; as we have been seeing all too well ever since Putin came to power in Russia.

In the early twenty-first century, the problem of power came back with a vengeance. The first one was the disruption caused by Islamic terrorism since 9/11, (the destruction of the world trade towers in New York) and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. The second one was the ascent to power of former KGB officer Vladimir Putin and his cohort of kleptocrats in Russia, and his war against Ukraine in 2014, followed by a full invasion in 2022. The third one is the extremely violent war between Hamas and Israel since 7 October 2023.

As Hannah Arendt wrote:¹³ totalitarian evil happened, therefore it can happen again.

As it does.

¹³ Cf, Chapter 7

PART I

MISSION AND TEMPTATIONS

CHAPTER 1

SIGN OF CONTRADICTION?

Simeon said to Mary, the mother of Jesus after he had blessed God: “This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed” (Luk. 2)

Jesus defied all expectations on the coming of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. He was born from a virgin mother. Mary’s husband Josef was quite upset by her pregnancy and even by the birth of her son in his ancestral town of David. Jesus was born in a dark manger, then set alight by a choir of angels from heaven (Luk.2). Josef, quite troubled, stayed apart from mother and child, as the Orthodox Icons on the birth of Jesus teach. In Matthew’s Gospel, only the visit of the Magi to “the infant king of the Jews was mentioned (Math.2).

Next to nothing the Gospels report on His life before He turned thirty. All four Gospels record what He taught during His three years of public life. He performed many miracles and healed many who were sick, but was also constantly on the run, according to one of the most beautiful stories written about His

life.¹⁴ When Jesus, in the third year of His public life, was arrested and crucified, His disciples at the time showed little courage to defend or follow him: Judas betrayed him; Peter, the rock on whose faith He was to build His Church, renounced Him. The others, with the exception of John, fled from the scene of capture. Jesus, the Messiah was arrested, flagellated, and crucified.

The Crucifix is itself the paramount sign of contradiction. Used by the Romans as an instrument for cruel and humiliating execution, Jesus turned the Crucifix into a sign of charity and victory over death and invited us to follow Him, as the way, the truth, and the life.

The disciples thereafter did not believe in His Resurrection and locked themselves up. Apparently, they left their hide-out to the Mount of Olives some forty days after Jesus' Resurrection.

"While they were with Him they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He answered them 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' No sooner had he said this than he was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight." (Acts 1,6-9)

They still did not understand! True faith, courage, and close presence throughout were manifested only by two women: his mother the Holy Mary and Maria Magdalena.

Thereafter, they went back to the upstairs room where they were staying. There, in this room, we read in the acts, something absolutely extraordinary happened to them, through which these frightened men were transformed into true apostles.

"And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it

¹⁴ Alexandre MEN, *Jésus, le Maître de Nazareth*. Nouvelle Cité 1999. French translation from the original: *Syn Tchelovetcheski*. Moscow 1992.

filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." (Acts 2, 1-4)

It was at Pentecost that His twelve disciples received the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit, as it turned out, was a life-changing event, so much so that those outside of the Upper-room could hear the noise. They assembled in great numbers "from every nation under heaven." Peter stood up with the eleven apostles and addressed the crowd, and each of them could hear the message in his or her own language, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles (2, 19-36).

His address was truly extraordinary. Just imagine: a simple fisherman, illiterate, from Galilee, who had renounced Jesus a few weeks ago. He now stands up before a huge crowd and, speaking as a learned preacher, proclaims Jesus as the Messiah! It was the Holy Spirit who turned him and other fearful men into true apostles of Jesus-Christ the Messiah.

Still, the Acts (1-8) of the Apostles limit themselves mostly to Apostles Peter and Philip. Beyond the Four Gospels, nothing can be found on the other apostles, who presumably went out to proclaim the Gospel to "the ends of the earth." What happened to them and their mission to proclaim Jesus the Messiah? In the Calendar of the Catholic Church, all, except St. John, are venerated as martyrs for the new faith, but we don't know for sure where they went to proclaim the Gospel. Is our ignorance the outcome of an organised forgetting, as in the case of the Nestorians? Or did none of the Apostles, besides Peter and Paul, evangelize? From the four Gospels and the Acts, we learn a lot about St. Peter, his character and his election by Jesus as the leader of the Apostles.

The four gospels were written in Greek. The Gospel ascribed to Mark was written in Rome, probably between 66-70 AD; the Gospels attributed to Matthew and Luke around AD 85-90 AD and the Gospel ascribed to John in the early second century. Despite the traditional ascriptions, the true authors are unknown. Most scholars agree that none were written by eyewitnesses. Jesus and his disciples spoke Aramean.

After the Acts, we lose track of Peter, until Eusebius tells us that he was crucified in Rome, probably in the year 67 A.D., well over 30 years after his Pentecostal address. From the two James brothers, we know that one was stoned to death. The other brother – the first bishop of Jerusalem – was beheaded shortly before the siege of Jerusalem. St. John lived longer than any other apostle, became bishop of Ephesus, and was banned to Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation, before he died early in the second century. The other apostles may have proclaimed the Gospel as far as the Persian Empire, China, India, Ethiopia, and around the Black Sea.

In Eusebius' History of the Church, the "Holy Apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered over the whole world" at the time of the Jewish War. "These things [the war] happened to the Jews in requital for James the Righteous, who was a brother of Jesus known as Christ, for though he was the most righteous of men, the Jews put him to death." According to Eusebius, the siege "under Vespasian was the penalty laid upon the Jews by divine justice for their crimes against Christ."¹⁵ St. Augustine shared this assessment. "[But] the Jews who killed him and refused to believe in him, to believe that he had to die and rise again, suffered a more wretched devastation at the hands of the Romans and were utterly uprooted from their kingdom, where they had already been under the dominion of foreigners", and they were dispersed all over the world.¹⁶

In the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we encounter a certain man named Saul, "still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains." As he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly surrounded him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul replied: "Who are you, sir?" The reply came: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." This Appearance of the Risen Lord, some two years after His Ascension to Heaven, transformed persecutor Saul into Apostle Paul. The Letters he wrote

¹⁵ Josephus, *The Jewish War*. As quoted by Eusebius, *The History of the Church*. Penguin Books 1989, p.61. His own assessment on p.41.

¹⁶ In *The City of God*. Book XVIII, Chapter 46. (On p. 827 in the English translation, Penguin Classics 1984.

in the last decade of his apostolate to the Churches he had founded, together with the Four Gospels of Matthew, Marc, Luke and John, became the primary source of the faith of the Christians. Jesus selected his most influential Apostle separately, from Heaven rather than at the time of His life on earth in Galilee or Jerusalem! Paul and Barnabas were sent on mission by the Holy Spirit directly from Antioch. Paul met Peter (Kefas) only three years later and for a very short time; he also briefly met James, the brother of John, before he was beheaded by Herod. (Acts 12,2). It took another fourteen years before Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem again.

St. Paul, the apostle of the gentiles.

Karen Armstrong¹⁷ might be right with her conclusion that the Christians – as they were first named in Antioch – would have been little more than a Jewish sect, had there been no Apostle Paul. It was Paul who preached the Gospel to the gentiles in parts of the Roman Empire, and not only to the Jewish communities. In doing so, St. Paul was the first disciple who took the mission "to be a sign of contradiction" literally to heart. He contradicted the Jerusalem Christian community by preaching the Gospel to the gentiles, and he contradicted Roman polytheism by preaching the belief in one God throughout the Empire. The letters he wrote to the faithful in the cities he visited between 50 and 58 AD are the oldest, most reliable sources of the new Christian faith. All of them were written before the Jewish War and before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his soldiers in 70 A.D. The Gospel of Marc, according to modern exegesis, almost literally quotes from a lost source, referred to as Q (from the German *Quelle*). The *Didache* (the Teaching), containing Christian doctrine on the Decalogue and discovered in 1875, may well have been another source written before the Jewish War.¹⁸

The dates mentioned above are important. Before the Jewish War, the new Christians were persecuted primarily by the Jews. The war marked the es-

¹⁷ Karen Armstrong, *St Paul The Misunderstood Apostle*. London 2015. My paragraph on St. Paul is based on her fascinating biography of St Paul relying on the seven letters attributed to him.

¹⁸ Ben H. Swett published an English translation with comments on 30 January 1998 in which he concludes that the *Didache* was written before 49 A.D. See: Website: *Early Christian Writings*.

trangement between Hellenic Jews and Christian- Jews.

Soon thereafter, the latter were scattered all over the world and came to consider – in accordance with very Old Testament concept of Yahweh – the destruction of Jerusalem as God’s punishment. At the same time, the early Christians were convinced that the “End of Times” had come, and that the return of Christ would occur in their lifetime.

Saul was a particularly zealous Pharisee who persecuted the Christians before the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, some two years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. After His resurrection, so we read in Paul’s First letter to the Corinthians, Jesus appeared to the Apostles, to more than five hundred of the brothers, and last of all, “he appeared to me too, as though I was born when nobody expected it.” (1 Cor. 15.5-8). Paul became an apostle through the grace given to him. For Paul, “the most important thing about his experience was that he actually *did see* the Lord, and that Jesus appeared to him in exactly the same way as he had appeared to the Twelve.”¹⁹ His encounter with Jesus was a revelation and not just a vision. Thenceforth, Paul did not go to Jerusalem to meet the other apostles, but instead went off to Arabia, so he writes in his letter to the Galatians. No less than three years later, he went up to Jerusalem (only) to meet Cephas [Peter], just for fifteen days. It was not until fourteen years had passed, that he travelled to Jerusalem again. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul clearly went his own way in preaching the gospel of Jesus. As Karen Armstrong writes: “In his letters, he was not writing for the Everyman and never intended to make a general ruling applicable to everybody, but was always addressing a specific problem in a particular congregation. Nor was he legislating for future generations of Christians, since he expected the *Parousia* in his own lifetime.”²⁰ His letters apply what was revealed to him and what he had learnt in the years of withdrawal.

According to St. Paul, “Jesus’s death and resurrection had transformed history and changed the fate of all peoples, regardless of their beliefs or ethnicity. He had turned “the prevailing norms of the political world on their head.” Hence

¹⁹ Karen Armstrong, *op.cit.* p.27. In this paragraph I rely on her fascinating biography.

²⁰ *Op.cit.* p. 73.

Paul’s passion to change the world and challenge Roman society and the Jewish people.²¹ Freedom, following liberation from the bondage of sin, was the theme of his message to the Galatians. Paul urged them to resign their submission as well as the Greco-Roman religion, to stand firm and to refuse to submit to the yoke of slavery. He challenged the fundamental social assumptions of his time by writing that “there is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male or female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.”²²

“Where the emperor cult [in the Roman Empire] deified power and wealth, the cross had revealed an entirely new set of divine values.” Paul “stressed discontinuity, but in doing so he violated some of the most fundamental values of his time.” He depicted God “declaring his solidarity with those whom Roman law ignored” and allied himself with the victims of oppression.”²³ In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul “scrupulously advocated equal rights for men and women in marriage.”²⁴

Finally, Paul practised what he preached. He worked long hours as a tent maker to earn his living, thus contradicting the prevailing attitude of the upper classes in society that an apostle like him should be able to live without working.²⁵ By working and living in solidarity with common labourers, Paul gave them dignity.

St. Paul has truly been the first who practiced and preached what it means to follow Christ and to be a sign of contradiction to the world. Although he was not one of the twelve, he became the apostle of the gentiles and brought the Christian faith to Western Asia (what is now Turkey), to Greece, Rome and Spain.²⁶

After (three and) fourteen years, St. Paul’s relations to St. Peter were rather complicated, as Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians (2, 1-21). He and Barna-

²¹ *Op.cit.* p.52,105.

²² *Op.cit.* p. 55.

²³ *Op.cit.* p.71,75.

²⁴ *Op.cit.* p. 81. The passages to the contrary in the letter to the Romans and in the letter to the Ephesians are not from St. Paul but added later and by others.

²⁵ *Op.cit.* p.33-34.

²⁶ According to St. Clemens, second Pope, in his letter to the Corinthians.

bas came to Jerusalem for the Council of Jerusalem to deal with the controversy over circumcision of gentile converts. Additionally, Peter came to Antioch, where he was censured by Paul: “But when I saw that they were not on the right road in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of all: ‘If you, though a Jew, are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’” Thereafter, Paul continued his own way as the apostle to the Gentiles, leaving Peter as the apostle to the circumcised. In so doing, St. Paul did not reject or condemn the Jews. In his letter to the Romans, he concludes his three chapters (9-11) on the place of Israel with the following prediction and promise: “and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob; and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’” In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. (11,26-29.)

From apostle to apostolic and church fathers

In the three centuries between the death of St. Paul and the rise to power of Emperor Constantine the Great, the Christian Faith developed and rapidly spread as a counter- culture in the Roman Empire. Our best source regarding this period is Eusebius’ *History of the Church*. For a long time, Antioch was the most important centre of the new faith. The Christian faith, for a variety of reasons, had the character of a counterculture.

They were “strangers” in the Roman Empire and, as a consequence, subject to persecution for their refusal to honour the emperor or sacrifice to the pagan gods. Persecutions were intermittent rather than permanent, local rather than Empire-wide, targeting people like Christian soldiers, rather than populations. Many Christians wanted to become martyrs to their faith and to die and be resurrected like the Christ they had decided to follow. The most widespread persecutions took place in the army of Emperor Marcus-Aurelius during the second century, under Emperor Decius in the third century, and throughout the whole empire under Emperor Diocletian, the immediate predecessor of

Emperor Constantine. These persecutions were excessively cruel and violent.

In the early days of the Christian era, religion and politics were not separate but intimately connected parts of social life. The unity of purpose and doctrine was essential for the new faith’s survival amidst a pagan society. The truth of the Christian faith required virtue to grow and spread; it required bishops, learned men and scholars to explain the signs of contradiction. Living in virtue is admired by the world and feared and respected by rulers; it is something Christians have frequently been persecuted for.²⁷

Christians could be recognized through three principal characteristics: 1) Christians are called to spread the faith - through example and evangelization; 2) they are taught to continuously renew themselves – through repentance, reconciliation, reform, contrition and conversion; and 3) they are inclined to continuously dispute the “true” way to follow Jesus, as we can already read from the outset in the Acts of the Apostles. Evangelization is the first mission of every Christian, and it is a worldwide, universal one. A faith that is no longer spread, is condemned to die. Contrary to the Islam, Christian evangelization began peacefully from the bottom up rather than through violent conquest. Self-renewal is the outcome of charity, humility and forgiveness as fundamental virtues in daily life.

Disputes pertaining to the “true” way to follow Jesus occurred as early as in the age of the Apostles, who were all Jews. Luke, the Apostolic and Church fathers were not.

The transition, represented by this contrast, had far-reaching consequences for the development and formulation of Christian doctrines:

First, most of the fathers lacked knowledge of the original text of the Hebrew Bible, the Midrash (commentaries on the Bible), and their interpretations in Jewish theology, and were not very interested in them. Their idea of God came from Greek philosophy.

²⁷ Cf. Peter Bamm, *Welten des Glaubens*. 1959.

Secondly, the early Christians firmly believed that the return of Christ and the end of times would occur in their lifetime. They lived accordingly, without planning for the future. What the early sources disclose is “the combination in the same minds, of an intense apocalyptic expectation that history will end and of the willingness to live with the prospect of a continuance of human history – both of these finding expression in an increasing emphasis on the centrality of Jesus.”²⁸ The concept of Jesus as a Rabbi became an embarrassment in the second century and an obscurity thereafter. He had become a turning-point in history, moving away from His Jewish origins.

Thirdly, they organized themselves in local churches with a bishop, but more in the sense of communities than of institutionalized churches. From the mid second century onwards, the monarchical episcopate (i.e., the rule by a single bishop as the structural requirement of defence against heresy and Judaism) led to a doctrine of “correction and fulfilment”.

With it, the tradition was born from the appropriation of the Jewish tradition by the Christian Church. The “Old Testament” henceforward came to be claimed as the Church’s own, including the exclusive right to its proper interpretation.²⁹ The “Old Law” had to be abolished. Out of this appropriation developed the Cain-Doctrine, which we shall further explore in Chapter 3.

The Apostolic Fathers were those who had been taught by one of the apostles themselves. St. Clemens wrote the First Letter to the Corinthians outside the New Testament. St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, both disciples of St. John, were both martyred. Church Fathers belonged to the next generations, variously distinguished between Greek and Latin Fathers, and between the ante-Nicene fathers, and the Nicene and post-Nicene fathers. The two distinctions reflected the growing distance between the Greek East and Latin West, and the transition from persecution to prominence. They all wrote in opposition to Judaism and other heresies.

Justin the Martyr, born in the early second century and martyred in 166 A.D.,

²⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries. His place in the History of Culture*. New Haven and London 1985 at p. 25.

²⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Development of Doctrine*. Volume 1. “Praeparatio Evangelica.

was one of those virtuous gentile Christians. He considered it his task to seek and proclaim the truth as a philosopher. As H. Chadwick wrote: “A thoughtful Christian of A.D. 150 contemplating the tiny of his community and the magnitude of the forces entrenched against its revolutionary program could not fail to conclude that by any natural criterion of judgment the prospects for the Church were less than rosy. Justin remains cheerfully extrovert, confident that Christianity is the divinely planned way and will therefore win.”

He was an early advocate that the Christian apologist must, first of all, present accurate information about his faith. If Christianity is true, it has nothing to fear from scrutiny.

When, at the end of his First Apology, Justin describes Baptism and the Eucharist, there is a “clearly implied thesis that, contrary to the natural expectations of his pagan readers, these rites are not black magic, and indeed could hardly be more innocuous and morally improving. The false charges of unmentionable vice provided a justification both for the mob violence and the official attitude of the persecuting government.”³⁰

Incarnation and the Christian concept of history

As Christopher Dawson writes: “The doctrine of the Incarnation which is the central doctrine of the Christian faith is also the center of history, and thus it is natural and appropriate that our traditional Christian history is framed in a chronological system which takes the year of Incarnation as its point of reference and reckons its annals backwards and forwards from this fixed center” – as we and the world still do today.

“Thus the Christian conception of history is essentially unitary. It has a beginning, a center, and an end. This beginning, this center, and this end transcend history; they are not historical events in the ordinary sense of the word, but

³⁰ H. Chadwick, *Justin Martyr's Defence Of Christianity*. A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures. John Rylands Library. Oxford University. P. 275-297. <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/.../datastream>. English translation of Justin's works can be found in: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. ANFO 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. On p. 244 ff.

acts of divine creation to which the whole process of history is subordinate.”³¹

At this point, we must emphasize the contradiction between the Christian (and Judaic) view of history and the prevailing Greek, and Roman views of history at the time. The Christian/ and Judaic view of history is linear rather than cyclical; history moves from creation to the end of times. Within this view, a human being is unique, created once and for all, moving from conception, earthly birth and death to eternal life. His or her life has a purpose. Their dignity, therefore, is the foundation of life, faith and society.

There is an interplay between the history of salvation and world history. There is a history of mankind and a history of the human person; there is a fundamental dualism in the historical process, rooted in the human faculty to pursue the good or do evil.

For us Christians, learning from history is based on our recognition that we are – in Romano Guardini’s words – redeemed by way of Jesus Crucifixion, and not by way of the institution of God’s Kingdom on earth. As he wrote:

“The first unlimited possibility has been lost. Salvation now becomes identified with sacrifice. Thus God’s kingdom does not come as it was meant to, in open history-revolutionizing fulfillment; it is to remain to the end of time suspended in the process of coming – its acceptance or rejection, progress or retrogression depending on the response of the individual or group in every period of world history.”³²

The institution of God’s Kingdom is reserved for Jesus’ “Second Coming” as we can read in Lucas 21. 25ff. :

“And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect; hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.”

³¹ Christopher Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*. ISI Books 2002. On p. 247 in the Chapter on ‘The Christian View of History p.247,249.

³² Romano Guardini, *The Lord*. P. 245. Regnery Publishing 2012.

The times in between – which we call the end-times - will be marked by terror and fear. The Christian Faith belongs to this time “in between.” As Christians, we are living in the time in which God’s kingdom continues to be in the process of coming; its progression or retrogression depends on our response. No Church, Empire or State can claim to embody or prefigure the future kingdom of God. As we read in Chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation, Satan will be released from prison when the thousand years are over and “will come out to lead astray all the nations in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and mobilize them for war [...]. They will besiege the camp of the saints, but fire from heaven will consume them. What follows, according to the Book of Revelation, is the last judgment.

Throughout the more than two thousand years since the pronouncement of His prayer on the eve of His crucifixion, the unity that Jesus prayed for - according to St. John’s Gospel - has been under continuous threat: first between Jews and Christians, then between the true doctrine and heresies, later between Eastern and Western Christians, and between Catholics and Reformation Christians, and more recently between nation-based Churches. No Christian Church emerged unscathed from these divisions, and all believers suffered and continue to suffer from them.

Guardini’s quotation offers us profound insight: the world is not divided between good and bad guys, between the true believers and the heretics, between believing Christians and wandering Jews, between good Christians and Barbarians, or between Christian Churches and Evil Empires. Instead, the boundary between “good” and “evil” runs through each of us, through our families, our Churches, our societies and political institutions. As people and as communities, we can make a difference. At the same time, we must be aware of our own weaknesses and limits, our failures and/or lack charity.

Before Christ’s Second Coming, there shall be no perfect Church or thousand year reign of Christ. God’s kingdom remains suspended and in the process of coming. The history of salvation and the history of mankind are intertwined but not the same.

In addition, there are the footprints of saints and sinners, of pilgrims and poets, of popes and peoples, artists and architects, composers and confessors, in cities and churches, in music and museums, in poems and paintings, in homes and habits, and, last but not least, in our inner conscience.

The Christian Faith is considered to be one of the world's great religions still alive.³³ Together with the Jewish Faith and the Islam, it is a faith in One God, as He revealed himself to mankind. As such, they contradict the other great religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, for they are not based on revelation and allow for polytheism, including the deification of the political ruler.

The faith in one God, the Creator, includes the belief in the unicity and the dignity of the human person, and so contradicts the various concepts of re-incarnation in other religions.

The Christian Faith in the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – adds a new dimension of love to the strict Jewish and Muslim Faith in the one and unique Yahweh or Allah. The Triune God offers salvation through Jesus' incarnation, and continuous support through the Holy Spirit.

Despite the commandment “*to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself (Marc 12,29-32)*”, Jews, Christians and Muslims have waged war against each other and among themselves throughout history, in the name of God's revealed truth as they saw it.

We must be aware that too many imprints of Christianity have been bloody, cruel and violent. Peace on earth may be a Christian dream, but like others, Christians have also been warmongers. We must realize that the three most devastating, deadly, and inhuman wars to ever exist, fought in the twenty and twenty-first centuries, began at the heart of so-called Christian Europe. Any reflection on Europe's Christian heritage must take this ongoing catastrophe into account.

³³ Cf. *The World's Great Religions*. Time Inc. 1957. Dutch Edition published by W. Gaade/Den Haag.

From persecution to prominence

The last three books in Eusebius' *History of the Church* describe the serious and widespread persecutions of the Christians under Emperors Diocletian (since 301 A.D), Maximilian and Galerius until Maximilian's death in 313, and the victory of Constantine as the sole Emperor. The persecution began with the Christians in the army. “In the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian, in the month Dystrus, called March by the Romans, when the feast of the Saviour's passion was near at hand, royal edicts were published everywhere, commanding that the churches be levelled to the ground and the Scriptures be destroyed by fire, and ordering that those who held places of honour be degraded, and that the household servants, if they persisted in the profession of Christianity, be deprived of freedom. Such was the first edict against us. But not long after, other decrees were issued, commanding that all the rulers of the churches in every place be first thrown into prison, and afterwards by every artifice be compelled to sacrifice.”³⁴

The persecutions were cruel and widespread throughout the Empire, and created many martyrs. They lasted for ten years, until Constantine could establish himself as the sole Emperor of the Roman Empire.

Emperor Constantine inaugurated the century in which the Christian faith received official recognition through the Edict of Tolerance (311 AD) by Galerius and the Edict of Milan (313).³⁵

Not long thereafter, Constantine decided to build his Christian Jerusalem next to the pagan Aelia Capitolina – the name given to the city by Emperor Hadrian in 135 AD. Jerusalem became a Christian Holy Place. Emperor Julian (the apostate) returned the city to the Jews in 362 AD, but within a year Julian's acts were reversed; Christianity's reign was restored and Jews became banned from the city.

The Christian faith became the official Church of the Empire under Emperor Theodosius in 385.³⁶ “It is our desire that all the various nations which are

³⁴ Eusebius, op.cit. chapters 8 and 9.

³⁵ Full text of the two Edicts in: Fordham University, Internet History Sourcebooks

³⁶ Loc. Cit. The Edicts of Milan (313) and Theodosius (385).

subject to our clemency and moderation, should continue to the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness.”

Soon after his death, the Empire disintegrated under the invasions of the “Barbarian” tribes. The West-Roman Empire collapsed and disappeared sometime between 410 and 476 AD. The East-European Empire would survive as the Byzantine Empire, with the (Orthodox) Christian Church as the official Church and the Emperor as its head, until its final disappearance in 1453. For a brief period in the sixth century, Emperor Justinian would re-unite the two halves of the Roman Empire. Jerusalem would continue as a Byzantine, Christian city until - and after a short period under Persian occupation - its conquest by Caliph Omar in 632 AD.

The Barbarian tribes – like the Vandals, the Goths, and the Huns – were converted to the Christian faith in the process, though often to the so-called heretic variety of the Arians. In 499 AD., Clovis, the king of the Franks, was converted from Arianism to the true faith.

The fifth century marked the beginning of an era of mass-migration and continuous warfare. Invasions did not just involve fighting armies, but whole tribes on the move. The last phase in this era began with the Arab-Islamic invasions, which occurred within years after the death of Mohammed in 632 AD. When the Arab armies met their first defeat near Tours a century later, the Persian Empire had disappeared, and the Byzantine Empire had been seriously shattered. The Frankish Kingdom had emerged as the principal political power in the Western part of Europe.

The barbarian invasions and the disintegration of the Empire in the West, left the Pope of the Christian Church as the principal force for the defence of Roman citizens and the spreading of the faith. The Church adopted the structure of the Roman Empire as its model of organization. Even the Papal Title “Pontifex Maximus” was borrowed from the Roman Senate.

St. Ambrose

It took a long struggle to (officially) replace traditional Roman polytheism with the new Christian faith in one Trinitarian God. St. Ambrose, brilliant governor, and later the chosen Bishop of Milan, achieved the symbolic victory against Symmachus in their dispute over the representation of the great god Serapis in the building of the Roman Senate. It was removed indeed.

Ambrose, however, also established another important principle against the very devote and Christian Emperor Theodosius, explained by Theodoret of Cyrus, regarding the killing of the people of Thessalonica: “You do not reflect, it seems, O Emperor, on the guilt you have incurred by that great massacre; but now that your fury is appeased, do you not perceive the enormity of your crime?. Your subjects, O Emperor, are of the same nature as yourself, and not only so, but are likewise your fellow servants; for there is one Lord and Ruler of all, and He is the maker of all creatures, whether princes or people. How would you look upon the temple of the one Lord of all? How could you lift up in prayer hands steeped in the blood of so unjust a massacre? Depart then, and do not by a second crime add to the guilt of the first.”³⁷

The distinction between ecclesiastical authority and earthly power is a clear influence of the Christian faith on human history, standing in sharp contrast to the exaltation of the state under the Roman Empire and the “Third Rome”-like Russian Empire. It made clear that the highest sovereign authority of the land also remains bound by divine law.

St. Augustine.

St. Ambrose baptized a pupil in the rhetoric of Symmachus named Augustine into the Church, who would become the last and probably the greatest of the Fathers of the Church. Augustine led a turbulent life in a turbulent epoch. He was born in North Africa in the year 354 AD, and had a concubine, who gave him a son. He was later converted to the Christian faith by his mother Monica,

³⁷ From: Ancient History Sourcebook: St. Ambrose Humiliates Theodosius the Great. In: Theodoret (c.393-466 CE), Ecclesiastical History, V.17-18. With an introduction by Davis (editor)

and was baptized in 387. He was ordained a priest and chosen as bishop of Hippo in 396, where he lived until his death in 430 AD. That year, Hippo was under siege by the Vandals, and destroyed a year later. Nothing, today, is left of the city, or of the Christian faith in most of North Africa. Saint Augustine, however, remains alive through his many works and the congregation he founded. Among his many works, his *Confessions* and *City of God* especially continue to influence Western and European thinking.

The *City of God*, his major work, reflects both the turbulence in his own life and of his times. He began writing it a year after the destruction of Rome in 410 AD, and completed the 22 books in 426 AD. In it, he takes issue with almost everything and everyone: the immorality of Roman society, polytheism, paganism, Jews, Christian heretics, and philosophers. Augustine, writes Dawson, “had to fight a continuous battle, not only against the paganism and unbelief of the open enemies of Christianity, but also against the fanaticism and sectarianism of his fellow-Christians.”³⁸ Still Augustine lived the time when Christianity was triumphant, and paganism withered.

The principal source for the *City of God*, are the Books of the Bible. Augustine wrote on the basis of his faith in Christ as the source of salvation for mankind. Augustine’s principal argument, of lasting importance for Western and European thought, can be found in his exposition of the two cities: the earthly city and the city of God. His eschatological and social dualism was characteristic for early Christian thinking based on the gospel of the Apostle Paul.³⁹

In Book XIV, Augustine contrasts the City of God to the earthly city, in the first the love of God versus the love of self in the second. Obviously, as mortal human beings we live in both cities. The City of God is in the process of becoming and we are the pilgrims to that city. As Augustine writes in Chapter 17, titled “What Produces Peace, and What Discord, Between the Heavenly and Earthly Cities:” “the families which do not live by faith seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith look for those eternal blessings which are promised...Thus the things necessary for this mor-

³⁸ Op.cit. p. 322.

³⁹ Cf. Dawson, op.cit. p. 323.

tal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in using them.”

Augustine is realistic about the role and position of the Church. “We must understand in one sense the kingdom of heaven” he writes, “in which exist together both he who breaks what he teaches and he who does it, the one being least, the other great, and in another sense the kingdom of heaven into which only he who does what he teaches shall enter. Consequently, where both classes exist, it is the Church as it now is, but where only the one shall exist, it is the Church as it is destined to be when no wicked person shall be in her. Therefore the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven.”⁴⁰

According to Dawson: “It is impossible to identify the City of God with the Church as some writers have done, since in the heavenly city there is no room for evil or imperfection, no admixture of sinners with the saints. But on the other hand, it is an even more serious error to separate the two concepts completely [...] Certainly the Church is not the eternal city of God, but it is its organ and representative in the world [...] the one bridge by which the creature can pass from Time to Eternity.”⁴¹

Augustine’s dualism realistically accepts the Christian contradiction between the two cities, the one “not of this world” and the other “earthly power,” itself based ultimately on the contradiction between good and evil that exists within every human person. There will forever be a contradiction between the history of salvation and the history of the world, between the pilgrim mission of the Church and the power over the earthly city. The contradiction, cannot be overcome by giving supreme power to the Church over the State or the State over the Church. Neither theocracy, nor the Byzantine solution of vesting supreme power in the emperor, can be the solution. Church leaders should resist the temptation to claim supreme power, and Emperors, kings, queens and presidents should resist the temptation to become head of the church.

⁴⁰ Excerpts from the translation: St. Augustine. *City of God*. Penguin Classics 1984.

⁴¹ Christopher Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*, p.335 in the Chapter on ‘St. Augustine and the City of God.’ ISI Books 2002.

Perennial contrasts

Does Christian contradiction to “the world” help to remove or alleviate some of the glaring contrasts observable throughout history?

Contrasts: there are many and they exist together. The most persistent and problematic one is the contrast **between rich and poor**. To this day, wealth and poverty exist alongside one another, in the same country, the same city, and even in the same street. Where are the Christian footprints in the efforts to eradicate poverty and restrain wealth?

Another related contrast is the one **between** lordship/kingship in wealth and leisure **and** labor in poverty; **between** nobility or the ruling classes **and** the proletariat or working class. Where are the Christian footprints in the efforts to eradicate slavery or serfdom, make the nobility part of the labor force and resist the temptation of electing kings to rule over them?

Throughout history, we observe glaring contrasts and contradictions within the acts of the same person. Emperors like Justinian and Napoleon were violent and cruel, but also promoted the codification of the law. Kings like Louis XIV of France and Popes like those of the Renaissance, accumulated wealth and supreme power for themselves, but also lavishly favored the arts and sciences. Where can one find the Christian inclination to challenge the former and support the latter?

These last examples lead us to an important and perennial contrast, explained in “*Power and Morality*” written by Pitrim A. Sorokin and Walter A. Lunden.⁴² The book deals with the contrasts between the moral behavior and mentality of the rulers (political rulers and captains of industry) and the moral behavior of the members of ruled populations.

Chapter II offers the following five generalizations: (1) the rulers’ morality and minds appear to be marked by a much stronger dualism – by great emotional and moral schizophrenia – than the morality and mentality of the

⁴² Published in 1959. Quotations below from extracts: <http://www.panarchy.org/Sorokin/power.html>

members of the ruled population; (2) taken as a whole, the ruling classes are more intellectually talented and mentally deranged than the ruled population. They have a greater proportion of dominating, aggressive, highly selfish, bold, and adventurous persons, more men who are harsh and insensitive to other human beings; hypocrite, liars and cynical manipulators of human relationships, compared to the strata of the ruled populations. (3) The moral behavior of ruling groups tends to be more criminal and immoral than that of the ruled strata of the same society. (4) The greater, more absolute, and coercive the power of the rulers, political leaders and big executives of business, labor and other organizations, and the less democratically this power is approved by the ruled population, the more corrupt and criminal such ruling groups and executives tend to be. And (5), if and when the power of ruling bodies is greatly limited (legally and factually), and when the governments function amidst a strongly integrated and unified moral public opinion, their criminality may become equal or even fall below the criminality of their ruled populations.”

Indeed, there is a most serious contrast between the morality and mentality of those who hold power and the ruled strata in society. The book rightly emphasizes that moral dualism is a problem, particularly for the powerful. History shows us that Christian rulers are hardly any different from other rulers.⁴³ And yet, they had been warned about this as early as the first book of (the prophet) Samuel in Chapter 8: “Samuel thought that it was wrong of them to say, ‘Let us have a king to judge us,’ so he prayed to Yahweh. But Yahweh said to Samuel, do what they ask; only, you must give them a solemn warning, and must tell them what the king who is to reign over them will do.’ ...” This is what the king who is to reign over you will do. He will take your sons and direct them to his chariotry and cavalry, and they will run in front of his chariot. He will use them as leaders of a thousand and leaders of fifty; he will make them plough his fields and gather in his harvest and make his weapons of war and the gear for his chariots. He will take your daughters as perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his officials. He will tithe your crops and vineyards to provide for his courtiers and his officials. He will take the best of your servants, men and

⁴³ Cf. my *Neither Justice nor Order*. Volume V in “Footprints of the Twentieth Century.

women, of your oxen and your donkeys, and make them work for him. He will tithe your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves.”

The people got their King, but for a very short time. After Saul, David and Solomon, the country fell apart, probably because Solomon at old age began to venerate idols “on the hill opposite Jerusalem” (1 Kings, 11, 7-10). This hill is known as the Hill of Evil Counsel, today hosting an office of the United Nations.

Samuel’s warning did not register

Samuel’s warning clearly did not register in European Christendom. Ever since Emperor Constantine the Great and up until the French Revolution – with exception of the Netherlands – our Christian peoples were ruled by Kings, who did exactly as the prophet had warned. The question whether the powerful elites in democratic societies are different, must be examined in its proper context, most likely with the same conclusion!

The problem is that empires, monarchies, states, churches and big companies all have their history, often marked by highly personalized rule. The overwhelming majority of the ruled people, on the contrary, are without history (*geschichtlos*).⁴⁴ Among them are the farmers of the Roman Empire, the unknown soldiers of the endless wars in history, the poor city dwellers of Paris and Rome, the executed heretics and the imported slaves from Africa, and the many children working and dying in the industries – to mention but a few examples. Our knowledge of history is very lopsided, considering how much of it is based on selective writing and organized forgetting.

Great history is made by the multitudes of people without history who, as the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, were moved by the Holy Spirit. Still, as Dawson points out, God has chosen them “to be the vehicle of his universal purpose for humanity.” Their footprints are all over the world, even as we know very little about most of them.

⁴⁴ Cf. Friedrich Heer, *Europa Unser*. Braunschweig 1977.

It is important to be reminded of the perennial dream of empire, with the Roman Empire as its model in organization and longevity. The Latin Church and the Orthodox Church took the organization of the Roman Empire as the model for their own (imperial) Church. Faith and politics were intimately linked in both parts and both churches of Europe.

The East Roman Empire and the later (Western) Holy Roman Empire both followed the tradition of Theodosius Roman Empire. The Christian faith was the official religion of the state. Both were at the origin of a millennial empire. The East Roman Empire became Byzantium and lasted until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmed II, Sultan of the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Its tradition of symbiosis between the temporal power and the spiritual power in the persons of the Emperor and the Patriarch survived thereafter in the countries which had accepted to belong to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. It survived, however, within each country separately, most clearly in Russia, with the creation of the Moscow patriarchate in the late sixteenth century, and after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, with the restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Kirill and “Czar” Vladimir Putin.

The Western Roman Empire collapsed under the weight of migration and the invasions of Italy and Rome, until Charlemagne built up his European empire through a series of hard fought wars. On Christmas day, in the year 800, he was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by Pope Leo III. The Holy Roman Empire – of the German nation since 1250 – survived until Napoleon broke it up and arranged its liquidation between 1803 and August 1806.⁴⁵ Its history, at least until the Thirty Years War, was dominated by the complex struggle for supremacy between Pope and Emperor. The conflict between ecclesiastical or spiritual authority and political or temporal power continues in the “West” up to the present day.

As a civilisation, Europe was henceforward limited to Charlemagne’s Empire, a Western Empire. Although it was short-lived, its dream lived on. In reality, it was no empire at all. As Christopher Dawson writes: “It claimed to be the Roman Empire, but it was in fact the Frankish monarchy, and so it embodied

⁴⁵ Friedrich Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire*. Weidenfeld Nicolson 1968. Translated from the German.

two contradictory principles, the universalism of the Roman and Christian traditions on the one hand, and the tribal particularism of barbaric Europe on the other.” The Emperor, however, was no longer the hereditary chieftain and war leader, but became an almost sacerdotal figure “anointed by the grace of God to rule over the Christian people and to guide and protect the Church. This involves, as we have seen, a strictly theocratic conception of kingship, so that the Carolingian Emperor was regarded, no less than the Byzantine *Basileus*, as the vicar of God and the head of the Church as well as of the State.” The short-lived Carolingian theocracy, according to Dawson, however: “differed from the Byzantine in that it was a theocracy inspired and controlled by the Church. There was no lay bureaucracy as existed in the Eastern Empire; its place was taken by the episcopate, from whose ranks the majority of the Emperor’s advisers and ministers were drawn.”⁴⁶

“It is impossible – writes Dawson – to understand early mediaeval culture through the analogy of modern conditions, which are based on the conception of the singular, all-inclusive society of the sovereign state. There were, in fact, two societies and two cultures in early mediaeval Europe. On the one hand, there was the peaceful society of the Church, which was located in the monasteries and Episcopal cities and inherited the tradition of late Roman culture. On the other hand, there was the war-society of the feudal nobility and their dependents, whose lives were spent in incessant wars and private feuds.” Dawson concludes his chapter on the rise of the Mediaeval Unity as follows: “the close of the tenth century saw the birth of a new series of Christian states extending from Scandinavia to the Danube. The eleventh century saw the passing of Northern paganism and the incorporation of the whole of Western Europe into the unity of Christendom.”⁴⁷

Among the general conclusions Christopher Dawson draws in his book, two must here be emphasised. For one, that as a concept of civilisation, “the culture that we regard as characteristically Western and European was confined in the main within the limits of the former Carolingian Empire, and found its centre in the old Frankish territories of Northern France and Western Germa-

⁴⁶ Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe. An Introduction to the History of European Unity*. The Catholic University of America Press 2003, p. 227, 228, 231.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 239, 249.

ny.” It was not a closed culture: “[Such] contact with the higher civilisation of the Islamic and Byzantine world had a decisive influence on Western Europe and was one of the most important elements in the development of mediaeval culture.”

His second conclusion is most relevant to the question whether Europe is a Christian civilisation. “[Indeed], throughout the Dark Ages, Western Society had been characterised by an ethical dualism that corresponds to the dualism of culture. There was one ideal for the warrior and another for the Christian, and the former still belonged in spirit to the barbaric world of Northern paganism. It was not until the eleventh century that the military society was incorporated into the spiritual polity of Western Christendom by the influence of the crusading ideal. The institution of knighthood is the symbol of the fusion of Nordic and Christian traditions in the mediaeval unity. The fusion did not create a Christian Europe, but a Europe characterised by an ethical dualism between Christian virtues and pagan traditions.”⁴⁸

Ethical Dualism

Ethical dualism, however, was not so much the dualism between “the Christian” and “the warrior”. Rather, it is the fundamental dualism within each of us, between good and evil, between vision and blindness, between virtue and vice. Church fathers like St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, or Ambrosias, offered a new vision for the Church but also developed the Cain-doctrine, as we shall see in chapter 3. The perennial contrasts Sorokin refers to also mark the origin of the great divisions between Christians and Jews, between the Latin Church and Byzantium, today between the West and Russia, between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, and between Church, Empire and the rising sovereign monarchies.

The Papacy was heavily (and politically) involved in all these conflicts. What such involvement did to the “Holy See” can be deduced from a fairly objective statis-

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.* p. 252, 254, 253. Excerpt from my: *European Unification into the Twenty-First Century*. Chapter 1.

tical source⁴⁹: between St. Peter and the creation of the Papal States in 757, seventy two Popes are listed as saints. From 757 to the end of the Papal States in 1870 – more than a millennium – there have been just five holy Popes, three in the ninth century and Leo IX and Gregory VII in the eleventh century.⁵⁰ Pope St. Clementine V, a hermit, was elected after a stalemate of over two years, but renounced the papacy within five months. More often than not, the morality and mentality of the Popes were on the side of those who held the most power.⁵¹

Popes, Emperors, kings, dukes, knights and bishops made history. The marks they left make up most of recorded history – a history of warfare, abuse of power, struggle for power, feudal and private warfare, exploitation, and repression, that is. The conflict between the search for the divine and the lure of earthly things was the central problem for the Churches – Latin as well as Orthodox. For traces of the Christian faith, we must look elsewhere. . Except for some of the recognized saints, the overwhelming majority of faithful and loving Christians are without history. Still, they have been recorded, for instance by Chateaubriand in his major work *Le Génie du Christianisme*⁵², and in many other works of art, music and literature. Romantic works? No doubt, but still with a clear message: true Christian signs of contradiction are found with the apostles, the faithful, saints like St. Francis of Assisi, the multitudes without recorded history, but definitely not, or rarely so, with the popes, emperors, kings, bishops, princes and nobles. During the more than thousand years when the Popes were head of state and leader of the Church, they very much acted like the kings from Samuel's story. Even more so, when Western society – after the disappearance of the Western Roman Empire – came to be based on feudality, that is, acquired private property as its foundation of social and political organization. The feudal system upheld the hierarchical Roman concept of power, but was now based on private property, from the Kings down to the local landlords. In this feudal order, farmers and laborers had no basic human rights but were part of the property. They had not opted for a king, as in Samuel's story, but just had to suffer it in a fundamentally unequal society in which human dignity remained a landowner's privilege.

49 Memmo Caporilli, *The Popes*. Euroedit – Trento. Sixth Edition 1999.

50 Pope Clementine V, was considered a holy man already before he became pope.

51 Cf. Sorokin as quoted supra.

52 Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme*. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris 1978.

CHAPTER 2

TEMPTATIONS

“Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us?” the Grand Inquisitor asked Jesus, who had come back to earth in the City of Sevilla. The question comes from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s last novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, a novel Henri de Lubac described as having a prophetic voice.⁵³

The Karamazovs are an ancient but at the same time a modern, chaotic family. The father, Fyodorov, doesn’t care about his children. His only interests are property and pleasure. He fathered four sons from three different women; Dmitri from his first wife, Ivan and Alyosha from his second wife, and Pavel Smerdyakov – whom he never recognized as such – from a prostitute, who gave birth to the boy in the garden of the property and died in labour.

Dmitri lives in perennial conflict with his father over the inheritance, and over a woman they both are in love with. Ivan leaves for Western Europe and tells the story of the Grand Inquisitor during a short home visit to his brother Al-

⁵³ Cardinal Henri de Lubac, *Le Drame de L’Humanisme Athée*. Oeuvres Complètes. II. Cerf Paris 2000.

yosha, who lives as a hermit. Smerdyakov works as the lowest servant on his father's property and is filled with a desire for revenge. Ultimately, he is the one who kills his father and not Dmitri, who is convicted for the murder, at the end of the book. The story of the Grand Inquisitor reflects various modern ideas that Ivan had picked up in nineteenth-century Paris and had told his brother Alyosha about.

The story

The Cardinal Grand Inquisitor in Sevilla is tasked with the persecution of heretics and does so with an almost inhuman dedication. In the story, Jesus reappears on earth: "He came down to the 'hot pavements' of the southern town in which on the day before almost a hundred heretics had, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, been burnt by the cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor, in a magnificent *auto da fe*, in the presence of the king, the court, the knights, the cardinals, the court's most charming ladies, and the entire population of Seville. 'He came softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, everyone recognised Him.'" The people are irresistibly drawn to Him, they surround Him, they flock about Him, follow Him. "He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in His heart and power shines from His eyes, and their radiance, shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love." Healing virtue emanates from contact with Him, and even with His garments. An old man in the crowd, blind since childhood, cries out, 'O Lord, heal me and I shall see Thee!' and, as it were, scales fall from his eyes and the blind man suddenly sees Him. The crowd weeps and kisses the earth beneath His feet. Children throw flowers at Him, sing, and cry hosannah: 'it is He — it is He!' they all repeat. 'It must be He, it can be no one but Him!' He stops at the steps of the Seville cathedral whilst weeping mourners are bringing in a little open white coffin. In it lies a seven-year-old child, a prominent citizen's only daughter. The dead child is covered in flowers. 'He will raise your child,' the crowd shouts to the weeping mother. The priest, coming to meet the coffin, looks perplexed, and frowns, but the mother of the dead child throws herself at His feet with a wail: 'if it is Thou, raise my child!' she cries, holding out her hands to Him. The procession halts, the coffin is laid on the steps at His feet. He looks with

compassion, and His lips once more softly pronounce 'Maiden, arise!' and the maiden arises. The little girl sits up in the coffin and looks round, smiling with wide-open, wondering eyes, holding a bunch of white roses they had put in her hand."

"At that moment the cardinal himself – the Grand Inquisitor – passes by the cathedral." He stops at the sight of the crowd and observes it from a distance. He sees everything; he sees them put the coffin down at His feet, sees the child rise up, and his face darkens. He knits his thick grey brows, and his eyes gleam with a sinister fire. He holds out his finger and bids the guards take Him." Such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission, trembling in obedience to him, that the crowd immediately makes way for the guards, and amidst a deathly silence they lay hands on Him and lead him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, becoming like one man, before the old Inquisitor. He blesses the people in silence and passes on. The guards lead their prisoner to the close, gloomy, vaulted prison — the ancient palace of the Holy inquisition – and lock him up inside it.

His reappearance is most unwelcome to the Grand Inquisitor, who has Him arrested and imprisoned. Our opening question is the one the Cardinal asked when visiting Jesus in the prison.

Dostoyevsky, himself a believing Russian Orthodox, wrote *The Brothers Karamazov* after extensive visits to Paris and Western Europe. Certainly, he disagreed with the teaching and the policies of the Latin Church. As we shall read later in this Chapter, the story of the Grand Inquisitor, however, goes much deeper than a Russian-Orthodox challenge to the Pope and Catholic Church. The Grand Inquisitor may have begun from faith, but ends up an atheist. The story, as told by Ivan, explains how he lost his faith: "He claims it as a merit for himself and his Church that at last they have vanquished freedom and have done so to make men happy. 'For now' (he is speaking of the Inquisition, of course) 'for the first time it has become possible to think of the happiness of men. Man was created a rebel; and how can rebels be happy?'" The answer to his own question then follows, in the story's most revealing part:

“The wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence,’ the old man goes on, great spirit talked with Thee in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he ‘tempted’ Thee. Is that so? And could anything truer be said than what he revealed to Thee in three questions and what Thou didst reject, and what in the books is called ‘the temptation’? And yet if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle. For in those three questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown; but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them. Who was right?”

“Nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But sees Thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though for ever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread.’ But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying.”

“They will seek us again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry to us, ‘Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven’t given it!’ And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them. And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, ‘Make us your slaves, but feed us.’ “Thou didst reject the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make all men bow

down to Thee alone — the banner of earthly bread; and Thou hast rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven.”

This banner of earthly bread hung above the philosophical materialism of the nineteenth century and would be unfurled by the ideologies of the twentieth and twenty first centuries soon thereafter. In the primary schools of Stalin’s Soviet Union, the message would be played out quite literally: children were instructed to pray for bread to the Lord of Heaven, and when no bread came, they were instructed to pray to Stalin for bread, after which baskets full of bread were brought in instantly.

Shortly before ending his story, Alyosha, quite upset, exclaims: “Perhaps nothing but Atheism, that’s all their secret. Your Inquisitor does not believe in God, that’s his secret!’ To which Ivan answers: “What if it is so! At last, you have guessed it. It’s perfectly true, it’s true that that’s the whole secret, but isn’t that suffering, at least for a man like that, who has wasted his whole life in the desert and yet could not shake off his incurable love of humanity? In his old age he reached the clear conviction that nothing but the advice of the great dread spirit could build up any tolerable sort of life for the feeble, unruly, ‘incomplete, empirical creatures created in jest.”⁵⁴

In a later chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan sinking into a delirium, receives the unannounced visit of the devil.

Inspired by the French Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century, the nineteenth century would gradually be dominated by various schools of thought, which De Lubac has identified as philosophical materialism. What played itself out in the nineteenth century had its sources in the early seventeenth century, more specifically the 1633 condemnation of Galileo Galilei.⁵⁵ The Inquisition’s rejection of the “grand book the universe” as a source of revelation complementary to Holy Scripture, caused a lasting conflict between Catholic Church doctrine and modern science, and between the spiritual and the material. The Church restricted science and natural philosophy to the domain of materiality

54 Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. From pages 506-535. English translation in E book published by Planet EDF. or in the Gutenberg version

55 See chapters 5 and 11 *infra*.

and reserved for herself the final word on the domain of faith and the soul, in which Church doctrine stuck to its medieval concept of creation. The Church condemned modern thinking with all available “-isms.” Philosophers and scientists went their own, separate ways. This conflict and separation are a tragedy. Marxism, positivism, empiricism became the forerunners of the destructive and violent ideologies of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries: like nationalism, Marxism-Leninism in Russia, national socialism in Germany and fascism in Italy, Portugal and Spain. Together, these ideologies left a poisonous mixture behind in which atheistic secularism could grow, particularly after the end of the Cold War in 1990.

From a Christian perspective, it must be emphasized that the idea of progress was not born in the nineteenth century. With roots in the Torah and Greek philosophy, the idea of progress lies at the core of Christian thought and the faith in Christ. As human beings, we are going somewhere: from our birth, we move to our transcendental destiny in the House of the Lord. The history of the world also moves from Creation to the End of Times. The Christian idea of progress can be recognized by three essential characteristics: (1) a sense of purpose in human life and in history; (2) respect for the past, including our ancestors and our history; (3) awareness of the perennial struggle between the forces of good and evil in ourselves and in history.

Modern ideologies of progress could only emerge from a Christian heritage, from a long tradition of divisive political theology⁵⁶. They themselves are aberrations from the Christian idea of progress, best recognized by their rejection of the past as obsolescent or out of date and by their rejection of the forces of good and evil.

The Problem of Power and Pride.

In his indictment, as we quoted already, the Grand Inquisitor reminds Jesus of the three questions of the wise and dreadful spirit, explaining that “[t]here are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive for ever

⁵⁶ Cf. chapter 7 *infra*.

the conscience of these impotent rebels⁵⁷ for their happiness those forces are miracle, mystery and authority.” Out of those three, it is authority, the third of the three temptations, which is most suitable to “hold captive for ever the conscience” of mankind:

“The devil then took him up a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, promising: All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage before me.” (Matthew, 4, 8-9).

Christ did not turn stones into bread, but throughout history, His followers are known to care for the poor and the hungry. Christ did not fall for the second temptation, but the history of Christianity is abounded with saints and miracles. The third temptation has been Christianity’s greatest and most dangerous one. Again, as Dostoyevsky’s Great Inquisitor remarks: “Listen, then. We are not working with Thee, but with *him*—that is our mystery. We took from him Rome and the sword of Caesar, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth, though hitherto we have not been able to complete our work, but we shall triumph and shall be Caesars, and then we shall plan the universal happiness of man. Why didst Thou reject that last gift? someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men. Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were, for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for world-wide union. The great conquerors, Timurs and Genghis-Khans, hurled like hurricanes over the face of the earth striving to subdue its people, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same craving for universal unity. Hadst Thou taken the world and Cæsar’s purple, Thou wouldst have founded the universal state and have given universal peace. For who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience and their bread in his hands? We have taken the sword of Cæsar, and in taking it, of course, have rejected Thee and followed *him*.”

The story of the Grand Inquisitor is not just an Eastern Orthodox reflection on

⁵⁷ Mankind yearning For freedom .Excerpts from The Brothers Karamazov op, cit. p. 517-524.

the Western Latin Church. It reflects on the much older and more fundamental tragedy, originating in the Ecumenical Councils and the Ecclesiastical State.

The great historic tragedies of religious divisions, cultural destruction and political warfare are related to these oldest vices, of pride of power, a search for profit, and the abuse of power in particular. Christian political and religious leaders, like those of other creeds, have too often prostrated themselves in homage to human power.

Christian doctrine: orthodoxy against heresy

Central to the tragedies of religious divisions – between Christians and Jews, between Latin and Greek Christians, between Roman Catholics and the Christians of the Reformation – is the development of Christian doctrine, the exercise of spiritual power. We can see how it works in the story above, when the cardinal Grand Inquisitor appears on the scene of Jesus' miracles, and says: "And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him, that the crowd immediately makes way for the guards, and in the midst of deathlike silence they lay hands on Him and lead him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old Inquisitor."

"Not working with Thee, but with *him*" for the Grand Inquisitor means that he acquired such power over women and men that the people can be "cowed into submission and trembling obedience." As such, he no longer needs to respect the fundamental dignity of every human being. Even worse, with such power over women and men, this doctrine prevails over the first commandment to love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself. Such doctrinal power was bound, sooner or later, to provoke resistance and revolution.

The most fateful consequence of the Inquisition⁵⁸ against so-called heresies, is not only the judicial prosecution and burning of heretics, but the fact that the souls and minds of the people were poisoned and pushed into submission

⁵⁸ Inquisition was the unavoidable outcome in the Church of the *Dictatus Papae*.

by fear and lies. It is one of the chapters from the history of fear, wherein fear for the Lord is turned into an instrument of power and repression by Popes, Emperors and Kings⁵⁹, as well as by totalitarian regimes and autocratic leaders today.

When the first Ecumenical Council met under the leadership of Emperor Constantine, the definition of "doctrine" became an issue of political theology. Acceptance of the "true doctrine" became a condition for unity in the Christian Empire. Orthodoxy became politicized and heresy henceforth criminalized. Under Church law, excommunication was to be the penalty for heresy. Under imperial law, this could be deportation or execution.

In addition, as far as writings drafted against heresy in the era of the Church Fathers and the first seven Ecumenical Councils were concerned, such development of doctrine continued in the Great Schism between East and West, the Reformation, and within each of the separate Churches coming out of these divisions. Such was the case not only with respect to the doctrine on the person of Jesus Christ, but also on other issues, among which the doctrine of papal authority has been the most controversial.

Apologetic writings always are in danger of primarily emphasising one side of the truth. Jews and Christians, Greek and Latin Christians, Catholics and Protestants all suffered significant spiritual losses from the divisions.

The Ecumenical Councils have been the principal instruments for defining Christian Doctrine, at least from the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. onwards. After the East-West Schism, the Latin or Roman Catholic Church continued holding Ecumenical Councils until (and including the Council of Trent in) the Sixteenth Century. In these Councils, the Emperor (of the Holy Roman Empire since 800) participated and the Popes were represented by Legates. For the Emperor and for the Popes, doctrine also served the political purpose of asserting their authority over people by submission or exclusion and excommunication.

After Trent, it took the Roman Catholic Church until the second half of the

⁵⁹ Friedrich Heer, *Sieben Kapitel aus der Geschichte des Schreckens*. Glock und Lutz Nürnberg Chapter 2.

Nineteenth Century to meet again in Council. The first Vatican Council met in Rome in 1869-1870: the Second Vatican Council also in Rome from 1963-1965. There were no more emperors after the First World War, and the Pope kept his role as the supreme authority above that of the Ecumenical Council.

Greater than doctrine.

It should be emphasized, however, that Vatican II was fundamentally different from previous Ecumenical Councils. Its primary task – according to Holy Pope John XXIII – was *aggiornamento*, rather than writing against heresies. Whereas Vatican I had a clearly political component – papal authority at the time of Italian unification – Vatican II did not condemn but instead opened the Roman Catholic Church to the modern world. The three most revolutionizing documents, adopted under the wise leadership of Pope Paul VI, are the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*), the Declaration on freedom of religion (*Dignitatis humanae*), and the Declaration on relations with non-Christian religions (*Nostra aetate*), with the Islam and Judaism in particular.⁶⁰

Christian doctrine can be defined as: “what the Church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God.”⁶¹ The Vatican II Ecumenical Council shifted the emphasis from submission or exclusion to witness, inclusion and mercy. Imposition and exclusion are acts of political power. Witness, inclusion and mercy are acts of spiritual authority.

The dignity of the human person⁶²

The dignity of the human person is a self-evident principle, written in the moral conscience of everyone, but was especially rediscovered after the Second World War. Outrage against the dignity of men by violent repression and organized starvation, in concentration camps, by the *Einsatzgruppen*, by the mil-

⁶⁰ Cf. chapter 3 and 6 *infra*.

⁶¹ Pelikan, *op.cit* p.2.

⁶² Cf *Neither Justice Nor Order*. Chapter 3. Volume 5 in the series “Footprints of the Twentieth Century. WLP 2017.

itary against the civilian population in war and by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, revived the awareness of dignity of the human person. It is important to emphasize that it was in response to the massive, deliberate and organized torture and killing of human beings who were inhumanely treated like dirt. Here we realized what is truly at stake: humanity as a whole.

The concept, as it originally appeared in Roman philosophy, used to be closely linked with honor and royalty. In early Christian thinking it came to be connected with the human person as such, created in the image of God. As Pope Leo the Great preached in one of his Christmas Sermons:

“Awake, O man, and recognize the dignity of thy nature. Recollect thou was made in the image of GOD, which although it was corrupted in Adam, was yet re-fashioned in Christ.”

Such may have been the Christian ideal. In reality, however, the concept continued to be seen as it had appeared in Roman philosophy.

The post-Second World War rediscovery of the dignity of the human person is not a matter of adding a new human right to the ones already formulated. It goes much deeper. Total war and totalitarian repression taught us that mankind needed a new and bright beacon to re-orient and guide law makers. This realization would become the starting point for a new approach to international law.

The human person alone is the true, observable, living entity – natural person – in law and society, the *fons omnis iuris*, the primary subject of law. Everything else – whether foundation, company, association, church or state – is a construction, fiction or environment.

There is no future without respect for the inherent dignity of every human person. Such respectful treatment must not be restricted to those of my faith, my family, tribe, nation, religion, class or race – as was done by the Christian Churches, by states, and by the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. We should have learned that excluding categories of human persons on the ba-

sis of faith, origin, nation, race, class or sex unavoidably leads to persecution, exclusion, vilification, and extermination. Utopias about a new type of man invariably led to the locking up of those who did not share that dream. We also should have learned that faith in an earthly utopia invariably subjects man to the reigning totalitarian powers. What is at stake here is the inherent dignity of the human person, whose rights and duties are determined by their life's ultimate destiny.

Human dignity and freedom of religion

Respect for freedom of conscience, creed and religion as a fundamental principle is neither obvious nor universal. Such respect has not traditionally been part of religious teaching, although every religion has always claimed the right to such freedom for itself. In Europe, we learned to have such respect the hard way, through violent conflict, religious wars, inquisition, cruel executions for heresy, and the French Revolution. More extreme than ever before was the European experience with the persecution and the concentration camps of the two totalitarian ideologies (Communism and Nazism) dominating the Twentieth Century. Nazism perished in the Second World War. Communist persecution of the churches, aimed at their eradication, was still in full swing when the Second Vatican Council met in the 1960's. As Vaclav Havel wrote, the violence in the communist totalitarian system was spiritual rather than physical, designed "to achieve the gradual destruction of the human spirit, of basic human dignity."⁶³ It was in this political context that respect for freedom of religion was first proclaimed officially in the Catholic Church on December 1965 by Pope Paul VI in the "Declaration on Religious Freedom, (*Dignitatis Humanae*), on the Right of the Person and the Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters religious." The Declaration marked a true human rights revolution in Catholic thinking.

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby so-

⁶³ Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth*. "The Power of the Powerless". Edited by Jan Vladislav. Fsber and Faber 1986.

ciety is governed and is therefore to become a civil right.

Due to lack of agreement amongst the Council fathers, the document appeared as a Papal Declaration rather than a Constitution of the Second Vatican Council. It is in accordance with their dignity as persons – that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility – that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also be bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accordance with its demands. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner of keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore, the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. Consequently, the right to this immunity continues to exist, even for those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it, and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that a just public order be observed.

The Declaration belonged to the *aggiornamento* of the Catholic Church through the Council convoked by the holy Pope John XXIII. Up until then, the Catholic Church had not been at the forefront of the modern human rights movement. In her doctrine, "error had no rights," as one could read in the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pope Pius IX.

What brought her there at the time was the American Jesuit Father John Courtney Murray and the severe persecution of the Church in the communist world. The first section of paragraph 1 is a true reflection of the American challenge to Soviet totalitarian repression. The Declaration also claims a special right to freedom for the Catholic Church by underlining the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ. This claim reflects the doctrine that the Catholic Church cannot err. Religious pluralism must be tolerated but cannot be celebrated as a resource.

Still, freedom of religion as a fundamental principle is a fragile one. Respect for our neighbor, who professes another creed than we do, is the exception

rather than the rule in our societies; belief in the truth of one's own religion and toleration of other beliefs don't go together easily. This is especially the case when certain beliefs are at the origin of moral precepts and the laws of the land. For instance, in family law, Christians, Muslims and secularists are on a collision course. The necessary constitutional limits to assure such respect require democratic government and a clear separation of powers; a condition met only in a limited number of countries.

At the same time, it must be admitted, that respect for the dignity of the human person is a new "command" also for the great majority of the Christian Churches themselves. Among the many Christian footprints in European history are the *auto da fe*'s referred to above; the worse than second-rate citizens called heretics, Jews, or gipsies; slavery and the slave trade; inequality of farmers and industrial workers; and inequality of women. They had not been the victims of Christian extremists but of the development of doctrine and abuse of power by the Churches themselves. The concept of heresy produced a category of sub-humans called heretics [often in one breath with Jews and Pagans], who, once so declared, could be tortured and exterminated. Jews and heretics had often been persecuted and exterminated together in Christian Europe. The Holocaust calls – again and again – for a profound re-examination of the way in which Christian doctrine developed in the past and the way it should develop in the future.

Respect for the dignity of the human person – regardless of religious conviction – is our first and foremost obligation, as is our ongoing reflection upon the tragedies of religious and ideological divisions and their disrespect for the dignity of other human persons. It is necessary to look beyond doctrine and heresy. All Christian Churches, well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, failed to respect the human dignity of slaves, serfs, farmers and women. The "royal" principle of organising political and ecclesiastical societies (feudalism) on the basis of property, necessarily ranked people in estates or classes, with diminishing human dignity from the first to the third! True respect for the equal dignity of every human person is a new mission for all Christians – especially in the twenty first century.

The prophetic voice of Dostoyevsky contained not only orthodox criticism of the Latin Church, nor was it just a warning for the potentially disastrous effects of nineteenth century philosophical materialism. The Grand Inquisitor stands for the abuse and politicisation of the Good News of Jesus Christ: the ever present danger of the third temptation in the Gospel, with its consequences in violence, division and war.

PART II

CONTRASTS AND DIVISIONS

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIANS AGAINST JEWS:

FROM THE CAIN-DOCTRINE TO THE HOLOCAUST AND BEYOND.

“We are conscious today that many centuries of blindness have cloaked our eyes so that we can no longer see the beauty of thy chosen people, nor recognise in their faces the features of our privileged brethren. We realise that the mark of Cain stands upon our foreheads. Across the centuries our brother Abel has lain in blood which we drew, or shed tears which we caused by forgetting thy love.” “Forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their names as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying Thee a second time in their flesh.” “For O Lord we know not what we did.” Prayer of Pope John XXIII on 3 June 1963.

Pope Innocent III decreed (in 1215) as follows: “As Cain was a wanderer and an outcast, not to be killed by anyone but marked with the sign of fear on his forehead, so the Jews . . . against whom the voice of the blood of Christ cries out . . . although they are not to be killed they must always be dispersed as wanderers upon the face of the earth.”

In their contrast, the two papal texts are shocking. Pope Innocent’s decree con-

firmed the existence of a blindness in the Christian Church since the early second century, as well as a general blind faith, spanning millennia, in a Church convinced of being the only true Church of Christ, free of error. The third temptation in our previous chapter clearly worked for a very long period of time within the church of the inquisition. Pope John's *aggiornamento*, therefore, raised the profound question of how to overcome two millennia of blindness and "forgetting thy love towards our privileged brethren." The prayer at the end of his life concluded his actions in favour of the Jewish people, ever since he was the *papal nuncio* in Bulgaria in the early 1920's. Once elected as Pope, he suppressed anti-Jewish passages in Church liturgy. After having received American Jewish leaders and French scholar Jules Isaac, he decided in October of 1960 to place the issue of Christianity's teaching of contempt against Judaism on the agenda of the Ecumenical Council, which he had assembled in 1959. He assigned to Cardinal Augustine Bea the task of preparing a declaration on the issue. With his full cooperation and participation, the following prayer was to be uttered by all German Catholics on the Sunday after the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "Lord, God of our Fathers! God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! God of mercy and God of solace! We confess before you: Countless men were murdered in our midst, because they belonged to the people from whom the Messiah rose up in the flesh. We pray Thee: Lead all among us who became guilty through deed, omission, or silence, that we may see the wrong and turn from it. In the spirit of heartfelt atonement, we beg for forgiveness for the sins which were committed by our fellow citizens. We beseech that the spirit of peace and reconciliation return to all homes and we pray for the peace of Israel among the nations; on the borders of its state and in our midst..."⁶⁴

Cardinal Bea's task of achieving the revolutionary Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, was certainly not an easy one. Its fourth paragraph dealt with the relations with the Jews. The Declaration rejected all three theses underlying the Cain-Doctrine – as developed since the Church fathers – and called for a dialogue of mutual esteem.⁶⁵

The curse of Cain marks our Christian foreheads indeed! It demands a most

⁶⁴ From: Inside the Vatican Magazine. April 2014.

⁶⁵ See further this chapter. The full text of the Declaration can be found on the Vatican Website.

profound rethinking of and repentance over the persecution of the Jews in Christian Europe, ranging from the Fathers of the Church in the second century and Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century up to and including Hitler's "Final Solution" of the Jewish question in the first half of the twentieth century, and the sad resurgence of anti-Semitism in our twenty-first century. For Pope John-Paul II, such rethinking and repentance would become a personal as well as ecclesiastical priority, particularly in light of his own experiences in Wadowice, where he grew up before the outbreak of the Second World War.

A radical break

The word became flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1, 15)

There is no doubt that the faith in the risen Jesus-Christ as expressed in the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John, constituted a radical break with the Jewish tradition. The Jewish faith of the Book relied on continuous study and discussion of the word of God as written in the books of the Bible. As the word had become flesh, the new faith constituted a call to follow Jesus. It gave rise to the development of "the doctrine of the person of Jesus in relation to the Father... studied largely on the basis of writings drafted against heresy, against Judaism, and against paganism."⁶⁶ In this development, a more fundamental conflict arose between the Hellenistic Jews and Hellenistic Jewish-Christians concerning the question of the continuity between Christianity and Judaism. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., this conflict, Pelikan writes, marked the relations between Christians and Jews everywhere. According to him, "most of Christian doctrine developed in a Church uninformed by any knowledge of the original text of the Hebrew Bible."⁶⁷ De-Judaization of Christianity and the loss of contact with Jewish thought was the consequence." Indeed, whereas the twelve Apostles were Jews, none of the Church fathers were.

⁶⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Volume 1 in "The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine. University of Chicago Press 171. At p.11.

⁶⁷ Loc. Cit. at p. 21.

The Anti-Jewish Cain- Doctrine

We must realize that the decree of Pope Innocent III, from which the opening quotation was taken, was but a mild variation on the prevailing, many centuries lasting, Christian anti-Judaism. Pope Innocent continued his decree as follows:

“Although Christian piety tolerates the Jews, whose own fault commits them to perpetual slavery . . . and allows them to continue with us (even though the Moors will not tolerate them), they must not be allowed to remain ungrateful to us in such a way as to repay us with contumely for favours and contempt for our familiarity. They are admitted to our familiarity only through our mercy; but they are to us dangerous as the insect in the apple, as the serpent in the breast. Since, therefore, they have already begun to gnaw like the rat, and to stink like the serpent, it is to our shame that the fire in our breast which is being eaten into by them, does not consume them. As they are reprobate slaves of the Lord, in whose death they evilly conspired (at least by the effect of the deed), let them acknowledge themselves as slaves of those whom the death of Christ has made free.”

Pope Innocent’s decree was not an exceptional statement at the time of the Crusades. In its “mild” variety it expressed the doctrine of the Catholic Church at least since the Church Fathers.

Two of the greatest Church Fathers – St. Augustine in the West and St. Chrysostom in the East – clearly expressed this doctrine: Chrysostom in his eight Sermons in Antioch and St. Augustine in his tract against Faustus.

According to St. Augustine:

“11. Then God says to Cain: “Thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother’s blood at thy hand. For thou shalt till the earth, and it shall no longer yield unto thee its strength. A mourner and an abject shalt thou be on the earth.” So the unbelieving people of the Jews is cursed from the earth, that is, from the Church, which in the confession of sins has

opened its mouth to receive the blood shed for the remission of sins by the hand of the people that would not be under grace, but under the law.”

12. “Groaning and trembling shalt thou be on the earth.””⁶⁸

In his sermons against the Jews, St. Chrysostom primarily expressed concern about his Christians in Antioch, who preferred the Synagogues to go to and the Jews to socialise with. To quote from one of his eight sermons against the Jews: “You did slay Christ, you did lift violent hands against the Master, you did spill his precious blood. This is why you have no chance for atonement, excuse, or defence. Your mad rage against Christ, the Anointed One, left no way for anyone to surpass your sin. This is why the penalty you now pay is greater than that paid by your fathers. Is it not clear that you dared a deed much worse and much greater than any sacrifice of children or transgression of the Law when you slew Christ?”⁶⁹

Their teaching and the Church’s doctrine with respect to the Jews, can be summarized in three theses:

(1) **DEICIDE:** The Jews, are forever to be held guilty for the Crucifixion of Jesus; they are condemned to be wanderers, but Christians are not allowed to kill them.

2) **APPROPRIATION:** After Jesus Christ, the Jewish people (as the chosen people) have ceased to exist; their place in salvation has been taken by the (Christian) people of God. The Jewish Books of the Bible – now called the Old Testament – belong to the Christian Church. The old and the new testaments are to be understood and interpreted as instructed by the Magisterium of the Christian Church.

(3) **INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION:** The only possibility available to Jews is to convert and to be baptised into the Christian Church.⁷⁰ “Groaning and trem-

68 St. Augustin: *Reply To Faustus The Manichæan*, [Contra Faustum Manichæum]. A.D. 400. Translated By Rev. Richard Stothert, M.A., Bombay 155 Reply to Faustus the Manichæan. [Contra Faustum Manichæum.] a.d. 400. Chapter XII. P. 241ff.

69 From the *Eight Homilies Against the Jews*. Homily VI, p. 55. Wiki source, free online library.

70 This thesis finds no support in St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans.

bling shalt thou be on the earth,” wrote St. Augustine, and his prophesy came true. The Cain-Doctrine can be traced from the Church fathers through the Ecumenical Church Councils, law-making, Papal Bulls and Church teaching throughout the centuries until Holy Pope John XXIII’s revolution in 1959/1965. The Popes could be cruel or condescending, tormenting or tolerant, but always stayed within the Cain-Doctrine of the Church. Even Pope Gregory the Great acted and wrote mercifully, within the context of the Cain-doctrine. The Cain-doctrine turned Jews into divinely ordained pariahs, thus dehumanizing them and turning them into objects of vilification and hatred. Popular hatred against the Jews increasingly blossomed in Christian Europe, especially from the era of the crusades in the 11th century onwards. The “Holy Week” often saw widespread attacks against Jewish quarters all over Europe. The – unfounded – accusations of ritual murder of children, desecration of the host, secret nightly rites, blood libel, and the poisoning of wells, were the starting cries for murderous popular attacks. While the Church fuelled the hatred against the Jews with its Cain-Doctrine, the Kings made them serfs. They were, sometimes, protected from popular outbreaks by royal troops, simply because financial support could be extracted from them for the many wars fought by the Kings and the Lords.

In the year 1348 – year of the great plague, the pandemic of the black death – lynchings began in the spring, on Eastern Sunday, soon after the first plague deaths. As Barbara Tuchman writes:

“On charges that they were poisoning wells, with the intent ‘to kill and destroy the whole of Christendom and have lordship over all the world,’ Jews were dragged from their houses and thrown into bonfires. While divine punishment was accepted as the plague’s source, people in their misery still looked for a human agent on whom to vent the hostility that could not be vented on God. The Jew, as the eternal stranger, was the most obvious target...whom Christians for centuries had been taught to hate, who was regarded as imbued with unsleeping malevolence against all Christians. Living in a distinct group of his own kind in a particular street or quarter, he was also the most feasible target, with property to loot as a further inducement.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The calamitous 14th century*. New York 1978 at p. 109.

What happened to the Jews of Barcelona in 1367 is vividly described in Ildefonso Falcones’ historical novel *The Cathedral of the Sea* (2006). It all starts at Easter Holy Mass, following a cry “Sacrilege! Heresy! The Devil’s work! Jews!” The entire congregation rushed out to attack the Jewish quarter, barely protected by royal soldiers. While the black friars (Dominicans in the service of the Inquisition) pillaged the houses, the entire population of the Jewish quarter – some 6.000 souls – were locked up in the Synagogue without food or water. Arnau, the main character in the novel, tries to negotiate a peaceful resolution. All he could achieve was their liberation against a huge sum to be paid to the Infante of the King and the burning at the stake of three prominent Jews. His concern for the Jews caused his incarceration in the dungeon under the bishop’s palace, awaiting his condemnation by the Inquisition. The Guild of the *bastaijos*, which he had belonged to since his twelfth birthday, provoked the people of Barcelona, and liberated him from the Inquisition’s claws. At least 2000 Jews had been killed. In 1391, the Barcelona Jewish quarter was burnt down and completely destroyed by the people. Its Jewish residents were put to death or forced to convert. The Jews did not return, and in 1397, the King granted Barcelona the right not to have a Jewry.⁷²

Dispersed and condemned

The destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. caused a dispersal of the Jewish people all across the Roman Empire and beyond. From the second century onwards, they were labeled ‘wanderers upon the face of the earth’ in the name of Christian doctrine, until the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the re-unification of the City of Jerusalem in 1967. During this very long era, Jews were subject to vilification, humiliation, inquisition, injustice and worse. This “tradition” still lingers, as can be seen on such websites as “the Christian Solution” and Maurice Pinay’s blog.

“Many centuries of blindness have cloaked our eyes so that we can no longer see the beauty of thy chosen people, nor recognise in their faces the features of our privileged brethren”. (Pope John XXIII)

⁷² Ildefonso Falcones, *CATHEDRAL OF THE SEA*. (Translation Nick Caistor. Doubleday 2008.

How could the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches have turned a blind eye for so many centuries? How was it possible that generations of Jews continued to be charged and killed for a crime (deicide) they did not commit? Why did so many proclaim or believe that “the blood of Christ” calls out against them?

For centuries, Catholics prayed for the conversion of the “perfidious Jews” on Good Friday, as did Orthodox and Anglican Christians. Clearly, as history shows us, this would be “hatred in the form of a prayer.” Very often the prayer acted as a call for pogroms and violent attacks on Jewish fellow citizens throughout Christian Europe.⁷³

Another part of the answer lies in the doctrine of appropriation,⁷⁴ through which is taught that we, the Christian Church, have taken the place of the Jewish People as the “true Israel.” After Jesus the Redeemer, the Jewish people have ceased to exist and the Jewish Scriptures, which we now call the Old Testa-

⁷³ After the Second World War, the prayer was changed several times: The form used before 1955 read as follows: “Let us pray also for the faithless Jews: that Almighty God may remove the veil from their hearts ; so that they too may acknowledge Jesus Christ our Lord. (‘Amen’ is not responded, nor is said ‘Let us pray’, or ‘Let us kneel’, or ‘Arise’, but immediately is said:) Almighty and eternal God, who dost not exclude from thy mercy even Jewish faithlessness: hear our prayers, which we offer for the blindness of that people; that acknowledging the light of thy Truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.” Pope Pius XII instituted kneeling for this petition as at the other petitions of the litany, so that the prayer read:” Let us pray also for the faithless Jews: that almighty God may remove the veil from their hearts; so that they too may acknowledge Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us pray. Let us kneel. [pause for silent prayer] Arise. Almighty and eternal God, who dost not exclude from thy mercy even Jewish faithlessness: hear our prayers, which we offer for the blindness of that people; that acknowledging the light of thy Truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.” Pope John XXIII ordered that the word “faithless” (Latin: perfidis) be removed from the prayer for the conversion of the Jews, Accordingly, the prayer was revised to read: “Let us pray also for the Jews: that almighty God may remove the veil from their hearts; so that they too may acknowledge Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us pray. Let us kneel. Arise. Almighty and eternal God, who dost also not exclude from thy mercy the Jews: hear our prayers, which we offer for the blindness of that people; the light of thy Truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen After the Second Vatican Council, the prayer was completely revised for the 1970 edition of the Roman Missal. “Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant. (Prayer in silence. Then the priest says:) Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

⁷⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine. 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Chicago 1971. P. 11 ff.

ment, have been taken over as our own as Christians. They are no longer Your Jewish scriptures because, according to Catholic and Orthodox doctrine, the Jewish people no longer exist. Henceforward, the Old and the New Testament were to be read and interpreted as determined by the Councils and the Magisterium of the Church. This doctrine of appropriation ignores the reality that the Psalms are the core of daily prayers in our Christian Churches and in all Jewish communities.

As a consequence, surviving Jews must convert or wander and die, and the Talmud can only be the work of Satan. Not Jesus Christ Himself, but Christian doctrine as it developed since the Church fathers and the Church Councils - convoked to define true doctrine as against Jews, Samaritans, heretics and pagans, - became the foundation from which hatred for the Jews, and the persecution of Jews emerged and developed up until the present. The true doctrine’s principal issue was the proper definition of Jesus-Christ, God-man, one nature and the Messiah as promised in the Jewish scriptures.

The Jewish Rabbis who, in Palestine and Babylonia, composed the Talmud, were inspired by the opposite belief: detailed rules and customs are required to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. They can be drafted only through serious study, argument and counterargument, respect and dialogue.

Unfinished

God’s kingdom, as I quoted Guardini⁷⁵ did not come as it was meant to. Its acceptance or rejection depended on the response of the individual or group in every period of world history. One might understand why Jesus was not recognized as the Messiah by all the Jews living at the time, because He did not come as they had been foretold. Under Roman occupation, Jesus did not liberate them, as had been their expectation. He was crucified by the Romans, as thousands of other Jews were after Him.

In “The Sacrifice of Isaac: A Survivor’s Story,” Elie Wiesel wrote about the role

⁷⁵ Chapter 1, supra.

this story, as interpreted by the Christian churches, played: “the threat hanging over Isaac is seen as a prefiguration of the crucifixion. Except that on Mount Moriah the act was not consummated: the father did not abandon his son.”⁷⁶

Therefore, and certainly after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., faithful Jews could have been accepted as fellow believers. Their Messiah and Christ’s Second Coming might have united them in their diversity. Why did this not happen until the papacy of Pope John XXIII in the twentieth century? Is it because Constantine’s Christian Empire politically intervened? Such it did, but as an argument for eighteen centuries of persecution, it is unsatisfactory. The more fundamental answer must be sought in the way in which the call to follow Jesus was turned into a political doctrine, to be imposed upon and accepted as the only truth.

According to Friedrich Heer, Christianity today can be compared to a tree or forest, uprooted from the soil it came from. He wrote his book, *Gottes Erste Liebe: Die Juden im Spannungsfeld der Geschichte* (1986), to redeem Christian guilt for what Adolf Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jews during the Holocaust.⁷⁷ The long tradition of anti-Jewish, Christian doctrine, has been a breeding ground for hatred, humiliation, persecution and crime, including the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council tried to redeem a very old and persistent Christian guilt, but only with partial success.

The Story of (another) Saul who became Paul

Saul, son of Salomon, grew up in the Jewish Community of Troyes in France, where his grandfather’s generation had escaped following the pogrom in Blois, and in which his great-grandfather had been killed at the age of 18. Saul did not want to become a scribe as family tradition dictated, but became a banker instead. In this capacity, he met a lovely young Christian lady, Mathilde. She asked him to hide two books of Aristotle, which were forbidden to Christians

⁷⁶ In *Messengers of God*, p. 90-91. Akeda stands for “Binding” of Isaac.

⁷⁷ Friedrich Heer, *Gottes Erste Liebe. Die Juden im Spannungsfeld der Geschichte*. Ulstein 1986. English translation: *God’s First Love. Christians and Jews Over Two Thousand Years*. London 1999.

at that time. After this, she took him to her brother, a Benedictine Abbot. Saul and Mathilde fell in love and got married in the Latin Church, after Saul was baptized and became Paul. It was the year 1214 C.E. His family, except his youngest brother, broke off all contact. At the time of the Fourth Lateran Council, he joined his brother in law, the Abbot, in going to Rome. This was the Council in where it was decided that Jews should wear a round or circular yellow badge, to more clearly separate them from the Christians. In Troyes, the badge came only twenty years later, after Paul and Mathilde had died from an epidemic disease. Their son Mathieu, married and with three children, was employed as a scribe in the Episcopal office. He was quite upset by the way Christians treated the Jews. In discussions, he used to quote St. Augustine, who had written that “the Jews hold the Book from which the Christians drew their faith,” to which his opponents replied: “[t]he Jews have abandoned the Book for the Talmud; we Christians now are the Book’s sole heirs.” The bishop often warned him to be careful, because the Dominican monks were persecuting heretics and Jews. To alleviate his suffering, the Bishop sent him on a mission to Paris to deliver a document. While in Paris, he heard that King Louis IX (in 1242 C.E.) had ordered to confiscate all copies of the Talmud – considered to be “writings of the devil” – and to burn them, which became a public spectacle. There he met a Jewish scribe, from his town Troyes, in tears. Back home, after several discussions with his Bishop and a long night of prayer, he appeared in office with the circular yellow badge on his dress, in solidarity with the Jews whom he had encountered in Paris. Shortly thereafter he was arrested by Dominican monks on the charge of revolt and conspiracy against our holy mother the Church. When asked who among the Jews had instigated him to wear the Badge, he answered: “Jesus of Nazareth!” “That is blasphemy,” his interrogators answered, and they decided to torture him until he would give the names of his Jewish conspirators. He died whilst being tortured.⁷⁸

This story is part of a family history that runs from Abraham, fleeing the burning Temple of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E., to Marek Halter, the author who was born in Warsaw, survived the Holocaust, and now lives in France. It is a history of wandering Jews, who in great majority kept their faith and remained part of the Jewish community, spread out over many countries. Condemned to

⁷⁸ The story is from: Marek Halter, *La Mémoire d’Abraham*. Paris 1983.

be “dispersed as wanderers” in Christian Europe, many always found another local Jewish community to which they could go.

The charge of conspiracy in the story above was without foundation. The charge – together with many others – has led to many executions - hanging, decapitating or burning at the stake - throughout European history.

Wanderers

The original Abraham, ancestor of the Jewish people, “appears to have come from the city of Ur in Southern Mesopotamia. He left the sedentary world of Ur – the first civilization created by man – and became a wanderer.”⁷⁹ He followed the arch of the fertile crescent in that part of the Middle East to end up in Canaan, sometime between 2000 and 1900 B. C. according to the Bible and (modern) Archeology. Before the beginning of the Christian Era, Jews had wandered through the civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, and Greece (Hellenism). The period of a united Israel was a very short period. King David united the kingdom. It fell apart shortly after death of his son, king Solomon.

The story of the Jews in europe.

There are many stories of Jews in Europe, some of them dating back to the Babylonian exile in the fifth century B.C., most of them since the destruction of Jerusalem in the years 66-70 C.E.

The stories vary per country and era, but they are all part of the “Jewish problem”. As Elie Wiesel wrote: To prepare “solutions” to the “Jewish problem”, the first step was to divorce the Jew from mankind. The process is not new; it has endured for some two thousand years. We hear again and again, in explanation of outrages rife in many places, that there are the Jews and there are the others; the Jews are never entirely innocent, nor are the others ever entirely guilty. Object and non-subject of history, the Jew has been at the mercy of a society in which persecuting him first and murdering him later has at times led to

⁷⁹ Writes Chaim Potok in the opening chapter of *Wanderings, A History of the Jews*. Paperback 1980..

sainthood or power.⁸⁰

Wherever they went, wherever they fled, they were and remained distinct communities, characterized by their strong faith: “*That the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore, you shall love the Lord, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.*” (Deut. 6).

Their strong faith in One God certainly has been a major reason for the survival and growth of the Jewish people, dispersed, persecuted, expelled and humiliated as they were across Europe. In many ways, the Jews often kept and developed their faith parallel to such developments among the Christians.

Soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, rabbis and scribes met to carefully write down the oral Tora (the *Mishna*), explain the Tora (in the *Talmud*), and give interpretations (*Midrash*).

It was the same era in which the Christians wrote the books of their “New Testament” and the Apostolic and Church Fathers developed Christian doctrine.

Jews in Europe lived and migrated as persecuted minorities. They tried to stay together around a synagogue in order to protect each other, often but not always separated from other human communities. As with other people, they knew poverty, decent living, prominence and wealth. Spread over many countries, they developed supreme networks of contacts. Some were prominent in trade and banking, like the Rothschilds, in the medical profession, or in science and art, such as Einstein, Halevy and Mendelsohn. As people with a strong faith and a clear identity, they often did better than others; they financed the wars of Kings and Emperors, and their doctors healed their children.

Fleeing from persecution in one place, they could migrate to other Jewish communities elsewhere. Jews had their golden age in Spain and Portugal in the early Middle Ages until their expulsion in the Fifteenth Century. They were welcome in the Northern Netherlands since the sixteenth century. They could live peacefully for many centuries in the Kingdom of Poland until the partition

⁸⁰ Elie Wiesel, “Zionism and Racism.” In *A Jew Today*. New York 1978, p.41.

of 1792, and again for a brief period after the First World War in the Polish republic, where Jews lived harmoniously with Catholics, as we learn from the life of Karol Wojtyła, later known as Pope John-Paul II.

The – often parallel – developments in Jewish and Christian communities also showed through the ages, from writing down the Lord’s teaching in the early centuries, to nationalism and secularization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. European Jews substantially contributed to the development of European civilization, whether in music or medicine, art and architecture or science and learning.⁸¹

Measures against the Jews In Europe

It is important to keep in mind that the great variety of measures taken against Jewish citizens at different times and in different places can be understood only in the context of the anti-Jewish Cain-Doctrine, as developed and formulated from the second century onwards. According to the Cain-Doctrine, every Jew was born guilty. As a consequence, wickedness was presumed. Throughout these centuries, therefore, a great variety of measures continued to be invented to restrict and control the Jews and to keep them separate from Christians. The presumed wickedness of the Jews produced hateful and humiliating official texts and practices, for instance with respect to the *Oath More Judico* and the designation of Jewish law as *superstitio Judaica* (Jewish superstition). Even such a merciful and holy Pope as Gregory the Great used this term “superstition” when referring to Jewish Law in his correspondence with bishops.

Among the measures imposed upon the Jewish people were special badges, dresses and headwear; special higher taxes and forced remittance of debts to Christians; the banning, confiscation and burning of Jewish Holy Books; the expulsion from territories – e.g. from England, France, Spain, Portugal and the Papal territories; forced residence in ghettos (in the Papal States even lasting until Italian unification in 1870). The story (in chapter 2) of the Grand Inquisitor was not just fiction. The Spanish Inquisition had a special interest in

⁸¹ Among the best books on the Jews in European history are Simon Schama, *The Story of the Jews*. In two volumes. 2014 and 2017. Eva Hoffmann, *Shetl*. Vintage 1999. Chaim Potok, *Wanderings*. Fawcett crest 1980.

converted Jews who allegedly continued to secretly practice their Jewish faith. They could be denounced anonymously, as was the case for Mathieu in the story told above.

The official presumption of wickedness had many consequences in daily life. We already referred to the Good Friday Prayer, which easily led to violent outbursts, pogroms and killing sprees, in France as much as in Russia and other European countries. The Good Friday prayer in the Orthodox Churches (still alive) was even more hateful than the Catholic one. We all know how deeply liturgy can enter our hearts and minds. After all, it survived throughout the centuries, even after the French Revolution and in the secular age. The Dreyfuss affair in France, at the end of the nineteenth century, showed how much the presumption of wickedness was alive in the French Republic of “Freedom, Fraternity and Equality.”

Making Laws Against the Jews

The Law of the Roman Republic was tolerant towards religious minorities, accepting their religion as legitimate and allowing for substantial legal autonomy, for instance with respect to Jewish Law.

Roman Law, after the Roman Empire was declared to be a Christian Empire, began to discriminate against the Jews from the fourth through seventh or eighth century. The Theodosian Code and the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* of Emperor Justinian issued specific prohibitions against Jews, Samaritans, heretics, and heathens.

With respect to the Jews, Roman Emperors continuously had to maintain a balance between theological doctrine, political expediency, and enforceability. The same applied to the Emperors, Czars, Popes, Patriarchs, Bishops, Kings, Queens, Princes and lower authorities throughout Europe. Church Councils on all levels promoted the application of the Cain-Doctrine; the rulers looked at political expediency and personal profit. Enforceability was a problem everywhere.

The story of the Jewry Oath, as told by Amnon Linder, is a very telling example of how Christian Europe dealt with its Jewish minorities throughout the centuries.⁸² The Oath was an ancient institution in the law of Israel and also found its way into Christian Europe. From the fifth century onwards, Jews were required to take an oath formulated so as to be binding under Jewish Law, unkindly referred to as *superstitio Judaica*. Oath-taking was necessary for a variety of purposes, like appearing in Court, confirming transactions and accepting public positions. Jewry Oaths were dealt with in many law books and statutes from the sevenths through the nineteenth centuries. They had two components: a solemn invocation of God with the hand on the Torah, and curses or self-maledictions to discourage perjury. Oath-taking confirmed a legal commitment and was a public ritual. The self-maledictions and the rituals imposed upon the Jewish party gave ample opportunity for humiliations, degradations and insults. Jews were ridiculed in the rituals and their curses would include the core of the Cain-doctrine, suggesting that the Jewish party would by definition commit perjury. The Cain-doctrine permeated the approach to the Jewish minorities in prayer, in law and in literature, such as the Canterbury Tales and Shakespeare's Play "The Merchant of Venice"⁸³

From the Canterbury Tales, The Tale of the Prioress:

In a great city of Asia amongst the Christian folk there was
a Jewry, sustained by a lord of that land for foul usury
and villainous lucre, hateful to Christ and his followers;
and men might ride or walk through the street,
for it was free and open at both ends.
A little child, as he came to and fro through the Jewry,
would sing full merrily, and cry evermore O alma redemptoris;
the sweetness of Christ's mother hath so pierced his heart,
that in prayer to her, he cannot stint singing by the way.
Our first foe, the serpent Satan, that in a Jew's heart
hath his wasp's nest, up-swelled and said: "O Hebrew people

82 Amnon Linder, The Jewry Oath in Christian Europe. In the excellent volume: *Jews in Early Christian Law: Byzantium and the Latin West, 6th-11th century*. Edited by John Tolan, Nicholas de Lange, Laurence Foschia, Capucine Nemo-Pekelman. Brepols Turnhout 2014.

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is this, alas! a thing seemly to you, that such a boy shall walk
as he list in your despite and sing of such a theme, which is
against the reverence of your law?"

From thenceforth the Jews have conspired
to hunt this innocent out of this world.

Thereto they have paid an homicide that had a privy dwelling
in an alley; and as the child passed by, this cursed Jew seized
him and held him fast, and cut his throat and flung him into a pit
*All that night this poor widow awaited her little child, but he came not;
for which, as soon as it was day, with face pale
for dread and anxious disquietude, she hath sought him at school
and elsewhere, till finally she espied thus far that he was last seen
in the Jewry. With mother's pity pent in her breast, she goes as
it were half out of her mind to every place where by likelihood
she hath supposed her little child might be, and ever she cried
on Christ's mother meek and kind, and at last she came to seek
him among the cursed Jews.

She asked and prayed piteously of every Jew that dwelt
there to tell her if her child had passed by. They said "Nay,"
but after a little while, Jesu of his grace put it in her thought
to call aloud for her son in that place where he was cast beside
the way into a pit.

**

This provost caused these Jews that wits of his murder to
be slain, and that anon, with torment and shameful death; he
would suffer no such cursedness. Evil shall have what evil deserves, there-
fore he let them be drawn with wild horses and after that he hanged them
by law.⁸⁴

Another widespread and unfounded charge was the cruelty and usury of Jewish money-lenders. It was the subject of Shakespeare's well-known play *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Shylock the Jew lends money to Antonio on cruel conditions:

84 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*. The Prioress's Tale. Excerpts from translation in Gutenberg Project.

This kindness will I show.
 Go with me to a notary, seal me there
 Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
 If you repay me not on such a day,
 In such a place, such sum or sums as are
 Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
 Be nominated for an equal pound
 Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
 In what part of your body pleaseth me.

In the fourth act, a mysterious female judge Portia is brought in, who allows Shylock to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's breast, but without shedding a drop of blood; clearly an impossible task. Thereafter Shylock himself is severely punished:

Tarry, Jew:
 The law hath yet another hold on you.
 It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
 If it be proved against an alien
 That by direct or indirect attempts
 He seek the life of any citizen,
 The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
 Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
 Comes to the privy coffer of the state;
 And the offender's life lies in the mercy
 Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.
 In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st;
 For it appears, by manifest proceeding,
 That indirectly and directly too
 Thou hast contrived against the very life
 Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd
 The danger formerly by me rehearsed.
 Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke."⁸⁵

⁸⁵ From the Fourth Act of The Merchant of Venice.

Even more telling is the Legend of the Wandering Jew, written and told in several versions since the thirteenth century. According to the Legend, a Jew encountered Jesus on the way to the Cross and shouted with the rabble: "crucify him." To whom Jesus replied: "I will stand here and rest, but thou shalt go on until the last day."⁸⁶

Popular hatred against the Jews blossomed in Christian Europe and increasingly so since the era of the Crusades in the 11th. Century.

A revolution in the catholic church?

"How absurd it is to make today's Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Christ, is something everyone will understand who has even an iota of intelligence or conscience" wrote Irene Harand, a Viennese practicing Catholic in 1937. John Connelly responded by remarking how "[y]et, in the Catholic camp, those considered most intelligent thought precisely that."⁸⁷ And unfortunately, even today too many Catholic and other Christians are still taught the Cain-Doctrine, despite the Revolution of 1965 when *Nostra Aetate* was formally proclaimed. A careful reading of the text makes quite clear that the three theses of the Cain-Doctrine summarized above, have been rejected.

As Connelly explains in his outstanding book *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (2012), the revolution did not materialize from within the Church, although we rightly associate the revolution with Holy Pope John XXIII, as confirmed in his last prayer cited earlier in this chapter. Pope John and the Vatican Council acted on the initiative of a number of persons who had converted from Judaism to the Catholic Church; persons who came to their initiative on the basis of an ongoing dialogue with fellow Jews like Martin Buber.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ See e.g. Eugene Sue, *The Wandering Jew*. London-New York 1889. David Hoffman ed. *Legend of the Wandering Jew. Chronicles Selected from the originals of Cartaphilus*. London 1853.

⁸⁷ John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*. Harvard University Press 2012. On p. 141/142.

⁸⁸ Most prominent among them was John M. Oesterreicher. See e.g. his: *The Rediscovery of Judaism: A Re-examination of the Conciliar Statement on the Jews*. The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies. 1971. In: Seton Hall University eRepository@Seton Hall.

Holy Pope John-Paul II – has taken up the challenge of the Revolution with conviction and commitment, as can be observed through the new institutions for Catholic-Jewish dialogue and the record of publications.⁸⁹

After her revolution, the Catholic church is faced with two major problems. The first one concerns the relationship between the “Anti-Judaism” of the past and the Anti-Semitism of the present, originating in the nineteenth century. The second one concerns the question of who is to be held responsible for the Anti-Judaism in the Christian Churches.⁹⁰

Regarding the first problem, the answer given in the document “We Remember” is that modern anti-Semitism, which led to the Holocaust/Shoa, is not related to the religious Anti-Judaism of the Church, but to nineteenth century nationalism. Pertaining to the second problem, the documents insist that the “erroneous and unjust interpretations of certain texts in the New Testament regarding the Jewish people” did not come from the Church as such, but from unidentified Christian circles.

These two arguments are rightly challenged by David Kertzer, who asserts that “This argument, sadly, is not the product of a Church that wants to confront its history. If Jews acquired equal rights in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was only over the angry, loud, and indeed indignant protests of the Vatican and the Church. The distinction made between “anti-Judaism” -- of which some unnamed and misinformed Christians were unfortunately guilty in the past -- and “anti-Semitism,” which led to the horrors of the Holocaust, will simply not survive historical scrutiny. As modern anti-Semitic movements took shape at the end of the nineteenth century, the Church was a major player in them, constantly warning people of the rising “Jewish peril.” The Commission’s neat distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism was not new to the 1998 document. In the wake of the Second World War, scholars and theologians close to the Church began to look for a way to defend the Church from the charge of having helped lay the ground-

89 In particular: Commission for religious relations with the Jews: *The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable. A Reflection...* on the occasion of the 50th. Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. 10 December 2015

90 Cf. *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoa*. Document of the Commission for religious relations with the Jews. 16 March 1998.

work for the Holocaust. The anti-Semitism vs. anti-Judaism distinction soon became an article of faith that relieved the Church of any responsibility for what happened. Before long, millions of people came to assume its historical reality.”⁹¹

Kertzer’s challenge finds support from an unexpected source: the tolerant Dutch. In 1858, the Catholic Church was re-established in the Netherlands. In its first Pastoral Council of 1865, the Church reaffirmed the Catholic doctrine against the Jews by means of its strict prohibition for Catholics to socialise with the Jews.⁹² His objection also finds support in John Connelly’s book, in which Connelly writes that “clearly the Holocaust was unthinkable without the ancient Christian legacy of deicide as well as the related idea that Jews were cut off from divine grace, destined to wander the earth until they turned to Christ.”

For many centuries, the Cain-Doctrine was part and parcel of the prayers, teaching, lore, policy and practice of the Christian churches, at least until Holy Pope John XXIII and the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. The doctrine remains responsible for the deep-seated presumption of Jewish wickedness, among the Christian faithful and today’s secularists. From the nineteenth century onwards, the doctrine easily merged with racial anti-Semitism, as has been made all too clear by Kertzer and Connelly.⁹³

There is yet another reason why the distinction between Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism is a false division, as evidenced in the treatment of Jews converted to the Christian faith. According to official doctrine, Jews could avoid persecution or expulsion by personal conversion. Still, converted Jews were not trusted, and many of them were even brought before the inquisition on the basis of anonymous allegations, or were persecuted in other ways.

It requires the acceptance of error and sin, and repentance on all levels from the Holy See, the Ecumenical and the Autocephalous Patriarchates of the Eastern

91 David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews. The Vatican’s Role in the rise of modern antisemitism*. Vintage eBooks. The quotes are copied from his article in the New York Times. Archives 2001.

92 Marcel Poorthuis en Theo Salemink, *Een Donkere Spiegel*. Valkhof pers 2006.

93 Cf. note 16 above. *Op.cit.* p. 9.

Churches (and other Christian Churches) down to the simplest believer. The Cain-Doctrine is a reminder that doctrines formulated under political leadership of Emperors and Popes can and do err, as happened with respect to the Jewish people. Where doctrines about the faith in Jesus Christ intervene, often in conflict with “others” – referred to as heathens, heretics, Samaritans or Jews – the faithful are bound to be spiritually poisoned and to split and become divided. What can be learned from the long and sad history of the Cain-Doctrine is threefold:

The **first** lesson is that the effort to formulate doctrine, always as against others, is by nature a political exercise in the garb of theology. For Emperor Constantine the Great, the (first) Council of Nicea had a clear political purpose. He had little patience for theological niceties, but was determined to put an end to the (Arian) controversy. He therefore played a prominent part in the debates at the Ecumenical Council of Nicea (327 CE), held for the purpose of maintaining unity in his Christian Empire.⁹⁴ The oft-quoted principle, *Cuius Regio Eius Religio*, dates back at least to Emperor Constantine and is at the origin of all religious divisions dealt with in this chapter and those that follow. As such, it is important to realize that the principle is meant to operate in top-down, but never bottom-up manner!

The **second** lesson is the danger of being locked up in one’s own formulated truth. The long and sad story of the persecution of the Jews in Christian Europe allows for no other conclusion than that the Cain-Doctrine is fundamentally wrong. It is the claim to the truth by which the centuries of blindness, as Pope John XXIII referred to in his prayer, could occur. It was by the same claim that “those considered most intelligent” in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches failed to understand the absurdity of making Jews throughout 20 centuries responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus under Roman occupation in the year 33. *Nostra Aetate* teaches us all that this second danger can be avoided only through interreligious dialogue, an open mind, the spirit of reconciliation, and the virtue of humility, to begin with.

94 Cf. John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium*. Viking 1997.

Ample room for evil

The **third** and by far the worst one is the extent to which Europe’s civilization at large, has been deeply poisoned by the Cain-doctrine. I begin with a simple example. When I was a little boy in a Catholic family in the Netherlands during the Second World War, I met only other Catholic boys. Contact with Protestants was to be avoided; with Jews it was forbidden by the Church. In the post-war years, we learned about occupation, starvation, liberation and recovery. It took almost twenty years before a real discussion in Western Europe developed on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and much longer before it became a major, popular issue. In Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe, this could only begin after 1989.

Another, most painful example concerns the fate of the baptized Jews in the Netherlands during the German occupation. From the beginning of the occupation, the Dutch Christian Churches tried to protect their baptized Jews from deportation. The Catholic Archbishop, Jan de Jong of Utrecht wanted a more principled approach, namely a condemnation of the deportation of all Jews, catholic or not. Not all bishops and other Christian leaders supported him. The Nazis used this difference of approach to sow division among them. While suggesting willingness not to deport baptized Jews, they raided two abbeys on August 2nd, 1942. Two nuns and three Trappist monks were arrested, apparently with no resistance from their superiors, and deported to Auschwitz, where they were gassed only a few days later, on August 9th.⁹⁵ One of them, Edith Stein, baptized as Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, was later made a Saint and co-patroness of Europe by Pope John-Paul II.

Facing evil: amnesia, collaboration, cowardice, indifference and paralysis

On January 27, 1945, the German extermination Camp Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army. In 2020, this hellish place was commemorated in an impressive ceremony, broadcasted all across the world, to which the Polish President had invited world leaders and the still living survivors.

95 Peter Steffen & Hans Evers, *Scheuren in het Kleed .Het Joods-Katholieke Gezin Löb*. Valkhof Pers 2009

The theme was: NEVER AGAIN. Auschwitz symbolizes Hitler's "Final Solution" to the Jewish problem, by means of which the Nazis massacred 6 million Jews – over one million of them in Auschwitz – between 1939 and 1945. Most of the others were killed where they lived, by special German SS units – the so called *Einsatzgruppen* – moving East following the troops of the invasion of Poland in 1939 and the German operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union in 1941.

The massacres of European Jews between 1933, when Hitler rose to power, to May of 1945, when Nazi-Germany was finally defeated, raise many troubling questions. Much has been written about the Holocaust. Some survivors wrote shortly after the war, amongst them Primo Levi and Eddy de Wind in "*Eindstation Auschwitz*," first published in 1946, but hardly known or read until 2020, and Elie Wiesel, who devoted his life to trying to understand what had occurred. Many survivors could not write about the hell they had gone through. A few turned their suffering into a service for others, like Victor Frankl and Edith Eger. Anne Frank had written a diary, which was found and published after the war. Some who were born after the Second World War also took to writing, as did Heather Morris and Eva Mozes Kor, best known for their the shocking stories titled *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* (2017) and *Cilka's Journey* (2019) and *The Twins of Auschwitz* (2009).

I belong to the generation who discovered much later what horrors had occurred. Ever since, I have kept trying to understand how this could have happened, something which proves to be an unending effort.

For this final paragraph, I have selected Primo Levi and some of the most recent publications.

Geraldine Schwarz writes, in her recently published and translated book, *Those Who Forget* (2017), writes about what she discovered about her grandfather's collaboration with the Nazis and focusses on the great majority of the German people, who had not killed anyone, but also had not done anything to oppose the massacres and sometimes even took advantage of the circumstances.

Primo Levi survived Auschwitz and saw it as his task to analyze and explain what happened and why. In his last book, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), he explored the grey zone occupied by prisoners of the German Extermination Camps, who survived, who cooperated, who carried out the orders and who were employed as slaves in the factories that produced gas and other lethal instruments. Like many survivors of the Holocaust, Levi observes how the extermination and concentration camps transformed respectable German officers, average soldiers, Kapos and medical doctors into beastly perpetrators of murder and torture, without understanding why. How could so many persons living in a land formed through centuries of Christian education stoop so low?

Edith Eger wrote *The Choice*, which was published in 2017. It took her many years before she could write about her experiences in Auschwitz and about her escape from death. Impressed by the writings of Victor Frankl, she decided to devote her life to help others as a psychologist. Her book is a moving and impressive account of her human capacity to survive and to heal from unspeakable evil, heal others and radiate joy.⁹⁶

Laurence Rees spent twenty five years to meet survivors and perpetrators of the Holocaust and combined their witness-accounts with academic research in his book *The Holocaust: A New History* (2017).

Others, like **Walter Laqueur** in *The Terrible Secret* (1980), and **Martin Gilbert** in *Auschwitz and the Allies* (1981), analyze why the Allies failed to deal with the "Final Solution" as the major problem in the war against Nazi Germany.

Elie Wiesel, whom I quoted earlier in this chapter, published his first book *Nuit (Night)* in 1958. He writes: "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreathes of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever."

⁹⁶ Followed in 2020 by her : *THE GIFT.12 Lessons to Save Your Life*. New York 2020.

Questions as to why so many people looked the other way, partly covered by Geraldine Schwarz, are the most difficult to answer. Primo Levi mentions them in the chapter “Shame,” noting how “they are those who faced by the crime of others or their own, turn their backs so as not to see it and not feel touched by it: this is what the majority of Germans did during the twelve Hitlerian years, deluding themselves that not seeing was a way of not knowing, and that not knowing relieved them of their share of complicity or connivance.”⁹⁷ They were the guilty ones – by voluntary omission, cover-up or criminal acts – who did not talk. Very few of them were prosecuted and they were often protected by family, friends or neighbors. Schwarz wrote about them because she felt guilty about her grandfather and had the moral courage to inquire and publish her discoveries.

A more fundamental, and hardly ever mentioned cause for people “turning their backs and not feeling affected,” is that their inner thoughts had been poisoned by the Cain-Doctrine, transmitted and taught during their Christian upbringing. Traces of that poison can even be found in the way the allied powers dealt with the problem during the war. Lack of genuine concern, if not indifference about their fellow-Jews, amongst the German people gave Hitler and the Nazi’s free reign to organize and execute the Final Solution. For the allies it was no priority issue. The degradation (*Entwürdigung*) of the Jews through the Cain-Doctrine facilitated their degradation and the Final Solution by the Nazis.

This was the case in particular with the German Catholic Church. Hierarchy and the faithful went along with the racial theories of the Nazi Party. There were no protests against the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 or the *Kristallnacht* in 1938, and no protest even against the announcement and the initiation of the Final Solution of the Jewish problem. There were no admonitions or measures against Catholics serving in the army or the SS. The best one can find was a careful and unsuccessful effort by the bishops to protect converted Catholic Jewish citizens in their flock, against deportation, in line with the general approach of the Catholic Church to give first priority to protecting her own

⁹⁷ On p. 65. Primo Levi, *THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED*. Abacus 1988. Translated from the Italian. Geraldine Schwarz, *Les Amnésiques*. Flammarion 2017. English translation “Those Who Forget. Simon&Schuster 2020. Walter Laqueur, *THE TERRIBLE SECRET*. Boston 1980 (third edition). Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*. London 1981.

faithful. This conclusion is confirmed by Laurence Rees, when he refers to the successful protest of Bishop von Galen against the T4 action, the program for the euthanasia killings of handicapped people: “It is significant that something similar was not attempted [...] over the treatment of the Jews. Underlying anti-Semitism among much of the population was not the only reason for this lack of action. Protests also did not occur because the Catholic Church in Germany had distanced itself from the persecution of the Jews, fearing the consequences for the church itself of protesting [...] Hitler knew that many of his supporters were Christians and that without their support his ambitions would be damaged.”⁹⁸

At least three other aspects could be added in the case of the German Catholic Church:

First, The Catholic Church supported Hitler in his anti-communist policy;

Second, In war, with Catholic soldiers also partaking in battle – it had to support the national cause. After all, nationalism, as we shall discuss in Chapter 7, had become Europe’s dominant political religion since the nineteenth century.

The third consideration concerns the policy of the Holy See.

In 1933, Pope Pius XI concluded a Concordat with Germany, meant primarily to protect the Catholic Church in Hitler’s German Empire. The text was signed on 20 July 1933 by Franz von Papen on behalf of Adolf Hitler, German Chancellor as of January 30, and by Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, Vatican Secretary of State, the later Pope Pius XII (1939-1958).⁹⁹ Two days after the signing, Hitler declared: “[t]he fact that the Vatican is concluding a treaty with the new Germany means the acknowledgement of the National Socialist state by the Catholic Church.”¹⁰⁰ The Concordat was highly controversial in the German Catholic Church, where the bishops had clearly denounced national socialism. Only by dictatorial fiat – Hitler dealing directly with the Papal Secretary of State – could the Concordat become a fact.

⁹⁸ P. 214/215.

⁹⁹ Text and comment in: Frank J. Coppa (ed), *Controversial Concordats*. Washington D.C. 1999.

¹⁰⁰ John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope*. Viking 1999. At p. 130.

Pope Pius XI's Encyclical, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, reflected a growing concern with Hitler's racist policies and the developing alliance between Hitler and Mussolini. The result was a draft-encyclical, prepared by German, French, and American Jesuits. Pope Pius XI died before he could deal with the draft, and the text disappeared in the archives.¹⁰¹ While the draft re-confirmed the Cain-doctrine with respect to the Jews, it nevertheless condemned racism and anti-Semitism, albeit in diplomatic terms.

In 1939, his secretary of state succeeded him as Pope Pius XII. What the new Pope brought with him were several tragic miscalculations. The first one was his faith in diplomacy as a method to solve complex problems.¹⁰² The second one was his aversion to democracy, by which he accepted Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy as potential allies against the Communist Soviet Union. The third one was his attachment to the Monarchic Roman Catholic Church, in which national bishops must be obedient to the Pope. The fourth one was his attachment to the Cain-Doctrine with respect to the Jews; his focus was on the fate of those Jews who were married to a Catholic or who had themselves become a Catholic.

In their refusal to protest, the German Church had the Holy See on their side. Pope Pius XII, the diplomat and spiritual leader, faced two dilemma's. The first was between the principle of neutrality in war and the call for moral leadership when faced with evil done to human persons. Neutrality meant no condemnation of any of the warring parties. Moral leadership brought another dilemma between clearly speaking out on evil, and keeping silent to protect the faithful belonging to the Church. The Pope opted for the latter also – so the argument – to be able to give as much assistance as possible to the victims of Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, questions remain with respect to the Pope's silence, that even the documents of the State Secretariat published since 1964 cannot answer.¹⁰³ Among them are the deportation of Jews from Slovakia (at the time its president was a Catholic priest); the deportation of the Jews of Rome; and the deportation of Hungarian Jews, where the Pope indeed helped convince Admi-

¹⁰¹ Cf. Washingtonpost.com, *The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI*. Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations, Draft Encyclical Humani Generis Unitas (1938). On the partly recovered text.

¹⁰² Cf. my: *Neither Justice nor Order*. On the illusions of "the international community". Also Chapter 3 supra.

¹⁰³ Cf. Pierre Blet s.j., *Pie XII et la Seconde Guerre mondiale d'après les archives du Vatican*. Perrin 1997.

ral Horthy – by means of diplomatic dispatch – to discontinue the deportations, as he did in July 1944, after 430.000 of them had already been deported to Auschwitz. Nevertheless, soon thereafter Eichmann (still in Budapest) found the "solution" to have them deported directly to the Reich; if they could not be transported, they could walk. By November 1944, 27.000 Hungarian Jews were on their appalling march to the remaining death- and concentration camps¹⁰⁴.

As we can read in the documentation¹⁰⁵ on Pius XII and the Second World War, the Pope employed diplomatic means at his disposal to resist the Holocaust; he promoted and supported the protection of the Jews in Rome and Italy. When he spoke, he did so in veiled, diplomatic terms. When things came too close to him, the Pope kept silent. Robert G. Weisbord and Wallace P. Sillapoa write:

"No sooner had the raid begun on October 16, 1943 than all Rome was abuzz with talk of the German atrocity. What surprised most Romans, apart from the display of barbarity, was the Germans' audacity in conducting such a *Judenaktion* in the papal city, under the very balcony of Pius XII." [...] "The Pope's presence alone did not suffice to halt the Nazi juggernaut.[...] From the very beginning of the Nazi occupation of Rome, Pius XII had settled on a general policy of silence."¹⁰⁶

Neutrality in the WWII was an impossibility. The Second World War began with the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1939 and became a world war with the Japanese attack on Pearl-Harbor and the Grand-Alliance of 1941 between the United States of America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. This Grand Alliance, Norman Davies writes in *Europe: A History* (1996), "was every bit as shocking as that of the Nazi-Soviet partnership two years earlier. Every principle of the Anglo-Saxon democracies was contradicted by the Soviet system. Nor was it just a matter of forgetting Stalin's past crimes. The Western leaders had to close their minds to the fact that Stalin continued to kill perhaps a million of his own people every year throughout the war. But Stalin was weak and Hitler was strong, Stalin had to be helped. By

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit. at p. 409.

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Blet s.j. op.cit.

¹⁰⁶ Robert G. Weisbord and Wallace P. Sillanpola, *The Chief Rabbi, the Pope and the Holocaust* Transaction Publishers. 1992 at p. 62, 64..

Stalin's standards, the Western democracies were every bit as nauseating and 'anti-socialist, theist' as the Führer. But with the Wehrmacht at the gates of Moscow, the helping hand of the West had to be accepted; ideological niceties did not enter the reckoning. Though the anti-Nazi alliance was to be wrapped in the verbiage of freedom, democracy, and justice, the Big Three were bound together by cynical convenience."¹⁰⁷

Pope Pius XII had no good argument for neutrality. He was clearly anti-Communist and was shocked by the Nazi-Soviet partnership, more than by Hitler's Operation Barbarossa. He was no great friend of liberal democracy and must have felt completely lost when the Grand Alliance between the Soviets and the two western democracies was concluded. In addition, the Pope had a problem similar to that of the Western Allies. Hitler's racial war of extermination and the Holocaust was unthinkable to any decent human mind.

Nazi Germany was defeated by an alliance of democracies and the Communist Soviet Union!

War of extermination and the holocaust

The totalitarian nature of the Nazi Regime, in which all power was invested from above, made any control or resistance from below almost impossible. The order of evil from above paralyzed people and the Catholic Church in particular, infected as it was by the Cain-Doctrine:¹⁰⁸ paralysis, in addition to degradation, collaboration, cowardice, amnesia and indifference ensued.

In Nazi-Germany, Adolf Hitler – an Austrian Corporal in the Great or First World War, who managed by violence and hatred to climb all the way up to become *Reichskanzler* of Germany in 1933 – ruled from above. From the outset, 'the Jew' was his primary enemy. The overriding aim of his government was the uncompromising removal of all Jews, from Germany and any other European country. For him, Jews and Bolsheviks were indistinguishable. Jews, Slavs, and

¹⁰⁷ From his *Europe, A History*. PIMLICO, 1997 as quoted in my *Western Cooperation*, p. 71/72.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi-Germany*. New York 1964. Also: John Connolly, *op.cit.*

Romas were all *Untermenschen*, subhumans to be exterminated for the sake of protection and domination of the pure Aryan Race.

Hitler's war of extermination was directed against all of them. The war began with the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. The so called *Einsatzgruppen* followed the advancing German armies and started murdering Poles. According to Laurence Rees in his new history of the Holocaust: "Up to 6 million people living in Poland – at least half of them Jews – lost their lives. The vast majority of these people did not die in battle but as a result of a deliberate policy of starvation, deportation and murder."¹⁰⁹ Initially, this war of extermination was fought together with the Soviet Union, whose invasion started on 17 September. Katyn stood for the deliberate murder of Polish leaders and intellectuals following Stalin's order.

The next phase in the war of extermination came when Hitler's armies opened the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Again, *Einsatzgruppen* followed the advancing armies to murder as many Slavs and Jews as possible. And not them alone. Special units of the Order Police, the Waffen SS and the Wehrmacht were also involved in the cleansing actions behind the frontlines. For Hitler "having decided to invade he felt now spiritually free." His 'spiritual' freedom manifested itself in his desire to wage a war without rules and without compassion for the defeated." And "at the epicenter of the Nazi's hatred, lay, as always, the Jews."¹¹⁰

Amongst them were the 34.000 Jews killed in Kiev, dumped in Babi-Yar.¹¹¹ On September 29, 1941, ten days after the Germans conquered Kiev, all Jews of the city were killed.¹¹²

First the Germans, and soon thereafter the Russians, did everything to erase traces of these killings.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust: A new history*. Penguin Random House UK 2017

¹¹⁰ *Op.cit* at p. 205

¹¹¹ A. Anatoli (Kuznetsov), *BABI YAR. A document in the form of a novel*. Translated by David Floyd. New York 1970.

¹¹² Timothy Snyder, *BLOODLANDS: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. P. 202ff. Basic Books 2010. Before the end of 1941, more than 50.000 Jews had been killed East of the line established in the Non-Agression Pact of 1939.

Babi Yar was just one killing ground on the Eastward moving war-front. The German murder brigades did not only kill Jews, but also other Soviet citizens either as bolshevists or subhuman Slaves; some 4.1 million of them lived in the German-occupied territories.

Also, it should not be forgotten that the majority of Soviet prisoners of war (3.3 million out of 5.7) perished in German captivity and deliberately so.

Murder to the end

After the first German defeat at the battle of Stalingrad, Poland became the epi-center of the “Final Solution” of the Jewish problem. Between March 1942 and November 1943, almost 1.7 million people had been murdered, most of them in one of the three death camps (i.e., Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka). By December 1943, all these camps had been destroyed. Auschwitz now remained as the central extermination camp of the Holocaust.

In July 1943, Mrs. Huppert, grandmother of Jurek (Jerzy) Kluger, was dragged from her home in Wadowice, Poland and transported to extermination camp Belzec. Jurek had been a schoolmate and friend of Lolek (Karol) Wojtyla during their years at primary and secondary school (1926-1938). With his father, Jurek had been deported to Siberia, with some 2 million other Poles, after the Soviet attack on Poland on September 17, 1939. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, Jurek, then in the Gulag, was set free and enrolled in the Polish army to be formed in Russia. He was trained as an artillery officer in the Himalayas and ended up in the allied campaign in Italy. In the meantime, all other members of his family had been exterminated in Auschwitz, specifically after the destruction of the Wadowice ghetto. Jurek no longer wanted to return to (communist) Poland, studied in England, and finally settled down in Rome in 1954. His schoolfriend Lolek, in the meantime had, in October 1942, decided to become a priest. While being a seminarian in secret, he had to work as a common laborer in a factory. Twice he narrowly escaped death. In February of 1944, he was hit by a German military truck and left in a ditch. That same year, in August 1944, he escaped a massive round-up of all men in Cracow following the Warsaw uprising. On the second of November 1946, Karol Wojtyla celebrated

his first Mass in the crypt in the Cathedral of Wawel amid those of his friends who were still alive. He knew that some of his schoolfriends had fought in the Italian campaign, but nobody knew whether they were still alive. It was not until the Second Vatican Council in 1965 that Jurek and Lolek could meet again. It was an emotional event for both of them. “They both held their hands out to shake them. But then they embraced. As Wojtyla gazed into his eyes, he said something that surprised his friend. Or at least something he was not expecting: “One day, all Jews and Christians will be able to meet in this fashion.”¹¹³

When Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on 27 January 1945, only the sick and the dying had been left by the SS murderers. The others – between 113,000 and 230,000 - were forced on the winter roads to walk to camps in Germany and Austria. On these “**death marches**,” more than one in three died from exhaustion, and others were shot. Among the survivors were Edith Eger and her sister Magda. More dead than alive, they had finally arrived at Mauthausen, one of the very worst camps in the German Nazi-camp system.

“My sister, writes Edith Eger, is dying slowly of starvation; my sister holds food in her hand. She clutches the tin the way she clutches her hair once, trying to hold on to herself. An unopenable can of fish is the most human part of her now. We are the dead and the near dead. I can’t tell which I am...Cries break me out of a sleep that resembles death. I wait for the promised explosion, for the promised heat. I keep my eyes closed and wait to burn. But there is no explosion. There is no flame. I open my eyes, and I can see jeeps rolling slowly in through the pine forest.... Someone is singing “When the Saints Go Marching in”. But as they happen, I have no idea what they mean....I see an American handing cigarettes to inmates, who are so hungry they eat them, paper and all. I watch from a tangle of [dead] bodies. I can’t tell which legs are my legs. “Are there any living here?” the Americans call in German. “Raise your hand if you are alive.” I try to move my fingers to signal that I am alive. *Here I am*, I want to call. *I am here*. I have no voice. He scours the bodies. His eyes pass over me without recognition. He holds a piece of dirty cloth to his face. “Raise your hand if you can hear me”, he says. *You’ll never go out of here alive*, they’ve said: the Kapo

¹¹³ Gian Franco Svidercoschi, *Letter to a Jewish Friend*. The simple and extraordinary story of Pope John Paul II and his Jewish schoolfriend. London 1988 at p.88.

who ripped out my earrings, the SS officer with the tattoo gun who didn't want to waste ink, the foreman in the thread factory, the SS who shot us down on the long, long march. This is how it feels for them to be right. The soldier shouts something in English. Someone outside my field of vision yells back. They are leaving. And then a patch of light explodes on the ground. Here's a fire. At last. I am surprised that it makes no noise. The soldiers turn... There is no fire. The gleam of light isn't fire at all. It is the sun colliding with Magda's sardine can! Whether on purpose or by accident, she has arrested the soldiers' attention with a tin of fish. They are returning. We have one more chance. If I can dance in my mind, I can make my body seen. I close my eyes and concentrate, raising my hands above my head in an imaginary arabesque. I hear the soldiers yell again, one to the other. One is very close to me. I keep my eyes locked shut and continue my dance. I imagine that I am dancing with him. That he lifts me over his head like Romeo did in the barracks with Mengele. That there is love and it springs out of war. That there is death and always, always its opposite. And now I can feel my hand. I know it is my hand because the soldier is touching it. I open my eyes. I see his wide, dark hand circles my fingers....And Magda? Has she been discovered too?He lifts me now and deposits me on the ground, on my back, at a slight distance from the dead bodies. I can see the sky in pieces between the treetops. I feel the humid air on my face, the damp of muddy grass beneath me. I let my mind rest in sensation... I remember Magda's story about my birth. "You helped me," my mother cried to her mother....And now Magda is beside me in the grass. She holds her can of sardines. We have survived the final selection. We are alive. We are together. We are free."¹¹⁴

Laurence Rees rightly concludes that: "The Holocaust is the most infamous crime in the history of the world...the word reflects the fact that the extermination of the Jews was a crime of singular horror in the history of the human race...and I believe it is still important to understand how and why this crime happened. For the history tells us, perhaps more than any other, just what our species can do."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Edith Eger, *The Choice*. Rider 2017. At the end of Chapter 6. To choose a blade of Grass.

¹¹⁵ Laurence Rees, op. Cit. At p. XV, 426, 429.

Beyond the holocaust and the second world war

On 29 April, 1974, we boarded an EL-AL flight from Amsterdam to Tel-Aviv. During take-off, the large (B747) aircraft was half empty. During its stop-over in Vienna, the plane was fully filled up with black-dressed Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union, on their way to Israel. When descending over the coastline to Ben Gurion airport in Israel, they all rose from their seats to sing the Israeli national anthem – a deeply moving sight.

Our visit took place between two contrasting and shocking experiences in the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. In the 1973 October War, launched by Egypt and Syria against Israel, the Soviet Union blocked a Security Council "Cease Fire" Resolution for three weeks, that is, until an Egyptian defeat was imminent. As in the 1967 War, the Soviet Union supported the Arab states in their war against Israel. Two years later, the General Assembly adopted a resolution, initiated by the Soviet Union, in which it "determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."¹¹⁶ It was at this point that I learned about the often forgotten plight of the Soviet Jews and their ongoing persecution since the end of the Second World War.¹¹⁷

According to Roy A. Medvedev, there was a serious resurgence of antisemitism in the Soviet Union, in and after the Second World War. At the end of the forties – following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 – the NKVD cooked up a story about the existence of a pro-American Jewish conspiracy, which was followed by arrest of the members of the JAC (Jewish Antifascist Committee). Most of them were shot. Thereafter anti-Jewish measures increased. Most of them were not given publicity. They were only carried out on oral instructions. In the last years of his life, Stalin cast aside almost all ideological screens and made anti-Semitism an open and obvious part of state policy. Preparations were made for mass deportation of Jews to remote districts. The well-known

¹¹⁶ In those two years I represented the Government of the Netherlands in the Sixth or Legal Committee of the General Assembly. The heinous resolution was repealed in December 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

¹¹⁷ This 1974 visit to Israel would be followed by many other ones as member of the Jerusalem Committee until 1993. In 1978 Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem invited me to join the "Jerusalem Committee" - a non-governmental, international advisory body, I belonged to until 1993, when Teddy Kollek lost the elections and the committee ceased to exist.

‘doctor’s’ case was cooked up. In January of 1953, Pravda and Izvestia reported that an organization of Jewish doctors had been unmasked who were hired agents, connected to an international Jewish organization: The Joint Distribution Agency. In fact, this was merely a charitable organization. It marked the beginning of an anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (e.g. the Slansky Trial in Czechoslovakia).¹¹⁸

In addition to the members of the JAC, about four hundred Jewish writers and artists were arrested and exiled. With the termination of the JAC and the loss of the writers and artists, there came an end to any open and effective Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.¹¹⁹

Orlando Figes in his book on Stalin, writes: “After the foundation of Israel in May 1948, and its alignment with the USA in the Cold War, the 2 million Soviet Jews, who had always remained loyal to the Soviet system, were portrayed by the Stalinist regime as a potential fifth column. -- His fears intensified “as a result of Golda Meir’s arrival in Moscow in the autumn of 1948 as the first Israeli ambassador to the USSR. On her visit to a Moscow synagogue on Yom Kippur (13 October), thousands of people lined the streets, many of them shouting Am Yisroel Chai!”¹²⁰

Stalin died on March 5, 1953 And Figes continues: “On 4 April 1953, Pravda carried a prominent statement by Lavrenty Beria, Stalin’s infamous head of secret police, exonerating nine Soviet doctors (seven of them Jews) who had previously been accused of “wrecking, espionage and terrorist activities against the active leaders of the Soviet Government.”

The Soviet people, especially its Jews, were astounded to learn that just a month after Stalin’s death the new leadership now admitted that the charges had been entirely invented by Stalin and his followers. Seven of the doctors were immediately released—two had already died at the hands of their jailers. The infamous “Doctors’ Plot” speaks volumes about Soviet politics, Stalin’s role, the persistence of a medieval view of doctors as potential poisoners,

¹¹⁸ Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge. The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*. New York 1972, At p.494ff.

¹¹⁹ Chaim Potok, *The Gates of November*. Chronicals of the Slepak Family. New York 1996, p.88.

¹²⁰ Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers, Private Life in Stalin’s Russia*. New York 2017.

and the survival of overt anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, despite the known horrors of the recent Holocaust. For Stalin, whose deeds easily matched those of Hitler and whose deceits had been evident throughout his life, the Doctors’ Plot and intended show trial were meant to cleanse the Soviet Union of “foreign,” “cosmopolitan,” and “Zionist” (read Jewish) elements. In fact, it was the only one of Stalin’s show trials that did not come off—only because he died just before the spectacle was to begin. Although the immediate de-Stalinization that followed the dictator’s death made life less fearful for all of the Soviet Union’s peoples, the country’s Jews were not yet out of the woods.”¹²¹

During the Khrushchev era, Jewish citizens were discriminated against within the framework of his antireligious campaigns. Emigrations to Israel and the United States were strictly forbidden until the Brezhnev era (1964-1982). What happened to them after this, was determined by four factors:

The **first** one is the teaching and practice of the Russian Orthodox church with respect to the Jewish people, the same as in the Roman Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council. Many a pogrom started from Eastern Liturgy Celebrations. “Yes, it is certainly true that anti-Semitism cannot be wiped out immediately only by the top men in the hierarchy speaking out against it. But if they (or, better the Church as a whole through Her Council) do not speak out against anti-Semitism, it is even less likely to be stamped out. But our hierarchs who, I believe, are not anti-Semites themselves, do not raise their pastoral voice against anti-Semitism because they are afraid of being misunderstood by simple Christians, as defending Judaism, the defense of which is not in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church. This is why they maintain silence, which is certainly both compromising and dangerous.”¹²² Alexander Solzhenitsyn also follows the Church’s position in this respect.¹²³

The **second** one was the autocratic Tsarist rule, the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Regime, and the return of totalitarian repression under Putin since the

¹²¹ BMJ December 2002, The Doctor’s Plot.

¹²² Gregory Benevitch, *The Jewish Question in the Russian Orthodox Church*. Intratext edition 2007 in Ch. 3.

¹²³ Levy Antoine. Alexandre Soljénitsyne, Deux siècles ensemble : 1795-1995. « Mais quand même... ». In: *Revue des études slaves*, tome 75, fascicule 3-4, 2004. pp. 519-531; Based on the authorized French translation of his book. There are several non-authorized English translations of Solzhenitsyn’s book.

year 2000. The greatest plague to the Jews and Russian society at large has always been the rule of the secret service – from the Tsarist Okhrana, through the Soviet NKVD or KGB, to Putin's FSB. The “service” has always remained above the law, while being omnipresent, all-powerful and more often than not criminal by any standard of the rule of law. As Martin Gilbert writes:

“Russian Jewry was a creation of Tsarist expansionism under a highly extended rule over this area. The Tsars then contained the Jews in what was called the “Pale of Settlement” in which life was very difficult.”[..] “More than two million or one half of the Russian Jews left Tsarist Russia between the first pogroms of the 1880's and the First World War.¹²⁴ Pogroms and the forgery called “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” all originated with the Tsarist Secret Service.

The **third** one was the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and its victories in the three wars for survival in 1948, 1967 and 1973. The number of Soviet Jews receiving exit visas was extremely limited until after the Six Day War in 1967.

The **fourth** related one was growing American support for the struggle of the Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel. Christian support for Aliya was limited to the Evangelical Christians, who set up the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem in 1980.¹²⁵

Anti-Semitism never died in the Soviet Union, nor did it in the 1990's and in Putin's Russia. In the Soviet Union, the KGB conducted its anti-Jewish campaigns under the guises of Cosmopolitanism, American Imperialism or Zionism. From Stalin's death until the late 1980's, the principal issue was the growing desire of the Soviet Jews to emigrate: to make Aliya to Israel and to emigrate to America. Support to the Soviet Jews – to live as Jews within Russia and to leave the country if they so desired - began with the student struggle for Soviet Jewry in 1964. After Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in October of 1967, the mood of Soviet Jewry changed markedly. They began to study Jewish history, attend Simchat Torah celebrations and apply for emigration visas to

¹²⁴ According to Martin Gilbert in: Jay & Meridel Rawlings, *GATES OF BRASS* Jerusalem 1985 at p. 47,48. Most of them to America.

¹²⁵ Cf. ICEJ International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. Website.

Israel.¹²⁶ It was only after the plane-hijacking affair in 1970 and the international condemnations of the KGB crackdown thereafter, that the Soviet authorities began to increase emigration quota. In the late 1980's, the government of Mikhail Gorbachev finally opened the borders of the Soviet Union, making possible the 1990's Aliyah on a massive scale: about 1.6 million Soviet Jews and their relatives emigrated, of which some 61% to Israel. The arbitrariness of the KGB in handling requests for emigration knew no limits. Upon first application for an exit visa, one lost their job. Unemployed, one risked condemnation for hooliganism, idleness or parasitism. Leaders of the emigration movement, in addition, faced deportation, exile or the Gulag. Volodya Slepak, one of the main organizers in Chaim Potok's *The Gates of November* (1996), spent 17 years in exile before being given his exit visa in October 1987; this more than a year after Anatoli Sharansky had been exchanged for Russian spies in Berlin.

Don't think that anti-Semitism in Russia died with the Soviet Union. According to Putin's propagandists “the president has quietened antisemitism,” but this is not the case. The Putin regime has, once again, consciously sought to instrumentalize Russian and Ukrainian antisemitism for its own purposes, as Medvedev's article makes all too clear. In the article, Medvedev described Zelensky as disgusting, corrupt and faithless, having repudiated his (Jewish) identity to serve rabbit nationalists. This meant Ukraine's head of state resembled a Jewish *Sonderkommando*, a reference to those incarcerated Jews forced to dispose of gas chamber victims during the Holocaust. Negotiations with such people and such a state are, therefore pointless. Indeed, there is no more odious attack on a person of Jewish origin, like (President) Zelensky, than the accusation of Nazi collaboration. The fact that one of Putin's inner circle members reaches for language from the ancient armory of hate to indicate the strength of the Russian state's emotions simply underlines the flaming antisemitism at the heart of the country's government and the nature of its representatives.”¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Cf. Elie Wiesel, *The Jews of Silence*. A personal report on Soviet Jewry. Second Edition New York 1987. Also : jewishvirtuallibrary.org/soviet-jewry-movement.

¹²⁷ Stephen Blank, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute: ‘An extraordinary and hateful essay has revealed the malignancy in the hearts of Kremlin policymakers’. On an article by Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Putin's Security Council and former Russian president, published on 11 October 2021 by Kommersant.

The Jewish people and the state of Israel

The Middle-East¹²⁸ was once the heartland of Christianity. At least until Mo-hamed's armies conquered the lands and the Islam gradually took over. The Latin-Christian efforts to recover the "holy land" by force of arms failed.

In the fifteenth century, Europe was mostly Christianized and Christianity became Europeanized. In the nineteenth century, the age of imperialism and the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Christian "Europe" returned in full force to the Middle East through the expansionist drives of the Russian, Austrian, French, British and German Empires. These developments brought with them renewed fights over the Christian "Holy Places" in Jerusalem, as well as the Crimean War and the First World War. At the end of the First World War, the area was partitioned between France and Great Britain; Anatolia became the Turkish Republic. French and British colonial expansion was disguised as the Mandate System of the League of Nations. Both Empires made the classic blunders of applying the principle of divide and rule. Syria (or the Levant) was first divided between a French and a British Mandate. The French partitioned their mandate between Lebanon and Syria. The British Mandate of Palestine was partitioned between the area West of the Jordan under direct British rule, and East of the Jordan, given to the Saudi-Arabian royal family as an Arab Emirate called Transjordan. Palestine, the small area west of the Jordan, was again partitioned between an area of the national home for the Jews and one for the local Arabs west of the Jordan. When all this failed, the problem was dumped on the United Nations. By General Assembly resolution of November 29, 1947, the area west of the Jordan was (again) divided between a Jewish State, an Arab State and an international regime for Jerusalem. The last months of the year 1947 were "overshadowed in Jerusalem by a violence and bitterness that had no precedent in the history of the City in modern times, or at any time in the past since the Jewish revolt against the Romans nearly 2,000 years earlier."¹²⁹

¹²⁸ The area now including Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Saudi-Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestinian areas and Egypt

¹²⁹ Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*. London 1996 at p. 185.

The State of Israel

On 14 May 1948, the **State of Israel** came into being; *the* major event for the Jewish people, after millennia of persecution, contempt and annihilation in the diaspora. As Modechai Nurok explains: "We have seen a graveyard in front of us, a graveyard for six million of our brothers. Maybe because of their blood, shed like water, have we been privileged to have our state."¹³⁰

From then on, every Jew in the world had a place to flee to when persecuted. As we saw already in the previous paragraph, it is unfortunately, even today, not yet a safe haven. War for its survival broke out immediately. Continuous warfare for the survival of the state would become a permanent condition ever since the Arab armies invaded the country, with the annihilation of Israel as their war aim. Jordan annexed the area destined for a (Palestinian) Arab State, including the Eastern part and the old City of Jerusalem, thereby depriving the Palestinian Arabs of their right to self-determination. Israel survived.

In October 1956, when Egyptian President Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal, blocked the Red Sea approach to Elad, and massed his troops in the Sinai peninsula, Israel attacked and occupied the Sinai desert.

In response to another full scale Arab effort to drive the Jews out in 1967, Israel prevailed, and occupied the so called Westbank of the Jordan, the Golan Heights on Syria, and kept the Sinai desert, as areas to exchange for peace. Jerusalem was reunited and in 1980 declared to be the capital of the country.

On October 6, 1973 (Yom Kippur), Egypt and Syria attacked again. More than three weeks later, the UN Security Council ordered a cease-fire.

Throughout all these years, Israel had to face terrorist attacks from the fed-ayeen in Gaza, since 1948 under Egyptian military rule, from El Fata, later the PLO in the Westbank, from the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and again from Hamas, ruling Gaza, the latter two supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

¹³⁰ Modechai Nurok chairman of the Knesset subcommittee in charge of establishing an annual day to commemorate the annihilation of European Jewry. Found on p. 172 in: Amos Elon, *Jerusalem City of Mirrors*. Flamingo London 1996.

Fifty years later (2023) and on the same Israeli feast of reconciliation, Hamas launched a full scale attack from the Gaza strip. Both attacks caught Israel by surprise. This latest attack by Hamas had been planned with full support from the Ayatollah terror regime in Iran; which has openly declared that Israel must be annihilated. Just days before the attacks, Khamenei delivered a speech at the International Islamic Unity Conference, claiming that the “usurper Zionist regime” would soon come to an end: “The firm view of the Islamic Republic is that the governments that are gambling on normalizing relations with the Zionist regime will suffer losses. Defeat awaits them. They are making a mistake. As the Europeans say, “They are betting on a losing horse.” Today, the situation of the Zionist regime is not a situation that encourages closeness to it. They [other governments] should not make this mistake. The usurper [Zionist] regime is coming to an end. Today, the Palestinian movement is more alive than it has ever been during these 70 or 80 years. Today, the Palestinian youth and the Palestinian movement, the anti-occupation, anti-oppression, anti-Zionism movement, is more energetic, more alive, and more prepared than ever, and you can see this. And God willing, this movement will achieve its goals. The honorable Imam [Khomeini], may God be pleased with him, described, the usurper [Zionist] regime as a cancer. This cancer will definitely be eradicated, God willing, at the hands of the Palestinian people and the resistance forces throughout the region.”¹³¹

The Hamas attack on Israel of October 7, 2023, more than any previous attack since 1948, had all the characteristics of an Iranian/Palestinian “final solution” of the Jewish problem, not only in Khamenei’s speech of October 3, but also because of the inhuman cruelty of the attack itself. The deliberate killing of children, women and whole families had all the characteristics of a “final solution” of the Jewish problem. It raised fundamental moral questions to Christian Europe and North America.

International diplomacy, after the recognition of the State of Israel, had been stuck between cowardice and compromise. The United States did significantly better than the European States in supporting the survival of Israel. After the 1967 war, the so called “international community” has gradually shifted

¹³¹ From a speech delivered by the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khamenei, on 3 October 2023.

support from Israel to the Palestinian cause, seemingly forgetting history and the continuing attacks on Israel’s existence. The European Union’s diplomacy towards Israel thus far has been the most shameful example of cowardice and compromise. Results were predictable: endless efforts to annihilate Israel by its Arab neighbors and intensifying violence between the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah on the one side, and punishing retaliation on the Israeli side, fueling extremism on both ends. The European Union has moved towards a position of support for the Palestinians and a condemnation of Israel, since 1973. The Westbank became PLO territory (i.e., Palestine Liberation Organization, set up in 1968). The Gaza strip (previously Egyptian military rule) became Hamas’s launching pad for missile attacks on Israel. The new State of Israel has faced deadly enemies from its creation onwards, both from within and from the Arab States. Even in times of war, diplomacy tends to ignore the causes of war. War is by definition evil. Nevertheless, radical evil – Hitler Germany’s aggression, Putin’s Russian war of aggression against the Ukraine and the Iranian/Palestinian aggression against Israel – must be resisted as “pure unadulterated evil”¹³² European diplomacy must wake up to Europe’s moral responsibility.

Throughout its history, for more than 75 years there has always been tension between its Jewish nature and its democratic politics, largely due to the fact that Israel has been at under attack from its creation. The twin roots of nationalism and faith practically exclude negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Christian Europe bears a heavy responsibility for these ongoing wars. The Aliyah was the response to new waves of persecution and contempt, from imperial Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, from other European states thereafter, and again from the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Aliyah also was the response of the survivors to the Holocaust. The British Mandate authorities did whatever they could to prevent Jewish immigration. The new State of Israel opened wide the gates for Aliyah and the survivors.

¹³² The term used by US President Joe Biden on 10 October 2023.

The Second Vatican Council and the Jewish People

A second major event for the Jewish people was the **Declaration *Nostra Aetate***, adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1965. It revoked the Cain-Doctrine, with its origin in the Second Century, as we saw previously. The Declaration was a first step towards a new relationship of respect and brotherhood between Jews and Christians.

Two millennia of persecution and contempt, including the organized forgetting of the Jewish contribution to Europe's civilization, require Christian Europe to do a lot of soul-searching. What were the causes of persistent persecution and contempt? Why did it take the Catholic Church so many centuries to recognize the fundamental error of the Cain-Doctrine and why did the Orthodox churches not follow? Why was Christian persecution and contempt so deeply anchored in prayer and doctrine, emotion, politics and popular sentiment? Why did Christian Europe ignore the contributions of the Jewish people to her civilization, to her faith, to her culture, to her science and philosophy? Why was the Talmud burned instead of studied and discussed?

As Bernard Lewis tried to explain: "An important concern of the early Christians was not so much to blame the Jews as, for understandable reasons, to exculpate the Romans. Jewish guilt and Roman innocence, the two interdependent, became important parts of the Christian message, first to Rome and then beyond, with devastating effect on popular attitudes toward Jews, especially at Easter time. Why did we continue to interpret the Crucifixion of Jesus as the collective sin of the Jews, rather than as a political move by the Sanhedrin presumably on instruction of Pilate? They had clear political motives for complying with the instructions of Pilate. And(as always)could easily mobilize a mob to shout fort them."¹³³

There also is a need for further reflection upon the fact that Jesus's salvation became identified with sacrifice and not with God's kingdom on earth.¹³⁴ The role of the Jewish people in the history of salvation had not yet been complet-

¹³³ Cf. Alexandre Adler, *Le Peuple- Monde. Destins d'Israel*. Albin Michel 2011. Bernard Lewis, 'The new Anti-Semitism'. Lecture delivered at Brandeis University. March 24, 2004.

¹³⁴ Cf. Guardini, *The Lord*. As quoted in Chapter 1 sup

ed. As Jesus taught in the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew,5-7): "I have come not to abolish but to complete" the Law of the Prophets. The Jewish tradition must continue to be built upon.

Unholy Politics around Holy Places?

Jerusalem has been a battleground for the monotheistic religions as well as being a place for pilgrims. Jewish pilgrims from the diaspora came for the three pilgrim festivals, the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. Christian Pilgrims from East and West began to come since the early second century; Muslim pilgrims since the death of Mohammed. They came, irrespective of who ruled the city. The Pilgrims came but never mixed with each other. They all went their separate ways.

Representatives of the three monotheistic religions used to deal with each other by way of conflict and contempt, instead of reconciliation and respect. From 1949 to 1967, Jordanian rule refused access for Jews to the city. When Jerusalem became the capital of Israel, the destroyed Jewish Quarter was rebuilt, and a huge plaza was created in front of the Western Wall. Access for Christian and Muslim pilgrims was assured by law.

Conflict and contempt in the "Holy Land" has a very long history, shameful for the Christian Churches, and the Latin church in particular. Holy Places were first discovered by Queen Helena, Mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, in 327. Next to Aelia Catalina, built after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Emperor decided to rebuild Jerusalem as a Christian City. As such, access was denied to the Hebrews until 638, and again under the rule of the Latin Kingdom from 1099 to 1187, during in which access was also denied to Orthodox Christians and Muslims. A treaty of February 18, 1229, between Emperor Frederick II and Sultan al-Malik, partly restored Christian rule. It drew the wrath of the Pope, who claimed that Jerusalem had to be retaken by force and not through negotiations. The Franciscans came already in St. Francis' lifetime, 1218 in Acra and 1229 in Jerusalem, basically for the sake of evangelization. At the time, Jerusalem belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, of which Jerusalem was a patriarchic See. This was a few years after the fourth

crusade (1204) that had attacked and sacked Constantinople instead of proceeding to Jerusalem. Mutual disdain and hatred between the Orthodox and the Latin Churches reigned. The Orthodox hated Latin priests, and the Latins, Franciscans included, had come to evangelize the Eastern schismatics. They received papal blessing and support from Catholic powers. Conflicts over the management and properties of the Holy Places was unavoidable.

Between 1244 and 1917, Jerusalem was to remain under Muslim control, after which it came under British rule until 1947. During the long period of Muslim control, access to the Holy Places for Jews and Christians was not denied but at times hindered.¹³⁵

According to S.B. Colbi on the Christian presence in Jerusalem: “In strong contrast is the rivalry of the Christian Churches and Powers. The history of the Holy Places is one long story of bitter animosities and contentions, in which outside influences take part in an increasing degree, until the scenes of Our Lord’s life on earth become a political shuttlecock, and eventually the cause of international conflict. If the Holy Places and the rights pertaining expression of men’s feelings about Him whose story hallowed those sites,” they are also an index of the corruptions and intrigues of despots and chancelleries during eight hundred years. The logical results have been the spirit of distrust and suspicion, and the attitude of intractability in all matters, even if only of the most trivial importance, concerning the Holy Places.”¹³⁶ The experiences of the Franciscan custodians confirmed this sad conclusion.

The unholy politics around the Holy Places in Jerusalem and Israel – referred to as the Holy Land – are shameful examples of the divisions discussed in this chapter and those that will follow; divisions that are definitely not in accordance with the Gospel.

On June 27, 1967, Israel proclaimed “The Protection of Holy Places Law,” a clear

¹³⁵ S.P. Colbi, ‘The Christian Establishment in Jerusalem’ In: Joel L. Kraemer, *JERUSALEM. Problems and Prospects*. Praeger 1980.

¹³⁶ The Status Quo In The Holy Places By L. G. A. Cust, formerly District Officer, Jerusalem. With an Annex on THE STATUS QUO IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM. By ABDULLAH EFFENDI KARDUS, M.B.E., formerly District Officer, .Text found in Wiki source.

commitment beyond the protection offered through the centuries by the Ottomans and including the Muslim Holy Places on the Temple Mount.¹³⁷ The reality of Israel, with an undivided Jerusalem as its Capital does make a difference, as does the Catholic Church since the two declarations of the Vatican Council in 1965.

On December 30, 1993, corresponding with 16 Tevet 5754, the Apostolic See and the State of Israel signed the “Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel,” a truly remarkable document. Both parties (The Holy See and the State of Israel) are committed to uphold the freedom of religion and conscience; both are committed to cooperation in combatting all forms of antisemitism; both continue to respect the Status Quo in the Christian Holy Places; both favor Christian pilgrimages to the holy land.

“The heart of the Holy Land is the “City of Peace,” in Hebrew *Yerushalayim*, where the faithful of the three great monotheistic religions come to pray for peace. If there is any place on earth where, as the Psalm says, “love and truth ... meet” and “justice and peace kiss” (Ps 85:11), it is there. It is for peace within its ramparts, towers and homes, that believers all over the world pray (Ps 122:6-8). It is Jerusalem’s unique status that makes it not only a place of reconciliation and encounter between religions and peoples, but a symbol for reciprocal respect and peaceful and harmonious coexistence across the world.”¹³⁸

Rising above the compromising cowardice of international diplomacy and UN Resolutions, the Christian Churches should respect and support Jerusalem as Israel’s Capital, reunited and restored in 1967, in response to Arab aggression. As Teddy Kollek reminds us: “The history of Jerusalem from earliest times is the history of man, a history of war and peace, of greatness and misery.... But the golden threat, the consistent theme running through that history, is the unshakeable association of the Jewish people with the city.” Throughout the three thousand years since King David the spiritual attachment of the Jews to

¹³⁷ For a collection of the relevant documents, see: Ruth Lapidot and Moshe Hirsch, *The Jerusalem and Its Resolution: selected documents*. Dordrecht/Boston/London 1994.

¹³⁸ “Celebrating 25th Anniversary of Vatican Israel Accord. Remarks by Archbishop Bernardito Auza . Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent observer of the Holy See to the UN. Fordham University. 19 June 2019.

Jerusalem has remained unbroken.”¹³⁹

Love and respect for the Jewish People, and genuine support for the secure existence of the State of Israel, requires moral clarity to prevent a new Holocaust, as advocated by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If?

Writing history might profit from an effort to describe what might have happened. After all, human acts are based on choices. This chapter recorded a very long and continuing era of errors built upon errors, conflicts escalating from disagreement to exclusion, from dispute to humiliation, and from exclusion to dehumanization.

Imagine what might have happened if we had better understood the place and the role of the Sanhedrin in its relations with Pilate? Chapter 27 in Matthews Gospel allows for a variety of interpretations. As we read in the opening paragraph: *“At daybreak all the chief priests and the elders of the people took formal action against Jesus to put Him to death. They bound Him and led Him away to be handed over to the procurator Pilate.”* The priests and the elders were those connected with the Sanhedrin. They not only handed Him over to be crucified, they also organized the crowds to shout *“Crucify Him”*. Such crowds can easily be organized; they are definitely not “the Jewish People”. What we know about Pilate is that he was a cruel procurator, responsible for many more crucifixions and flagellations. The Jewish people suffered with Jesus under Pilate’s cruelty.

¹³⁹ JERUSALEM. Sacred City of Mankind. A History of Forty Centuries. Teddy Kollek&Moshe Pearlman.1972

CHAPTER 4

AT WAR WITH ISLAM?

The differences between the Hadith of Islam and the Gospel of St. Matthew are striking and can be read in the following two texts:

Narrated By Ibn ‘Umar, Allah’s Apostle said: “I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle, and offer the prayers perfectly and give the obligatory charity, so if they perform all that, then they save their lives and property from me except for Islamic laws and then their reckoning (accounts) will be done by Allah.”¹⁴⁰

“Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Sahih Bukhari, Hadith. Book 1, 2:24.

¹⁴¹ Matthew, 28, 19.

As Christians, we believe in the Triune God: the Father in heaven, the Son Jesus incarnated, crucified and the first one risen from the dead, the Holy Spirit to be with us thereafter. We believe in the Holy Trinity of One Loving God. With Jesus, revelation entered a new phase in the history of salvation, Jesus incarnated and a sign of contradiction.

Muslims believe in Allah, and submit themselves (*Islam*) to Mohammed as the last prophet, who directly received God's words in the Koran; written down many years later on the basis of oral tradition. Together with the Hadith, God's revelation to Mohammed is final and not open to interpretation or evolution.

The fundamental equality of the dignity of man and woman is based on the Book of Genesis, but was no longer respected after the fall of man: "Yet your urge shall be for your husband and he shall be your master," the Lord God said to the woman (Gn,3,16). Jesus re-affirmed the principle according to the Gospel (Mt. 19 and Mc. 10). But Mahomed rejected it.

According to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5), Heaven is open to all, in contrast to the Koran, where heaven is reserved for men, as a prolongation of their sexual dreams. Surah 55, 56).

Islam is waging war on Christendom. It did so in all directions: against Eastern Christendom, in the Middle East once the heartland of Christendom,¹⁴² against Asia, the Caucasus and Russia; against Western Christendom in Spain, the Balkan and Africa.

When Islam was born, in the seventh century, the first phase in the formulation of doctrine by the Christian Church, as against heresy, had been completed. The Western Roman Empire no longer existed. Mohamed's faith may have motivated the Arab warriors, but conversion of the Christians to the Islam was not their principal purpose. While Spain was conquered in a few decades, it took them – Arabs plus Saracens plus Turks – more than seven centuries to conquer Constantinople. Approximately at the same time the last Moorish caliphate in Spain was conquered by Spanish forces. The Mediterranean Sea ceased to be a

¹⁴² Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*. op.cit.

Roman Lake; for centuries the Sea became the principal battleground between the powers of Europe and the Islamic powers. The Crusades and Thomas Aquinas theory of just war, legitimated warfare for "holy" purposes, against the Islamic states, against heretics and in self-defense – later, war for the national cause became the modern legitimation for warfare in any shape or form.

According to Wheatcroft in his book on Infidels: "While Muslims were not the first or only enemies of Western Christendom, they quickly became its prime focus for fear or hatred....From the mid-seventh century, Islam was seen as the prime external challenge to true Christian faith."¹⁴³

Why?

Belloc explains: "Mohammedanism began as a *heresy*: not as a new religion. It was not a pagan contrast with the Church; it was not an alien enemy. It was a perversion of Christian doctrine."¹⁴⁴ After the fierce fights against heresies since Emperor Constantine the Great, a heretic was considered to be worse than a pagan. Above all, with Mohammed a heretic was born who claimed to be the last prophet, who rejected the core doctrine of Incarnation and who announced to spread the new faith by force of arms.

Another answer can be found in the long lasting success of the Mohammedan "heresy" against the Christians. Today, fourteen centuries since Mohamed, the Islam is alive and expanding – with 1.6 billion adherents, the second religion in the world after Christianity (and before Catholicism). The first cause of their enduring success was, as Hilary Belloc explained, that it won battles, all of them until 1683. Through them, the heartland of Christianity was conquered, among them Constantinople, long time the center of Christianity and irretrievably lost forever. In addition, at the time, the Arabs offered vast relief from slavery and heavy taxation by the Byzantine and Sassan (Persian) Empires. They did not destroy or exterminate Jews and Christians who did not accept Islam at once. Their doctrine was simple and realistic. They preserved

¹⁴³ Andrew Wheatcroft, *INFIDELS A history of Conflict between Christendom and Islam*. New York 2005 at p.36

¹⁴⁴ Hillaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies*. Tan Books. Rockford, Illinois 1991 at p. 42.

Greek philosophers, literature and science. Until at least the late Middle Ages, literacy in the Islamic Empire was much higher than in Christian lands. Mohamed's heresy did not arise from within but outside the Christian Church. The Islamic Empire, finally and through its expansion, could enlist fighters from the conquered territories, from the Berbers in North Africa to the Turkish tribes from Asia.

In this chapter it is not my intention to write about Islam. Others have done so much better. My purpose is to make clear that war with Islam has been a perennial problem for European Christendom ever since the death of Mohamed, and that it must be faced as such.

Holy war

"*Jihad* or holy war is an obligation for all adult Muslims, as the principal way in which the faith in Mohammed is to be spread all over the world."¹⁴⁵ Jihad started right away, during Mohammed's last two years of life, and continued apace immediately thereafter. "It is neither hunger nor poverty that has driven us from our land [Arabia]. We, the Arabs, are drinkers of blood and we know there is no blood more tasty than that of the Greeks. That is why we have come, to spill and drink your blood.", wrote Khalid bin al-Walid in the "Sword of Allah." With this opening quotation begins Raymond Ibrahim's first Chapter "Islam takes Christendom by Storm: the Battle of Yarmouk in 636."¹⁴⁶ It was the battle by which the Arabs conquered considerable Christian land, Roman Syria, and Egypt, including the patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem.

In Ibrahim's book we can read, on the basis of primary sources and facts, how Jihad was waged with excessive violence, cruelty and lust, from the battle of Yarmouk in 636 AD to the (failed) siege of Vienna in 1683, and from the Balkan wars until the First World War. Whole cities and towns were destroyed, their populations murdered, women raped and reduced to sex slaves, and arable land turned into desert.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Samir Khalil SAMIR, S.J., 111 *Questions on Islam*. Ignatius Press San Francisco 2008.

¹⁴⁶ Raymond Ibrahim, *SWORD AND SCIMITAR. Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West*. Da Capo Press 2018. "Greeks" stands for Christians.

As Christians we must recognize that Byzantium, the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire and the other European states fought back with the same means, the same cruelty and the same belief in the holiness of their war, at least until the Sea-battle of 1571 at Lepanto. The threat to Europe was military, political and spiritual. In military and political terms, the turning point came with the failed Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683, the first ever defeat according to Islamic historians.

Subsequently, Jihad has not been abolished as a method to spread Islam. The "Islamic State," created, and not yet defeated, in Iraq and Syria, is a modern example of accepting holy war as an obligation, with all the excesses of violence and cruelty that accompany it. The beheading of infidels is as old as the first battle ever fought by Mohammed. The Iranian Ayatollahs continue Jihad by their support for terrorism. The Saudis continue Jihad by their world-wide support (financial and otherwise) to the spreading the Wahhabi or Salafist version of Islam.

Three waves of islamic expansion

The violent, Islam-driven wars of expansion, can be distinguished in three major waves of conquest:

First Wave

The first wave started immediately after the death of Mohamed. The Arab and other fighters overran the Sassanian or Persian Empire, and the East-Roman or Byzantine Empire in the Middle East, Egypt, North Africa, Spain and parts of France, until the battle of Tours in 732 AD. The Reconquista of Spain was a long, drawn out war with its final conclusion in 1492 AD after the fall of Granada.

The first wave also moved further North, from Arabia into the Caucasus in 644 AD, conquering the two oldest Christian states, Georgia and Armenia, and thereafter reaching as far as Derwent in the lands of Dagestan. The Muslim Arabs reached Crimea three centuries before the Rus of Kiev was converted to

the Christian Orthodox Faith in 988 AD on the Crimea. Armenians have been attacked and persecuted ever since.

As Sanikidze and Walker explain: “Georgia was one of the first states to adopt Christianity as an official religion, doing so just a few decades after the Christianization of neighboring Armenia (301 AD). In the centuries that followed, Georgia remained Christian, despite the fact that for most of its history it was under the influence of powerful Muslim kingdoms and empires to the south, and was even occupied by Muslim conquerors on numerous occasions. As a result, Christianity plays a particularly important part in the Georgian national narrative and consciousness, as suggested by the slogan of the nineteenth century Georgian national movement: *language, homeland, faith* (Christianity). Nevertheless, Georgia has long had a significant Muslim population. And like other Soviet successor states with significant Muslim populations, there is growing concern in the country about the possible politicization of Islam, particularly in view of the Islamification of the Chechen resistance movement to Georgia.”¹⁴⁷

In Russia, Muslims have been present since the seventh century. Muslims in Russia are indigenous citizens of the country, writes Akhmatova: “In 2000, the Muslims of Russia celebrated fourteen centuries of Islam on Russian soil. Throughout these centuries, Muslims took an active part in building what we call today ‘Russian civilization.’ Their “story is not merely one of conflict, conquest and resistance. Rather, relations between the Christian Russians and Muslims, both within Russia and between Russia and other Muslim countries, have also been marked by periods of co-existence, tolerance, accommodation, and even cooperation. The period of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great’s reign (1762-1796) provides an early and good example of such mutual accommodation and cooperation.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ From: George Sanikidze and Edward W. Walker, *Islam and Islamic Practices in Georgia*. University of California. Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies. Working Paper Series.

¹⁴⁸ Elmira Akhmatova/Historia factory, *Islam in Russia: Past, present and future*. July 2, 2016.

The City of Constantinople

“Surely, Constantinople will be conquered; how blessed the commander who will conquer it, and how blessed his army,” said the prophet Mohammed.¹⁴⁹ And indeed, as early as 677 AD, did the Muslims send a large fleet towards Constantinople in an effort to finally break the city, but they were defeated so badly, through the Byzantine use of Greek Fire, that they were forced to pay an indemnity to the Emperor. A second siege occurred already in 717AD. Just as the siege was about to succeed, the Caliphate’s arriving new fleet was manned not by Arab Muslims but by Egyptian Christians! The Turkish commander was recalled, and on 15 August 718, the siege was lifted. After this, Muslim raiders continued to terrorize the Mediterranean and the coastal lands; in 858 AD they attacked Constantinople another time, but failed again.

Second Wave

The second wave of Islamist attacks came after the foundation of the Seljuk Turkish Empire in the year 1000 AD. Their first great battle, with the forces of the Byzantine Empire, took place at Manzikert in 1071 AD. Emperor Romanus was taken prisoner by the Turks, but sent back home where he was murdered. Partly because of the defeat at Manzikert and partly due to the civil wars following the murder of the Emperor, Asia Minor would be left open to Turkish invasion. The Byzantine Empire recovered briefly, but the second wave met a new challenge in the call for a Crusade by Pope Urban II of the Latin Church.

The Crusades

From the following passage in the Song of Roland, one can deduce that reconquering European lands from the Arabs – Moors or Saracens – had been a first priority ever since the advance of their armies had been stopped in 732 AD near Tours: “Charles the king, our great emperor, has been in Spain for seven full years; he has conquered all the upland right down to the seashore and not a castle can stand before him; neither wall nor city remains to be destroyed ex-

¹⁴⁹ Raymond Ibrahim, *op. cit.* at p. 44. At the beginning of his Chapter 2.

cept Saragossa, which is built in a mountain. King Marsilea rules in Saragossa; he does not love God, he worships Mahomet and calls upon Apollyon. He has no protection against all the evil which is about to come upon him.”¹⁵⁰

Charles, sole king of the Franks since 771, started campaigning in Spain the very first year of his reign. In less than a century since the death of Mahomed, the Arab armies had overrun most of the heartland of Christendom in the Middle East, North Africa and the Iberian peninsula. In terms of war and peace, the Saracen (and later Turkish) threat to Christianity was the dominating political issue in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the seventeenth century, until the failed Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683.

Charles was sufficiently successful as a conqueror to become Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 800 AD. The Byzantine Empire was sufficiently strong to keep the Turks at bay in the East, until their crushing defeat in 1071 AD at Manzikert. After the Great Schism of 1054, the Popes needed the Holy Roman Empire of the West as a protector, but did not want them as their masters. To the contrary. The Investiture Dispute between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV, brought the latter to an act of submission, repentance and exile. When the Norwegians, who came to the Pope’s assistance, but instead looted Rome, Gregory VII died in exile.¹⁵¹

Deus le Volt

It was in this complicated context that Pope Urban II called for a crusade against the Turks in 1095. Allegedly, he responded to a request for assistance by the Byzantine Emperor. He added the aim of liberating Jerusalem and hoped to unify Latin Christians by turning them away from private wars to a common cause.

“All who were present cried out, “It is the will of God! It is the will of God!” When the venerable Roman pontiff heard that, with eyes uplifted to heaven he gave thanks to God.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ The Song of Roland translated by Jessie Crosland.

¹⁵¹ Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*. Penguin House 2016 at p.19ff.

¹⁵² From the Robert the Monk version of the call to crusade by Pope Urban II. written perhaps 25 years after the

The first crusaders started fighting, killing and looting right away, long before they reached Asia Minor. As one can read in the accounts of eyewitnesses and participants, the crusaders started, as they proceeded South-Eastward along the Rhine, to attack the Jews of Mannheim, considered to be their enemies’. Robert the Monk wrote: “Emico and the rest of his band held a council and, after sunrise, attacked the Jews in the hall with arrows and lances. Breaking the bolts and doors, they killed the Jews, about seven hundred in number, who in vain resisted the force and attack of so many thousands. They killed the women, also, and with their swords pierced tender children of whatever age and sex. The Jews, seeing that their Christian enemies were attacking them and their children, and that they were sparing no age, likewise fell upon one another, brother, children, wives, and sisters, and thus they perished at each other’s hands. Horrible to say, mothers cut the throats of nursing children with knives and stabbed others, preferring them to perish thus by their own hands rather than to be killed by the weapons of the uncircumcised. From this cruel slaughter of the Jews a few escaped ; and a few because of fear, rather than because of love of the Christian faith, were baptized.”

As the armies moved on, they came to the Byzantine Empire. They had been told that Emperor Alexius had called on the Pope for help against the Turks. Was there such an appeal? Krey answered in his two stories on the first crusade: “The conduct of Alexius and the people of his empire toward the Crusaders, as they passed through the land on their way to Constantinople, seemed incomprehensible to the Latins at the time. Chelandion, whose study of the reign of Alexius represents probably the most authoritative modern investigation of the subject, maintains the thesis that Alexius had not at all asked for help, and that the Empire was less in need of aid than at any time since 1071. The Emperor’s suspicions, the statements of his daughter, together with his own unquestionable zeal to hasten each band away from Constantinople and across the Bosphorus before the next band arrived, indicates very clearly that he did distrust the Latins”¹⁵³

Ultimately, the Crusades failed to recover Jerusalem. The fourth Crusade “di-

speech, but he may have been present at the council.. From Early Christian writings, Fordham University.

¹⁵³ The two stories are from: August C. Krey, *The First Crusade. The accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*. Princeton University Press 1921. From the version digitized by the Internet Archive. 2007. At p. 69.

verted and deranged,” conquering Constantinople. After these events, Byzantium was so weakened that little more than the City of Constantinople was left to be conquered by the Ottomans in 1453, which had been the principal aim for the Muslim conquerors, ever since the Prophet Mohamed.

Constantinople again and again

The final conquest of Constantinople marked **the third wave of Muslim wars** of expansion and imposition of the Islam, launched after the Ottomans took power in 1299. They took over the mission to spread Islam by force of arms, from their foothold in western Anatolia, into Balkan Europe.

The Balkans had been Christianized as early as the first century, by the Apostles St. Paul and Saint Andrew. It was annexed by the Roman Empire during the second century, becoming one of its most prosperous and stable regions. After the fall of the West-Roman Empire, the region became subject to Latin and Orthodox Christian influences, while at the same time being invaded by Huns, Germanic tribes, Goths, Slavs, Avars (Turkish tribe), and Magyars (10th century).¹⁵⁴

When the Ottoman armies and fleets conquered Constantinople in 1453, the City was essentially all that was left of the Byzantine Empire. Bulgaria had been occupied, the Serbs defeated (1389 in the battle of Kosovo). Following the conquest of Constantinople, Greece, Macedonia and Peloponnesus were conquered and laid waste in the 1450's, followed by the remainders of Serbia, Albania and Bosnia. In 1526, the Hungarian army was crushed in the battle of Mohacs. In 1529, the Ottoman armies stood before Vienna, but the siege failed.

The conquest of Constantinople marked the end of the Byzantine Empire, for centuries the principal Christian bulwark against Islamic advance into East and Central Europe. Thereafter, the defense of Christian Europe would be left to the Catholic Habsburg Empire.

¹⁵⁴ The Christianisation of the Slavic people in the Balkans can be traced back to St. Cyril and St. Method in the ninth century

With Emperor Charles V (1519-1555), the Holy Roman Empire included Spain, Portugal, the Low Countries, Burgundy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary. After the emperor's death, the Empire split into its Austrian and Spanish parts, both marked by a Catholicism formed by war against Islam.

The Spanish part had completed the *Reconquista* from Islamic conquest and embarked upon colonial conquest into Latin-America.

The two Habsburg powers were faced in the sixteenth century with the Reformation against Catholic rule. The two powers supported the Popes in the Counterreformation and the Council of Trent, but it was them, rather than the Papacy, who were in control of Catholic Europe. Counterreformation Catholicism would turn out to be as strict and intolerant as counter-Islam Catholicism.

Lepanto 1571

It was in this context that “Christian Europe” in 1570 faced a new Islamic threat. Again according to Wheatcroft: “The Ottoman state was built upon a theory of infinite expansion, and annual war to advance its frontiers. Without conquest it would decay. Moreover, all good Muslims were duty bound to extend the Domain of Peace, and that burden weighed heaviest upon the Sultan.” By late 1570, the Island of Cyprus seemed likely to be conquered, but the Sultan “desired much more than the capture of an island.” His Admiral Ali Pasha “knew that he had to achieve the complete destruction of the Christian fleet, and return laden with trophies, slaves, and booty.”¹⁵⁵ Throughout the summer of 1571, his fleet was assembled and moved to the designated meeting point in the Aegean sea. A Christian fleet, to be commanded by Don John, half-brother of Spanish King Philip II, moved to Messina. At the sea-battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, the fleet of the Christian “Holy-League” achieved a crushing victory over the Ottomans, and more than 15,000 Christian galley-slaves were liberated from Turkish captivity.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Wheatcroft, *INFIDELS. A history of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam*. Random House Paperback 2005, at p.6.

From Duffy in his book on the Popes I quote and paraphrase: For many Catholics in Christian Europe, the victory of the Holy League became the day “Our Lady Saved Christendom.” Pope Pius V’s greatest dream had been “to found a Holy League for a Crusade to defend Christianity, and this dream was realized at the Battle of Lepanto. The victory there over the Turkish fleet remains the source of this pope’s popular fame, and gave the Church not only the feast day on October 7 but also the tradition of dedicating the entire month of October to our Lady of the Rosary.¹⁵⁶ Pope Pius V was “an austere saint,” raised by the Dominican Order, who – next to his greatest dream – also strongly favored the Inquisition and harsh treatment of the Jews. He believed in the supreme authority of the papacy over secular rulers and excommunicated and deposed Elizabeth I of England.¹⁵⁷ Lepanto would turn out to be the last “holy war” on the side of the Christians. Wars thereafter quickly became secularized.

Secularization of diplomacy.

The Peace of Westphalia “secularized” intra-European diplomacy. When the Turks attacked again in 1683, Vienna and the Habsburg Empire were saved, thanks to the bravery and intelligence of Jan Sobieski, King of Poland, and his Polish force.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, most of the Balkans remained part of the Ottoman Empire, until the rebellions in the nineteenth century. After the failed siege of Vienna in 1683, the borderline between Islam and Christendom became the – continuously moving – fought over border between the Austrian and the Ottoman Empires. After the Napoleonic Wars, the Peace of Vienna in 1815 opened the possibility for secularizing relations with the Ottoman Empire.

It was in Sarajevo that the assassination of the Austrian Archduke marked the beginning of the Great or First World War in 1914. After the end of the War, the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. Anatolia became the Turkish Republic. Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine came under French and English control in the framework of the League of Nations system of mandates.

Waging war was the business of sultans, caliphs, emperors, kings and knights,

¹⁵⁶ Op.cit.p.30

¹⁵⁷ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners. A History of the Popes.* Yale University Press 1997 at p. 170.

¹⁵⁸ Raymond Ibrahim, *op. cit.* p. 269-278.

to whom the lower casts or estates provided the foot soldiers, and from whom they suffered and for which they had to pay the bills. Those leaders fought wars often and easily, not just as Moors against Christians, but even more frequently, wars among Christian Kings and among Moorish leaders.

Warfare, whatever name is given to it, is unholy business, whether called a holy war or considered as legitimate self-defense. The many wars fought between Islam and Christendom were extremely violent and cruel.

Until the early nineteenth century, there existed no delimited, linear “national” borders. Property rights of the higher estates determined territorial control. Repression by Muslim leaders did not differ much from repression by feudal lords in Christian lands. The serf of a Lord was not better off than the slave in Muslim rule. As can be read in the many stories about the long war between Muslims and Christians in Al-Andalus or Spain, the Reconquista for them was no change for the better. The story of *Cathedral of the Sea* (2006), which we previously referred to in chapter 3, unfolded in a part of Spain that had been reconquered from the Caliphate two centuries earlier. In the fifty-five year period that the novel covers, the kings of Aragon fought wars continuously, with other Spanish kings from Majorca or Castilla, but also with the people; the Jews in particular had to pay the price. Even the Papacy needed money for such purposes. The main character, who was blamed by the Inquisition for being too closely acquainted with a distinguished Jewish citizen and consequently burnt at the stake, was no longer prosecuted after having been freed by the people!

The Ottoman Empire

“The Ottoman Empire was vast, writes Glenny in his book on the Balkans: “It straddled three continents and bordered seven seas. It was guardian to the holiest shrines of three great faiths of Europe and the Near East, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Sultan was at once both Emperor and Caliph, Allah’s chosen representative on earth. From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, the imperial army swept all before it, one of the most successful machines of military conquest in history. In its wake, the Ottoman military left not only

scorched earth but a unique social and political system.” “Until its final collapse” during the First World War in the twentieth century, “the Empire remained overwhelmingly rural,” its “economy slept through” the far-reaching changes elsewhere in Europe.

“Imperial subjects were divided into *millets*. A *millet* gathered all members of a faith whose origins lay in the Old Testament- the largest three were the Muslim, the Greek Orthodox, and the Jewish *millets*.” The word means nation. “For the Ottomans, nationhood meant religious affiliation.” For them and the religious hierarchies, “religion always took precedence over culture, language and race, in defining one’s identity.”¹⁵⁹

The Serbian rebellion from 1804 onwards “marked the beginning of modern history on the Balkan peninsula.” For the first time in Ottoman history, “an entire Christian population had risen up against the Sultan.” In the Greek Orthodox Church, the role of the hierarchy was limited, the bishops initially “supported the Turkish authorities, thus deepening resentment among Serbs.” Far worse with respect to the war against European Christendom, however, was the internationalization of the crisis. And Glenny continues: “By the autumn of 1806, the Sultan was prepared to concede almost all the Serbian demands. At this point, however, war broke out between Turkey and Russia. Until then, the outside world had shown little interest in this regional Ottoman dispute. Suddenly, the Serb cause was thrust into the maelstrom of the Napoleonic Wars. The internationalization of a crisis within the Ottoman Empire set the precedent for the next two centuries in the Balkans – great power politics has almost always decisively influenced the course of state formation.”¹⁶⁰

The internationalization of the crisis, as it turned out, would not be a rallying of the forces of European Christendom against the Ottoman Islam Empire. It would become a new chapter in the European wars fought in the name of the very secular ideology of the balance of power.¹⁶¹ This new ideology would align France and Great Britain with the Ottoman Empire and against Russia – un-

159 Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999. Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*. Granta Books, London 1999. At p. 70-71.

160 *Op. cit.* at p. 2, 13, 14.

161 Cf. my: *Neither Justice nor Order*. Volume V in “Footprints of the Twentieth Century, Chapters 2 and 7.

til the Ottomans aligned themselves with Germany in the First World War. It meant continuous warfare in the Balkan peninsula until this present day and, finally, the carving up of the Ottoman Empire with the Peace of Versailles in 1919, by the same powers who had supported the Sultan against the Russian Czar. Thanks to such secularist internationalization, the Balkan and the Middle East continue to be the source of instability and continuous warfare.

Faith and lust were the driving forces behind continuous warfare against Christendom, successively fought by the Arabs, the Saracens, the Seljuk Turks and the Ottoman Turks, up to and including the genocide of the Armenians during the First World War (1916-1919). Writes Raymond Ibrahim: “At the beginning of 1915 there were some two million Armenians within Turkey; today there are fewer than 60,000.... Despite the vast amount of evidence that points to the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide, eyewitness accounts, official archives, photographic evidence, the reports of diplomats, and the testimony of survivors, denial of the Armenian Genocide by successive regimes in Turkey since 1915 continues up to the present. As the International Association of Genocide Scholars state, “the Armenian Genocide is not controversial, but rather is denied only by the Turkish government and its apologists.” Now, this is not a new issue. The Honorable Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey from 1913-1916, wrote the following in his memoir: “When the Turkish authorities gave the order for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal this fact. . . I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.

In 1920, U.S. Senate Resolution 359 heard testimony on the “mutilation, violation, torture, and death” of countless Armenians, to quote American Lieutenant General James Harbord, who further referred to the genocide as the “most colossal crime of all the ages.”

In her memoir, *Ravished Armenia* (1918), Aurora Mardigian describes being raped and thrown into a harem (consistent with Islam’s rules of war). Unlike

thousands of other Armenian girls who were discarded after being defiled, she managed to escape. In the city of Malatya, she saw 16 Christian girls crucified: “Each girl had been nailed alive upon her cross,” she writes, “spikes through her feet and hands, only their hair blown by the wind, covered their bodies.” Such scenes were also portrayed in the 1919 documentary film *Auction of Souls*.

Whereas the genocide is largely acknowledged in the West—long before a new resolution over 40 American states had formally recognized it—one of its primary, if not fundamental, causes is habitually overlooked: religion (Muslim Turks vis-à-vis Christian Armenians).

The genocide is unfortunately primarily articulated through a secular paradigm that focuses almost exclusively on nationalism, identity, territorial disputes, etc.—thereby projecting modern, secular Western sensibilities onto vastly different characters and eras.

War, of course, is another factor that clouds the true essence of the genocide. Because these atrocities mostly occurred during World War I, so the argument goes, they are ultimately a reflection of just that—*war*, in all its chaos and destruction, and nothing more. But as Winston Churchill, who described the massacres as an “administrative holocaust,” correctly observed, “[t]he opportunity [First World War] presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race.” Even Adolf Hitler had pointed out that “Turkey is taking advantage of the war in order to thoroughly liquidate its internal foes, i.e., the indigenous Christians, without being thereby disturbed by foreign intervention.”

Even the most cited factor of the Armenian Genocide, “ethnic identity conflict,” while legitimate, must be understood in light of the fact that, historically, religion often accounted more for a person’s identity than language or heritage. This is demonstrated on a daily basis throughout the Islamic world today, where Muslim governments and Muslim mobs persecute Christian minorities who share the same race, ethnicity, language, and culture; minorities who are indistinguishable from the majority—except, of course, for being non-Muslims, or “infidels.”

As one Armenian studies professor asks, “[i]f it [the Armenian Genocide] was a feud between Turks and Armenians, what explains the genocide carried out by Turkey against the Christian Assyrians at the same time?” The same can be said about the Greeks (some 750,000 of whom were liquidated during WWI). From a Turkish perspective, the primary thing Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks had in common was that they were all Christians—that is to say, “infidels.”

And the same can be said of all those Christian and other non-Muslim minorities who were most recently targeted for genocide by IS — another genocide recognized by the U.S., also conducted during the chaos of war, and against those whose only crime was, again, simply to be “infidels.”¹⁶²

Erdogan’s outrage about the Western recognition of the Armenian Genocide is hypocritical.

European Christians, however, must realize that the Armenian Genocide was followed by the genocide of the Jews, the Poles and the Slavs in the Second World War and the Bosnian Muslims in the 1990’s.

I should, at this point, emphasize three additional aspects. The first one refers to the perennial contrast mentioned in Chapter 1. In war, such contrasts between political leaders, armies on the one side, and the poor peoples on the other, are exceptionally sharp. The majority of Muslim and Christian peoples did not want war, but rather preferred to live in peace. The second aspect refers to trade and diplomacy. Even during wars, trade and diplomacy continued apace, driven by profit and power, instead of on the basis of (moral) principle. The third aspect concerns cultural exchanges, another area in which contact and reciprocal learning continued intermittently.

¹⁶² From: The “Most Colossal Crime of All Ages”^{10/31/2019} by Raymond Ibrahim “This resolution” in the text refers to a resolution adopted by the U.S. Congress, H.Res.296.

War Continues

The defeat of the Ottomans and the alternative creation of the Turkish Republic thereafter nurtured at least two illusions. The first one was that the Turkish Republic was a modernized, Western style secular, parliamentary democracy. The second one was that the Muslim Turkish Republic had forever given up its *Jihad* obligation. Both were proven wrong as early as between the first and the second peace treaty between Turkey and the victorious powers. Between the two treaties, the Greeks were expelled from Smyrna (since: Izmir) and a massive process of ethnic cleansing was taking place under supervision of the League of Nations. In the second peace treaty, there was no Armenian state anymore, nor any reference any longer to the rights of the Kurdish people.¹⁶³

The Western powers were more focused on the Soviet Russian problem and treated the Turkish Republic as they saw fit: as a reliable, secular republic, willing to join the Western Alliance after the Second World War against the Soviet threat. This seemed to work, at least until the Erdogan era.

The secularist illusions about Turkey are fueled by two historic misconceptions in Europe since 1648. The first one is the illusion that peace can be achieved between sovereign states, once diplomacy and international relations are decoupled from religion. The second one is the illusion of the French Enlightenment, that democracy and the rule of law within sovereign states can be achieved only when decoupled from religion.

The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church and the Islam

“Except for some rare periods in history (e.g., the so-called time of Convivencia, which took place among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in southern Spain in the 14th and 15th centuries), believers in these three religious traditions either, at best, kept their distance from one another, or were in conflict. There has been very little genuine dialogue between these three religions. And while in the Middle Ages the writings of some gifted scholars from the three

¹⁶³ Cf. my: *Neither Justice Nor Order*, Chapters 2 and 7; Also: *Western Cooperation*. Part I, Chapter 1. Volume III in my *Footprints of the 20th Century*.

Abrahamic religions (e.g., al Ghazali [d. 1111], Moses Maimonides [d. 1204] and Thomas Aquinas [d. 1274]) influenced one another in mutually illuminating ways, such cross-fertilization was very rare. Instead, the sad reality has been that most of the time Jews, Muslims and Christians have remained ignorant about each other, or worse, especially in the case of Christians and Muslims, attacked each other.”¹⁶⁴

The Second Vatican Council clearly broke new ground with a new approach to other religions as indicated in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. In Chapter 3, I referred to paragraph 4 with respect to new relations with the Jewish people. Paragraph 3 of the same declaration dealt with the Muslims, and I quote: “The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.... Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.”

This was in the year 1965, about half the way through the Cold War between the Soviet East and the European-American West, but well before the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), the radicalization of the Sunnis, and “9/11,” the terrorist attack on New York.

Still, the Declaration is directly related to another important declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*. Accepting the fundamental dignity of the human person, including everyone, man and woman, commoner or nobleman, priest or layperson, is also the foundation for freedom of religion. The Other is no longer the despicable heretic, Jew or Saracen, serf or slave, but a human person to be respected as such. Human dignity understood thus is not obvious in religious doctrine, nor in the history of Europe and the Middle East. It took the Catholic

¹⁶⁴ Fr. James L. Heft, S.M. “The Necessity of Interfaith Diplomacy: The Catholic/Muslim Dialogue, ifacs.com

Church two millennia and millions of victims in two world wars to reach that conclusion and it may take more centuries for the Islamic world to reach the same. In the world at large, much more is to be done to build a just society on this foundation. So, beware of illusions and be more realistic than the Declaration itself. It would be unwise and unrealistic “to forget the past” as a starting point for reaching mutual understanding. Instead it is necessary to remember and repent together, before trying to do better in the future.

As the Declaration explains, there are good reasons for including both Muslims and Jews in the new efforts at mutual esteem and understanding. With them, Christians have the faith in One God in common. They trace their origin to Abraham and the same prophets. For obvious reasons, priority after the Second Vatican Council went to developing new relations with the Jews. The dialogue with the Muslims was initiated in the 1980's. It received more attention only in this twenty-first century, after “9/11” and, surprisingly, with the Lecture given on the theme of faith and reason, by Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg on September 12, 2006. From his learned and brilliant lecture, only a few of the next phrases hit the news and are still remembered: “I was reminded of all this [to raise the question of God through the use of reason] recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on - perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara - by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologos and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both. It was presumably the emperor himself who set down this dialogue, during the siege of Constantinople between 1394 and 1402; and this would explain why his arguments are given in greater detail than those of his Persian interlocutor. The dialogue ranges widely over the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur'an, and deals especially with the image of God and of man, while necessarily returning repeatedly to the relationship between - as they were called - three «Laws» or «rules of life»: the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur'an. It is not my intention to discuss this question in the present lecture; here I would like to discuss only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole - which, in the context of the issue of «faith and reason», I found interesting, and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.”

In the seventh conversation (διάλεξις - controversy), edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: “There is no compulsion in religion.” According to some of the experts, this is probably one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat. But, naturally, the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur'an, concerning holy war. Without descending into details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the “Book” and the “infidels,” he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, regarding the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. “God”, he says, “is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (σὺν λόγῳ) is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death...”

The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: “For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality.” Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazem went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. God willing, we would even have to practice idolatry.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ From: Apostolic Journey to München, Altötting and Regensburg. Meeting with the representatives of science in the Aula Magna of the University. 12 September 2006. Lecture of the Holy Father: *Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections*. Vatican.va. To understand the attacked sentences, I quote more extensively so as to properly understand, what most commentators failed to do.

The controversies arose in response to the above-cited passage. I deliberately add the full paragraphs related to a Christian-Islamic dialogue, to be able to understand better before rushing to an opinion, as did so many journalists, clerics and others. Let us look at the context and the nature of the dialogue that took place between Manuel II and his Muslim interlocutor (invariably referred to as the “educated Persian” or “learned Moslem”).

The Dialogue

At the time, Manuel II was not only a vassal of the cruel Turkish Sultan Bayezid, but also his hostage. Constantinople was under Turkish siege. The city was all that was left of the Byzantine Empire, and would soon (in 1453) be conquered. The quote (in bold) in the Pope’s lecture was from the seventh (out of twenty-seven) dialogue and dealt with moral issues. His interlocutor did not consider it to be brusque nor was he startled. In a polite and equally brusque manner, he responded. The story of this dialogue is no work of fiction. It really took place, and it did not lead to any agreement or conversion. In his rebuttal, the interlocutor insisted on the restrictive character of Christian morality. The Law of Christ, he said, is admirable but impractical; love for your enemy, for virginity, and voluntary poverty, are for the angels, not for human beings. To which Manuel II answered with the well-known argument that a distinction had to be made between precepts for all and councils reserved to the perfect, adding the reproach that Mahomet’s Law only kept those from Moses, Christ had abrogated, like polygamy, impure food and violence. Courtesy apparently does not exclude lively polemics. In fact, the Turks of Anatolia admired the Saint Emperor Manuel so much that they thought he resembled their own Mahomet. The dialogue was a courteous and positive one between a Christian and a Muslim, one that, in sympathetic ways, detached itself from the quarrels and prejudices characterizing the interreligious dialogues of pre-modern times.¹⁶⁶

The reaction of Muslim scholars to Pope Benedict XVI confirmed the prejudices of pre-modern times, rather than the courtesy and wisdom of Manuel

¹⁶⁶ Marie-Hélène Congourdeau. Manuel II et l’islam. *Contacts*, 2007, 217 (janvier-mars), pp.20-34. ff-halshs-00672239f.

II and his interlocutor.. Their answer came with “a common word between us and you”- initiative (ACW), launched on October 13, 2007, initially as an Open Letter signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals (including figures like the Grand Muftis of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Bosnia, Russia, and Istanbul) written to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world, including His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In essence, it proposed – based on verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Bible – that Islam and Christianity share, at their core, the twin ‘golden’ commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one’s neighbor. Based on this joint common ground, it called for peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims worldwide. ACW was and is an extended global handshake of interreligious goodwill, friendship and fellowship, and consequently of world peace.”¹⁶⁷ By emphasizing their common ground as a basis for peace and harmony, it bypasses the underlying question as to why it did not work for almost fifteen centuries. Manuel II and his interlocutor at least tried to deal with that real question.

The most original passage in the exchange of Manuel II with his Muslim interlocutor, is where Manuel, in his tragic situation, deals with the relations between theological truth and historical reality. His Muslim correspondent advanced the (at the time) classic argument that the military successes of the Islamic Forces, as predicted by Mahomet, are proof of the favor God (Allah) accords to Muslims. Manuel responded with an argument quite modern for his time, namely that empires succeed each other, where periods of prosperity are followed by decline, without religion having anything to do with the fortune of the peoples.¹⁶⁸

The shared honesty of Manuel and his interlocutor were not an obstacle to but rather a condition for fruitful dialogue. Neither Manuel nor his correspondent tried to convert the other. They challenged each other on a number of moral issues, not by telling how good their own religion was, but by what they disliked in the other as evidenced by the reality of their conduct.

¹⁶⁷ MABDA · English Monograph Series · No. 20 A Common Word Between Us and You 5-Year Anniversary Edition ISBN: 978-9957-428-56-3

¹⁶⁸ Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, op.cit.

Before drawing some final lessons from Manuel's dialogue with his interlocutor, let us briefly look at three important Christian replies to ACW in the twenty first century:

Christian replies to a common word.

The response from the Armenian Church came in the form of a letter, dated September 23, 2012, which reads: "In our more recent history, the predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East were the first to receive, shelter and support the millions of refugees fleeing the Genocide of the Armenians perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey from 1915 to 1923. After the annihilation of 1.5 million of our sons and daughters during the First World War, the remnants of our nation witnessed the caring love and attention of our Arab brothers, which can serve today as the best example of how Christians and Muslims can live together in harmony, support one another in times of hardship, and enjoy the God-given benefits of a peaceful and creative life."¹⁶⁹

The reply from the Russian Patriarch came 22 December 2008 and states: "The final form of the letter was presented at a conference in September 2007 held under the theme of "Love in the Quran," by the Royal Academy of The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan, under the Patronage of H.M. King Abdullah II. Indeed, the most fundamental common ground between Islam and Christianity, and the best basis for future dialogue and understanding, is the love of God and the love of the neighbor. Never before have Muslims delivered this kind of definitive consensus statement on Christianity. Rather than engage in polemic, the signatories have adopted the traditional and mainstream Islamic position of respecting the Christian scripture and calling to be more, Christians not less, faithful to it."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Response from Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, General Secretary For Inter Church Relations on behalf of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. After the Armenian genocide during the First World War, this response has a special significance. ACW website.

¹⁷⁰ This and the other replies can be found on the website of ACW.

The most substantial response came from Daniel Madigan SJ, the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Muslims. After raising a number of questions concerning the claim that the dual commitment of love is the foundation of all three faiths, and only an occasional reference to Judaism, it is worthwhile to quote from his conclusions: "Although I suggested at the beginning that we might read this letter against the background of *Nostra Aetate* with its appeal to common elements of faith and practice, that should not be taken to imply that our dialogue will best proceed by a series of letters, however authoritative. These documents are important touchstones, but we know from the history of Vatican II that they only grow out of reflection on experience. Many of the signatories of *A Common Word* have long experience of an interfaith dialogue that goes beyond mere ceremony and requires commitment and openness. Documents like these not only grow out of personal encounter, ideally they also open the way to further interaction...Of course we are both quite sure that the other has plenty of which to repent compared to our high ideals and minor failings. Perhaps we both need to listen again to Jesus' advice about taking the plank out of our own eye before offering to remove the speck from another's eye (Mt 7:3-5). The dialogue of mutual repentance is the most difficult, yet most necessary of all, if we wish to move ahead...Though the discourse of *A Common Word* is framed in terms of conflict between Muslims and Christians, an honest examination of conscience will not permit us to forget that our future is not threatened only by conflict between us. Over the centuries of undeniable conflict and contestation between members of our two traditions, each group has had its own internal conflicts that have claimed and continue to claim many more lives than interconfessional strife. ...The greatest shame of the last century was the killing of millions of Jews by Christians conditioned by their own long tradition of anti-Semitism and seduced by a virulently nationalist and racist new ideology. The last 15 years in Africa have seen millions of Christians slaughtered in horrendous civil wars by their fellow believers. A Catholic missionary is dozens of times more likely to be killed in largely Catholic Latin America than anywhere in the Muslim world. So let us not be misled into thinking either that Muslim-Christian conflict is the world's greatest conflict, or even that war is the most serious threat to the human future... The new stage in Muslim-Christian dialogue represented by *A Common Word* should not become the occasion for a further narrowing of our

attention and a greater obsession with ourselves. If we wish to talk of love, we will not be able to ignore the cry of the poor.”¹⁷¹

In his response, the Russian patriarch is right. The ACW (promoted by the King of Jordan) has adopted the mainstream as well as traditional Islamic position towards Christians. Daniel Madigan correctly warns that documents and discussions between intellectuals are not enough. He rightly concludes that the dialogue of mutual repentance is the most difficult, yet most necessary of all, if we wish to move ahead.”

With this conclusion, we return to the dialogue of Emperor Manuel II with his learned Persian, Muslim interlocutor. Theological discussions on the fundamental texts are unlikely to be fruitful. Interreligious dialogue is not meant to be about conversion – after all, this never worked in Christian/Muslim relations previously, and will not be likely in the future either. A dialogue of mutual repentance does make sense, provided it will be practiced on all levels of a society in which Christians and Muslims live side by side. As Manuel II already knew, such dialogue should deal with historic reality rather than with concerns over theological truth. Pope Benedict XVI’s argument was that violent conversion is an act not in accordance with reason and therefore contrary to God’s nature. Manuel’s Muslim interlocutor considered such an argument admirable but impractical. In historical reality, Christians and Muslims alike waged violent wars; against each other, among themselves, and against the Jewish people.

Islam and the new anti-semitism.

The War of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) against Israel, launched on October 7, 2023, was the product of the new Islamist Anti-Semitism.¹⁷² What is truly new is how Islamist Anti-Semitism has recaptured three special features of European Christian Anti-Semitism. The first is that Jews are judged on the basis of standards that are widely different from those applied to others.

¹⁷¹ Response from Daniel Madigan SJ, the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims. On ACW website.

¹⁷² Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites. An Inquiry into conflict and prejudice*. New York London 1987, and text of his lecture delivered at Brandeis University on March 24, 2004.

The second is that Jews are accused of cosmic evil (on the basis of conspiracy theories), and the third is that the distinction between Zionists, Israelis, and Jews is irrelevant, allowing for the demonization of all Jews,¹⁷³ the State of Israel included. Since the early twentieth century, Arab language translations of European anti-Jewish texts were printed and widely circulated, especially after 1948. Among them were *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. The Mufti of Jerusalem contacted Nazi Germany before and during the Second World War, being strongly influenced by the Nazi’s Anti-Semitism and having a strong influence on Arab thinking thus, influencing Christian Arabs in particular.

In traditional Islam, Jews were depicted as cowardly or wretched, and were treated with good humored contempt. In 1948, the Arabs were convinced that the Israelis would quickly be destroyed, swept into the sea. Hence the bewilderment and horror at the fact that half a million Jews could defeat five Arab armies. The Arabs’ shameful and humiliating defeats in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 against Israel gave them comfort in the Christian doctrine of the Jews as the source of cosmic evil. Such evil, obviously, requires a radical and religious response: the annihilation of the State of Israel. The world of Islam has not given up. The doctrine of Hamas, supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, reminds us all of this reality.

The bitter irony is that the world of Islam finds justification in a doctrine which the Catholic Church herself has decided to reject, despite Arab diplomatic efforts during the Second Vatican Council to prevent acceptance of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (par. 4).

¹⁷³ Cf. previous chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE GREAT SCHISM BETWEEN EAST AND WEST.

*Now if your mind has followed on my praise
From light to light, you are already eager
To know what spirit shines in the eight blaze*

*In it, for having seen the sum of good,
There sings a soul that showed the world's deceit
To any who would heed. The bones and blood*

*From which it was cruelly driven have their tomb
Down there in Cieldauro: to his peace
It came from exile and from martyrdom.¹⁷⁴*

¹⁷⁴ Dante, *The Divine Comedy Paradiso*. Canto .124-131. Rendered into English Verse by John Ciardi. New York 1977

The night was put to flight, the darkness fled,
 And to my eyes their former strength returned:
 Like when the wild west wind accumulates
 Black clouds and stormy darkness fills the sky:
 The sun lies hid before the hour the stars
 Should shine, and night envelops all the earth:
 But should the North wind from his Thracian cave
 Lash at the darkness and loose the prisoner day,
 Out shines the sun with sudden light suffused
 And dazzles with its rays the blinking eye.
 In the same way the clouds of my grief dissolved and I drank in the light¹⁷⁵

The shining spirit in Dante's *Paradiso* is Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, a philosopher born around 480 AD who was tortured and brutally killed in the Pavia prison in 524/525 AD. In prison, he wrote his beautiful *The Consolation of Philosophy*, a widely read and admired book throughout the Middle Ages. At the time, Rome was in the hands of the Gothic King Theodoric, who had thrown him in prison for alleged treasonable correspondence with Constantinople, capital of the East Roman Empire. It was the time of the fierce conflict over Christology, and Theodoric was an Arian. Boethius was an early victim of what would grow into the Great Schism between the Greek Orthodox and the Latin Catholic Churches.

On the very first pages of the *Consolation*, "Philosophy" appears to him in prison, as a woman with imperious authority: "As she spoke she gathered her dress into a fold and wiped from my eyes the tears that filled them."

The Great Schism – like the Cain-doctrine – is rooted in the efforts to lockup the faith in theological, philosophical or legal formulas of doctrine on the faith in Jesus Christ, as adopted and proclaimed by the true Church authority. The preferred instruments to that end were the Ecumenical Councils, and – via the hierarchical lines – Episcopal Councils. As had been very clear since the Roman Empire became a Christian Empire under Constantine the Great (330 AD), the definition of "doctrine" was a furious exercise in political theology, particu-

¹⁷⁵ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by V.E. Watts. Penguin Classics 1988

larly due to the Church Fathers, who all were trained in Greek philosophy and fond of arguing. It would also become an exercise in imposition, condemnation and exclusion, bound to create division between the self-proclaimed true believers and the Jews, the so called heretics, and thereafter between the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic Churches. Whereas the Emperors of the Roman Empire played a leading role in the Ecumenical Councils, recognized by East and West, those declared "heretics" had to flee for their lives.

The long, drawn-out conflict we refer to as the "Great Schism" in reality was a struggle for dominance between the Pope in Rome and the Emperors and Patriarchs of Constantinople, both claiming supreme power, with everlasting consequences. Like all power struggles, it generated self-righteousness, anxiety, violence, division and blindness. From them, the pretence is born of being the only true church outside of which there is no salvation. Outsiders are heretics, to be excommunicated, executed and forgotten. In the Great East-West Schism, all these varieties were present.

Boethius lived shortly after the final collapse of the West Roman Empire in 476. The Roman Empire continued as the East-Roman Empire, with Constantinople as its Capital. The Ecumenical Councils of the Church continued to be convoked and presided by the Emperor until and including the Seventh General Council of Nicaea II in 787 AD.¹⁷⁶ All seven councils defined the Church's doctrine as against the heresies of Arianism, the Nestorians, the Monophysites, Monothelitism and Iconoclasm. The Pope would always be represented by legates and had to agree with the conclusions of the Councils. For a long time, Constantinople rather than Rome was considered to be the center of Christianity. As Meyendorff argues:

"With the decline of ancient Rome and internal dissension in the other Eastern patriarchates, the Church of Constantinople became, between the sixth and the eleventh centuries, the richest and most influential center of Christendom. As a symbol and expression of this universal prestige, Justinian built a church which, even today, is seen as the very masterpiece of Byzantine architecture: the Temple of the Holy Wisdom, 'Hagia Sophia.'" ¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ The Eight Council of Constantinople IV held in 869-70 A.D. had two versions. Thereafter all Ecumenical Councils were Councils of the Latin or Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁷⁷ John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. New York 1982

In Constantinople, the Emperor held supreme power and the Patriarch served under him as head of the Church. In the meantime, the Greek “East” and the Latin “West” slowly drifted apart. The Empire’s links to the Italian peninsula and Rome were weakened. The attempts of Justinian to restore this connection in the sixth century ended in failure, despite the monumental achievement of the codification of Roman Law.

Lost and forgotten.

“Historians can argue over the realities of Charlemagne’s Christendom, but this was only one part of a much larger Christian story, and one that is massively more diverse, and more impressive, than the common stereotype suggests,” wrote Philip Jenkins.¹⁷⁸ And he continues: “When we speak of the medieval church, we are usually referring to conditions in Western Europe, and not to the much wealthier and more sophisticated Eastern world centred in Constantinople. But there was, in addition, a third Christian world, a vast and complex realm that stretched deep into Asia.”

In the West, these second and third Christian worlds have been forgotten purposefully: the second one since its excommunication in 1054¹⁷⁹; the third one since the definition of the doctrine on Christ, in the Ecumenical Councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451.

The definition of true doctrine as against major heresies was no peaceful process, as the texts from the two Councils makes clear. They both stated the “true nature of Christ” and positioned the Holy Mary as his virgin Mother. “Be Anathema” was the worst curse one could receive at the time. It meant to be condemned eternally, as if the power of an Ecumenical Council could reach into the afterlife... what a proud pretence! On earth, it meant that your life in the Christian Empire was in immediate danger. Heresy became punishable by excommunication and execution.

at page 19.

¹⁷⁸ Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity. The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle-East, Africa and Asia*. A Lion Book 2008 at p. 5- ..

¹⁷⁹ The excommunication was mutual, forgetting also.

As Dickens explains in his brief history:

“The Council of Ephesus, in many ways a disgraceful display of petty politics and acrimonious accusations between those who had been called to “love one another” (John 13:34), resulted in both Nestorius and Cyril being excommunicated. While the latter continued on in his position as Alexandrine Patriarch, ignoring the decision of the council, Nestorius went into exile in Upper Egypt, where he lived out his remaining days in monastic seclusion (until his death in 451).. Many theologians who have studied the views of Nestorius are of the opinion that he was not in fact a heretic, but that much of the controversy was the result of politics, misunderstanding, and difficulties in translating words between Syriac and Greek.”¹⁸⁰

This aforementioned conclusion was officially confirmed only in 1994, by the Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. In this declaration, John Paul II, Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, and Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos–Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, now “proclaim together before the world their common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation. The controversies of the past led to anathemas, bearing on persons and on formulas. The Lord’s Spirit permits us to understand better today that the divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstandings.”¹⁸¹

The Declaration, by which an anathema, with its resulting persecutions ,was withdrawn only fifteen centuries later, gives us an absolutely shocking example of the persistent fallibility of the political theology of formulating doctrines.

Many followers of Nestorius fled the Roman Empire to Edessa, located in the then Persian Empire. They joined the Persian Church, existing already since the days of the Apostles. With the new ideas they brought in, the Church of the East, henceforth, came to be known as the Nestorian Church.¹⁸² The Church

¹⁸⁰ © 1999 Mark Dickens, www.oxus.com/Church_of_the_East. An excellent brief history.

¹⁸¹ Given at Saint Peter’s, on 11 November 1994. Mar Dinkha IV And Johannes Paulus PP. II © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

¹⁸² ‘The Assyrian Church of the East’ is the name used by Ronald Roberson, CSP, *The Eastern Christian Churches. A Brief Survey*. Edizioni Orientalia Christiana. 1999.

was persecuted at times by the Persian leaders and forgotten by the West; an example of organised forgetting, given its presumed heresy. They extended their missionary activities into Central Asia, China, India and even Japan.

Bishop Timothy, a contemporary of Charlemagne in the Latin West, became Patriarch or Catholicos of the Church of the East around 780 AD. He was based in the ancient Mesopotamian City of Seleucia (disappeared but close to today's Baghdad). According to Philip Jenkins, he was far more influential than the Western Pope in Rome and could claim to be in the line of succession of the original apostolic church. In the West we follow the westward movement of the early Christians, as described in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St. Paul. Early Christians, probably in greater numbers, journeyed East and inland, as far as Western China and India. Today's Syria and Iraq were the bases of two great transnational churches, deemed heretical by the Orthodox and Catholics, ignored and forgotten thereafter. Contrary also to the Orthodox and the Catholic, Timothy's church remained thoroughly in dialogue with Judaism and Islam, and also with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

With Catholicos Timothy "began a long and successful missionary enterprise which encompassed nearly a millennium of expansion into much of Asia. By the time of the patriarchate of Timothy I (779-820), the Nestorian Catholicos, already oversaw a greater geographic area (and probably more people) than any pope before the Age of Exploration. Eighteen metropolitans and dozens of bishops represented the church in most of Asia. Timothy, in writing about 'all the provinces under the jurisdiction of this patriarchal see,' spoke of 'the Indians, the Chinese, the Tibetans, [and] the Turks.' During his time as Nestorian patriarch, he appointed a bishop for Yemen (in the otherwise Muslim region of the Arab peninsula) and consecrated the first bishop for Tibet. In the words of Atiya, 'few churches can claim for themselves the Nestorian evangelizing fire that swept all over the continent of Asia in the earlier Middle Ages.'

In light of this evangelistic fervour, one may well ask, "What were the keys to the Nestorian success?" Certainly, as with all successful missionary work throughout history, the expansion of the Nestorians into Asia was primarily the result of the many dedicated men and women (primarily the former) who

were willing to sacrifice their comfort in order to obey the Great Commission. In Atiya's words, "the backbone of Nestorian expansion lay with its monastic rule, which furnished the church with a great army of dedicated men ready to penetrate unknown regions and expose themselves to every peril to spread the faith in the far East.... They combined with their enthusiasm for their faith a monastic system and hierarchy ready for action and self-sacrifice." However, although there were many clergy involved in evangelizing Asia, there were also considerable numbers of lay people, especially traders, merchants, artisans and teachers. In particular, the Sogdians, an ancient Iranian people who lived in Transoxiana and who were inveterate traders, were key players in the transmission of Christian teaching along the Silk Road (they also played a significant role in propagating Buddhism, Manichaeism and Islam throughout Central Asia at various times). "Although Syriac was the liturgical language of the Nestorian church, the language in which Nestorian Christianity was disseminated across Asia was principally Sogdian. In addition, in the early days of the church, there was a high value placed on literacy and learning. As noted above, theological training schools also played a key role in the propagation of the gospel. In addition to theology, these schools trained students in medicine, music and other academic subjects. Whenever the Nestorians established a new episcopal see, they also set up a school, a library and a hospital, thus "combining educational and medical work with their preaching. Finally, when persecution came, which it did often in the early days, it tended to act as a purifying agent, strengthening the Christian community. All of these were significant factors in the ongoing expansion of the Nestorians into much of Asia."¹⁸³

The Nestorian Church always was a minority church, but flourished for many centuries, with its rich scholarly activity and extensive missionary reach. According to most historians, it was Timur (Tamarlane), a Turco-Mongol conqueror and a fanatical Muslim, who dealt the death blow to the Nestorian Church in the late fourteenth century, thereafter lost and forgotten. All of this apparently was of no interest to the church that claimed for herself to be the true Church, forgetting in her pride what happened to fellow Christians in Asia. Today, the Nestorian Church is still alive; her Patriarch – due to continuing persecutions in Asia – currently, and since 1940, has his See in Chicago!

¹⁸³ Loc.cit. p.11,12. Aziz S. Atiya is the author of: *History of Eastern Christianity*, University of Notre Dame Press 1968.

Rome * constantinople * muscovy

The successors to St. Peter took Rome as the episcopal and papal See, because the city was the capital of the Roman Empire, where Peter and Paul had been martyred. The succeeding Popes kept the Roman See after the collapse of the West-Roman Empire in 476. In the meantime, in 330 AD Emperor Constantine created his capital city on the Bosphorus called Constantinople, but also fondly called the “second Rome.” The struggle for predominance between the two “Rome’s” – the imperial and the papal city – would continue, with the Great Schism as its lasting heritage. When Constantinople became Istanbul after 1453, the Russians claimed their Church to be the principal one in Orthodoxy, with Muscovy as the third Rome.

Constantinople

Since the Roman Empire became a Christian empire, defining the doctrine of the Church became an exercise in political theology, conducted in an Ecumenical Council chaired by the emperor. The Christian Emperor, obviously, could no longer be venerated as a god, like previous Roman Emperors, but he still kept the highest rank in the hierarchy – somewhere halfway between Christ and his subjects, above the patriarchs and the clergy. In the Preamble to his Edict, known as the Sixth *Novella*, of 17 April 535, Emperor Justinian emphasised that the “two greatest gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from on high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves divine things, while the latter directs and administers human affairs; both, however, proceed from the same origin and adorn the life of mankind. Hence, nothing should be such a source of care to the emperors as the dignity of the priests, since it is for their (imperial) welfare that they constantly implore God. For if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. New York 1982 at p.48. Cf. David J.D. Miller and Peter Sarris, *The Novels of Justinian*. Cambridge 2017.

He made clear that the “harmony” referred to, is not harmony between two powers or between two distinct societies, as we would read it in the modern era. In the legal thought of Justinian, there is no place at all for the Church as a society *sui generis*. “It is meant to represent the internal cohesion of one single human society, for whose orderly welfare on earth the emperor alone is responsible.”¹⁸⁵ The Emperor’s attitude toward the bishop of Rome is to be understood within this framework. The “Petrine” or apostolic theory of Roman primacy can be given binding force only by imperial authority. Thus, the second Rome was bound to come into political conflict with the first Rome.

According to historian Steven Runciman in his classic work on Byzantine Civilization, the one problem that troubled the Orthodox Church throughout its whole history was the relation with Rome. When Rome ceased to be the political centre of the world, her Church clung to her Petrine origin as the reason for her exalted position. Ungenerously, she would not even have allowed Constantinople second place.” The great heresies of the fifth and sixth century embittered the situation, although the Christology of Pope Leo I was accepted as being in agreement with the Ecumenical Councils. “Meanwhile, as Constantinople grew more uniquely the great Christian City, her bishops grew more self-confident and arrogant. Finally in 595, provoked by the claims of Rome, the patriarch John the Faster took the title of Oecumenical-world-wide. The Pope, Gregory the Great, was naturally indignant and cried that Antichrist must be near: “No see, he declared, had any jurisdiction over another, but all were equal before God”. Rome, however, did not retain this view in later years.”

Further antipathies and misunderstandings resulted from the linguistic question. In Rome, hardly anyone still knew Greek, and in Constantinople Latin had mostly been forgotten. The Iconoclastic Controversy caused an open breach between Rome and the Imperial Government in Constantinople. Those who dissented with the emperor appealed to Rome. Among them was St. Theodore the Studite, who was both a champion of veneration of images and an advocate of the view that the Roman See, free from imperial control, should decide on matters of doctrine. “But already, while Theodore wrote, Rome threw away her chance of establishing herself in the East by an act of great political unwisdom.

¹⁸⁵ Op.cit. page 49.

Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne at a time when the Churches were again in communion; and the coronation made it impossible for the Imperial Government to trust the Papacy any further.”¹⁸⁶

Rome

The Popes of the first Rome had a different view of the relationship between the two powers and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. As Pope Gelasius wrote in a letter to Emperor Anastasius in 494 AD.: “There are two powers, august Emperor, by which the world is chiefly ruled, namely, the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power. Of these that of priests is the more weighty, since they have to render an account for even the kings of men in the divine judgment. You are also aware, dear son, that while you are permitted honourably over human kind, yet in things divine you bow your head humbly before the leaders of the clergy and await from their hands the means of your salvation. In the reception and proper disposition of the heavenly mysteries you recognize that you should be subordinate rather than superior to the religious order, and that in these matters you depend on their judgment rather than wish to force them to follow your will.”¹⁸⁷

The Popes in Rome were recognized as the first among the patriarchs of the Christian Church. Still, the position of the Popes under various “barbarian” rulers was shaky at best. Rome as a city and the extensive Church properties in Italy became indefensible. Papal spiritual authority as Head of the Church needed political protection to be exercised. The Roman Empire could no longer afford it, especially as the Eastern provinces of the Empire were threatened by the Persian Empire and thereafter overrun by the Arabs in the seventh century. As a consequence, the Popes sought the protection of the Frankish kingdom, a rising power in the North-West of Europe.

At the end of the eighth century, Pope Stephanus crossed the Alps and visited King Pepin (753-756 AD.) for the purpose of concluding an alliance against the Lombards and liberating the papacy from political protection by the Byzan-

¹⁸⁶ Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation*. Edward Arnold 1975 at p. 119-122. On Theodore of Studium: Catholic Encyclopedia.

¹⁸⁷ Medieval Sourcebook: Gelasius I on Spiritual and Temporal Power. <http://www.fordham.edu>.

tine Empire. It resulted in the transformation of the Byzantine properties into the papacy’s own ecclesiastical state. Henceforth the ecclesiastical state would make the Popes a secular sovereign power in addition to their spiritual authority. The year 800 AD. – the crowning of Charlemagne as Emperor – marked the birth of the Holy Roman Empire, which would last until its dissolution by Napoleon in 1806. In the struggle for dominance, the Pope now faced the Emperor of the West in addition to the Emperor of the second Rome. Historically, the Great Schism is dated in the year 1054 AD., when the first and the second Rome formally excommunicated each other. As Meyendorff rightly concludes: “Provoked by gradual estrangement, the schism cannot be formally associated with any particular date or event. Its ultimate root, however, was clearly a different understanding of doctrinal authority, which in the West had been concentrated in the person of the Pope, whereas the East never considered that truth could be formally secured by any particular person or institution, and saw no seat of authority above the conciliar process, involving the bishops but also requiring a popular consensus.”¹⁸⁸

Set Above the Nations

Nevertheless, it was almost immediately after the formal Schism that the Popes of the first Rome launched their effort to achieve supremacy over the Emperor of the new Holy Roman Empire of the West.

The effort began with the reform Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) – “one of the most energetic and determined men ever to occupy the See of Peter, and he was driven by an almost mystically exalted vision of the awesome responsibility and dignity of the papal office”¹⁸⁹ – a text attributed to him, the so called *Dictatus Papae*, makes clear.¹⁹⁰

The *Dictatus*, apparently formulated shortly after the Great Schism and at the time of serious conflict between Pope Gregory VII and the Emperor of the (Western) Holy Roman Empire, is a remarkable document. The claims to universal jurisdiction of the Papacy had always been rejected by the Eastern Pa-

¹⁸⁸ Op. Cit. At page 30.

¹⁸⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners. A History of the Popes*. Yale University Press 1997. At page 94.

¹⁹⁰ Text Below in this chapter, English translation by Ernest F. Henderson. Legalhistorysources.com

triarchates. The theocratic claim to supreme, dictatorial power above and over the temporal power of the Holy Roman Empire was a completely new one. The claim that the Pope cannot be judged by anyone and that the Roman church has never erred, nor will it err to all eternity, can be seen as the first step towards the later dogma of infallibility of the Pope. The Era of Papal supremacy lasted until about 1307, when the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Boniface VIII against King Phillip the Fair of France resulted in the departure of the Popes to Avignon in 1309, followed by the Schism lasting from 1378-1417. The claim itself, however, lived on for much longer!

Liberated from imperial protection by the emperor of the second Rome, and in conflict with Emperor Henri IV – successor to Charlemagne – of the Holy Roman Empire (of the West), Pope Leo IX's and Gregory VII's dual concern was the new political theology of Papal supremacy 1) over the temporal powers of Emperors and Kings; and 2) over the Ecumenical Councils of the Latin Church.

The new political theology found its origin in the need for drastic reform in the Latin Church and as such the Papal Revolution was formative to the Western Legal Tradition.¹⁹¹ At the same time, it formulated the principle of the superiority of spiritual power of the Pope over and above the temporal power of the Emperor.

In reality, the election of the Benedictine Monk as Pope Gregory VII inaugurated a passionate and violent conflict between the Pope and Emperor Henri IV, the latter supported by the Bishops of the imperial church and those of Italy. After two efforts by the emperor to depose him, Gregory VII finally died in exile in 1078, when the Normans, whom he had invited to help him against the Emperor, plundered Rome instead. He was succeeded by Pope Victor III, who reigned for just over one year. Whereas anti-pope Clement III at the time was settled in Rome, Pope Urban II, born in France, was elected in Velletri on 12 March 1088. He proclaimed the first Crusade in 1095 in Clairmont.¹⁹² The call to war may have been inspired by Christian ideals and holy purposes. The call,

¹⁹¹ Cf. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution*. Harvard University Press 1997 (ninth printing). Also my: *European Unification into the twenty first century*. Wolf Legal Publishers 2017. Volume IV of Footprints of the 20th Century (third edition) at pages 29ff.

¹⁹² See further Chapter 6 below.

surely, was a call for the defence of European Christendom after the catastrophic defeats of Byzantium in the battles of Manzikert (1071) and of Hattin (1087).¹⁹³ Unavoidably, waging war is unholy business. It is important to perceive this fundamental distinction and thus avoid the popular misnomer “Holy War”. Whatever good motives may be responsible for going to war, the conduct of the war itself is and has always been bound to unleash all the dark passions of a fallen mankind.

The distinction between “holy purpose” and “unholy war” did not register in the medieval mind. Being a warrior was a respectable profession for free men and knights, as one can read in the famous stories of *The Morte of King Arthur*. Killing other knights was no sin after having confessed one's own sins; killing heretics or heathens never was. The truce of God promoted by the Church was concerned with private wars only. The strongest support for the crusades came from the monasteries – e.g. Saint Bernardus – and from the monks who became popes. *Deus le Volt* spread as a call to enlist for the crusades. As proclaimed by the highest authority in the Latin Church, many responded.

The First Crusade did conquer Jerusalem, but the Latin Kingdom (1187) survived less than a century. The second and third crusades ended in failure. The fourth crusade (1204) deviated from its purpose; it sacked and conquered Constantinople instead. The Crusades failed to restore Asia Minor – the heartland of Christianity – to Christian rule. War between Christendom and Islam became a permanent feature of world politics.

Within (Western) Christendom, the crusading spirit had catastrophic consequences. The Papacy also tried, through the call for crusades, to unite Christendom under its “supreme” leadership. The quest ultimately failed and poisoned the relations between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Crusades were also formed to eradicate heresies within Christendom itself, such as the Baltic Crusades and the Albigensian Crusade (lasting for twenty years).¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ See Raymond Ibrahim, *SWORD AND SCIMITAR. Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West*. Da Capo Press 2018. Chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades. A short history*. New Haven and London. 1987, who lists them all.

Diverted and Deranged, the sack of Constantinople

Pope Urban's successors, particularly Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), actively promoted a fourth crusade against the Turks. Once on the way with Venetian ships and money, the fourth crusade was diverted to Zara in Hungary and Constantinople. In April 1204, Constantinople was attacked, conquered and systematically, ruthlessly sacked, writes historian Ernle Bradford in *The Great Betrayal* (1967): "Monasteries and convents were sacked and looted, nuns raped, and even the sacred precincts of Santa Sophia, noblest cathedral in Christendom, were invaded by hordes of drunken rapacious soldiery. They rode their horses into the great sanctuary of the Divine Wisdom and tore the very vestments from the priests at the altar". Not for nearly six centuries, not indeed until 1793, when the French mob sacked their own churches, would Europe witness anything comparable to the desecration of Santa Sophia and the other churches of Constantinople.¹⁹⁵

As Runciman writes in his history of the Byzantine Empire: "It is hard to exaggerate the harm done to European civilisation by the sack of Constantinople. The treasures of the City, the books and works of art preserved from distant centuries, were all dispersed and most destroyed. The Empire, the great Eastern bulwark of Christendom, was broken as a power. Its highly centralised organisation was ruined. Provinces, to save themselves, were forced into devolution. The conquests of the Ottoman were made possible by the Crusaders' crime."¹⁹⁶

Although against his will, after the event Pope Innocent III tried to make the best of it by trying to enforce Church union. Latin "Emperors" ruled the city until 1261. "It was a merciful deliverance – wrote Steven Runciman – when in 1261 the troops of Michael Palaeologus forced their way into the city, and Baldwin, the Latin Patriarch and the Venetian *podesta* hurried to the harbour and sailed away to the west."

The East-West Schism had become irreparable. The Byzantine Empire entered

the final era of its decline, while the famous four stolen horses still shine on the St. Marco in Venice today.

"Once the spoils had been divided, the crusaders could proceed to the election of a new [Latin] emperor." Still, to include Pope Innocent's name "among those responsible for the diversion [of the fourth crusade] is particularly unkind", according to Jonathan Riley Smith.¹⁹⁷ "He certainly determined to make the best of things after the event and instructions flowed from Rome with the aim of taking advance of the fall of the Byzantine empire to bring about, even to enforce, Church union. From the start, however, the crusade proceeded in a way that was galling to him. One act of disobedience led to another. Most of the crusaders, however divided and personally distressed, ignored his advice and prohibitions; and the crusade ended in a way that was bound to make the unification of the Catholic and Orthodox churches, so dear to his heart, harder."

"Harder" is an understatement. In the political theology of the Popes of Rome, Church union meant (enforced) submission to the Roman Catholic Church and nothing else, at least until the Second Vatican Council.¹⁹⁸

The extent to which the Catholic leaders were locked in their own truth is made clear again in the fourth Constitution of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), created little more than ten years after the conquest of Constantinople. Named: "On the Pride of the Greeks towards the Latins" the text reads: "For after the Greek church together with certain associates and supporters withdrew from the obedience of the apostolic see, the Greeks began to detest the Latins so much that, among other wicked things they committed out of contempt for them, when Latin priests celebrated on their altars they would not offer sacrifice on them until they had washed them, as if the altars had been defiled thereby.[...] Wishing thereby to remove such a great scandal from God's church, we strictly order, on advice of this sacred council, that henceforth they do not presume to do such things but rather conform themselves like obedient sons to the holy Roman church, their mother, so that there may be one flock and one shepherd. If anyone however does dare to do such thing, let him be struck with

¹⁹⁵ Ernle Bradford, *The Great Betrayal. Constantinople 1204*. White Lion Edition, 1967 at p.162-163.

¹⁹⁶ Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation*. Surrey 1933 (seventh impression 1975) p.57, 55-56

¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades. A Short History*. Yale University Press 1987. Quotes from p. 129/130.

Among the many books on the subject, this short history is the most balanced one.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Unitatis Redintegratio. Decree on Ecumenism. 21 November 1964.

the sword of excommunication and be deprived of every ecclesiastical office and benefice.¹⁹⁹

Why this blindness towards “the Greeks,” who had suffered ruthless pillaging and whose altars had been defiled by the crusaders?

“The Eastern Churches still harbour bitter resentment about the behaviour of Western Christians during this time. Eastern Christendom has never forgotten those three appalling days of pillage. ‘Even the Saracens are merciful and kind,’ “‘compared with these men who bear the Cross of Christ on their shoulders.’ What shocked the Greeks more than anything was the wanton and systematic sacrilege of the Crusaders. How could men who had specially dedicated themselves to God’s service treat the things of God in such a way? As the Byzantines watched the Crusaders tear to pieces the altar and icon screen in the Church of the Holy Wisdom, and set prostitutes on the Patriarch’s throne, they must have felt that those who did such things were not Christians in the same sense as themselves.”²⁰⁰

The Latin Empire of Constantinople was a monstrosity. The dark legacy it left behind would affect all of Christendom. The Greek Empire never recovered from the damage and could no longer continue as the last great eastern bulwark against the Islamic tide. Christendom after 1204 too was changed, according to John Julius Norwich: “Long divided, it was now polarized. For centuries before and after the Great Schism, the difference between the Churches had been essentially theological. After the sack of Constantinople this was no longer true. To the Byzantines the barbarians who had desecrated their altars, plundered their homes and violated their women could not be considered, in any real sense, Christian at all. Future attempts to force them into union could never succeed for long, simply because anything appeared to them preferable to the idea of submission to Rome. ‘Better the Sultan’s turban than the cardinal’s hat, they used to say; and they meant it.”²⁰¹

199 From the English translation of the Constitutions of the Fourth Lateran Council. St. Michel’s Depot.

200 The Languedoc - www.midi-france.info/

201 John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium*. Viking 1997 at p. 317.

The Orthodox Church after 1453

With the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, the Orthodox Church fell into a historical and legal void. It became a time of introversion, of death and resurrection. Most of the Orthodox came under Turkish rule where at best they could be tolerated as a minority “Christian Nation” (millet), or severely persecuted. At the same time the Orthodox were faced with intrusive missionaries from the Latin Church. Between these two pressures, the survival of the Orthodox Church in the long era of introversion depended on “the liturgical and monastic prayer” and “the service of unity by the Ecumenical Patriarch.” The eighteenth century was a time of agony. The deterioration of the Ottoman Empire contaminated the Orthodox Church in Greece and the Balkans. In Russia, Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate.

The nineteenth century was the century of conflict and rising nationalism, undermining the unity of the Orthodox Church. “Autocephaly” degenerates into “auto-cephalism”, that is to say, the formation of independent churches on the basis of the ethnic rather than the Eucharistic principle.²⁰² The mutual charges of heresy between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, however, continued unabated, at least until the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church by the Soviet Regime and the Second Vatican Council.²⁰³

Political Theology and Polarization

Even after Vatican II, polarization and profound distrust remain difficult to overcome. In September 1994, a delegation from Aid to the Church in Need – was received in audience by the Patriarch of Moscow. He opened the audience complaining about the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders allegedly sent by Pope Innocent III. Even after the end of the Soviet Union, freedom of religion for the Russians continues to mean freedom from the Roman Catholic church.

202 Cf. Olivier Clément, *La Vérité vous rendra libre. Entretiens avec le Patriarche oecuménique Bartholomée*. Desclée de Brouwer.1996.at p. 25-44.

203 See e.g. Orthodox Christian Information Center, *The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895; reply to Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical “On the Reunion of Christendom”*. 1894.

The profound division between the Orthodox East and the Latin West has a long history, beginning in 330 AD. and extending into our twenty-first century. The Christianisation of the Slavic people can be traced back to St. Cyril and St. Method, in the ninth century. They translated the Bible in the Cyrillic language (for which they wrote the alphabet). In 966 AD, Mieszko, ruler of the Poles, was baptized into the Latin Church. Twenty-two years later in 988 AD, Prince Vladimir of Kiev was baptized into the Greek Orthodox Church. For both, it happened after marriage. For today's Russia and Poland, they are considered the founding dates of their states. The marriages were political, and the historic consequences would be primarily political. Poles and Russians never learned to trust and like each other.

Pride of Power; Bound to Err!

The Cain doctrine and the doctrine of the Latin Church on the East-West Schism found their clearest expression in the era of the Roman Popes 'Set Above the Nations' and thereafter. Both still dominate history and our thinking, with catastrophic consequences in the twentieth century. For (modern) believing Catholics, it is difficult to accept that Papal rule cannot err, and that pride of power can generate infallibility. With respect to the Eastern and the Orthodox churches, Catholic blindness cloaked our eyes as well, so that we did not see the beauties of their faith, their liturgy, and their culture. The Schism also ended mutual enrichment in theology and philosophy. The scholastics in particular pulled away from Orthodox tradition, moving instead towards philosophical rationalism.²⁰⁴

The Eastern (Assyrian) churches are almost lost and forgotten. The second Vatican Council – nine centuries after the Schism - has finally opened up the dialogue with the Orthodox churches, the Russian one in particular. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul is fading away, since the Greek-Turkish War in the 1920's. In the "secular" Turkish Republic, Christians are a suppressed minority. The Armenian Christians had been massacred during the First World War. The Greek Orthodox are a disappearing minority. They are not allowed to have their own seminary, and only Turkish nationals are eligible to the priesthood.

²⁰⁴ See e.g. Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum* 1949 and *Méditation sur l'Église*. Paris 1953.

Post Schism Doctrines in the Latin Church

According to Olivier Clement, the papal revolution, shortly after the Great Schism in the eleventh century, is to be seen as a tragedy of the Papacy and the "betrayal of the faith of St. Peter" in the *Dictatus Papae* of Pope Gregory VII. The controversial submission of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son (the so called *filioque*) finds its way in a (Latin) Church where the action of the Holy Spirit is submitted to the hierarchy and sometimes suppressed by it. The body of Christ is no longer felt as the place for a Pentecost to be continued, but as a hierarchical society, more and more centralised, in which the final say belongs to the vicar of Christ.²⁰⁵ The Popes relied on a political reading of Math. Chapter 16, 19, insisting that their feet be kissed, rather than themselves washing the feet of their disciples. Among those new doctrines are the *filioque*, celibacy, original sin, purgatory, and the threefold claim to the one true church, to universal jurisdiction, and to papal infallibility.

All of it summarized in the following Dictates of Pope Gregory VII:

1. That the Roman Church was funded by God alone.
2. That the Roman pontiff alone can right be called universal.
3. That he alone can depose or reinstate bishops.
4. That, in a council his legate, even if a lower grade, is above all bishops, and can pass sentence of deposition against them.
5. That the pope may depose the absent.
6. That, among other things, we ought not to remain in the same house with those excommunicated by Him.
7. That for him alone is it lawful, according to the needs of the time, to make

²⁰⁵ Olivier Clement, *La Révolte de l'Esprit*. Sock 1978 at p. 90. The theological dispute whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or from the Father and the Son brought the Great Schism in 1054.

new laws, to assemble together new congregations, to make an abbey of a canonry; and, on the other hand, to divide a rich bishopric and unite the poor ones.

8. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.
9. That of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet.
10. That his name alone shall be spoken in the churches.
11. That this is the only name in the world.
12. That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors.
13. That he may be permitted to transfer bishops if need be.
14. That he has power to ordain a clerk of any Church he may visit.
15. That he who is ordained by him may preside over another Church, but mayb not hold a subordinate position; and that such a one may not receive a higher grade from any bishop.
16. That no synod shall be called a general one without his order.
17. That no chapter and no book shall be considered canonical without his authority.
18. That a sentence passed by him may be retracted by no one; and that he himself alone of all, may retract it.
19. That he himself may be judged by no one.
20. That no one shall dare to condemn one who appeals to the apostolic chair.

21. That to the latter should be referred the more important cases of every church.
22. That the Roman church has never erred; nor will it err to all eternity, the Scripture bearing witness.
23. That the Roman pontiff, if he have been canonically ordained, is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter; St. Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, bearing witness, and many holy fathers agreeing with him. As is contained in the decrees of St. Symmachus the Pope.
24. That, by his command and consent, it may be lawful for subordinates to bring accusations.
25. That he may depose and reinstate bishops without assembling a synod.
26. That he who is not at peace with the Roman Church shall not be considered catholic.
27. That he may absolve subjects from their fealty to wicked men.

source: Ernest F. Henderson, *Legalhistorysources.co*,

The most interesting one concerns the doctrine of original sin, first argued by St. Augustine in his dispute with Pelagius and since the Schism Catholic doctrine. St. Augustine's concept was not shared by Church Father Chrysostomos. The Orthodox Churches refer to Adam's sin not as original sin, but as ancestral sin. What is the difference? According to the doctrine of original sin, everybody thereafter is born in sin. In the doctrine of ancestral sin, we all live with the consequences of Adam's sin, but nobody thereafter is born in sin; every new-born child is born innocent. The difference has consequences. Baptism has a different meaning. The following three new Catholic doctrines are not shared by the Orthodox Church: on purgatory, on celibacy, and on the Holy Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ See further Chapter 8 *infra*.

In our age, such differences should no longer be looked at as heresies, but as fascinating chances for dialogue and better understanding of God's revelation. Already in the Book of Genesis, chapter 4, we can read that Cain found a wife – not his sister – who did not have Adam and Eve as her parents. In our age of evolution and the discovery of expanding time and space, the concept of original sin needs reformulation. The Latin preference to freeze concepts in unalterable, legally formulated doctrine, the Greek tradition of subjecting concepts to philosophical disputes, and the Hebrew tradition of discovering revelation through comparing opposite readings of biblical stories, are not mutually exclusive. They can and should be mutually enriching,²⁰⁷ and open to dialogue.

Heresy: From Sin to Crime, From Faith to Fear

This political theology of the Roman Catholic Church also became a source of Western criminal law, within the context of the development and systematisation of canon law. According to Harold J. Berman: “in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries a sharp procedural distinction was made, for the first time, between sin and crime (...) A gross exception, however, to the principle of the division between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions was contained in the law applicable to heretics. *In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, heresy, which previously had been only a spiritual offense, punishable by anathema, became also a legal offense, punishable as treason.* The inquisitional procedure was used for the first time to expose it, and the death penalty was for the first time made applicable to it.”²⁰⁸ It enabled the “supreme” power of the Church – in the person of the inquisitor – to prosecute and torture Jews and suspected heretics, without being legally responsible for their cruel punishment or death thereafter.

In reality, it was an outcome of the Investiture conflict between the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy. Pope Lucius II issued the Bull *Ad Abolendam* (towards abolishing malignant heresies) in November 1184, following the Treaty of Verona with Frederick I the Emperor. In addition to the Crusades against the Turks, the Popes called for crusades against heretical sects like the Cathars and Waldenses in southern France and Northern Italy. After twenty

²⁰⁷ See for instance my chapter 11 *infra*.

²⁰⁸ “*Law and Revolution. Op. cit.* at p. 185-86. Cf also in my *European Unification into the Twenty First Century*, Part I, Chapter 2.

years of war against them, Pope Gregory IX appointed inquisitors of “heretical depravity” in 1231. What this meant was written in Canon 3 of the Fourth Lateral Council in 1215:

We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises against the holy, orthodox and Catholic faith which we have above explained; condemning all heretics under whatever names they may be known, for while they have different faces they are nevertheless bound to each other by their tails, since in all of them vanity is a common element. Those condemned, being handed over to the secular rulers of their bailiffs, let them be abandoned, to be punished with due justice, clerics being first degraded from their orders. (...) Secular authorities, whatever office they may hold, shall be admonished and induced and if necessary compelled by ecclesiastical censure, that as they wish to be esteemed and numbered among the faithful, so for the defence of the faith they ought publicly to take an oath that they will strive in good faith and to the best of their ability to exterminate in the territories subject to their jurisdiction all heretics pointed out by the Church; so that whenever anyone shall have assumed authority, whether spiritual or temporal, let him be bound to confirm this decree by oath. But if a temporal ruler, after having been requested and admonished by the Church, should neglect to cleanse his territory of this heretical foulness, let him be excommunicated by the metropolitan and the other bishops of the province.”²⁰⁹

Thereafter: “The medieval Inquisition came into existence during the pontificate of Gregory IX (1227-1241), its purpose being to suppress heresy in all its forms. At the beginning of this epoch the suppression of heresy, which had formerly been the responsibility of diocesan bishops, came to be exercised also by the Holy See directly, and special legates were appointed for this purpose. Later, this work was undertaken by religious orders, in particular the Dominicans and Franciscans. From this developed a characteristic ecclesiastical institution – the Inquisition – which consisted of a network of tribunals, whose leaders were given express pontifical delegation to judge and, if need be, condemn those charged with the crime of heresy. Following a practice in force in all European judicial systems until the end of the eighteenth century, this

²⁰⁹ Text from the Vatican Site: Papal Encyclicals. A few excerpts from a very long and bitter text.

process made allowance for the use of torture in certain very specific circumstances, and, in the most serious cases, for condemnation to death by burning. Civil authority (the so-called “secular arm”) carried out the death sentence. In fact, the temporal powers were generally eager to assist in the struggle against heresy, because the heretic was perceived to be a threat to society at large.”²¹⁰

Pope Gregory IX’s Bull marked the beginning of centuries of inquisition and persecutions of so-called heretics and Jews. Look at the terminology: “heretics,” like Jews, were first de-personalised and reduced to dirt, before being tortured as objects of hatred or as “superfluous entities.” It was similar to what the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century (Chapter 7) learned to do on a larger scale.

With Papal approval, the Spanish Inquisition was established in 1478, and would (together with the Portuguese inquisition) continue for 350 years in mainland Spain and in the colonies in Asia and Latin America. Among the persecuted heretics were many converted Muslims and Jews (Moriscos and Conversos).

The museum of the inquisition in Cordoba - one can read in its presentation:²¹¹ - “can be found in the heart of the historic center of **Cordoba**, in the Jewish Quarter, “the ideal place to travel back in time to some of the most gruesome periods of our history. This private collection spans the 13th to the mid-19th century and features a wide variety of complex torture machines and processes, based on documented evidence in various languages and numerous illustrations, in which you can almost feel in your bones each of the methods of torture used by the criminal courts of the time. 700 years of history in which these barbaric penalties were imposed for petty crimes, differences of belief or other equally unreasonable causes which often defy explanation. The basic purpose in the five rooms is to raise awareness and demonstrate the cruel excesses committed through these inhuman means of torture and humiliation, which were inflicted on thousands of European citizens. This way, we can make a telling comparison between the total deprivation of human rights which existed then and freedom which we fortunately enjoy today.”

²¹⁰ From Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *To Promote and Safeguard the Faith. From the Holy Office to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*. 2015.

²¹¹ From the introduction on the website of the museum.

In the Dominican cloister annexed to the Basilica Santa Maria supra Minerva, Galileo Galilei was sentenced in 1633 by the Roman Inquisition created by Pope Paul III in 1542 to impede the rise of Protestantism. The index of forbidden books came around the same time. With it, Inquisition reached its final stage as an official institution in the very center of the Holy See in Rome. The Holy Congregation of the Universal Inquisition was created, the forerunner of the Holy Office and the current Congregation of the Doctrine. In 1998, under Pope John-Paul II, its archives were opened to academic researchers.

The Inquisition and the Index were instruments of mind control of the worst kind, rivalled only by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Whatever the number of so-called heretics sentenced to be burned at the stakes or sent to the galleys to row themselves to death may be, there was no justification whatsoever for burning any of them. The worst part of the processes towards a sentence were in the hands of the Inquisition: interrogations based on anonymous denunciations and torture during hearings.

They could be launched, based on anonymous submissions in Trials by Ordeal. “Trials by Ordeal bear almost no resemblance to modern trials. They were proceedings designed to attract God’s attention and have Him make the deciding call: guilty or innocent. If a defendant was truly innocent, the logic went, God would step in and perform a miracle to save the defendant from a grievous wrong. Trials by ordeal were not, mind you, some wink-wink proceeding. People of the medieval world, for the most part, actually *believed* that God would ensure a just outcome. For most people of the time, God was ever-watchful—they could scarcely imagine Him just sitting by and let an innocent person be found guilty.”²¹²

The inquisitional procedure included judicial torture during the ecclesiastical inquisition and the cruellest forms of execution carried out by the secular authorities. It did its evil work primarily in catholic monarchies and in the Ecclesiastical State until 1870. After that, it faded away.

²¹² In: Prof. Douglas O. Linder, *Famous Trials*. The section on medieval Trials.

According to a recent comment, such practices were not an invention of the Inquisition. Torture was an already established practice and “it may in fact be too much to expect that the Church should have resisted the adoption of this standard practice in her own procedures.”²¹³ The practice was officially accepted by Pope Innocent IV in his Bulla *Ad Extirpanda* of 15 May 1252. The laws and regulations he proclaimed therein were to be followed by Magistrates and Secular Officials in the states and districts of Lombardy, Riviera di Romagna and Marchia Tervisina.²¹⁴

Would it indeed have been too much to expect that the Church should have resisted rather than confirmed the practice of torture and the burning at the stake of condemned heretics? Placed above the authority of nations, the Popes exercised more political power than spiritual authority. Had they followed the Gospel to be a sign of contradiction, they would and should have resisted the adoption of such standard practices. As I wrote in Chapter 1, the concept of heresy in the development of Christian doctrine was a most destructive one, creating categories of sub-humans to be tortured and exterminated at will. It showed the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church at its worst. Such mistreatment is incompatible with the mission to be a sign of contradiction. Inquisition had not been incidental: it was a permanent institution in the very centre of the Holy See, under the direct supervision of the Popes.

The exalted political vision of the papacy in the Middle Ages left its footprints on the modern vision of the Popes as infallible sources of doctrine, as circumscribed and restricted in the First Vatican Council (1870).²¹⁵

The worst as well as lasting impact of the Inquisition is the uninterrupted production of fear, and the invitation to denounce fellow-citizens and family members to the Inquisition, with offices throughout catholic territories, which continued for centuries. In Spain, informers were called *familiares*. Everybody, everywhere and on all levels of Church life was urged to be an inform-

er in the service of pure doctrine. We shall never fully learn how many Jews and so-called heretics were burned or killed otherwise. We do know how much the consciences of men and women were poisoned by fear and falsehood.²¹⁶ After all, it took the Roman Catholic Church many centuries to accept freedom of religion, which only happened at the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 and with great difficulty. Among those of my generation who were born before the Second World War, many remember their fear for not being a rule-observing, practicing Catholic. The Second Vatican Council liberated us from such fear, and for many, at the same time, from the Catholic Church herself.

Papal supremacy, heretic depravity, and the rule of fear may have become part of Roman Catholic doctrine between the Great Schism of 1054 and the Second Vatican Council of 1963-1965, but such exalted vision finds little support in the Gospels. When Peter, presumptuously, said: “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for You”, Jesus answered: “You will lay down your life for me? I tell you truly, the cock will not crow before you have three times disowned me.” (John 13, 37:38).

The most beautiful reading of the mission entrusted by Jesus to St. Peter, I found in the Epilogue to “*Jesus, le Maître n de Nazareth*” by Alexander Men: “*Car ce ne sont pas les doctrines ou des theories, mais le Christ lui-même qui renouvelle constamment le christianianisme et le mène à l’éternité.*” (For not the doctrines or the theories, but Christ Himself it is who constantly renews Christianity and leads it to eternity).²¹⁷

The Christian faith – whether Assyrian, East or West, Orthodox or Latin, Catholic or Reformed – is not a religion but a relation. We are called to follow Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life – without any presumption, pride or posture, but in great humility, from the highest authority all the way down to the common faithful.

²¹³ Jordan Bishop, ‘Aquinas on Torture’. The author 2006. Journal Compilation. The Dominican Council/Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2006.

²¹⁴ English text on the website of the San Francisco State University (sfsu.edu/~draker/history/)

²¹⁵ In the final paragraph. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the second Vatican Council is somewhat ambivalent on this issue.

²¹⁶ Cf. Friedrich Heer, *Sieben Kapitel aus der Geschichte des Schreckens*. Nürnberg 1965

²¹⁷ From the French translation published by Nouvel Cité in 1999.

Muscovy

The Church of Kiev became a metropolitan church; the metropolitan was appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople along with the Byzantine Emperor. After the destruction of Kiev in the Thirteenth Century, as a result of internecine struggles and the Tartar-Mongol invasion, the Kiev Metropolitans moved North to Vladimir and then to Moscow. In 1448, Jonah was elected metropolitan as ordered by the Tsar, but without approval of the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople. Only in 1589, the Moscow Patriarchate was established.

“Moscow’s *demarche* provoked a crisis among the Orthodox in neighbouring Poland-Lithuania, who till then had always looked to the Patriarch of Constantinople. With the new Muscovite Patriarch claiming jurisdiction over them from across the frontier, many of those Orthodox now sought protection of Rome. In the era of the Counter-Reformation, the Vatican under Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85) entertained hopes of returning the Russians to the Catholic Church.

In 1596, at the Union of Brest, the majority of their bishops chose to found a new Uniate communion – the Greek Catholic Church of Slavic Rite. They retained their ritual, and their married clergy, whilst admitting the supremacy of the Pope. Most of the Orthodox Churches in Byelorussia and Ukraine, including the ancient cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev, passed into the hands of the Uniates. [..]

Moscow, however, was never reconciled to these developments. The furious determination of the Russian Orthodox Church to punish and forcibly to re-convert the Uniates remained constant throughout modern history. [..] The Russo-Polish wars [..] only served to cement the religious hatreds.”²¹⁸

In Russia, the contrast between the violent rulers and the subdued faithful can be underlined with the “prayer of the heart” or *philocalie*, the most beautiful and lasting example which is found in the spiritual guidance for “The Russian Pilgrim.”²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Norman Davies, *Europe A History*. Pimlico 1997 at p. 505.

²¹⁹ Eastern Orthodox Texts Preserved, *The way of the Pilgrim and the Pilgrim continues his way*.

Holy russia?

Alexander Men did not live to see the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was assassinated in front of his house on 8 September, 1990, probably by those who hated him for his charisma and openness towards fellow Christians in Europe. Ever since the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Church was a state-church governed by autocratic Tsars and Patriarchs,²²⁰ fully in accordance with the Sixth Novella of Emperor Justinian of the Roman Empire, as cited above. From Lenin in 1917 to Gorbachev in the 1980’s, the Church was heavily persecuted. The Soviet Union did come to an end in December 1991, after Boris Yeltsin had proclaimed the sovereignty of the Russian Federation. Thereafter, Ukraine and the other Soviet Republics had no other choice than to do the same. With the end of Soviet communist atheism, the dream of “The Holy Land of Russia” was revived in Moscow.²²¹

When Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999 and Kirill was elected the Moscow Patriarch in 2008, the myth of Moscow as the third Rome was revived as an argument to re-unite the Orthodox Churches of the Euro-Asian continent under autocratic imperial rule of Tsar (or President) and Patriarch of Holy Russia. “church policy became a key element of Putin’s strategy. This activity coincided with the global processes that took place in recent years in Eastern Europe on the one hand, and within the Orthodox world, on the other. In 2003–2004, Georgia and Ukraine experienced ‘colorful revolutions’. Thereafter their – democratically elected – leaders declared their pro-European ambitions. In Russia, it was perceived as an unfriendly activity on the part of the USA and NATO in Russia’s territories of influence. These, and a number of other events, have led to a change in Russia’s official foreign policy doctrine. Its main pillars were articulated in 2007, in Vladimir Putin’s Munich speech, which condemned the unipolarity of the modern world and NATO’s expansion to the east. Earlier on, in 2005, in his message to the Federal Assembly, Putin called the collapse of the USSR “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.” Since the beginning of the new millennium, Russia has become more active in the foreign policy arena, opting for an increasingly aggressive style. Russia’s ag-

²²⁰ Cf. B.H. Sumner, *Survey of Russian History*. 1947

²²¹ Title of a book I received in January 1998 from the political counsellor of President Yeltsin, when on a visit to promote the ratification of the European Human Rights Convention.

gression against Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) should be considered part of this policy. The church policy is also becoming a key element within that strategy. This factor has been especially strong since 2009, when the newly elected Patriarch Kirill has promoted the doctrine of the 'Russian world' based on the Orthodox religion, the Russian language, and the common view of historical development. Since that time, the struggle at the symbolic level, i.e. in the perspective on culture and history, including the church, has intensified, becoming one of the key factors in the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine."²²²

It nevertheless took all of us in Europe by shock and disbelief, when Vladimir Putin – in name of that same holy Russia – launched his war against Ukraine, with the annexation of Crimea on 24 February, 2014, and the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, 2022. Europe should have understood earlier but, like in the 1930's, when Adolf Hitler came to power, we failed to see the signs of Evil in Putin's regular references to the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the Twentieth Century. After all, Putin had been (secretly) baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church and as President had restored the traditional Russian symphony between State and Church. Few realized that there was a design behind this restoration: the build-up of a Christian-Orthodox Empire on the Euro-Asian Continent, by force of arms. After eight years of warfare in the Donbas, the invasion produced additional shock and disbelief: the full support of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, as expressed in his sermon on the feast commemorating the baptism of Jesus Christ: "The desire to defeat Russia today has taken very dangerous forms. We pray to the Lord that he will bring the madmen to reason and help them understand that any desire to destroy Russia will mean the end of the world." Such a doomsday warning can be understood only in the context of the Russian claim to Muscovy as the Third Rome: the first Rome has fallen in heresy, the second Rome has been destroyed. Remains the third Rome as the last ever capital of the Church. "In light of the fact that "Third Rome" is demonstrably the creation of late nineteenth-century Russian scholars, philosophers and publicists, every effort should be made to discourage the use of the idea as an explanatory device. It says nothing about long-term trends in Russian foreign

²²² Alexander Dobroyer, 'The Fall of the 'Third Rome'. In: Aspen Institute Central Europe. 7. 6. 2019.

policy or Russian national psychology, rather it is evidence of the abuse of historical information."²²³

The origins of the confrontation are not in the West, but in the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Union. It was the people of Ukraine, Moldavia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania who looked to the West for freedom, protection and security after 1991, much like the people of the former Soviet satellites Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania had done after 1989. They all asked for membership of NATO and the European Union, as is their sovereign right. With the coming to power of former KGB officer Vladimir Putin, their requests for protection could only become more urgent. Unfortunately, one must read Putin's and Kirill's lies the way Soviet citizens learned long ago: read them in reverse: what others are blamed for, the Putin Regime is doing or planning itself. The invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, was a case of unprovoked aggression and a war crime. Vladimir Putin, clearly, decided to abuse this historical myth for the purpose of his policy from the beginning of the twenty-first century up to and including the unprovoked invasions of Ukraine, with all its suffering and massive destruction as a consequence. The Russian Patriarch dutifully agreed, despite the fact that Putin was not a Tsar by the Grace of God, but a nasty former KGB Officer. The Patriarch even added his conflict with the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches as an argument in support of the invasion.

The Metropolitan Epiphanius of the united Ukrainian Orthodox Church stressed, in an interview to the BBC, that the Orthodox Church of Ukraine will depart from the Russian imperial traditions and move towards the Byzantine/Greek ones, because it was the Greek roots that were artificially removed from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. "We must move away from those Russian imperial traditions that have been imposed on us for a long time. When we visit the churches of the Greek tradition, we see that all those traditions existed in the Ukrainian Church even during the time of Petro Mohyla,"²²⁴ [...] "But everything will be done gradually, so as not to cause resistance from the conservative part of the faithful who do not perceive reforms as such. We are not talking

²²³ From: Marshall T. Poe, 'Moscow, the Third Rome', The Origins and Transformations of a Pivotal Moment. Harvard University 10 October 1997 (Research Paper).

²²⁴ Metropolitan Petro Mohyla was an influential Eastern Orthodox theologian and reformer of Moldavian origin, Metropolitan of Kyiv, Halych and All Rus' from 1633 until his death.

about changing the foundations of faith or dogmatics. We are talking about good reforms. We must engage in enlightenment, explain to people that we must become better, so that love prevails among us,” said the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. In the same interview, when asked if he would allow LGBT to take communion, Epiphanius declared: “We have a clear position [...] this is a sin that we have to [...] speak openly about [...]. This is a way of life that is incompatible with Christian views. Therefore, this is the position of the Orthodox Church, the position of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches, and in this matter we are unshakable. Because we are based on the foundations of the Scriptures, which clearly states that this is a sin. [...] people must repent of their sins, correct their mistakes. And if a person repents, if the person recognizes it, then of course the person can participate in the sacraments.”²²⁵

It is extremely sad that the Patriarch of a Church – whose priests and believers suffered immensely under Soviet rule – is bowing down to a President who employs the same methods, the same violence, and the same lies as his former KGB masters.

²²⁵ The interview was published on 1 March 2019.

CHAPTER 6

REFORMATION AND COUNTER- REFORMATION

“PETER: Let me ask you, didn’t you ever consider, when you became supreme pastor of the church, how this church was born, how it grew, what sort of men gave it strength? Was this accomplished by wars, by chests full of treasure, by cavalry raids? No: by patience under suffering, by the blood of martyrs and our own, by enduring prisons and whips. You say the church has grown when all its ministers are burdened with earthly goods; you say it’s been adorned when it’s weighed down with worldly possessions and pleasures; you say it’s being defended when the entire world is ripped apart by ferocious wars for the private gain of the priests; you say it’s in flourishing estate when it’s drunk on the pleasures of this world; you call it quiet when, because nobody complains about your riches, you are free to cultivate your vices; and you grant glorious titles to princes who recognize you as their teacher in the art of perpetrating shameless robberies and atrocious murders under the name of “the defence of Christ.”

JULIUS: Such things as this I never heard before.

PETER: What did your preachers tell you, then?

JULIUS: I never heard anything from them but fulsome praise. They exercised their fanciest rhetoric in thundering out my glories, they compared me to Jove wielding his thunderbolt, they practically deified me, they called me the saviour of the world, and a great many other things of that sort.

PETER: I'm not surprised there was nobody to give you good advice, for you yourself were the salt that had lost its savour. For that is the special function of the apostles and those that follow them, to teach others the lesson of Christ, and in the purest form possible.

JULIUS: You're not going to open the gates, then?

PETER: To anyone, rather than a contagious disease like you. As far as you're concerned, we're all excommunicated anyway. But would you care for a word of practical advice? You have here a gang of musclemen; you have a pile of money; you're a good builder. Go make yourself a new private paradise; but make it good and strong to keep the demons of hell from dragging you out of it.

JULIUS: I'll act in accordance with my own dignity. I'll take a couple of months to build up my forces; then we'll besiege you here and if you don't surrender, drive you out. For I don't doubt to receive shortly, from the wars I started, fresh recruits of sixty thousand souls or more.²²⁶

When Michelangelo went to Rome in 1505, Pope Julius II commissioned him to build a tomb for himself in five years. According to the first plan, it was to be a huge, free-standing tomb outlining the Christian world. At the summit of the monument there was to be a portrayal of two angels leading the Pope to heaven out of his tomb on the day of the Last Judgment. One can see where Erasmus's satire found its inspiration...²²⁷

²²⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *Julius Excluded from Heaven*. English translation from the satire published in 1513. Final page.

²²⁷ After the Pope's death in 1513, Michelangelo and the pope's heirs agreed to a much smaller version to be placed against a wall; finally set up in the Church San Pietro in Vincoli in 1545. Cf. Web Gallery of Art. Michelangelo Buonarroti. Tomb of Julius II.

The Papal claims to supremacy of power and infallibility go back to the letter from Pope Gelasius to Emperor Anastasius in 495 AD.

The so called "Donation of Constantine" was invoked to legitimize such claims since the Eighth Century. The Donation surfaced around the time Pope Stephanus received Frankish protection for the formation of an Ecclesiastical State.²²⁸ The Donation, it was believed, legitimized three Papal claims: (1) The transfer of Emperor Constance's own supreme power to "the most blessed pontiff, our father Sylvester the universal pope"; (2) Supremacy over the four chief patriarchal seats of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem; and (3) "also over all churches of God in the whole world.. and chief over all the priests of the whole world."²²⁹

At the time, a person's status could be recognized by his garments and privileges. The Donation conferred imperial garments such as the purple mantle and the tiara to the Pope. The Tiara with its three crowns – from top to bottom: the spiritual, the imperial and the royal crown – symbolized supreme political power. It was not until the Second Vatican Council that Pope Paul VI sold the tiara.

In line with the Donation were the efforts by Gregory VII to liberate the Papacy from the imperial power of the Holy Roman Empire. After the Great Schism of 1054, the relationship as established since Constantine the Great no longer applied to the Latin or Western Church. As can be read in the *Dictatus Papae*, to "be liberated from" could only mean to "be placed above." It flowed from a one-dimensional concept of "authority as political power," in which there is only a choice between "above" or "below." Within this one-dimensional, political concept of authority, the Papacy was bound to re-emphasize the importance of its own political power base: a Papal or Ecclesiastical State, acquired with the assistance of the Frankish kings.

²²⁸ The English translation of the Donation can be found in Fordham University's *Medieval Sourcebook*. The Donation is supposed to be composed around 845.

²²⁹ Whether the forgeries were invoked or had an influence is obviously disputed.

Dante on Papal Supremacy

In Dante's *Inferno*, canto XIX, we read about the Donation: "Ah, Constantine, of how much ill was mother, not thy conversion, but the dower-gift the earliest wealthy Father took from thee!"²³⁰

In his treatise *De Monarchia*,²³¹ Dante most clearly refutes the arguments of the medieval Popes used to claim supreme power, and he did so well before the Donation of Constantine was proven to be a forgery. The treatise itself would soon be a banned book...

According to Dante in Chapter VIII, the papal arguments, based as they are on the saying of Christ to Peter: "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," must be refuted. Christ's saying is to be taken, not as an absolute statement, but in relation to something else, namely the spiritual authority given by Christ to grant absolution and forgiveness.

In Canto IX, Dante makes clear that the papal argument of the two swords (Luke 22:38), is a false one: "if Peter's reply had carried the meaning ascribed to it, the meaning would have been at variance with that of Christ, and Christ would have censured him [Peter], as He did often times for Peter's witless answers."

In Canto X, Dante rejects the argument based on the Donation of Constantine. The Emperor has no power to alienate the imperial dignity, nor does the Church have the power to receive it from him. Dante rightly distinguishes between the power of the Empire, with its foundation in human law, and the authority of the Church, founded in the person of Christ. The Church is utterly unqualified for receiving temporal power by the express prohibitive command in the Gospel of Matthew.²³² The authority of the Church has its foundation in Christ, an authority outside the political dimension within which the Popes wrongly sought their supremacy, and continued to do so at least until the Second Vatican Council and the abandoning of the Tiara! This one-dimensional approach

²³⁰ From the *Divina Comedia*. Verses 110-115. Chapter XIX is in the eighth circle (Fraud) and third trench (simoniacs), written well before the Donation was found to be a forgery.

²³¹ From the English translation in the Online Library of Liberty. in Book III, chapters VIII-X

²³² Gospel of St. Matthew, 10, 9-10.

to authority may explain why the Roman Catholic Church is often considered a conservative force in society – from the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Liberal Democracy, to our present days – simply because each cry for reform is understood as an attack on the Pope's supreme power. His supreme power derives from a Church organised as an absolute monarchy, after the model of the Roman Empire, declared to be based on divine law.

The three claims, however, continued to play a role in the sense that the Pope is not answerable to anybody on earth. Like the Roman Emperors before him, he stands above the law, and also above the Ecumenical Councils in the Church.

Papal secular, political power did have its consequences, as Erasmus described in his *Praise of Folly*: "And now for some reflections upon popes, cardinals, and bishops, who in pomp and splendour have almost equalled if not outshone secular princess."²³³ With these words begin a few paragraphs describing how popes and bishops live and what concerns them, ending with "Thus the Popes thrusting only their sickle into the harvest of profit," leaving the toil of spiritual husbandry to the bishops who leave it to the pastors and the pastor leave it to...and so on and so forth.

In a first chapter (the cry for reformation) Owen Chadwick wrote: "Under Alexander VI Borgia, Julius II, and Leo X, it appeared that the throne of St. Peter, like other bishoprics, had become a remunerative if uncomfortable seat for world politicians. Not to see the contrast between precept and practice was to be blind." The Renaissance Popes, certainly, were no signs of contradiction. And many reformers "thought that the Emperor Constantine caused the disaster by his donation (the gift of lands and secular authority to Pope Sylvester), that the golden age of Christendom had been ruined when the Pope required wealth."²³⁴

The first claim would burden the relations between the papacy and the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, at least until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The second claim had been a principal cause for the East-West Schism, as discussed in the previous chapter. The third claim continues to be a divisive issue

²³³ From the Gutenberg Ebook 2009/2012. English version London 1876..

²³⁴ In: *The Reformation*. Chapter 1, p. 17,19,20. Penguin Books 1972

within the Roman Catholic Church. The first and third claims jointly were at the origin of many cries for reform, including the cry for Reformation in the early sixteenth century.

Supreme political conflicts

Papal exile to Avignon and schism followed the era of the Popes “set above the nations.” This internal Catholic schism was followed by the Renaissance Popes, who continued to reassert the claims of supremacy, despite the secularization and corruption of their power, thus giving rise to growing protest against them.

The Renaissance Popes were politicians who were usually linked to one or more of the Italian grand families.²³⁵ They preferred diplomacy to merciful understanding. In their opinion, the growing division among the faithful had to be contained via political and diplomatic means.²³⁶

Their priorities were initially related to the rebuilding of Rome, which Pope Martin V had found dilapidated and deserted on his return in 1420. The plans to transform Rome into the splendid centre of Christendom – after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 – required funds well above the means of the papal states. The Indulgences schemes throughout Europe were meant to raise such funds in return for promising liberation from purgatory. They were the trigger for Luther’s 95 theses and the Reformation.

The Papal or Ecclesiastical States dominated the centre of the Italian peninsula, marked by political conflict and instability, and plagued by continuous warfare. Perhaps unavoidably, but with much vigour, Pope Martin’s successors were fully engaged in Italian and European politics and focused their attention additionally on the reconstruction and beautification of the centre of Christendom.

The Renaissance Papacy, writes Eamon Duffy, “for all its glories, had shown itself again and again chronically resistant to reform. Yet, everywhere in the

²³⁵ Apart from Pope Hadrian VI in 1523, all Popes were Italians deeply involved in Italian politics, until Holy Pope John-Paul II in 1978.

²³⁶ Cf. Friedrich Heer, *Das Heilige Römische Reich*. Eduard Kaiser Verlag 1967. At p.192.

Christian world, ever more urgently, reform was being called for.” In Italy, it was the Dominican Prior Girolamo Savonarola, who identified the Rome of Alexander VI (1492-1503) with the forces of Antichrist. “We Italians,” wrote Nicolo Machiavelli, “are more irreligious and corrupt than others...because the Church and its representatives set us the worst example.” Rather unsurprisingly, one of Pope Alexander’s illegitimate sons, Cesare Borgia, served as the model for *The Prince*, Machiavelli’s most famous work.²³⁷

In Rotterdam, it was Desiderius Erasmus who called for reform. His satire, from which I quoted above, was published around the same time that Maarten Luther affixed his 95 theses against the Indulgencies, “which Pope Julius and after him Pope Leo had issued to help fund the rebuilding of St. Peter’s” in 1517.²³⁸ By 1520, after reading (among other things) the exposure by the humanist Lorenzo Valla of the Donation of Constantine as a forgery, Luther became convinced that the Roman hierarchy was a tyranny in the service of the Antichrist.” In response to Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, nobody less than King Henry VIII of England wrote his *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*!²³⁹ Not long thereafter, Pope Clement VII (1523-34) asked Raphael’s workshop to decorate his state rooms with a fresco glorifying the Donation of Constantine!

The theses and treatises of Luther’s rapidly spread throughout the Empire and beyond, mostly thanks to the (newly invented) printing press.

The same popes who resisted reform also promoted the Inquisition and the Index of Prohibited Books. Among them were the works of Dante, Erasmus, Savonarola and Machiavelli.²⁴⁰

With the **Counterreformation**, the Roman Catholic Church withdrew into a particularity of a narrow orthodox kind, wherein the battle against the reformers joined with the reaction against the invention of printing and the discoveries of modern science. The first printed Bible was made by Gutenberg between

²³⁷ Quotation from: Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*. The penguin History of the Church 3. 1990 at p. 23. Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*. (English translation) A Mentor Classic. The New American Library 1955.

²³⁸ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners. A History of the Popes*. Yale University Press 1997 at p. 151-153.

²³⁹ Mark Greengass, *Christendom Destroyed Europe 1517-1648*. Penguinbooks 2014 at p. 308-309.

²⁴⁰ On the Index of Prohibited Books, see Chapter 7 *infra*.

1452 and 1455. After some fifty years, more than a million books were already in circulation. When Luther posted his 95 theses in 1516, they could be rapidly and widely circulated. Pope Leo X, who immediately had excommunicated Luther, also followed his predecessor Julius II in fighting against the printed book. His Bull *Inter Sollicitudines* was included in the decrees of the Fifth Lateran Council (1515) and meant to institute pre-publication control in the following terms:

to prevent what has been a healthy discovery [printing of books] for the glory of God, the advance of the faith, and the propagation of good skills, from being misused for the opposite purposes and becoming an obstacle to the salvation of Christians, we have judged that our care must be exercised over the printing of books, precisely so that thorns do not grow up with the good seed or poisons become mixed with medicines.

The Congregation of the Index was attached to the Sacred Roman and Universal Inquisition; it had been started by Pius V in 1571, but was only formally established by his successor, Gregory XIII, on 13 September 1573. Its specific purpose was to examine suspect works, to correct or edit those books which, after the required review by censors, were allowed to continue to circulate, and to add periodically to the list of forbidden books (*Index librorum prohibitorum*).

“Within fifty years of its establishment the Holy Roman Office attained an absolutely privileged position in the process of a general reorganization of the central government of the Church and the Papal States brought about by Sixtus V with the Constitution *Immensa aeterni Dei* of 22 January 1588. In fact, at the head of the fifteen congregations established by Sixtus V (which included the five already existing congregations) was placed the *Congregatio sanctae Inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis*, which preserved its character as a tribunal.”²⁴¹

In 1562 the Council of Trent approved “Ten Rules concerning prohibited Books,” authorized by Pope Pius IV. Mind Control was extended from pre-print control to control of all books published. It was a system of thought- and mind-control matched only by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

²⁴¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *To Promote and Safeguard the Faith*. Published in 2015.

“Nowhere else in the world did an institution try to control the medium of modern times, the book, for over 400 years, said the 44-year-old Wolf, a diocesan priest and professor of history at Münster University in Germany. Rome monitored the book market and reviewed all important publications. The archives covering thousands of books offer a unique peek into centuries of Vatican thinking on theology, philosophy, history, politics, science and literature.”²⁴²

It was not until a year after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council that Pope Paul VI, in 1966, abolished the Index and replaced it with a milder approach. Those of us, like this author, who went to catholic school before the Second Vatican Council, still remember the limited choice of books we were allowed to read. Our healthy reaction at the time was to look at the List of Prohibited Books to find the truly interesting ones! And indeed, the list included the writing of the most creative philosophers, scientists and literary authors. What happened to Dante, Boccaccio, Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, Desiderius Erasmus, bibles translated in the vernacular, Spinoza, – just to mention a few well-known names – makes us understand why the political theology of the Roman Catholic Church provoked the Enlightenment and the Revolution thereafter.

Cuius Regio Eius Religio

The sixteenth century covers a period in which extraordinary changes affected the whole of Western Europe, writes Winston Churchill:²⁴³ “For two hundred years or more the Renaissance had been stirring the thoughts and spirit of Italy.” Literature, philosophy, and art flourished under the vivid revival of the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. Education was extended beyond the training of the clergy, and the minds of men to whom study was available were refreshed and enlarged. The invention of printing enabled knowledge and argument to be steadily spread and extended. In addition to splendid achieve-

²⁴² Secrets Behind Forbidden Books. Tom Heneghan in “America” For a full list of prohibited books, cf. *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1559 and 1948.

²⁴³ Winston Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Volume Two, *The New World*. Book Four, *Renaissance and Reformation*. New York 1959. Quotations and paraphrases from p. 3,4.

ments in architecture and art, the period also saw the beginnings of a revolution in science, rightly associated with the name of Copernicus, as well as the discovery of new continents. “The Popes had in the meanwhile become temporal rulers, with lusts and pomp of other potentates, yet they claimed to carry with them the spiritual power as well. The revenues of the Church were swelled by the sale of ‘indulgencies’ to remit Purgatory both for the living and the dead. The offices of bishops and cardinals were bought and sold, and the people taxed to the limit of their credulity. These and other abuses in the organisation of the Church were widely recognised and much resented, but as yet they went uncorrected.” The Renaissance thus gave birth to the Reformation.

As temporal rulers, the Renaissance Popes were deeply involved in European politics, conflicts, and wars. It should be kept in mind that Europe’s other potentates equally taxed their people and derived their powers from property, marriage and succession. What succession did to Europe’s royal houses, nepotism did to elected offices like those of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the Popes of Rome. Emperor Charles V bought himself into office. Thereafter, the Empire firmly became a Habsburg Empire. In Christian Europe, Reformation was bound to concern every emperor, king, bishop or prince and their peoples. Each of them reacted to it in their own way.

The story of Reformation in England

Reformation in England, involving all of Europe, was a slow process which played out in problems of marriage and succession. King Henry VIII, who ruled from 1509-1547, wanted a son to succeed him. His first spouse, Catharine of Aragon, only gave him a daughter, as did Anna Boleyn thereafter. His third spouse, Jane Seymour, gave birth to a weak son, who succeeded him, but only for a very short time (1547-1553). Henry’s first daughter succeeded Edward VI, as Mary I, only for six years, and she in turn was succeeded by Anna Boleyn’s daughter, Elisabeth, who reigned from 1558-1603. Before Henry VIII secretly married Anna Boleyn in January 1533, he was considered in Rome to be a “Defender of the [Catholic] Faith.” This marriage definitively impacted his reputation: The following month Henry himself wrote a letter describing his position as “King and Sovereign, recognising no superior in earth but only God, and not

subject to the laws of any earthly creature”. The break between England and Rome was complete. ” Where the Church of England stood doctrinally, only became clear during the long reign of Elisabeth, a forceful woman brought up a Protestant. She realised that unless the Government controlled the Church it would be too weak to survive the Counter-Reformation now gathering head in Catholic Europe.²⁴⁴

The case of England gives some insight into the political character of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Power at the time was based on property and profit. Royal marriage and succession were crucial assets. Europe’s royal families married among themselves; the choices of spouse were based on political considerations. King Henry VIII’s first wife, Catharina of Aragon, never accepted divorce, and their daughter Mary was married to Philip II of Spain – too short apparently to return England to the Catholic Church! After this, Elisabeth, however, had to cope with a hostile Spain, including the Armada that was sent to conquer England in 1588.

After her death in 1603, James VI of Scotland also became King James I of England. Under his reign, the authorised version of the Bible in English was published as the King James’ Bible, but religious conflict continued as the Pope forbade allegiance to the heretical king. His son, Charles I, who succeeded him in 1625, was married to (Catholic) Henrietta Maria of France. He was executed in 1649, primarily as the outcome of the conflict between him and the London Parliament, following his decision in 1629 to dissolve parliament and establish personal rule. His execution was due to the victory of the Puritans that brought Cromwell to power as the Great Protector to the English Republic, until the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. This era of the United Kingdom of England and Scotland is referred to as the era of the Civil War. Underlying the constitutional issue, “was a religious and class conflict. The Puritans were predominant in Parliament, High Churchmen at Court.”²⁴⁵ The restoration brought Charles II, eldest son of Charles I, back from exile; his rule was long (1660-1685) and lax. “He wanted to be king, as was his right, and have a pleasant life. He was cynical rather than cruel, and indifferent rather than intolerant.” With the reign

²⁴⁴ Churchill, *op.cit.* at p. 61, 106.. England at the time had some 3 million inhabitants and Scotland was ruled by James V and thereafter Mary Queen of Scots, both Catholic.

²⁴⁵ Churchill, *op.cit.* at p. 231.

of his younger brother James I (1685-88), the struggle between Parliament and Crown, between Catholics and Protestants, returned to its starting point, but within an entirely different European context. In 1648, the religious wars had come to an end. The Habsburg Empire was paralysed, Spanish power decayed, the Dutch Republic created, and the power of the Papacy reduced. France – under the very long reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) – had become Europe’s major, and aggressively expansive, power. The new Catholic King James was restored in the same year as Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and quelled the last resistance of the Huguenots. The English people were disturbed by James’ intention to employ similar methods to restore the Catholic religion in England and Scotland. Renewed civil war was imminent. James’ French plot, however, failed when parliament received the military and political support of his son in law, Dutch Prince William III, who landed a considerable force on the English south coast. The “Glorious Revolution” saved Parliamentary supremacy and the Protestant Faith for England. It gave the English Bill of Rights of 1689, declaring the rights and liberties of the subject and settling the succession of the crown. “Henceforward Britain was divided for practical purposes by Party and not by Creed, and henceforward Europe disputed questions of material power and national pre-eminence.”²⁴⁶

In France, Catholicism and Absolutism prevailed

National pre-eminence and personal glory were the driving forces of **Louis XIV, king of France** since 1643, and fully in charge after the death of Cardinal Jules Mazarin in 1661. “He was king – that is to say, an extraordinary being – an intermediary between men and God, and he was entrusted with divine authority. The Parliamentarians, the Protestants themselves (out of opposition to the pope) maintained that his authority derived directly from God and that no power could release his subjects from the allegiance they owed him.”²⁴⁷ Formed also by the famous treatise of Jean Bodin in his *Six Books of the Republic* (published in 1583), Louis XIV saw it his threefold mission: (1) to restore public order in France damaged by the religious wars; (2) to legitimate his emancipation from Pope and Emperor; and (3) to subject the warring feudal Lords and fami-

²⁴⁶ Churchill, op. cit. and preface to the third volume of his *History of the English Speaking Peoples*.

²⁴⁷ Louis Bertrand, ‘4. The King’s Secret’. In: Brison D. Gooch, *Interpreting European History*. Vol. 1. From the Renaissance to Napoleon. The Dorsey Press 1967 at p. 281.

lies to his absolute personal rule.²⁴⁸

The religious wars had been closely connected with the creeds of warring families and the political choices of brides for the kings of France (and the other European powers). The French kings, in addition, traced their origins all the way back to King Clovis I and Charlemagne. In their view, it gave them a special, independent status as the Church’s eldest daughter and as being outside the Holy Roman Empire. For Louis XIV, ruling over a united nation presupposed unity in creed – much like it did for Constantine the Great in the fourth century – and supreme sovereign power, as had also been claimed by Henry VIII of England.

With the Edict of Fontainebleau of 22 October 1685, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, which his grandfather Henry IV had issued on 13 April, 1598. Henri IV (later “the Great”), became King of Navarre in 1572 and King of France from 1589 until 1610, when he was assassinated.²⁴⁹ He was brought up a Huguenot (Calvinist Protestant) and his solemn wedding to Margaret de Valois set the stage two weeks later for the massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day, on 24 August 1572. “So it was determined to exterminate all the Protestants, and the plan was approved by the queen. They discussed for some time whether they should make an exception of the king of Navarre and the prince of Conde. All agreed that the king of Navarre should be spared by reason of the royal dignity and the new alliance. The duke of Guise, who was put in full command of the enterprise, summoned by night several captains of the Catholic Swiss mercenaries from the five little cantons, and some commanders of French companies, and told them that it was the will of the king that, according to God’s will, they should take vengeance on the band of rebels while they had the beasts in the toils. Victory was easy and the booty great and to be obtained without danger. The signal to commence the massacre should be given by the bell of the palace, and the marks by which they should recognize each other in the darkness were a bit of white linen tied around the left arm and a white cross on the hat.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Cf. my *European Unification into the Twenty First Century*. Vol. IV in *Footprints of the Twentieth Century*. Third Edition Part I, Chapter 4.

²⁴⁹ After many earlier and unsuccessful attempts.

²⁵⁰ In J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History*. Ginn 1906. Boston. Vol 2 p. 180. Translated from De Thou, *Histoire des choses arrives de son temps*. Paris 1659.

The massacres were not limited to Paris; they spread to cities and towns all over France. King Charles IX of France was succeeded by his younger brother, Henry III, in 1574. Henry IV, the first King in the Bourbon line, succeeded him in 1589. It was his principal purpose to end the religious wars waged since 1559. The Edict of Nantes (1598), imposed as an act of royal sovereignty, was to end the wars and allow for a mode of peaceful coexistence between Huguenots and Catholics. His “good peace” was meant to enable those of his subjects “*de la religion prétendue réformée*” to return to the true religion (“*la vraie religion catholique, apostolique et romaine*”), which obviously did not happen, and certainly not under Louis XIV, once he took all power into his own hands.

The Edict of Nantes first was applied in a restrictive manner. In 1680, persecution of the Huguenots was resumed, and in 1685 Louis XIV replaced the Edict with his Edict of Fontainebleau. Persecution was legalized, Huguenot Churches had to be destroyed, and their schools closed. Between 200.000 and 900.000 Huguenots left France.

“The French monarchy enjoyed a supremacy over the Church that was as real as that exercised by Henry VIII in England, but without the deeper social support that came with Protestant nationalist messianism.”²⁵¹ The last act in the religious wars in France preceded the last act in England, i.e. the Glorious Revolution in 1689. Where Parliamentarism and Protestantism had prevailed in England, in France Absolutism and Catholicism prevailed and survived (only) until the Revolution in 1789. Given the longevity of the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, there was no internally generated reform in the French Catholic Church.

The Revolution directed itself first against the Church. Alexis de Tocqueville devoted two full chapters to the irreligious passion of the French Revolution. In his book on *L'ancien regime et la Révolution* he writes: “One of the first measures of the French Revolution was an attack upon the Church. Of all the passions to which that Revolution gave birth, that of irreligion was the first kindled, as it was the last extinguished.” As he explains: “the philosophy of the eighteenth century was one of the chief causes of the Revolution; and it is not to be de-

²⁵¹ Michael Burleigh, *EARTHLY POWERS*. Harper Perennial 2006 at p. 28.

nied that that philosophy was deeply irreligious.” Their doctrines “are not only the causes of the French Revolution; they are, so to speak, its substance; they constitute the most fundamental, the most durable, the truest portion of its work.” The attacks upon the Church were widely different. “The leaders of the revolution attacked the Church with absolute fury.”²⁵²

The consequences were far reaching, as de Tocqueville wrote in the third book. “Ever since the great revolution of the sixteenth century, when the spirit of free inquiry was evoked to decide which of the various Christian traditions were true and which false, there had constantly appeared, from time to time, inquisitive or daring minds which disputed or denied them all. The train of thought which in the time of Luther had expelled from the Catholic fold several millions of Catholics drove a few Christians every year out of the pale of Christianity. Heresy had been followed by unbelief. It may be said generally that in the eighteenth century, Christianity had lost a large portion of its power all over Europe; but in most countries it had been reluctantly abandoned rather than violently rejected. Irreligion had spread among sovereigns and wits, but it had made no progress among the middle classes and the people; it was a fashionable caprice, not a popular opinion.” The scenes that took place in France “were without precedent.” Established religions had often been violently attacked, but the fury which assailed them was always inspired by zeal for some new religion. In France, the Christian faith was furiously assailed, but no attempt was made to raise up another religion on its ruins. Ardent efforts were made to eradicate from men’s souls the faith that was in them, and to leave them empty.”²⁵³

Reformation and war in the holy roman empire.

Marten Luther’s 95 theses were posted when Charles V, born in 1500 AD in Ghent, acceded as a young boy to a great number of thrones, merely as a consequence of the then prevailing royal succession and inheritance rules. In September 1506, he became Duke of Burgundy and Lord of the Netherlands – di-

²⁵² Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien regime et la Révolution* 1856. Quotation from the English translation. *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Translated by John Bonner. New York 1856 (digital copy scanned by Google)

²⁵³ *Op.cit.* From Book III, chapter 2. In the English translation Chapter XIV.

rectly involving him in the beginning revolt in the low countries and in wars with France (mostly fought in Italy). In 1516, he became King of Spain – including the territories conquered in Latin America. In 1519, he became Archduke of Austria, King of Germany and Italy, and Holy Roman Emperor – involving him in wars with France, against the Turks and the wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.²⁵⁴

From our (post-modern) vantage point, familiar with sovereignty as a concept in public law, applicable to states within clearly established linear borders, it is difficult to understand the surreal conditions of the Holy Roman Empire at the time of Charles V. Charles V inherited a patchwork of territories with their inhabitants as part of personal and dynastic possessions, spread all over Europe and Latin America. He had no capital city but travelled most of the time to give instructions through his viceroys, family members, nobles and bishops, the regional and local rulers, or to wage wars against the Turks and other European Kings (all related to him through marriage and succession). His possessions in the low countries, for instance, were a source of conflict with the French and the English kings. His possessions in Italy implied continuous warfare with the French, the Italian city states, or the Papal States, depending on the ever-shifting alliances.

After his death, the Holy Roman Empire turned into the Habsburg dynasty, with two successors – Philip II in Spain and Ferdinand I in Germany and Central Europe. Ferdinand and his successors were primarily concerned with their wars against superpower the Ottoman Empire. Philip II was primarily concerned with the revolt against his intolerant Catholic rule in the Low Countries. He would soon send the Duke of Alva with 10,000 troops to suppress the revolt and restore Catholic rule.

²⁵⁴ Charles's full titlature went as follows: Charles, by the grace of God, Holy Roman Emperor, forever August, King of Germany, King of Italy, King of all Spains, of Castile, Aragon, León, of Hungary, of Dalmatia, of Croatia, Navarra, Grenada, Toledo, Valencia, Galicia, Majorca, Sevilla, Cordova, Murcia, Jaén, Algarves, Algeciras, Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, King of Two Sicilies, of Sardinia, Corsica, King of Jerusalem, King of the Western and Eastern Indies, of the Islands and Mainland of the Ocean Sea, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Brabant, Lorraine, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Limburg, Luxembourg, Gelderland, Neopatria, Württemberg, Landgrave of Alsace, Prince of Swabia, Asturia and Catalonia, Count of Flanders, Habsburg, Tyrol, Gorizia, Barcelona, Artois, Burgundy Palatine, Hainaut, Holland, Seeland, Ferrette, Kyburg, Namur, Roussillon, Cerdagne, Drenthe, Zutphen, Margrave of the Holy Roman Empire, Burgau, Oristano and Gociano, Lord of Frisia, the Wendish March, Pordenone, Biscay, Molin, Salins, Tripoli and Mechelen.

Revolt in the Low Countries.

In the Netherlands, his viceroys were Margarethe of Austria, Mary of Hungary, and Margarethe of Parma, all of whom were his family-members. The efforts to centralise rule in the Netherlands (from Luxembourg to Groningen) were strongly resisted and led to open revolt under Philip II, who ruled from afar without moving away from his palace in Spain. Alva was set on war, until the armistice of 1609 and the peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Duke of Egmont was one of his first casualties to be publicly beheaded. Just before the execution, Egmont was interrogated by Alva. Goethe wrote a play about it with music by Beethoven:

Alva: “Be that as it may, I would rather not hear them from you. The king sent me here in the hope that I should obtain the support of the nobles. The king wills and will have his will obeyed.”

Egmont: Your words, alas, justify the fears of the people, the universal fear! The king has then resolved as no sovereign ought to resolve.”

Alva. “Such being your sentiments, it were a vain attempt for us to endeavour to agree. From the people I demand submission; --and from you, their leaders and princes, I demand counsel and support, as pledges of this unconditional duty.”

Egmont: “Demand our heads, and your object is attained; to a noble soul it must be indifferent whether he stoop his neck to such a yoke, or lay it upon the block. I have spoken much to little purpose. I have agitated the air, but accomplished nothing.”²⁵⁵

Egmont and Horne were executed in 1568. In 1581, seven provinces signed the Act of Abjuration, and Prince William was assassinated in 1584. After a series of inconclusive battles, an armistice was reached in 1609. Fighting resumed in 1621, and the peace of Münster was signed on 15 May 1648, within the frame-

²⁵⁵ Goethe, *Egmont*, Excerpts from End of the fourth act. *Egmont A Tragedy In Five Acts*. By Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe Translated by Anna Swanwick. Gutenberg project E-text.

work of the Peace Treaties of 1648, ending the Thirty Years war. The seven provinces of the Netherlands became a Republic with Northern Brabant and Limburg under “generality rule.” The Southern Netherlands (Belgium) remained under Habsburg rule until the French Revolution.

The Thirty Years War

To wage war, emperor and kings had to rely on mercenaries or soldiers of fortune, who were hired with money received from taxes levied from the populations living in their possessions; or, in the case of Spain, from the silver shipped and sold from the conquered colonies in South America. To the extent that these sources of income did not suffice, the mercenaries were allowed to loot villages and towns they marched through or conquered. Thus, country folks were victims in a double sense: first taxed, and later also killed, raped and looted after the fighting. In his book, *The Betrothed*, Manzoni describes the adventures of a betrothed couple in the duchy of Milan, Italy, at the time that German mercenaries marched through, during the Thirty Years War, to reconquer Mantua. With the help of the local priest, the Lord in the region tried to prevent their wedding, as he wanted to have the bride for his own pleasure. She was saved by a monk, but both had to flee from the German soldiers of the Empire, who looted their village on the way to conquest. In Milan, the soldiers left behind a plague-epidemic, from which the majority of the population perished. The two betrothed found each other again in the field hospital for the dying victims they took care of. They survived the plague and finally married.²⁵⁶ A beautiful story!

Reformation and Counterreformation meant cruel warfare and execution of heretics all over non-orthodox Europe. The new theses of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin (French citizen) spread like wildfire through the continent and were received with violent repression by the popes, bishops, kings and princes, to end in general warfare in the Thirty Years War from 1618-1648. We already referred to the peasants’ war in Germany, the civil war in England, the religious wars in France, and the war against Spain in the Netherlands, all interrelated in one way or another.

²⁵⁶ Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*. Paperback. Penguin classics. 1983. (translated from the Italian).

In the latter years of the feudal societies, the faith of the people was the business of the local lords, princes, bishops and kings. The well-known principle *cuius regio eius religio* applied on these levels of power. At the same time, kings, as we saw already, tried to centralize power over the local lords and to liberate themselves from Papal oversight. In the Holy Roman Empire, with its complex multilayer system of rule²⁵⁷ and its special relationship with the Catholic Church, religion was bound to become an explosive issue. As the Peace of Augsburg underlined, the faith of the people was the business of the prince and not of the people themselves. On all levels of feudal power, the principle meant that the prince determined the religion of the people, top down. Bottom-up change of religion had no place in the system.

The very fact that a simple Augustinian Monk publicly posted his 95 theses, and that his message spread all over Europe thanks to the newly invented printed book, challenged the power of all rulers, from the Pope and the Emperor all the way down to the local lord.

The Renaissance Popes had apparently learned how to deal with other potentates, but were unable to understand serious challenges “from below” like Martin Luther’s 95 theses. They lacked the necessary spiritual authority and insight to give a papal – that is, fatherly – merciful and spiritual response to the challenge of a young Augustinian Monk in the Empire.

The Papal response to Luther was immediate and political. In a dogmatic Bull of 9 November, 1518, Pope Leo X required all Christians to believe in the Pope’s power to grant indulgencies. In June 1520, Leo X issued the Bull *Exsurge Domine*, condemning Luther, who in turn publicly burned the Bull. Despite its pious references, the Bulls were a declaration of war rather than a fatherly exhortation to an Augustinian friar who may have erred but surely had a point against the widespread corruption within the Papacy, the Empire, and the institutional Church at large.

With Luther, “the Reformation broke out as an appeal from the authority of the

²⁵⁷ Cf. Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire. A Thousand Year of Europe’s History*. Allen Lane Penguin 2016.

institutional Church to the authority of the historical Jesus,”²⁵⁸ and definitely not as a call for schism or secession. Pope Leo X did not understand this. He was born as a member of the reigning Medici family of Florence, was given the cardinalate at the age of 13 and was elected Pope at the age of 38, even before having become a priest. He was a politician in the Machiavellian sense, more interested in warfare and wealth than in spiritual matters. In fact, he had received no formation whatsoever to qualify him for the papacy, an office he was unworthy to have been elected to. Leo X was no exception. The Popes at the time were deeply involved in the Italian Wars and showed no signs of spiritual leadership, with the exception of Pope Adrianus,²⁵⁹ who reigned too short a time to make the difference. In an era where personal power – as popes, emperors, kings and bishops – made all the difference, the Popes caused immeasurable harm to the Church, to the faith, to the lives of the people, and to “Christian” Europe at large. They were warmongers rather than peacemakers. The Roman Popes in the era of reformation and European war acted primarily as heads of the papal states. Contrary to the Peace of Augsburg, the Council of Trent emphasised the fight against protestant heresies rather than reconciliation with them. “The nineteenth ecumenical council opened at Trent on 13 December 1545, and closed there on 4 December, 1563. Its main object was the definitive formulation of the doctrines of the Church in answer to the heresies of the Protestants; a further object was the execution of a thorough reform of the inner life of the Church by removing the numerous abuses that had developed in it.”²⁶⁰ Europe descended into Reformation, Counterreformation and War – unnecessarily so – and would no longer be the same thereafter.

Feudalism and Catholicism turned out to be a highly inflammable mixture. Neither one nor the other was known for their tolerance and attention for the concerns of the people. Challenged together, they only knew to provide a political answer, namely repression, if necessary by violent means. The Counter-Reformation and its strongest ally in the House of Habsburg tried to recover lost territory for the Catholic faith by force of arms, with the Thirty Years War as a result. “Now for my Part, being fully assured, by the Reasons I have already given, that there is some Right common to all Nations, which takes Place both

²⁵⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries*. Yale University Press 1985 at p.157.

²⁵⁹ Born in Utrecht and Pope from August 1522 until September 1523.

²⁶⁰ From: New Advent, the Council of Trent.

in the Preparations and in the Course of War, I had many and weighty Reasons inducing me to write a Treatise upon it. I observed throughout the Christian World a Licentiousness in regard to War, which even barbarous Nations ought to be ashamed of: a Running to Arms upon very frivolous or rather no Occasions; which being once taken up, there remained no longer any Reverence for Right, either Divine or Human, just as if from that Time Men were authorized and firmly resolved to commit all manner of Crimes Without Restraint.”²⁶¹

The Thirty Years War was the last phase in the long period of Christian Europe’s war with itself, which first began in 1517. The Thirty Years War moved through three phases, escalating from a rebellion by Protestant Bohemians in Prague and their ruthless repression by Emperor Ferdinand II in 1618, through foreign intervention, to general European warfare.

The Peace of Augsburg had been achieved by Emperor Charles V and his successor Ferdinand I, then King of Austria, well before the completion of the Council of Trent in 1563. “The Diet of Augsburg (1555) is widely viewed as the turning point between the tumultuous age of the Protestant Reformation in the German lands and the subsequent era of confessional formation and negotiation. In the wake of two wars – the Schmalkaldic War of 1546-47 and the Princes’ War of 1552 – King Ferdinand and the leading princes decided to move toward a negotiated, provisional arrangement of the religious question. The Diet of Augsburg was important in many respects, but its central achievement was its provisions on religion, ‘the Religious Peace.’” Put briefly, the religious peace made political restoration possible by accepting what had previously been regarded as an impossibility – namely, religious diversity. But, in fact, it decreed the toleration only of those who accepted the Confession of Augsburg (1530), the definitive Lutheran doctrinal statement. Officially, the Empire remained a Catholic polity in communion with Rome. Among the many religious peace-agreements negotiated in the wake of the Reformation, the Imperial solution – which everyone agreed should only apply until a general restoration of Christian unity – was distinguished by its recognition of the Empire’s peculiar political character. ‘With certain exceptions, the right of reformation (*ius reformandi*) belonged solely to the princes and other members of the Imperial

²⁶¹ Hugo Grotius, *De Iure Belli ac Pacis*.

Diet, who enjoyed the right to require their subjects to accept their official religion or emigrate. Although the Peace was broken [by the Edict of Restoration], it was restored (and opened up to the Reformed or Calvinist confession) by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It remained the fundamental law of the Empire's regime of confessional coexistence until 1803"²⁶²

The Edict of Restitution ended the first phase of the Thirty Years War. It also underlined how much personal rule made the difference between war and peace at the time, but also how much the Counter-Reformation, as a political project, had made the difference: disciplinary reform and rigidity inside, and intolerance towards others outside the Roman Catholic Church.

"The Catholic victories, which seemed to presage a stronger Habsburg and Catholic monarchy, emboldened King Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) to land his Swedish army in Pomerania to the aid, he said, of the Protestant princes and peoples. His good fortune was dramatic but brief. In 1631, having beaten the Catholic armies at Breitenfeld in Saxony, the 'Lion of the North' invaded the south to graze his troops on episcopal lands and the duchy of Bavaria. After he died in battle in the following year, peace negotiations began between the Emperor and some Imperial estates, which led to a near-restoration of Imperial governance (Peace of Prague, 1635). This provoked a French invasion that shifted the centre of military operations westward toward the Rhine. One factor in the war of stalemate between 1635 and 1648 was the stiffening of confessional resentments. The most infamous event occurred in May 1631, in the highly strategic city of Magdeburg, where the Catholic armies broke in, plundered, and which they ultimately (intentionally or not) torched. The surviving burghers – Magdeburg had housed 30,000 souls – fled the city to find only ruin and death."

The story received a vivid description from the Swabian cobbler Hans Heberle and a compelling literary dramatization in *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* (1668), a novel by the Hessian writer H. C. J. Grimmelshausen (1621-79). One can debate the latter author's realism, but no one doubts that the war caused extreme destruction through plundering, famine, and disease. It would take

²⁶² GHDI, *Op.cit.* The Religious Peace of Augsburg. Full texts available on GHDI.

two generations to make up for the losses in population, livestock, and tools, not to mention the losses in production and commerce.

War and inquisition

"In 1600, Rome's Campo de' Fiori, now a nice plaza lined with cafés, was one of the city's execution grounds, and on Ash Wednesday of that year Giordano Bruno, a philosopher and former priest accused of heresy by the Inquisition, was taken there and burned. The event was carefully timed. Ash Wednesday is the primary day of Christian penance. As for the year, Pope Clement VIII chose it because 1600 was a jubilee for the Church—a festivity that would be enhanced by the execution of an important heretic. Bruno rode to the Campo on a mule, the traditional means of transport for people going to their death. It was also a practical means. After years in the Inquisition's prisons, many of the condemned could not walk anymore. Once he arrived and mounted the pyre, a crucifix was held up to his face. According to a witness, he turned away angrily. He could not speak; he had been gagged with a leather bridle. (Or, some say, an iron spike had been driven through his tongue.) He was tied to the stake, and the pyre was lit. When it had burned out, his remains were dumped into the Tiber."²⁶³

Today, Giordano Bruno is widely seen as a martyr to the cause of free speech. A large statue of Bruno glistens in Campo de' Fiori. Bronze letters on the granite pedestal proclaim: "To Bruno, from the generation he foresaw here, where the pyre burned."²⁶⁴

Bruno was a highly original philosopher and a non-conformist thinker. He read Erasmus' proscribed book on the New Testament and, three years into training as a Dominican, he was informed that he was under investigation by the Inquisition. For some fifteen years thereafter, he was on the run throughout

²⁶³ As Ingrid Rowland writes in "Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), the Church thereby made Bruno a martyr. In *The New Yorker*: Books. August 25, 2008 Issue. *The Forbidden World* Did a sixteenth-century heretic grasp the nature of the cosmos? Joan Acocella August 18, 2008. Also: Alberto A. Martinez, *Bred Alive*. *Giordano Bruno, Galileo and the Inquisition*. Chicago 2018.

²⁶⁴ From Douglas O. Linder, *Famous Trials*. *Op.cit.*

Europe, until he moved to Venice in 1592, where he finally was reported to the Inquisition.

“Innumerable suns exist; innumerable earths revolve around these suns in a manner similar to the way the seven planets revolve around our sun. Living beings inhabit these worlds. An academician belonging to no academy”, an unfrocked monk, an excommunicated Calvinist, an expelled Lutheran, an avant-garde and marginal philosopher, a forgotten genius of the Renaissance—Giordano Bruno was also an inspired magus,²⁶⁵ one can read on a website with information about him.

Among the heresies for which he was condemned were his extraordinarily brilliant ideas about the cosmos. As Lindner concluded his short biography: “Did it really have to end at a stake in Rome? After all, Bruno had killed no one, led no insurrections, stolen nothing. He even had complied with the terms of his excommunication. His crime, if it was one, was to write and argue. Bruno was killed because of his ideas – ideas that were original, thoughtful, and beautiful, but inconsistent with those of the Church. Bruno burned because Cardinal Bellarmine concluded there was no way of bringing this brilliant and stubborn man into line. And, in the year 1600, maintaining lines is what the Church did.”

The cruel European religious wars coincided with one of the most paradigmatic discovery in the sciences: the discovery that the earth moves around the sun, or even further according to Giordano Bruno.. The counterreformation Roman Catholic Church was in no mood to see their importance. The Papacy, fully involved in the war, saw these discoveries rather as another direct threat to its infallible doctrinal authority. The discovery was originally made by Nicolaus Copernicus from Torun. His hypothesis was published after his death and received public attention only when Johannes Keppler and Galileo Galilei could prove its validity through observation with the telescope. After the burning alive of Bruno, the Inquisition went after Galileo. The text of the sentence merits quoting in full, because of its character as the forerunner to later totalitarian “justice”, which we became familiar with anew since the twentieth century.

²⁶⁵ <http://www.bruno-giordano.net/>

Galileo Galilei was sentenced on 22 June 1633 by the Inquisition.

“Whereas you, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, Florentine, aged seventy years, were in the year 1615 denounced to this Holy Office for holding as true the false doctrine taught by some that the Sun is the center of the world and immovable and that the Earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; for having disciples to whom you taught the same doctrine; for holding correspondence with certain mathematicians of Germany concerning the same; for having printed certain letters, entitled “On the Sun-spots,” wherein you developed the same doctrine as true; and for replying to the objections from the Holy Scriptures, which from time to time were urged against it, by glossing the said Scriptures according to your own meaning; and whereas there was thereupon produced the copy of a document in the form of a letter, purporting to be written by you to one formerly your disciple, and in this divers propositions are set forth, following the position of Copernicus, which are contrary to the true sense and authority of Holy Scripture: This Holy Tribunal being therefore of intention to proceed against the disorder and mischief thence resulting, which went on increasing to the prejudice of the Holy Faith, by command of His Holiness and of the Most Eminent Lords Cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the Sun and the motion of the Earth were by the theological Qualifiers qualified as follows: The proposition that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture. The proposition that the Earth is not the center of the world and immovable but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is equally absurd and false philosophically and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith. But whereas it was desired at that time to deal leniently with you, it was decreed at the Holy Congregation held before His Holiness on the twenty-fifth of February, 1616, that his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine should order you to abandon altogether the said false doctrine and, in the event of your refusal, that an injunction should be imposed upon you by the Commissary of the Holy Office to give up the said doctrine and not to teach it to others, not to defend it, nor even to discuss it; and your failing your acquiescence in this injunc-

tion, that you should be imprisoned. In execution of this decree, on the following day at the palace of and in the presence of the Cardinal Bellarmine, after being gently admonished by the said Lord Cardinal, the command was enjoined upon you by the Father Commissary of the Holy Office of that time, before a notary and witnesses, that you were altogether to abandon the said false opinion and not in the future to hold or defend or teach it in any way whatsoever, neither verbally nor in writing; and upon your promising to obey, you were dismissed. And in order that a doctrine so pernicious might be wholly rooted out and not insinuate itself further to the grave prejudice of Catholic truth, a decree was issued by the Holy Congregation of the Index prohibiting the books which treat of this doctrine and declaring the doctrine itself to be false and wholly contrary to the sacred and divine Scripture. And whereas a book appeared here recently, printed last year at Florence, the title of which shows that you were the author, this title being: "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei on the Great World System:"; and whereas the Holy Congregation was afterward informed that through the publication of said book the false opinion of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun was daily gaining round, the said book was taken into careful consideration, and in it there was discovered a patent violation of the aforesaid injunction that had been imposed upon you, for in this book you have defended the said opinion previously condemned and to your face declared to be so, although in the said book you strive by various devices to produce the impression that you leave it undecided, and in express terms as probably: which, however, is a most grievous error, as an opinion can in no wise be probable which has been declared and defined to be contrary to divine Scripture. Therefore by our order you were cited before this Holy office, where, being examined upon our oath, you acknowledged the book to be written and published by you. You confessed that you began to write the said book about ten or twelve years ago, after the command had been imposed upon you as above; that you requested license or print it without, however, intimating to those who granted you this license that you had been commanded not to hold, defend, or teach the doctrine in question in any way whatever. You likewise confessed that the writing of the said book is in many places drawn up in such a form that the reader might fancy that the arguments brought forward on the false side are cal-

culated by their cogency to compel conviction rather than to be easy of refutation, excusing yourself for having fallen into an error, as you alleged, so foreign to your intention, by the fact that you had written in dialogue and by the natural complacency that every man feels in regard to his own subtleties and in showing himself more clever than the generality of men in devising, even on behalf of false propositions, ingenious and plausible arguments. And a suitable term having been assigned to you to prepare your defense, you produced a certificate in the handwriting of his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, procured by you, as you asserted, in order to defend yourself against the calumnies of your enemies, who charged that you had abjured and had been punished by the Holy Office, in which certificate it is declared that you had not abjured and had not been punished but only that the declaration made by His Holiness and published by the Holy Congregation of the Index has been announced to you, wherein it is declared that the doctrine of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and therefore cannot be defended or held. And, as in this certificate there is no mention of the two articles of the injunction, namely, the order not "to teach" and "in any way," you represented that we ought to believe that in the course of fourteen or sixteen years you had lost all memory of them and that this was why you said nothing of the injunction when you requested permission to print your book. And all this you urged not by way of excuse for your error but that it might be set down to a vainglorious ambitions rather than to malice. But his certificate produced by you in your defense has only aggravated your delinquency, since, although it is there stated that said opinion is contrary to Holy Scripture, you have nevertheless dared to discuss and defend it and to argue its probability; nor does the license artfully and cunningly extorted by you avail you anything, since you did not notify the command imposed upon you. And whereas it appeared to us that you had not stated the full truth with regard to your intention, we thought it necessary to subject you to a rigorous examination at which (without prejudice, however, to the matters confessed by you and set forth as above with regard to your said intention) you answered like a good Catholic. Therefore, having seen and maturely considered the merits of this your cause, together with your confessions and excuses above-mentioned, and all that ought justly to be seen and con-

sidered, we have arrived at the underwritten final sentence against you: Invoking, therefore, the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most glorious Mother, ever Virgin Mary, but this our final sentence, which sitting in judgment, with the counsel and advice of the Reverend Masters of sacred theology and Doctors of both Laws, our assessors, we deliver in these writings, in the cause and causes at present before us between the Magnificent Carlo Sinceri, Doctor of both Laws, Proctor Fiscal of this Holy Office, of the one part, and your Galileo Galilei, the defendant, here present, examined, tried, and confessed as shown above, of the other part. We say, pronounce, sentence, and declare that you, the said Galileo, by reason of the matters adduced in trial, and by you confessed as above, have rendered yourself in the judgment of this Holy Office vehemently suspected of heresy, namely, of having believed and held the doctrine—which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures—that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from east to west and that the Earth moves and is not the center of the world; and that an opinion may be held and defended as probably after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to the Holy Scripture; and that consequently you have incurred all the censures and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. From which we are content that you be absolved, provided that, first, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, you abjure, curse, and detest before use the aforesaid errors and heresies and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church in the form to be prescribed by us for you. And in order that this your grave and pernicious error and transgression may not remain altogether unpunished and that you may be more cautious in the future and an example to others that they may abstain from similar delinquencies, we ordain that the book of the “Dialogues of Galileo Galilei” be prohibited by public edict. We condemn you to the formal prison of this Holy Office during our pleasure, and by way of salutary penance we enjoin that for three years to come you repeat once a week at the seven penitential Psalms. Reserving to ourselves liberty to moderate, commute or take off, in whole or in part, the aforesaid penalties and penance.”

Deliberately humiliated and dressed in the white shirt of penitence, Galileo knelt and recited his abjuration, which was necessary to avoid being burned at the stake. He died in 1642.

I purposely gave the English translation of the full text of the sentence. The sentence arguably signified a turn for the worse as far as the relations between the Catholic Church and modern science were concerned. Imagine: the principal proponents of heliocentrism – Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo – professed the Catholic faith. The Pope and the Cardinal Judges gave a sentence based on political theology, without proper argumentation or examination.

First of all, Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo taught no false doctrine, but reported a discovery.

Second, the idea that the earth is unmovable and the center of the world was launched by Ptolemaic and Aristotelian philosophy rather than in Holy Scripture. The statement that the discovery of the scientists was contrary to Holy Scripture, was in itself absurd. Contrary to what a judge is obliged to do, the sentence offers no proper arguments for the statement that the so-called “proposition that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically” and also “formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture.”

The sentence reflected the intolerance and narrowmindedness of an institution in the business of proclaiming their top-down “truth” as final and irrevocable without any room for decent dialogue. Apart from the personal tragedy of Galileo and his daughter, the Church lost the confidence and the respect of the scientists; the recognition of error came too late – only in 1993 – to make a difference.

Above all, the sentence foreshadowed later totalitarian “justice;” first, because it claims doctrine-like ideology to be all encompassing and inclusive; every scientific endeavor is subject to political theology.

Second, it does not bother to prove why and in what sense the sun being at the

center of the world and thus being responsible for the moving of the earth, is contrary to Holy Scripture. As such, political theology of the Roman Catholic Church violated the wisdom gradually learned in science, namely that every scientific discovery is true until a better one is discovered. Copernicus and Galileo discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe. Today we live with the discovery that the Sun is not either. “Our sun belongs to a galaxy of two hundred billion stars called the Milky Way Galaxy.”²⁶⁶

The peace of westphalia

The peace settlement – the end of hostilities – comprised two treaties, signed on the same day, between the emperor and his allies and the queen of Sweden and her allies at Osnabrück, and between the emperor and his allies and the king of France and his allies at Münster. The most important articles for the German participants were those that restored the imperial constitution and the religious peace. The Holy Roman Empire would be split in two related monarchies: the Habsburg Dynasty in Austria and the Kingdom of Spain. The Peace confirmed confessional parity between Spain and Austria; the Reformed confession was recognized in Austria’s imperial collegial institutions; the imperial estates lost the right to force their subjects to choose between religious conformity and exile. Two dreams were buried in Westphalia, for the Empire became neither an absolutist Catholic monarchy nor a national Protestant one.”²⁶⁷ The historic tragedy of further Christian division might have been avoided if the Papacy had not fallen to the third temptation in the Gospel.²⁶⁸

The Treaties of Westphalia did not make lasting peace, nor did they mark acceptance of religious diversity. As Pelikan wrote: “In the process of defining Catholic particularity, doctrinal emphasises that had previously been able to coexist as parts of comprehensive (or undifferentiated) Catholic tradition now became the themes of opposing and mutually exclusive systems, only one of which took the name “Catholic” of its own. That paradox of “a Catholic particularity” found its identification in the use of the name “Roman Catholic,” prob-

²⁶⁶ Robert Jastrow, *Until the Sun Dies*. Toronto 1977.

²⁶⁷ Thomas A. Brady Jr. and Ellen Yutzy Glebe, *The Thirty Years War*. In *GHDI*, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁸ Cf. also: Peter H. Wilson, *Europe’s Tragedy A New History of the Thirty Years War*. Penguin 2009

lematic though the name remained.” The name conjoins the universality of the Church over the entire world with the specificity of only one single see.²⁶⁹ What happened to all confessional churches was “that the universal tradition of orthodoxy was increasingly being filtered through, and identified with, the particular traditions represented by the doctrinal formularies that had come out of the Reformation controversies.”²⁷⁰

After the East-West Schism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation would henceforward determine the place and role of Christendom in the history of Europe, including their adversity to modern science and philosophy.

As I wrote elsewhere, the treaties of Westphalia replaced the hierarchical (feudal) structure of international society with the juxtaposition of sovereign states recognizing no authority over them.²⁷¹ The condemnation of the Treaties by Pope Innocent X received not even a footnote in the peace settlement. Whereas Christianity had proven to be no force for peace, sovereign states recognized the balance of power among them as the sole guiding principle in their mutual relations. “It may be said generally that in the eighteenth-century Christianity had lost a large portion of its power all over Europe; but in most countries it had been reluctantly abandoned rather than violently rejected. Irreligion had spread among sovereigns and wits, but it had made no progress among the middle classes and the people; it was a fashionable caprice, not a popular opinion.”²⁷²

Since the latter part of the thirteenth century, wrote Arnold Toynbee, the next four centuries were a particularly bellicose era in the history of the Christian Church of the West. The actions of the Church were a source of disunity and hatred instead of a source of charity and unity. Papal victories over the Holy Roman Empire were followed by submission to the power of France. The shameful religious wars resulted in growing resistance against papal power, the Roman Catholic Church and finally against Christendom itself. Some of

²⁶⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*. Vol. 4. Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700). University of Chicago Press 1985 paperback at p.245-246.

²⁷⁰ *op.cit.* p. 332,334.

²⁷¹ Cf. my: *Neither Justice nor Order*.” Volume V in :Footprints of the 20th. Century. Wolf Legal Publishing2017. Third Edition, p. 66.

²⁷² According to Alexis de Tocqueville, as quoted above

the displaced persons from the religious war became founders of the American states of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The renaissance of Hellenism, according to Toynbee, in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century, included the reception of the Greek attitude of idolatry of one's own fatherland in the emerging Western sovereign monarchies.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the leading Western minds deliberately moved their attention and focus away from religious quarrels to the promotion of the sciences and their technical applications. The mathematics of Nicolaus Copernicus and the telescopes of Galileo Galilei provided access to new sources of knowledge about nature, evolution and the universe. Our globe no longer is the firmly fixed centre of God's creation, but just one celestial body in an expanding universe. The trend of secularization became widespread in the Western world, without however fulfilling the hopeful expectation of the century.²⁷³

²⁷³ Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity among the religions of the world*. Oxford University Press 1958, Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 7

FROM POLITICAL THEOLOGY TO TOTALITARIAN IDEOLOGIES.

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.¹ I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah. From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Math. 16, 15-23)

This passage of St. Matthew's Gospel has been the source of conflict between the Christian Churches, with respect to the authority given to Peter and his successors: the Popes (bishops of Rome). Is the "rock" **Jesus** Himself, the **faith** of Peter, or the **person** of Peter and his successors? The latter official Roman Catholic interpretation, adopted in the eleventh century, is not based on interpretations given by the church fathers. St. Augustine clearly concluded that Christ is the Rock (*Petra*). Peter and the other apostle must, through their faith, together build the Church upon it.²⁷⁴

The gospel does tell us that Peter's faith failed him from time to time, thinking as human beings do, as it would fail his successors. With Jesus, the apostles accepted Peter's leadership. The primacy of his successors was not the problem. The real problem, it seems to me, is the tendency to define the spiritual authority received from Christ in terms of absolute monarchic political power over others.

Unlike the Apostles, the church fathers were no Jews. They were educated in the Greek philosophical traditions and were not familiar with Judaism. They read the so called "Old Testament" through Greek eyes. In the Judaic tradition, Genesis (e.g.) is read as a book of edifying stories, and not as a book of real history or philosophical doctrine.

"The story of the Garden of Eden is not just a historical event, it is a *paradigmatic* event, typically repeated in every life-time; the normal change of awareness of our personal and social reality as we progress through life. The story of an expulsion from a paradisaic 'Garden' is thus a kind of metaphor, a parable of human maturation."²⁷⁵

This different reading has consequences. In Jewish traditions, understanding and living the faith is the outcome of a perennial dialogue between different interpretations of the stories which make up the Old Testament. There are, in fact, two stories of the creation of man, to begin with. In the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church, the truths of the Bible are proclaimed top-down, once

²⁷⁴ Cf. The Church Fathers' Interpretation of the Rock of Matthew 16:18 by William Webster

²⁷⁵ Barry W. Holtz (ed), *BACK TO THE SOURCES. Reading Classic Jewish Texts*. New York 1984 at p. 57

and valid forever. As we saw in Chapter 3, the Cain-Doctrine against the Jews took the place of an ongoing dialogue between Jews and Christians on interpretation of Holy Scripture. For a long time, the Catholic faithful were not supposed even to read the "Old Testament" themselves.

When the Roman Empire – with Constantine and Theodosius – became a Christian Empire, political theology was born together with the formulation of doctrine in the Ecumenical Councils of the Church, among them being the condemnation of Nestorius. The Declaration, by which an anathema of Nestorius was pronounced together with its resulting persecutions, was withdrawn only fifteen centuries later, in 1994. This gives us an absolutely shocking example of the fallibility in formulating doctrines. Doctrine, apparently, must be subject to continuous dialogue and evolution.

The East-West Schism was followed in the Latin Church by a long, drawn-out conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, in which the successive Popes of the Middle Ages claimed superior spiritual power over the temporal power of Emperor and Kings. Such a claim was considered indisputable. The political theology of the Roman Catholic Church provoked the irreligious Enlightenment in philosophy and Revolution thereafter.

Part 1: The French Revolution

"By seeming to tend rather to the regeneration of the human race than to the reform of France alone, it [the French Revolution] roused passions such as the most violent political revolutions had been incapable of awakening. It inspired proselytism, and gave birth to propagandism; and hence assumed that quasi-religious character which so terrified those who saw it, or, rather, became a sort of new religion, imperfect, it is true, without God, worship, or future life, but still able, like Islamism, to cover the earth with its soldiers, its apostles, and its martyrs."²⁷⁶ In France, the religious wars had been extremely violent: the Bartholomew massacres and, more recently, Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes, with the expulsion and forced fleeing of almost a million Hu-

²⁷⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, Book I, Chapter III..

guenots as a result. Citizenship thereafter was restricted to Catholics.

France thus reaffirmed ²⁷⁷ itself as being a Roman Catholic country, characterized by the mixture of rigid counter-reformation Catholicism, repressive fiefdom, and royal absolutism. Catholicism was in fact the state-religion, in which the Clergy guaranteed and sacralized “for eternity” the social, political and intellectual order. As the first estate (or order), the Clergy assured a variety of public services such as charity, education, and civil status. Its education, however, “was an exceptional privilege which was confined to the ruling elements of society, especially the priesthood.”²⁷⁸

The Clergy was even more privileged than the nobility. Catholic France was divided into three estates or orders under the King. The first one was the entire clergy (higher and lower). The second estate was the nobility (nobility of the sword and nobility of the robe). The third one were all the other citizens, which was 98% of the French population in 1789. Bishops would be recruited from the nobility. “Throne and altar were inseparable, with senior clerics omnipresent at solemn public occasions well into the French Revolution. [...] Louis XVI was crowned (June 1774) as the ‘*rex christianissimus*’ the most Christian King, of the Church’s ‘eldest daughter’ *la France*.”²⁷⁹

The French social order was based on land. Arable land was not only subjected to the hazards of the climate, but also to domination by the fiefdom. The preponderance of clergy and nobility marked the souls of the people. This social order of inequality was not just a political fact; it was considered to be of divine law. The social order was not based on consent between men, but recognized as a God-made hierarchy. Impiety was synonymous to anarchy.²⁸⁰

The third estate had no rights they could invoke against the first and the second orders, (neither did slaves, acquired in war or bought in from Asia or Africa). They could be tortured and executed for heresy, profanation, apostasy, idolatry or witchcraft on the basis of anonymous accusations.

²⁷⁷ France officially has been Catholic country since the Concordat of 1516 with Pope Leo X.

²⁷⁸ Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*. Franciscan University Press, 1989.

²⁷⁹ Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*. Harper Perennial 2006 at p. 23-24.

²⁸⁰ François Furet and Denis Richet, *La Révolution Française*. Fayard 1973. P. 16/17

The invention of the printing press would change all of this. As Cesare di Beccaria wrote: “The art of printing has diffused the knowledge of those philosophical truths, by which the relations between sovereigns and their subjects, and between nations, are discovered. By this knowledge commerce is animated, and there has sprung up a spirit of emulation and industry worthy of rational beings. These are the produce of this enlightened age; but the cruelty of punishments, and the irregularity of proceeding in criminal cases, so principal a part of the legislation, and so much neglected throughout Europe, has hardly ever been called in question. Errors, accumulated through many centuries, have never been exposed by ascending to general principles; nor has the force of acknowledged truths been ever opposed to the unbounded licentiousness of ill-directed power, which has continually produced so many authorized examples of the most unfeeling barbarity. Surely, the groans of the weak, sacrificed to the cruel ignorance and indolence of the powerful; the barbarous torments lavished and multiplied with useless severity, for crimes either not proved, or in their nature impossible; the filth and horrors of a prison, increased by the most cruel tormentor of the miserable, uncertainty, ought to have roused the attention of those, whose business is to direct the opinions of mankind.”²⁸¹

Sexual violence by clergy or nobility was common practice. The farmers constituted some 75% of the population. They lived in isolation, most of them were analphabetic, and they had to pay heavy taxes, some twenty percent of the harvest to the Church, rights to their Lords and taxes to the King.

It was this monarchic-seigneurial-catholic French social order which the early revolutionaries wanted to change radically, violently and immediately. Their first target was the Church.

Why 1789?

Furet and Richet cite a variety of reasons for the breakdown of the social order. Among them are the fact that France had become a richer country, that its population had grown substantially, and that no war had touched the king-

²⁸¹ Cesare Besana di Beccaria, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* [1764]. Placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1766!. English translation in Library of Liberty. Including comment by Voltaire.

dom for some time. Agricultural production and prices had increased without bringing any change for the better to the farmers and their families. At the same time, the cities grew richer and became more independent. The suffering farmers found an unexpected ally in the commoners of urban wealth. Miserable farmers and frustrated commoners found each other in their resistance against the social order, in which the nobility no longer faced reform by the monarchy, as they did under Louis XIV. The unjust system of taxes, exempting nobility and clergy, caused a financial crisis, which the king failed to address by refusing to sacrifice his own nobility.

Finally, in 1789, revolution was in the air. Since 1776, the Americans had won their independence from England, and the Belgians (in 1789) had revolted against Austrian rule.

Against the alliance of farmers and urban citizens within the third estate, church, king and nobility could no longer prevail. In reality, the year 1789 saw three revolutions; the revolution of the advocates (that is the States-General), the revolution of the Parisians, and the revolution of the farmers.²⁸²

Revolutionary Changes

We must try to understand the French social order as the deeper source for the radicalism, irreligion and violence of the French Revolution. Where divine law was proclaimed as the source of an unjust order, in which human dignity was denied to 98% of the population, revolution was bound to attack church, nobility and king. The extent to which the church had been part and parcel of the social order was made clear, for instance, by her reaction to the essay of Beccaria, which was immediately placed on the index of forbidden books.

It was this France that had to be transformed into a democracy with equal rights for all. The measures against the Catholic Church started right away. In August of 1789, the privileges of the First Estate (Clergy) and the Second Estate (Nobility) were abolished, and the tithes gathered by the Clergy in particular. In October of 1789, the National Constituent Assembly seized the properties

²⁸² Furet and Richet, *Op.cit.* premiere partie, chapters 1-3.

and lands held by the Catholic Church. In July of 1790, the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy” subordinated the Catholic Church in France to the French government as employees of the state. After Papal disapproval, over fifty percent of the clergy nevertheless swore the oath of fidelity to the new order (jurors or constitutional clergy). The others (non-jurors or refractory clergy) faced dismissal, deportation, or decapitation.

Many clergymen emigrated, a substantial number to nearby England. After the fall of the monarchy in 1792, the measures against the Church included the random destruction of works of art, crosses, and bells, and the institution of so called civic cults like the Cult of Reason and the Cult of the Supreme Being. On 10 November 1792, the Festival of Reason was held in the Temple of the *Notre Dame* of Paris.

When in April 2019, the Cathedral of Notre Dame of Paris had to be closed following a destructive fire, French president Macron reminded the Parisians that it was only the second closure of the Church since its construction in the Middle Ages. The Cathedral, of course, has been state property since the Revolution, and directed by President Macron, the Cathedral was restored beautifully in 2024.

A shocking example of the anti-religious fury was the civil war of the Republic against the Vendée. In the year of terror (1793), catholic farmers and nobles rebelled against the Republic. After several months of heavy fighting, the rebels were finally defeated in the decisive battle of Savenay, in December 1793. Thereafter, General Westermann reported to his political masters at the Convention that “the Vendée is no more ... According to your orders, I have trampled their children beneath our horses’ feet; I have massacred their women, so they will no longer give birth to brigands. I do not have a single prisoner to reproach me. I have exterminated them all.”

These massacres were not the end of it. In the first months of 1794, the *colonnes infernales* of General Louis-Marie Turreau massacred tens of thousands more, women and children in particular. The war in the Vendée continued at least until 1799.²⁸³

²⁸³ The quote is from: Mark Levene, *The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide. Volume II Genocide in the Age*

Napoleon

Napoleon came to power in 1799, ready to accommodate the continued presence of religious belief and practice in French society, not in the least in order to dampen counter-revolutionary opposition. Writings from his youth show “that Napoleon had little time for religion but, much like the *philosophes*, he saw its uses for society. He also appreciated its cost saving benefits, demonstrated by the state-sponsored re-establishment of religious congregations to run hospitals and schools. Above all, Napoleon recognized that if relations were mended with the Church, it could be used to promote and consolidate his rule throughout France. Ignoring objections from revolutionary opponents of the Church, Napoleon set about formalizing its place in France in a way designed to ensure that loyal membership of the Church and the state were no longer mutually exclusive.” On 16 July 1801 France signed a Concordat with the Holy See, which was “the product of eight months of grueling negotiations. Catholicism was henceforth to be recognized only as ‘the religion of the vast majority of French citizens’. The description denied the Church any privileged place within the state, and the Church was to give up all claims to property lost during the Revolution. The Concordat’s most dramatic step, however, was to bring the Church under the authority of the state. In measures that recalled the Civil Constitution of 1790, all clergy were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the government, their salaries were to be paid by the state, and dioceses were again redrawn and aligned with administrative divisions. In addition, all bishops were to be appointed by Napoleon, further minimizing Rome’s authority. This trend was confirmed in 1802 with the addition to the Concordat of the 27 ‘Organic Articles’, developed and announced without consultation with Rome. Article One required that all instructions from Rome must be approved by the government. “Napoleon’s Church, like the Gallican Church of the *ancien régime*, had its own national identity.”²⁸⁴

The Concordat did not end the disgraceful maltreatment of Pope Pius VII by Napoleon. His predecessor, Pope Pius VI, had died in French custody in the

of the Nation State. 2005. It was only since the 1980’s that the question was raised whether the massacres were to be seen as genocide. “Convention”: the name of the new republican government.

284 From: The French Revolution and the Catholic Church by Gemma Betros | Published in History Review Issue 68 December 2010. Cf. also Frank J. Coppa, Editor, *Controversial Concordats*. Washington DC 1999.

citadel of Valence on 29 August, 1799. Pius VII was also arrested and brought to France in 1808. It was only after Napoleon’s defeat in the Russian campaign, that Pius VII managed to return to Rome alive in 1812.

Spreading Revolutionary Change

At the same time, the call for change from the old regime to an egalitarian lay democracy was not to be limited to France alone; the human race as a whole had to be revolutionized. “The revolutionaries had inherited the Enlightenment’s belief in the universal abstraction of man. They felt that they were acting on behalf of all people everywhere, pitting themselves against universal tyranny. Their most noble monument was not some parochial pronouncement on the rights of the French but a ringing declaration on the Rights of Man.”²⁸⁵ Understandably, there was widespread unease and desire for change. The storming of the Bastille in Paris came only weeks after the invasion of Brussels by the Austrian army to suppress the rebellion in the Belgian Estates.

France, moreover, had participated in the American Revolution against English colonial rule, and on 29 April 1789, George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States of America. The American Declaration Independence of 4 July 1776 was followed by the adoption of the (first ever democratic) Constitution of the U.S.A. on 17 September 1787. The first ten amendments, called **the Bill of Rights**, were adopted on 4 March 1789 and made part of the U.S. Constitution on 15 December 1791. These American developments were a major source of inspiration for the French revolutionaries and for the drafting of the French Declaration, further discussed later in this chapter.

In turn, the French Revolution affected and disturbed the whole of Europe, especially when Napoleon set out to foment rebellion and spread that new identity, by force of arms, to Spain, Egypt, the Empire, Italy, the Netherlands, and Russia. “Violence is the one feature of the Revolution which its critics have always found most repulsive.” This took many forms: mob rule and lynching, wanton attacks against priests and nobles, random massacres, assassinations, and revenge killings. “But two aspects of revolutionary violence had no prec-

285 Norman Davies, *Europe A History*. PIMLICO 1997 at p. 675.

edent: one was the sheer scale of military casualties that arose from the use of mass conscript armies; the other was the cold-blooded reign of political terror unleashed by the Jacobins.”²⁸⁶

The footprints of the revolutionary wars can be seen or read about in Francisco Goya’s “The Disasters of War” (in Spain), Tolstoy’s Masterwork *War and Peace* (Napoleon’s invasion in Russia), Stendhal’s *La Chartreuse de Parme*, or Charles Dickens *Tale of Two Cities*, Victor Hugo’s *Quatrevingt-treize* (his last novel) and Gertrud von Le Fort’s *Die Letzte am Schaffot*.

A Revolutionary Document

At this juncture, it is important to underline the unprecedented revolutionary nature of the *Déclaration universelle des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, of 26 August 1789. This document, composed and adopted before the revolution descended into war and terror, summarized the reasons for revolution and formulated the principles for the future. It would have a lasting and world-wide impact on the promotion of democracy and human rights. It is a short and forceful document, quoted in full below.

At the time, France was still a catholic monarchy. Its laws were based on church law, custom, and the sovereignty of the king. The privileges and property rights referred to above were enshrined in Customary and Canon Law, contracts, and treaties. Relationships were founded on the large landownership of the Church, the monarchy and the nobility, and the intimate connection between Church, nobility and Monarchy. As the Declaration made clear, such relationships had to be replaced by entirely new ones based on the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

The first two articles formed the basis of France’s new identity as an egalitarian democracy in which the distinction between estates no longer had a place. In article 3, the Declaration made quite clear that henceforward such laws had to be abolished if contrary to the principles enunciated. The authority of the nation, as expressed by the National Constitutional Assembly, must prevail

²⁸⁶ Op. Cit. At p. 709

over laws then in existence, based as it is on the “general will” of the people, according to article 6.

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man reads in English translation:

“The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits

except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.

5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be entrusted.
13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.
14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.
15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.
16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.
17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.”²⁸⁷.

²⁸⁷ *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*—1789. Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789

The Declaration was to have far-reaching consequences. As Elie Kedourie wrote: “what would have been confiscation before 1789 was, afterwards, a mere entering into lawful possession.” As he explained, the French Revolution was not merely a civil disturbance, a *coup d’état*, which replaced one set of rulers by another [...] As became increasingly apparent the French Revolution introduced new possibilities in the use of political power, and transformed the ends for which rulers might legitimately work. The Revolution meant that if the citizens of a state no longer approved of the political arrangements of their society, they had the right and the power to replace them by others more satisfactory.²⁸⁸

The resulting, new distinction between public and private law opened the road for constitutional government and democratic rule, to be based on the natural and imprescriptible, basic human rights. As the reign of terror made clear, the new principles could also be abused for totalitarian purposes by the political religions that would emerge thereafter. This is particularly the case with the principle of the general will in article 6, clearly based on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (1762).

Still, the Declaration must be studied and understood on its own terms and in relation to its lasting importance for the development of human rights and democracy thereafter. The Christian Churches failed to see its importance, at least until after the Second World War, because of its allegedly false rationalist perspective and the anti-religious, violent fury against the Church and the clergy. It had not been understood why the Declaration looked revolutionary, that is because of the corruption of Christian principles in the social order of the Old Regime. In the feudal systems, in monarchies and in the Churches themselves, the fundamental dignity of every human person had never been truly respected. Fundamental human rights for everyone had never been recognized.

As we can read, the principles of the Declaration were in themselves Christian principles.²⁸⁹ In its drafting, representatives of all three French estates par-

²⁸⁸ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*. Fourth Expanded Edition. Blackwell 1993 at p.9 and 4.

²⁸⁹ See: Jacques Maritain, *Les Droits de l’homme et la Loi Naturelle*..1943/1945. Written from exile to support the French under occupation.

ticipated. The Declaration would become the foundation for an entirely new branch of public law. Every French Constitution thereafter would include the text of the Declaration as its legal source. Napoleon consolidated the rights so proclaimed in six new codes of law: the Civil Code and the Code of Civil Procedure in 1804; the Commercial Code in 1807; the Criminal Instruction Code in 1808; and the Penal Code in 1810.²⁹⁰ The Declaration, the Constitutions,²⁹¹ and the Codes took the place of divine law and custom in the *Ancien Régime*. Sooner or later most European states followed the French example.

The Napoleon Codes were an effort to find a synthesis between principles of the old law and those of the Revolution. The lasting importance of Napoleon’s codifications can be compared to the codification of Roman law by Emperor Justinian’s *Corpus Iuris Civilis* in the sixth century. Napoleon himself considered the Civil Code as his major achievement. Through its article 7, the Civil Code consolidated the three revolutionary principles of equality before the law, freedom of religion, and the abolition of feudalism. In family law, the Civil Code maintained the ancient tradition of the husband as the one who rules the household. The Penal Code and the Criminal Instruction Code reflected the thoughts of the essays of di Beccaria and Voltaire. The Penal Code clearly defined the basic rule: *Nulle contravention, nul délit, nul crime, ne peuvent être punis de peines qui n’étaient pas prononcées par la loi avant qu’ils fussent commis*. (No minor offence, no delict, no crime can be sentenced, unless so pronounced by law prior to them being committed). This basic rule has been adopted ever since in European Criminal Law.

The Criminal Instruction Code abolished many cruel procedural practices in customary law, including torture during interrogation and various extremely cruel punishments, although still preserving capital punishment as such. Compared to the many excessively cruel capital punishments existing under the Old Regime and the laws of the Church, the *guillotine* almost looked like a more humane variant!

²⁹⁰ The Rural Code of 1814 was never promulgated

²⁹¹ Including the Constitution of the Fifth French Constitution of 1958. There were more than twenty French Constitutions in between.

The Papacy

Unfortunately, the Catholic Church was an integral part of the monarchic-catholic-feudal structure of France. The Church was also part of Europe's old regime, through Papal autocratic rule over the Ecclesiastical States and her alliance with the Habsburg Empire. As such, the Church failed to see the value and importance of the Declaration and of the subsequent Codes of Law, stuck as she was in the old-regime's hierarchical, political and legal structures, wrongly considered as emanations of divine law. The Church was also blinded by her efforts to safeguard Papal civil rule, under threat ever since Napoleon's Italian campaign in 1798.

"The papacy may have been pragmatic in its dealings with independent republics in Latin America, but in Europe it was a bastion of monarchical legitimacy."²⁹² Much of the attention of the papacy went to the "war" against the Papal or Ecclesiastical States – from Napoleons' Italian campaign, to the Italian unification wars and the conquest of Rome in 1870. Thereafter, the Papacy rejected the guarantees offered by the Italian State. Pope Pius IX and his successors locked themselves up inside the Vatican, until Pope John XXIII, who simply walked out of Vatican territory to visit the sick of Rome in 1959. The "travelling Pope" we are familiar with today, is a new phenomenon introduced by Pope Paul VI in the 1960's and practiced globally by Pope John-Paul II.

Those of us who were born before the Second World War experienced the Second Vatican Council (1963-65) as a promising *aggiornamento* and a sign of liberation. For us, the long stream of condemnations in the conclusions of the First Vatican Council (1869-70) and the Encyclicals from Pope Pius VIII in 1829 to Pope Pius X in 1906 are difficult to understand, especially for those popes who had been true pastors of the Church. These encyclicals were not addressed to the people of good will but to the restricted "estates" of patriarchs, primates, archbishops and bishops. The furious and selective condemnations were meant to call the recipients to action. Surely, not every bishop complied; if they did, it was to enforce obedience on the faithful.

²⁹² Michael Burleigh, op.cit. at p.136.

The history of the Catholic Church may provide some clarification. In times of adversity, the definition of doctrine is the preferred instrument to restore unity and condemn adversaries as heretics. As was it at the time of Emperor Constantine the Great, and at the time of the Counter-Reformation, and likewise in the wake of the great upheaval called the French Revolution, which had declared war on the Catholic Church. The Popes of the era, from the French Revolution to the outbreak of the First World War, reacted with renewed vigor to define "revealed" doctrine against the philosophers of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century in particular. Much like at the time of Constantine, it was an exercise in political theology elevated to the higher level of "defining true doctrine."

The person of Christ was the focus in the fourth century; the primacy of the Pope and "the God given rule of Popes and Princes" became the focus in the nineteenth century. The subjects brought up were: papal infallibility, papal civil rule (the Ecclesiastical States), the separation between Church and State, and freedom of religion. The First Vatican Council declared the Dogma of Papal Infallibility, but strictly circumscribed it. Between 1860 and 1870, the Ecclesiastical States disappeared into the kingdom of United Italy, despite the repeated claims of the Popes "that the temporal power was conferred many centuries ago by Divine Providence on the bishop of Rome, that he might without hindrance use the authority conferred by Christ for the eternal welfare of the Nations."²⁹³

According to David Kertzer: "Pope Pius IX became pope at a time of revolutionary ferment in Europe, when the old ideas of autocracy were being questioned, when demands for constitutional rights were being heard. And he was being buffeted. There were those, including other high-ranking priests, who were urging him to come to terms with modern times, to grant people more freedoms, to let up on the rule by priests of the state over which he ruled - the Papal States with its capital in Rome. And it wasn't always clear which way he would go - whether he would go with those more liberal or progressive elements or stick with those who thought the medieval vision of the church had to remain

²⁹³ Pope Leo XIII, *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*. Encyclical on the evils of society. 21 April 1878. www.papalencyclicals.net. Popes Pius VIII, Gregory XVI and Pius IX in several encyclicals had dealt with the problem before. See also Chapter 4 above.

unchanging. In reality, the first Vatican Council appears to have understood one sign of the times.

Before the French Revolution, Popes and Patriarchs – much like emperors and kings – saw themselves as standing above the law, as rulers “by the grace of God” and divine law. This was, as I previously described it, the original sin of all the Christian Churches after Constantine the Great. For kings and emperors that position above the law disappeared from Western Europe after the French Revolution. Not so in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union or Putin’s Russia, where that position has been maintained throughout the centuries. Holy Russia must continue to be ruled by a symphony of power – autocracy + orthodoxy + nationalism – as the true successor of Justinian’s Christian Roman Empire, as we learned in 2022, following the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

For the Papacy, the first Vatican Council (1869) reduced the infallibility claim to a dogma, strictly circumscribing the exercise of papal infallibility, quite comparable to the secular principle in constitutional monarchies that “the king can do no wrong” meaning that he cannot do anything without the approval of the elected government. The myth of papal infallibility in the Catholic Church, however, lives on, together with the other two claims, in the symphony of state and church power in the Russian world.

At the same time, there was another drama playing out in Italy, namely the drama of Italian unification, the *Risorgimento*, when there were those, including high ranking priests, who urged the pope to play a leadership role, to actually preside over a federation of Italian states that would drive out the foreigners (the Austrians) and create an Italian unified nation-state presided over by the pope, if only in an honorary way. And the pope, at a certain point, was tempted by that as well. But in rejecting this possibility, in opposing the unification of Italy, in insisting that the pope could not exist except also as a temporal ruler – as a king – the pope would put the church on a conservative, even reactionary, path that would have a major influence on the course not only of the Roman Catholic Church for decades to come, but also on Europe more generally.”²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ From the interview with David I. Kertzer, author of *The Pope Who Would Be King: The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe*. Random House 2018.

Looking back, the outcome of the loss of papal civil rule was the opposite of what the Popes feared. It liberated the Popes from temporal power, to use their spiritual authority; henceforth, the Popes assumed exclusive authority over the appointment of bishops, which in turn resulted in excessive centralization of papal power inside the Catholic Church (ultra-Montanism).²⁹⁵

On the two other subjects – the separation between church and state and freedom of religion – the Popes fought a losing battle, mainly because they stuck to the old order of throne and altar. Despite the “Restoration” after the Napoleonic wars, that order had vanished forever. Still, the list of condemnations, anathemas, excommunications and indexed publications kept growing. A few examples:

- The condemnation of the “shameful font of religious indifferentism [giving] rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone;”
- the “insanity that liberty of conscience and worship is each man’s personal right;
- the “absurd principle of “naturalism”, or the condemnation of “liberalism” as a direct attack on the ideas of liberal democracy and human rights;
- the “most fatal error of Communism and Socialism;”
- the sweeping condemnation finally of “modernism:” “the Modernist sustains and includes within himself a manifold personality; he is a philosopher, a believer, a theologian, an historian, a critic, an apologist, a reformer. These roles must be clearly distinguished one from another by all who would accurately understand their system and thoroughly grasp the principles and the outcome of their doctrines.”
- Still under its banner, Pope Pius X lists all the “doctrines”, attacking the

²⁹⁵ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners .op.cit.* Chapter V.

true faith, such as Agnosticism, Immanentism, Scientism, Positivism, and Materialism.²⁹⁶ In all of them, attention is also given to the attacks on clerical celibacy and the Christian Marriage. The faithful, of course must be protected against pestilent ideas by the Index of forbidden books. Most Catholics born after the Second Vatican Council no longer know what the “Index” stands for.

The tragedy of such focus on so called insane doctrines has been twofold. The Papacy, during this era, no longer inspired but lost the intellectuals – philosophers and scientists - in addition to the workers, who turned to Trade Unions for protection in the era of Industrialization. At the same time, the Papacy at best underestimated the destructive force of the new political religion of nationalism, in- and outside Italy. As it turned out, this political religion emerged from the French Revolution and came to dominate the nineteenth century, leading directly to the horrors of the First World War. With Woodrow Wilson’s idea of “the right to national self-determination,” the political religion received new and lasting prominence.

Nationalism

According to Kedourie, article 3 of the French Human Rights Declaration “is one prerequisite, without which a doctrine such as nationalism is not conceivable.”²⁹⁷ In this sense, the French Revolution opened the era of the modern political religions, and nationalism in particular. In many respects, the nation took the place of the Church as the source of identity in the nineteenth century, with nationalism as its new religion. Loyalty to the nation took the place of loyalty to one’s church or religion. Many responsibilities assumed by the churches – such as social welfare, medical care, and education – were taken over by the nation state.

Contrary to the promises of the drafters of the Declaration, sovereignty of the nation instead of sovereignty of the king did not lead to more peace and stability. Nineteenth-century nationalism ultimately led to the disaster of the Great

²⁹⁶ Encyclicals: *Mirare Vos*, Pope Gregory XVI, 1832; *Qui Pluribus* and *Quanta Cura*, Pope Pius IX, 1846 and 1864; *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Pope Pius X, 1907.

²⁹⁷ at p. 5.

War of 1914. As Michael Burleigh writes: “During the First World War the political religion of European nationalism threatened to engulf those who were responsible for maintaining a Christianity posited on the transcendental City of God as reflected in St. Paul’s words ‘Our citizenship is in heaven.’ Everywhere, clergy and theologians justified their nation going to war and their own participation in it.”²⁹⁸ Everywhere also, the enemy was stripped of all moral worth.²⁹⁹

From the distress of the nations and the horrors of the First World War originated the totalitarian political religions of the twentieth century.

Part 2: totalitarian political ideologies.

The rise of totalitarian systems in the twentieth century has been a distinct feature of Christian Europe. These regimes found their inspiration in the political theologies of the Christian churches and the philosophical materialism of the nineteenth century.

It is of great importance to clearly make distinctions between the various emerging totalitarian-political religions, if only because not all of them were at war with European Christendom or the churches. In 1917, Lenin took power in St. Petersburg and established the Russian-, later Soviet, communist, totalitarian regime, a terror regime from its very inception. Out of the three it lasted the longest: in Russia from 1917 to 1991; in East and Central Europe from 1945 to 1989; and in China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia, and Cuba until this day. Fascism in Italy lasted from 1925-1943, and from 1936 to 1978 in Spain and Portugal. Hitler’s National Socialist- or rather, Nazi Totalitarian, regime lasted from 1933 to 1945.

Communism

“Dostoyevsky was a revolutionary of the spirit; he wanted revolution but revolution with God and Christ. He was the enemy of atheistic socialism, which

²⁹⁸ Op.cit. at p.438ff.

²⁹⁹ I extensively dealt with nationalism and war in volumes III, IV and V of my series *Footprints of the 20th Century*. Also in

to him was another aspect of the lure of the Grand Inquisitor and a surrender of the freedom of the spirit for the sake of food and happiness” writes Nicolas Berdyaev, in *The Origin of Russian Communism* (1937).

Socialism and Communism, with their Marxist origin in the nineteenth century, were atheistic. Leninist Communism developed into a totalitarian political religion in the very first year of Lenin’s violent revolution.

The persecution of Christians and the churches began immediately after Lenin had come to power, and would continue until the late 1980’s, at the end of Gorbachev’s rule in Russia and the Soviet Union. In the satellite states of East and Central Europe, persecution continued until “the Year of Truth” in 1989. Russia under Lenin, and the Soviet Union under Stalin and his successors, cruelly persecuted the Russian Orthodox Church³⁰⁰ with the clear aim of annihilating the Christian faith, and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular. Orthodox European Christendom suffered severely.

It is important to emphasize that Lenin’s violent revolution established the first totalitarian state in Europe, characterized –among other things – by the radical evil of the setting up of Concentration/ “Labor” Camps as early as mid-1918. Leninist Communism developed into a totalitarian political religion at war with European Christendom.

“Entire peoples find themselves in danger of falling back into a barbarism worse than that which oppressed the greater part of the world at the coming of the Redeemer. This all too imminent danger, Venerable Brethren, as you have already surmised, is Bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization,” wrote Pope Pius XI in 1937 (*Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*).

Europe, nevertheless, knew many fellow travelers and admirers of the “socialist” experiment at least until 1991, when the Soviet Union imploded peacefully.

³⁰⁰ Minority churches in Russia, Catholics, Baptists and evangelicals have always been persecuted or hindered, under the Tsars and again after the end of the Soviet Union.

Fascism

Mussolini took power in 1925. The Italian fascist state, following two years under German control, died with him at the very end of the Second World War in 1945. The Papacy was “at war” with Communism, Liberalism, Democracy and Italian Nationalism, but not with Mussolini’s Italy, Salazar’s Portugal or Franco’s Spain. These regimes represented efforts to implement the ideas of corporatism as an alternative to liberal democracy; ideas very close to Catholic thinking at the time. Mussolini’s rise to power happened in the same year that Pope Pius XI was elected. According to David Kertzer: “The Pope had seen something in Mussolini he liked. Despite all their differences, the two men shared some important values. Neither had any sympathy for parliamentary democracy. Neither believed in freedom of speech or freedom of association. Both saw Communism as a great threat. Both thought Italy was mired in crisis and that the current system was beyond salvation.”³⁰¹

With Mussolini, Pope Pius XI concluded the Lateran Accords – two treaties and a Concordat – in 1929, thus finally regulating the sovereign status of Vatican City. The Concordat protected the Catholic Church in Italy.

Spain (from 1939 to 1975) and Portugal (from 1932 to 1970) are considered to have been fascist states as well. Like in Mussolini’s Italy, they were one-party dictatorships. Franco prevailed in the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) due to the support of Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. Franco’s dictatorship was openly totalitarian, but gradually, after the Second World War assumed an authoritarian character. Salazar’s Portugal was a one-party, unitary corporatist republic, and declared itself against all ideologies. What the three “fascist” states had in common was one leader, one party, dictatorships and corporatism.

At this juncture, we must emphasize the abuse of the term “fascism.” Still today, many intellectuals, politicians and other newsmakers follow what originally was invented by Communist propaganda in the 1930’s to distinguish Stalin’s “socialism in one country” from Hitler’s “national socialism.” The easiest

³⁰¹ As quoted by Saul Friedländer in the New Republic March 2014.

and most effective approach would be to lump every ideology except communism together under the swearword “fascism,” where it still is today. It has no meaning; Nazism and Communism have been far worse than fascism. In terms of evil they have much more in common than either of them with fascism.

National Socialism

The Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* was given only a few days after his Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, on the Catholic Church in the German Reich, a much shorter and milder challenge to Hitler’s Regime. “Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community — however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things — whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.”

Hitler waged war against the “communists,” socialists, the Jews and non-Aryan foreigners, and the Slavs in particular. His ideology was clearly atheistic and “political Christianity” for him meant Nazism. In Germany, the Nazi’s persecuted Christian organizations and priests, preachers and laypersons, i.e. those who resisted Nazi rule. The best known example is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died in April 1945. In April 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned, first in Berlin, from where he disappeared in February 1945. On 9 April 1945 he was murdered in concentration camp Flossenbürg.³⁰² In occupied countries, Poland in particular, Catholic priests were murdered primarily as Poles, who had the courage to resist. In the Netherlands, the shining example of resistance and martyrdom was Titus Brandsma, Carmelite Monk and University Professor. He was arrested in January 1942 and murdered in Dachau on 26 July 1942. During his time of isolation in German prison, he wrote a moving biography of the Great Teresa of Avilla, completed by a fellow Carmelite and published in 1946.

³⁰² See his moving letters from prison: *Widerstand und Ergebung*. Kaiser Taschenbuch 1951-1997. Translated in many languages.

The Nazi’s did not persecute the Churches as such, if only because Hitler counted on Christian complicity in the Final Solution of the Jewish problem.³⁰³

Radical or infernal evil.

In the West, the Holocaust stands out as the most prominent example of Radical or Infernal Evil in the twentieth century. After the defeat of Germany in 1945, it took almost twenty years before a real debate on the Holocaust could begin in Western Germany, and not until reunification in 1990 for the Eastern part of Germany. The Holocaust was more than the Concentration/Death Camps to which European Jews were transported with the clear aim of murdering them as quickly as possible. The majority of Jews had been murdered where they lived immediately after the area came under Nazi rule.³⁰⁴

In addition and linked to the Holocaust, Nazi Germany ran a large number of other Concentration/Extermination Camps in which inmates were deliberately forced to work until they died by exhaustion, torture, or execution. After the defeat of Germany, a reasonably comprehensive picture could be gathered of the Camps, their regime, and the fate of the inmates over the twelve years of Nazi-Germany’s existence.

The nazi *konzentration lager* (concentration camps).

The history of the Nazi Concentration Camps covers the entire period of Nazi totalitarian rule, from 1933 until the German defeat in 1945. The first camps appeared within months after Hitler came to power. After a brief interlude of releases in 1934, the terror system expanded rapidly under Heinrich Himmler, especially after the outbreak of the Second World War. It collapsed apocalyptically with the defeat of Germany in 1945. In Chapter 3, we already recorded one of the death marches of survivors from Auschwitz to one of the very worst camps further West – Mauthausen – where Edith Eger and her sister miraculously survived. There were other such death marches during which many

³⁰³ Cf. Chapter 3, *supra*.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Chapter 3, *supra*.

inmates died from exhaustion, violence or execution. Nikolas Wachsmann writes:

*“Dachau, April 29, 1945. It is early afternoon when U.S. troops, part of the Allied force sweeping across Germany to crush the last remains of the Third Reich, approach an abandoned train on a rail siding at the grounds of a sprawling SS complex near Munich. As the soldiers come closer, they make a dreadful discovery: the boxcars are filled with the corpses of well over two thousand men and women, and also some children. Gaunt, contorted limbs are entangled amid a mess of straw and rags, covered in filth, blood, and excrement. Several ashen-faced GIs turn away to cry or vomit. “It made us sick at our stomach and so mad we could do nothing but clench our fists,” an officer wrote the next day. As the shaken soldiers move deeper into the SS complex and reach the prisoner compound, later that afternoon, they come upon thirty-two thousand survivors from many ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds, representing about thirty European nations. Some seem more dead than alive as they stumble toward their liberators. Many more lie in overcrowded barracks, infested with dirt and disease. Wherever the soldiers turn, they see dead bodies, sprawled between barracks, dumped in ditches, stacked like logs by the camp’s crematorium. As for those behind the carnage, almost all career SS men are long gone, with only a ragtag gang of perhaps two hundred guards left behind.”*³⁰⁵

Dachau was one of the first camps established in March 1933 for the purpose of “protective custody” of the enemies of Hitler and the Third Reich. “Protective custody” in Nazi newspeak, of course, meant the opposite of what it signaled. Its real meaning was to protect the Nazi regime against its self-declared enemies, preferably by starvation, exhaustion, execution or by torturing them to death. The camp system grew with the growing list of enemies: first political opponents – communist terrorists and social democrats – and soon thereafter also Jews, Poles, Soviet Prisoners of War and other “enemies” from the occupied states.

³⁰⁵ Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL. A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. Little Brown 2015. I much relied on his history of the Camps. The quote is from the Prologue.

Heinrich Himmler, no doubt, was the evil force of the Nazi extermination/concentration camp system until its final collapse. As he said in a secret speech: “The nation had to fight to the death against the “forces of organized sub humanity,” a catch-all term he would use over and over again, meaning Communists, Socialists, Freemasons, priests, asocials, criminals, and above all Jews, who “should not be viewed as humans of our species.” Hitler had fully backed the extension of the terror apparatus since 1934. As Wachsmann adds in a later chapter: “Heinrich Himmler was a mass murderer greatly concerned with decorum. He had long cultivated an image as a deeply principled man, and during the Second World War he became a prominent preacher of a new kind of Nazi morality that saw mass killing as a sacred duty to protect the German people from its mortal enemies. Contrary to the views of some historians, Nazi perpetrators like Himmler did not see themselves as nihilists. Himmler regarded the Nazi Final Solution as a righteous act, committed out of necessity, idealism, and “love for our people,” as he put it in a notorious speech to SS group leaders in Posen in the early evening of October 4, 1943. That the killers had remained unblemished and “decent” during the mass slaughter of Jews was a truly “glorious page in our history,” he told himself and the other SS grandees.

Dachau and the death marches truly reflect the radical, infernal evil of the Nazi Concentration/Extermination Camp system. The system and its expansion were an essential component of Nazi totalitarian rule. Certainly in the early years, “protective custody” was not hidden from public view; rather, it received ample public attention and support. Especially where prisoners were employed in Quarries and brick works – for the sake of Hitler’s grand city building plans - these camps were true extermination camps, like Mauthausen, Natzweiler, Buchenwald and Sachshausen. The camps were flexible instruments of lawless suppression. They could also be used for killing the weak. The methods devised for euthanasia before the outbreak of the war could easily be employed for weakened inmates in the Concentration Camps.

When the end came and the survivors were forced to walk for hundreds of kilometers, away from the Soviet forces, the few helpful Germans were far outnumbered by the silent majority. When the war was over, most of the SS murderers denied any personal responsibility and disappeared in anonymi-

ty. “Such falsehoods were more than desperate defense strategies. Of course, many defendants lied to save themselves. But the most devoted Camp SS members had become so used to the normality of evil that they continued to believe in the righteousness of their actions, justifying the murders of the sick as a humanitarian act and SS violence as a disciplinary measure. Even outsiders were still infused with this SS spirit. The veteran professor of tropical medicine Claus Schilling, at seventy-four probably the oldest accused at any of the Dachau trials, not only defended his murderous malaria experiments, he asked the court to let him complete his research, for the greater good of science and humanity. All he needed, he said, was a chair, a table, and a typewriter; he got the gallows instead.”³⁰⁶

The Gulag

Soviet (Russian) Concentration Camps were built from 1918 onwards, would be enormously expanded under Stalin’s terror rule from 1929 until his death in 1953, and disappeared no sooner than in the late 1980’s. The camps came under the authority of the NKVD (later KGB) – the secret police – which always tried to keep their crimes secret, as today is tried by former KGB officer, President Putin. Russia, unlike Germany, could not be forced to properly deal with the radical evil of its past. Many individual Russians tried to organize remembrance, but never received official backing. Since Putin, reviving admiration of the “Great Leader Stalin” took the place of serious remembering. That is: radical evil prolonged. No Gulag officer or leader has ever been prosecuted for their crimes. No full records are available of those who suffered in the Camps, those who died by exhaustion or execution, or where they were buried. The worst camps were in Northern and North-Eastern Siberia in the cruel climate above the Arctic Circle, where great number of inmates froze to death or died from exhaustion, malnutrition, and disease. The survivors and their families are left to their own devices to cope with the immense suffering of their beloved.

Unfortunately, the Soviet Union was one of the victors of the Second World War. Stalin and Soviet totalitarian rule occupied a different place in Europe’s post-war intellectual discourse, out of fear, complicity or ideological bias. For

³⁰⁶ Quoted from Nikolaus Wachsmann, op.cit.

a long time, anti-communism was considered to be a right-wing aberration. The Soviet totalitarian regime was not defeated; it just faded away from Brezhnev’s “really existing socialism” to Gorbachev’s perestroika and its falling apart in 1990/1991.

With Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipel* in the 1970’s and the Soviet collapse in 1991, the ideological bias began to erode slowly. As Solzhenitsyn wrote: “These people, who had experienced on their own hides twenty-four years of Communist happiness, knew by 1941 what as yet no one else in the world knew: that nowhere on the planet, nowhere in history, was there a regime more vicious, more bloodthirsty, and at the same time more cunning and ingenious than the Bolshevik, the self-styled Soviet regime. That no other regime on earth could compare with it either in the number of those it had done to death, in hardness, in the range of its ambitions, in its thoroughgoing and unmitigated totalitarianism – no, not even the regime of its pupil Hitler, which at the time blinded Western eyes to all else.”³⁰⁷

The quote appears in Part V titled “Katorga.” The term *Katorga* stands for newly created and more deadly special camp complexes within the Gulag, set up exclusively in the harshest regions of Siberia and meant for the most dangerous political prisoners, i.e. military who had been in contact with “strangers.” Katorga was part of “the Zenith of the Camp-Industrial Complex.”³⁰⁸ The Soviet system of Concentration camps had its origin in 1918. From its inception it grew larger and larger until it reached the zenith after the Second World War and Stalin’s death in March 1953. It declined thereafter, but disappeared only at the end of the 1980’s under Gorbachev, silently and without any foreign pressure.

Stephane Courtois and his co-authors made a major contribution to the gradual realization of totalitarian communism as the other, if not the original, source of radical evil.³⁰⁹ Even then, their *Black book of Communism* (1997) met

³⁰⁷ Solzhenitsyn, *the GULAG Archipelago Three. Katorga Exile Stalin is no more*. on p. 28. New York 1976.

³⁰⁸ Anne Applebaum, *GULAG A History*. Penguinbooks 2004. Title of her chapter 22. Her book offers by far the best history of the Gulag on which I relied in this chapter.

³⁰⁹ Stephane Courtois a.o., *Le Livre Noir du Communisme. Crimes, terreur, repression*. Robert Laffont 1997; *Du Passé faisons table rase! Histoire et mémoire du communisme en Europe*. Robert Laffont 2002. the camps

with severe criticism, for instance in the French daily *Le Monde*.³¹⁰ A real debate about the crimes of the Communist Totalitarian Regimes is still wanting. In our secularized societies, we don't want to be reminded of the infernal evil of the Concentration Camp Systems. As far as Europe is concerned, it is a matter of the past and should be forgotten.

Unlike Germany, Russia under Vladimir Putin flatly refuses to deal with the past crimes of the Soviet Union. "In 1995, in the Perm region of the Russian Federation, a unique memorial museum of the history of political repression was created in the former camp for political prisoners Perm-36. The core of this camp is the only surviving camp complex of buildings from Stalin's gulag era. For nearly 20 years, the Memorial Centre Perm-36 not only preserved and restored the dilapidated camp construction, but was engaged in research, collecting, exposition, exhibition and education activities. In 2014, with the political changes in Russia and the change of the governor of the Perm region, Memorial Centre Perm-36 was removed from the museum and all the buildings and the facilities of the former camp, which are state property, were transferred to establish a state institution that has drastically changed the mission of the former site. No longer is it a museum devoted to the repressive forced-labor practices of the Stalin era, but one that presents the gulag as a vital component of the Soviet victory in World War II."³¹¹

"Memorial," an organization created in 1989 in Moscow by Russian citizens, has been declared a "terrorist" organization in 2016.³¹² Outlawing Memorial and condoning the radical evil of the Gulag means that Putin's Russia refuses to cope with its dark and evil past and is bound to repeat it.... Such happened in 2014 and 2022, and evil continues.

³¹⁰ Cf. Stéphane Courtois, *Du passé faisons table rase. Histoire et mémoire du communisme en Europe*. Robert Laffont 2002.

³¹¹ *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*, Gulag Museum of Perm-36

³¹² Where the concentration camp system is still fully in force, as in China and North Korea, the Western democracies prefer to look at their interests in trade.

The post (second world) war problem of evil.

"The problem of evil will be the fundamental question of post-war intellectual life in Europe."

This quote from Hannah Arendt was included in my introduction. It was the nature of evil that she had been thinking about for thirty years. The reason was what she considered to be the "radical evil" of the Concentration/Extermination Camps of Hitler, and Stalin's Communist Gulag archipelago. Hannah Arendt died in 1975, well before the changes in European intellectual discourse, following publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Black Book of Communism* in 1997. As far as the problem of radical evil is concerned, it was Lenin who discovered in the camps the means to realize total power, as Stalin continued after him. So-called "destalinization" in 1956 did not abolish the camp system. Under Gorbachev (1985-1990) and Yeltsin (1990-2000) came major change. With Vladimir Putin, radical evil, now for profit, is making a comeback.

Lenin, "Hitler and Stalin discovered in the camps the means to realize their belief in total power, a belief that meant not only that "everything is permitted" but implied the far more radical proposition that "everything is possible." The camps were designed as 'laboratories' in which 'experiments' were conducted to test that proposition, and what those experiments demonstrated was that 'the omnipotence of man' is bought at the price 'of the superfluity of men.' In the camps, all men were remade into one man, all human beings into one utterly predictable 'living corpse,' a body permanently in 'the process of dying.' Human beings were reduced "to the lowest common denominator of organic life, rendered "equal" in the sense of being interchangeable which, it should be noted, is exactly the opposite of political equality."

"The assault on human nature in the camps was methodological and three-fold. The "first, essential step" is the destruction of juridical or political man by disfranchisement; secondly, the moral person is destroyed by rendering his or her conscience impotent; and thirdly, the "unique identity" of the individual is obliterated by annihilating the human capacity for spontaneity in thought and action.

(1). Disenfranchisement means the elimination of every legal status, including even that of the criminal. Human beings are subjected to torment not only unfit for any conceivable crime but also unrelated to anything they have done; they are punished for having been born a Jew, for being the representative of a dying class, for being “asocial,” or mentally ill, or the carrier of a disease. New categories would be invented when old categories became exhausted, or victims would have to be selected at random, as in fact they finally were in Stalin’s “more perfect” system. The arbitrariness of the choice of victims aims at destroying “the civil rights of the whole population,” and such destruction is by no means a matter of brainwashing since it is not “consent” that is wanted but only absolute “discipline.” In the camps every legal right and political institution that for centuries had been wrought to stabilize the world and clear a space for human freedom, including the expression and debate of diverse opinions, is swept away as if it had never existed. In this sense the destruction of juridical or political man “is a prerequisite for dominating him entirely.”

(2). “Next, the ability to make a conscientious choice is negated. Prisoners are made to choose not between good and evil but between evil and evil. When a mother is forced to choose one of her children to be murdered in order to save the life (or postpone the death) of another, she is implicated in the crime committed against her. Martyrdom was not possible since the camps were what Arendt called “holes of oblivion,” places completely cut off from the outside world in which a martyr’s story might be told, remembered, and become an example for others. The dead are immediately forgotten “as if they had never existed,” their deaths as superfluous as their lives had been.

(3). Finally, the concentration of human beings, massing them together and binding them in terror’s “band of iron,” destroys every relation to and distinction from one another, obliterating not only their individual place in the world but their individuality itself. They are submitted to torture, not to learn what they know but to so hurt them that they became bundles of insensate flesh. Far from being able to act spontaneously, to begin anything new by acting or thinking, they walk “like dummies to their death”³¹³. In the slave labor camps of the Gulag, with their supposed economic “rationale,” the laborers are starved

³¹³ (David Rousset, *Les jours de notre mort* [Paris, 1947], quoted by Arendt)

or frozen to death, at once replaced by others whose lives and deaths are no less superfluous than those of their predecessors.”³¹⁴

According to Hannah Arendt, the oppressors should not be demonized, for they are themselves, and in their own estimation, also “superfluous human beings.” “Those who support a totalitarian system, according to Arendt, may be “bearers of orders” or “bearers of secrets” but in the eyes of the movement they bear no responsibility for what they do. Without the structure of responsibility the reality of the world becomes “a mass of incomprehensible data.” Human beings “can be tortured and slaughtered, and yet neither the tormentors or the tormented . . . can be aware that what is happening is anything more than a cruel game.” The supporters are pawn like “embodiments” of the will of the leader who, as the sole repository of “responsibility,” is infallible.”³¹⁵ What applied to the Nazi SS equally applied the Soviet KGB. Already in their training they were molded into beings without responsibility, conscience or moral compass.

The evil of the Concentration/Labor and Extermination Camps of Lenin, Hitler and Stalin was *the* evil of the twentieth century. To us European Christians, it raises many painful questions. The evil did not come from nowhere. Nor did it end with the defeat of Germany in 1945 or with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The infernal evil leaves its footprints in our countries, in the minds of our peoples and in the moral degradation of European society, Russian and the other former Soviet Republics in particular.

“The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. Political, social, and economic events everywhere are in conspiracy with totalitarian instruments devised for making men superfluous [...] The Nazis and the Bolsheviks can be sure that their factories of annihilation which demonstrate the swiftest solution to the problem of overpopulation, of economically superfluous and socially rootless human masses, are as much

³¹⁴ From: “Evil: The Crime against Humanity”. Review and quotations from Hannah Arendt’s writings on the question of evil by Jerome Kohn, Director of the Hannah Arendt Center, New School University, Dresden.

³¹⁵ Op. cit.

of an attraction as a warning. Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.”³¹⁶

Thus, according to Arendt, the totalitarian solution for the people in the world that nobody wanted remains as an ever-present danger in the future. According to Villa, the validity of Arendt’s remark on the totalitarian dangers waiting in the future has been demonstrated by events in Rwanda, Former Yugoslavia and in other numerous more current examples. In the examples, “the unthinkable” have reappeared again and again, in connection with the dissolution of states or the need to shore up political power.³¹⁷ The technological advance of the techniques and instruments of mass death goes hand in hand with a new willingness to think and to do the “unthinkable.” Villa claims that the legacy of totalitarianism is two-fold: on the one hand there is the new “fear-based” human rights community, but on the other, there is also a new “common sense” of the superfluosity of human beings, a “common sense” that enables the thought of ethnic cleansing or a nuclear war. Thus, Arendt’s remarks on the totalitarian evil and her “prophecy” of a grim future warns us; “it happened, therefore it can happen again!”³¹⁸

Infernal Evil not only knows oppressors and victims. It needs the many who look away, who condone, who profit, who keep silence and who collaborate. Above all, it needs Evil will or intent.³¹⁹

Evil intent

Totalitarian terror cannot be sufficiently understood by the structure of the regime or the obedience and sadism of the executioners. There must be the evil intent of a ruler, who wanted mass-murder, who was willing to execute it and for that purpose took power. Lenin took power with the clear purpose to

exterminate the Russian Church, the bourgeoisie and the Kulaks. In the Cheka directed by Dzerzhinsky he found the man to organize it by starvation or incarceration in Concentration/“Labor” Camps. After a pause from 1923 to 1927 (due to Lenin’s illness and death), his successor, Stalin, intensified the terror regime that continued until his death in 1953. Hitler took power with the clear purpose to exterminate the Jews of Europe and the Slavs and Gypsies thereafter; in Heinrich Himmler he found his man to employ unrestrained terror. Evil is no abstract concept. It must be willed and executed by living persons. Just as Mussolini and Hitler learned from Lenin and Stalin, so did Vladimir Putin of Russia and Lukashenka in Belarus in the early twenty-first century.

Persecution of the Russian Church.

In the context of the post-war problem of infernal evil, it is necessary to come back to the persecution of the Russian (Orthodox) Church as “a systemic feature of the Soviet regime.”³²⁰ This is necessary for two reasons. The first one is the systemic feature of the persecution. Russia’s national church had to be annihilated as incompatible with the communist ideocracy (or religion), unique in the radicality of its evil. The second one is the virtual absence of true concern for the fate of the Russian Orthodox Church herself in Christian Europe and the West.³²¹

The anti-religious campaign by the Bolshevik regime, against the Russian Orthodox Church as their ideological and political opponent, started the day Lenin came to power in 1917. The article I referred to distinguishes six phases in the persecution from 1917-1987: In the (1) first phase the economic and material basis of the Church was destroyed. The Church was separated from the State, churches were closed down and confiscated and the Church was deprived of all her real estate and of her right to own real estate, as early as 8 November 1917.³²² The Church was deprived of her legal personality, including the right to acquire property; state subsidies for all religious bodies were banned. Teaching of re-

³¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 459

³¹⁷ Dana Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror, Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt*, p. 37

³¹⁸ p. 38.

³¹⁹ Cf. Frans A.M. Alting von Geusau, *Sporen van de Twintigste Eeuw*. 2011 (third edition). Hoofdstuk 1. Rüdiger Safranski, *Het Kwaad. Drama van de Vrijheid*. Atlas 1998.

³²⁰ *Persecution of believers as a systemic feature of the Soviet Regime*. Lyubov Sovkovets, Sergei Krasilnikov, and Dia Mymrina. SHS Web of Conferences 28, 01098 (2015).

³²¹ In the major Catholic relief organisation “Aid to the Church in Need” founded in 1947, the idea to support the Russian Orthodox Church as such came up in 1992 only! And was not a good idea.

³²² Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime 1927-1982*. Two volumes. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. New York 1984. From vol. I, p. 31ff.

ligion was also banned. The Russian Orthodox Church henceforward became legally superfluous. In the (2) second phase, the period of the New Economic Policy, the regime and the Communist Party focused on promoting materialistic ideals and atheist education in order to transform the mind of believers. The (3) third phase, Stalin's forced collectivization and industrialization, saw intense and furious attacks on religious organizations. All-encompassing measures of persecution included terror, repression, atheist propaganda and random arrests and executions of the clergy and ordinary believers. Many of them disappeared into the Gulag. During a brief and wartime (4) fourth phase, attacks on the Church eased somewhat, some bodies of the Church were restored, and believers were allowed to attend religious services. Stalin needed the Church for his war effort, no more. In a (5) fifth phase, Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev (in the West wrongly admired for his so-called destalinization secret speech), initiated a new campaign against the Church. His argument was that in building a Communist society there could be no place for the Church and her believers. In the (6) sixth phase there was no longer mass persecution of the Church. Anti-religious propaganda was renewed, and atheist education was introduced in schools and universities.

Among the millions of inmates in the Gulag, there must have been many priests and orthodox believers. After all, they were the principal enemies of the Soviet regime and they could always be tried as counter-revolutionaries, spies, saboteurs, bigots, parasites, or be punished for anti-Soviet agitation or activities. Solzhenitsyn refers to them from time to time, mainly to distinguish them from other inmates: "And how is it that genuine believers survived in camp (as we mentioned more than once)? .. A steadfastness unheard of in the twentieth century.. One of them is Auntie Dusya, who answers the question of the Convoy guard: 'Your term?' with: 'Till God forgives my sins – till then I'll be serving time.'" Another is Grigory Ivanovich, who grew stronger in camp: "So wouldn't it be more correct to say that no camp can corrupt those who have a stable nucleus, who do not accept that pitiful ideology which holds that human beings are created for happiness, an ideology which is done by the first blow of the work assigner's cudgel?" Earlier, Solzhenitsyn tells the story of an old woman, who had been relentlessly interrogated and threatened. To which she answered: "there is nothing you can do with me even if you cut me into

pieces. After all you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other, and you are even afraid of killing me.. But I am not afraid of anything. I would be glad to be judged by God right this minute." In camp, he quotes another, existence did not determine consciousness, but just the opposite: "consciousness and steadfast faith in the human essence decided whether you became an animal or remained a human being." "They knew very well for what they were serving time, and they were unwavering in their convictions! They were the only ones, perhaps, to whom the camp philosophy did not stick."³²³

"It is impossible to underestimate the significance of a prisoner comprehending and accepting the reason for his own imprisonment. The man who sees his imprisonment as a trial of faith or as an opportunity to serve has a far stronger defense against the dehumanization and scheming cruelty that often accompanied ten, fifteen, or twenty-five years behind barbed wire. Father Tavrion Batzsky, who had been in various prisons and camps for around thirty years, exclaimed, 'If you only knew how grateful I am God for my wonderful life!' "The Gulag could not touch these people who were sustained by their faith that they were loved by God. Indeed, it would seem as though they truly lived out Jesus' statement that man does not live by bread alone, for in refusing to cheat their fellow prisoners, to collaborate with the guards, or to bully their way to a needed bowl of oatmeal, they did not receive enough bread to live on. Their faith subjected them to other dangers, as well; nuns were often held with prostitutes and thieves, suffering sexual abuse from guards and prisoners alike. Camp officials would frequently focus their attentions on religious prisoners and harass them with greater frequency and cruelty through various punishments, tortures, and sexual assaults intended to dehumanize their victims.

"Nevertheless these believers were not dehumanized, for they saw their worth in Christ, not in the sadistic treatment they received at the hands of the guards; they looked at the world from Christ's perspective and found their strength in forgiveness. Upon being asked how he survived months of torture without becoming embittered, Father Roman Braga said, "God bless [the torturers], if there are still alive some of them. I forgave them at that time... Jesus on the Cross forgave them... they don't know what they do... We forgive them because

³²³ From his Gulag archipelago, Part Two p. 310, 623-626 and Part I, p. 131.

we want them to come to God and become people. “Priests, monks, and other Orthodox Christians reached out to criminals in many ways, sometimes even at the behest of camp officials. Because it made the guards’ jobs easier, priests and monks were permitted and even encouraged in the 1930s to “reeducate” non-believing prisoners by introducing literature to them and discussing morality. Furthermore, the ministry of Christians was not limited to these sponsored activities. Priests would often nurse sick men, sometimes criminals, back to health. Ivan Alexandrovich Sazikov, a criminal who was cared for by Father Arseny, told the priest: “I don’t trust people in general. I believe priests even less. But you, Pyotr Andreyevich, I trust. I know you won’t turn your back on me. You live in your God, you do good not for your own benefit, but for the sake of others.” Sazikov eventually became a Christian upon witnessing this same priest successfully halt a violent fight between criminals in the name of God. This kindness, courage, and power—which stood out so starkly in the labor camps—won the attention and respect of many criminal prisoners who had never witnessed such traits while they were free. Intellectual dissidents who were imprisoned alongside Christians also started to engage in religious dialogues with them, often impressed by the education and intelligence of priests. Alexander writes, “It seemed that for many the concepts of God, science, and ‘intelligentsia’ were becoming more closely related.” Many prisoners observed that their Christian comrades had strength in their faith and yearned to share in that hope and comfort.”³²⁴

The Persecuted Churches behind the Iron Curtain.

When Stalin extended the Soviet reign of terror to East and Central Europe, during and after the Second World War, the Christian leaders and their churches were his primary targets for persecution, if not annihilation.

Persecution was at its worst in the immediate post-war years in East and Central Europe. The local churches had to be deprived of their leaders, to be “nationalized” – that is to say, prohibition of any contact with the world church

³²⁴ From: augustinecollective.org/god-in-the-gulag-christianitys-survival-in-soviet-russia. Article by Alexandra Heywood in the Darmouth Apologia. Winter 2011 .vol 5, issue 1. See further :FATHER ARSENY. 1893-1793. *Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father*. As compiled the servant of God Alexander and translated from the Russian by Vera Bouteneff. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press New York 1998.

and the Holy See in particular – and to be “normalized” – that is to say, be reduced to places of cult under communist supervision. Bishops and priests were rounded up, tortured, falsely tried and sent to the Gulag wherefrom many never returned. Their schools and charities were closed.³²⁵ Khrushchev may be on record for his so-called ‘destalinization’ of the Soviet Union, but persecution of the churches was increased during his rule from 1955 to 1964, with the exception of Poland.

Poland emerged from the Second World War, betrayed by all: by Germany, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States of America, with only the Catholic Church as its lifebuoy. The War had started over the partition of Poland by virtue of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, followed by the German invasion on September 1st and the Soviet invasion on September 17th – with the agreed purpose of wiping the Polish people from the map of Europe. France and the United Kingdom declared war against Germany, but not against the Soviet Union.

“Katyn” stands for the liquidation of 30.000 of Poland’s most distinguished citizens on Stalin’s orders, and the deportation of 1.000.000, of whom some 10% perished on transport or in the Gulag – all of them before Hitler’s army attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The Grand Alliance between Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin against Hitler “was every bit as shocking as that of the Nazi-Soviet partnership two years earlier.”³²⁶ Poland lost 6.000.000 citizens in the war; half of them were Polish Jews who perished together with the same number of other European Jews in Hitler’s extermination camps. Until the end of the war, Hitler and Stalin colluded in their effort to exterminate the Poles. When the Polish resistance rose in Warsaw, with the approach of the Soviet armies in August 1944, Stalin ordered his troops not to advance further – giving the Nazi’s until January 1945 to crush the resistance and systematically destroy the city of Warsaw. Through Yalta and Potsdam, the Western Allies acquiesced in Stalin’s policies of annexing 48% of Polish territory and moving its Western border to the Oder-Neisse. The massive expulsion of Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans from their habitats, was accepted as a necessary “order-

³²⁵ Cf. Albert Galter, *Le Communisme et l’Église Catholique. Le « livre rouge » de la persécution*. Edition Fleurus. Paris 1956.

³²⁶ Norman Davies, *Europe. A History*. PLIMLICO 1997 at p. 1028

ly transfer of populations.” Post-war Poland emerged as the enemy nation of its Soviet “liberator,” with a 95% Roman Catholic population. Obviously, the destruction of the Polish Catholic Church was a primary objective for Stalin’s henchmen, called the government of national union. The fact that this policy failed and ultimately backfired, had everything do with the strength of the Catholic Church and the courage of Cardinal Wyszyński.

Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981) had been appointed Archbishop and Primate of Poland in 1948. Quite a few eyebrows were raised when – in the midst of the worst period of persecution – he signed an agreement with the government of Poland, on 14 April 1950. In exchange for some rather vague promises to respect the freedom of the church and catholic institutions, the episcopate recognized the legitimacy of the communist government, its policies and Poland’s new Western borders. Cardinal Sapieha (Archbishop of Cracow), who was in Rome at the time, said that it was not a *modus vivendi* but a *modus moriendi*. As could be expected, the communist government violated the agreement before the ink had dried. Persecution was heightened, and the Primate himself was arrested in 1953 and kept in isolation until 1956, when he was released by the new Polish leader, Władysław Gomułka, on 26 October. Unique for the situation behind the Iron Curtain, Wyszyński and Gomułka signed a compromise by which the Church recognized the authority of the Marxist state and the alliance with the Soviet Union in exchange for regaining its rights to make its own appointments of bishops and priests, to teach religion at schools and to publish an independent newspaper. The compromise was the outcome of sound realism on both sides. Gomułka needed the Cardinal’s authority to keep the anti-communist fever under control. The Cardinal needed Gomułka to keep the Soviet army at bay and blunt the persecution of the Church.

While the Polish communist leadership stumbled from one economic crisis to another, Cardinal Wyszyński strengthened his influence upon Polish attitudes by his pastoral leadership and his defiance of the communist party in their continuing efforts to undermine the Church.

Selective persecution in the era of East-West détente.

The 1962 Cuban Missile crisis brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. Its settlement is generally considered to have opened an era of *détente* in East-West relations. The East became less isolated, the West more confused. Khrushchev’s boasting of communism’s superiority was replaced by Brezhnev’s assertion of “really existing” socialism. Both East and West had become used – as Vaclav Havel said – to the totalitarian system, accepted it as unchangeable and thus helped to perpetuate it. The persecution of Christians and the churches did not end; rather, it became more selective and less violent. Censorship became less effective but more arbitrary. Brezhnev’s decision, in 1968, to suppress socialism with a human face in Czechoslovakia with military force, inaugurated an era of disbelief in the official truth of the communist regimes. “In our system,” Vaclav Havel wrote, “the violence is spiritual rather than physical. Designed to achieve the gradual destruction of the human spirit, of basic human dignity... people live their lives in a state of permanent humiliation. (...) Totalitarianism is a system which absorbs the whole society. It enters every vein and artery of the social organism, usurping and controlling all aspects of human life.”³²⁷

Life under totalitarian communism was thus permeated with hypocrisy and lies. One-party rule was called a “people’s democracy;” humiliation was called “liberation” and military intervention “fraternal assistance.” The regime falsified the past, the present and the future, thus depriving man of any certainty, identity or memory.... and henceforth trying to intrude his “inner sanctuary” and destroy his human dignity.³²⁸

Worse and more lasting than centrally planned economic mismanagement, is the morally debased environment left behind by communist rule and its acceptance as a legitimate form of government. It is in this context that Charta 77 was born in Czechoslovakia, and KOR and the flying university in Poland. The

327 Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless” In : *Václav Havel or Living in Truth*. Edited by Jan Vladislav. Faber and Faber 1986. And : *East European Reporter*. Vol.2 nr.2.

328 Cf. Havel *op.cit.*; Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *Beyond Glasnost. The post-totalitarian mind*. Chicago 1989; my own: *Beyond Containment and Division. Western Cooperation from a post-Totalitarian Perspective*. Dordrecht/ Boston/ London 1992.

Final Act of Helsinki in 1975 did not so much support Brezhnev in his effort to have the *status quo* (Europe's division) legitimized, as it helped and publicized the dissidents in defending their human rights.

Into a new millennium.

The last decennium of the Twentieth Century for Europe was an era of major changes and great expectations. The “Year of Truth” of 1989, as we liked to call it, peacefully ended the Cold War (or *détente*), Soviet domination over East and Central Europe, and the post-war division of Europe. In 1991, the Soviet Union itself disintegrated, after Boris Yeltsin declared that the sovereignty of the Russian Federation. The Communist leaders of the other Soviet Republics had to do the same. It inaugurated the era of democratic enlargement, privatization, globalization, the Internet, and economic growth – but also the “new ideologies” of Islamism in the Middle East, Secularism in the Western world, economic globalism, and the “Russian World” political theology and ideology with the rise to power of Putin's KGB Cohort.³²⁹

The new millennium was marked by a variety of “years of remembering,” official gatherings to commemorate the Second World War as the worst war ever, never to be repeated. All of them ignored Arendt's warning that the totalitarian solution for the people in the world that nobody wanted, remains as an ever-present danger in the future. That future arrived in 2014 – poorly understood – and in 2022, with a huge bang! The radical evil of the Putin Regime is manifested most sharply in the war against the Ukrainian people and in the treatment of Alexey Navalny, who, after a failed poisoning attempt, ended up in the restored Gulag camp Yamalo Nenets in Western Siberia, where, according to the official lie, he died on 16 February 2024, “after taking a walk and feeling unwell.” In reality, of course, he was murdered. The Yamalo death camp is well-known for its torture practice of using the watercannon during walks of its prisoners at -20C°.

³²⁹ Catherine Belton, *PUTIN'S PEOPLE. How the KGB took back Russia and the took on the West*. London 2020 in the Prologue.

Part 3: War in Europe.

In Russia, church doctrine after the end of the Soviet Union returned to the old Roman Empire's political doctrine of the symphony between emperor and patriarch, applicable to Moscow, claimed to be the Third Rome, the holy Russian world under God's chosen Tsar.³³⁰ The doctrine holds, even when the current “Tsar” is an evil President brought up in the KGB under Yuri Andropov, the one who ordered the (failed) assassination attempt (13 May 1981) in Rome on Pope John-Paul II.

It was not until the unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, that Europe and the West began to wake up to the radical evil of Vladimir Putin's totalitarian rule and the full support he received from the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, it was too late to prevent the unprovoked, carefully planned and openly prepared invasion of Ukraine, and also too late to deter the so-called denazification of Ukraine, a crime against humanity in its very purpose.

The terms “war” and “invasion” were forbidden by the Kremlin. The official terms were a “special military operation” and the “denazification” of Ukraine. Denazification in Putin's jargon had the same meaning as the “final solution” had in Hitler's jargon. The false purpose of denazification is brought in to justify the annihilation of a country, the extermination of men, women and children, wanton destruction of hospitals and homes, rape and murder of innocent citizens, and starving survivors of long-distance bombing to death. Putin's “special military operation” is far worse than a war, as it aims at the extermination of the state and the very people of Ukraine.

His evil intent is **the return of radical evil** of the kind that Europe experienced before, during the twentieth century – under German Nazism and Soviet Communism. The evil ideology which the KGB developed during totalitarian communism, is now being practiced by the FSB under Putin, with the blessing of the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church. Putin's war against Ukraine originated in the mind of a person whose leadership was described as a reli-

³³⁰ Tsar and Kaiser both stand for Caesar. Cf. Chapter 4 *supra*.

gious miracle by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is important to realize that the KGB (FSB) ideology of holy Russia has a long history, as we could read already in Chapter 2 on the Grand Inquisitor and in Chapter 5 supra, on the East-West Schism and the ideology of Moscow as the Third Rome. That ideology was revived in the nineteenth century in the many debates and arguments between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles.³³¹

Radical Evil Reclaimed

“The problem of evil will be the fundamental question of post-war intellectual life in Europe,” I previously quoted Hannah Arendt saying. Being at war again, a fundamental question is coming back with a vengeance. We Europeans did not really deal with this fundamental question, except as one for remembering a bygone, surmounted past. As a consequence, Europe and the West failed to recognize the radical evil in the way Vladimir Putin decided to deal with the Soviet/Russian past, that is, in the way of the KGB/FSB.

The Okhrana, the NKVD, the KGB and the FSB have always been the institutionalization of radical evil: standing above the law, omnipresent, criminal and all-powerful, even outside Russia, as we could read in Catherine Belton’s *Putin’s People*³³². Putin and his people were trained and formed by the institution in which the fundamental question of evil does not exist. In terms of method and purpose, the Putin Regime simply prolongates what was learned through the KGB. For them, it does not matter what for. The KGB promoted atheist communist ideology the same way Putin’s people now promote the “Orthodox Christian’s Russian World.” Radical evil is back indeed.

It Concerns All European Christians

We deliberately write “reclaimed.” The evil, as Hannah Arendt explained, is not just a Russian problem, but a basic problem of Europe’s Christian heritage throughout the ages. Disenfranchisement happened to the barbarians in Roman times, to the Jews and heretics throughout many centuries in Christian

³³¹ Cf. Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe. A Study in Identity and International Relations*. London and New York 1996.

³³² Catharine Belton, *Putin’s People*.

Europe, to slaves and the slave trade, in so-called ethnic cleansing, the transfer of peoples after the wars in the twentieth century and to immigrants and refugees today.

Disfranchisement of the natives in countries colonized by Europe’s Christian powers, was common practice: there were the Spanish *Conquistadores* in Latin America, the treatment of Indians in North America, the Dutch in Indonesia and the Antilles, the Belgian King Leopold II in so-called “free Congo,” widespread violence in the colonies of France, Germany and the British Empire, and in the colonization of Asia by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Genocide was practiced long before the term was invented.

The Grand Inquisitor³³³ told Jesus that we are not working with Thee but with him, that is, the wise and dread spirit, whose three questions – called temptations in the Gospel – themselves were the real stupendous miracle. He stands model for much that could and can be recognized throughout Christian Europe’s history. Turn the stones into bread and mankind will be grateful and obedient? Yes, indeed. Today we call it “economic growth” or the dictatorship of economic values. Craving for universal unity? Yes, the dreams of Empire and a universal religion. Expansionism and evangelization too often were close together since the Roman Empire became a Christian Empire.

“**Post-war** in Europe” stood for the illusion of “never again war” in Europe after two devastating world wars. We were wrong. Waging war has been and remains standard practice in Christian Europe. Apart from the Cold War until 1990, there were the Chechen wars, the wars in former Yugoslavia, the wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the war with Georgia. Vladimir Putin began his war against Ukraine in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. Full invasion of Ukraine followed on 24 February 2022. His war against Ukraine, Europe, and the West in fact began in the year 2000; his nuclear threats came with the full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The original sin of the Christian Churches, I wrote previously, is the rise of political theology in the Ecumenical Councils of the fourth century, with their

³³³ Chapter 2, A Prophetic Voice, supra

sources in dreams of Empire and universal Christianity. In other words, “the two incalculably fruitful convictions: that a human empire might be global; and that the power of an all-good God might be universal.”³³⁴ These were the convictions of the monotheist religions of Christianity and the Islam. The symphony of power is the Russian Orthodox variant of the original sin of the Christian Churches; the Pope’s infallibility and supremacy the Roman Catholic variant; and the Islamic State and Shiite Iran, the Islamic variants.

Probably the most persistent and engrained evils from which Christian Europe must be delivered are the practice of organized forgetting and the dream of a Christian Empire.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, radical totalitarian evil can happen **again**. When it goes unpunished, unrepented, unredeemed and unremembered, its evil will roam the world forever.

Evil is committed by human beings. Satan works through them. For those who wield power, Guardini warned us in his fourth and final danger: “Nothing corrupts purity of character and the lofty qualities of the soul more than power. To wield power that is neither determined by moral responsibility nor curbed by respect for the person results in the destruction of all that is human in the wielder himself.” This is what happened to the young KGB officer Putin in Dresden, who began the robbing of Russian assets and ended up as Russia’s president, waging a genocidal war against fellow-orthodox, brother country Ukraine. The path of evil, from which we must pray to be delivered, is such power, bound to evolve from bad to worse, into radical evil. Many of us Europeans bear a heavy responsibility for allowing the occurrence of such paths of evil, again and again throughout two millennia of European Christianity, by not daring to be “signs of contradiction.”

³³⁴ Tom Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword, The Battle for Global Empire and the end of the ancient world*. Little Brown 2012 at p. 30-58.

PART III

SIGNS OF

CONTRADICTION

CHAPTER 8

A CHRISTIAN FAMILY: A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION?³³⁵

“God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’ (...) That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.”(Gen.1,27-28;2,24)

“The importance and centrality of the family with regard to the person and society is repeatedly underlined by Sacred Scripture. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (*Gen 2:18*). From the texts that narrate the creation of man (cf. *Gen 1:26-28, 2:7-24*) there emerges how — in God’s plan — the couple which constitutes “the first form of communion between persons.” Eve is created like Adam as the one who, in her otherness, completes him (cf. *Gen 2:18*) in order to form with him “one flesh” (*Gen 2:24*; cf. *Mt 19:5-6*)[459]. At the same time, both are involved in the work of procreation, which makes them co-creators with the Creator: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (*Gen 1:28*). The family is presented, in the Creator’s plan, as “the *primary place of ‘humanization’* for the

³³⁵ This chapter is drawn from a booklet, we wrote for children and grandchildren, entitled: *Become What You Are*. In Dutch and in English, 2015. Commercial edition in Dutch in 2017.

person and society” and the “cradle of life and love.”³³⁶

The way to become a true sign of contradiction begins in the family.

Based on love.

In the wisdom of God’s order, the love between man and woman is meant to be the foundation for our human participation in God’s continuing work of creation. In marriage, you will be a link in the chain of generations God allows to come and go to His glory; you are given a place of responsibility towards the world and humanity.³³⁷

Matrimony and family belong to the core of the wisdom of God’s order. Jesus, who came to us to complete the Torah and to restore the order of God’s wisdom, lived for thirty years in His family, “where he progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and man” (Lk 2,52).

When asked about divorce, His answer was crystal clear: “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” They said to him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Mt. 19, 4-8).

Love between man and wife is the foundation upon which a family is to be built. They must try to make it visible and perceptible to their children through joy, tenderness and forgiveness. Love can be passed on by example only. In Goethe’s well known fairytale, it was said: “O my friend!” continued he, turning to the old Man, and looking at the three statues; ‘glorious and secure

³³⁶ From: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*.

³³⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ‘Traupredigt aus der Zelle, Mai 1943.’ In: *Widerstand und Ergebung*. Gütersloh 1951 In English: Wedding Homily from prison.

is the kingdom of our fathers; but thou hast forgotten the fourth power, which rules the world, earlier, more universally, more certainly, the power of Love.’ With these words, he fell upon the lovely maiden’s neck; she had cast away her veil, and her cheeks were tinged with the fairest, most imperishable red. Here the old Man said with a smile: ‘Love does not rule; but it trains, and that is more.’”³³⁸

Hardness of hearts in a broken world

The Story of the Fall of Man in Chapter 3 of Genesis tells us how man and woman broke the order of God’s wisdom. The story is not history but a paradigmatic story about the condition of mankind in order to talk about- and learn from it.

Rivalry enters between husband and wife, between parents and children, and among the children in the very heart of the family, as the story of Cain and Abel makes clear. Rivalry confounds and separates. Obedience becomes confused with submission, responsibility with domination. Whoever feels too dependent seeks refuge in liberation ideologies. Whoever dominates becomes inclined to repression and adultery. Fallen man also is inclined to separate what was united in the wisdom of God’s order. Against creative love arises love as passion only.³³⁹ Against the very Christian culture of life arises the modern secular culture of death, as we can read in the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* of Pope John-Paul II. Daily reality for the family has become an ongoing battle between the order of God’s wisdom and the disorder of evil.

The Sacrament of Matrimony.

It is in the context of this ongoing battle that the Catholic Church offers the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony – a sacrament to bless, support, and sustain her families. The Sacrament is not just something given in the past – on our wedding day. It is meant to be the beginning of a lifelong support line for the couple, the parents, and the children. It is also a Covenant between man, woman, and God. With the Sacrament of Matrimony a new life begins, based as it

³³⁸ From the English Translation by Thomas Carlyle: *The Fairytale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*.

³³⁹ Cf. Denis de Rougemont, *L’amour et l’Occident*.

is on a personal choice by mutual consent in which love is destined to grow. The new life also needs the Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation when forgiveness is needed.

Forgiving Each Other.

In our broken world, the family is the place *par excellence*, the school of preference for learning conversion and forgiveness. Forgiving and joy go together in the family. The Lord's Prayer and the Holy Mary are the first two prayers to teach our children: "forgive us our trespassers as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Forgiving includes giving. When we manage to forgive or ask to be forgiven – often after quite an inner struggle – we extend new life and a new joy to each other. It strengthens and deepens our mutual love and heals our own heart. Forgiving must not be reserved for major failures and sins only, but it should be daily practice in small failures as well. For example: "I am sorry, I did not listen well to you when you came home;" or "forgive me, I was too quick in my judgment." Forgiving means renewed freedom and joy to continue together, and never go to bed before having forgiven each other.

Suffering and joy in the family.

Many families have their share and their experience in suffering. The Cross of suffering – illness, death, physical or mental handicap, broken families, and derailed children – is bound to occur in many homes. Under the Cross of Jesus, no suffering is meaningless. The Cross is pointing to heaven. A family united around the Cross in prayer after all can become an even better school for humanity. Sorrow, suffering, and setbacks might foster deeper humanity and greater mildness. It can become a blessing for the whole family to see the patience and care of father, mother and children in coping with each other's suffering. There will be days, of course, one feels lost as if in a desert and on the point of giving up. Still, we can learn to bear suffering together and to pray the Lord for help, confident that He will give us the strength we need.

The family a school of humanity.

Fathers and mothers equally bear primary responsibility for making the family a school of humanity. Living in a broken and imperfect world, actual family life is continuously under the threat of evil. The decision in favor of the good and against evil is made in the "inner sanctuary," the moral conscience of every human person. Moral conscience is formed in the family, the "inner sanctuary" of society. On our own, we are unable to overcome our weaknesses. When we open our hearts to God's Word, He will guide our feet to walk the way He laid out before us. As fathers, mothers, and families, we are therefore called upon to pray together to approach the mission given to the family in the wisdom of God's order.

As Christians, we have a sacred duty to remain a sign of contradiction, to defend and promote the family, as defined in our Christian creed and in article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are never allowed to give up or to look at the decline of the family as irreversible. As Olivier Clément³⁴⁰ wrote, ours is a religion of the person, of communion, of liberty and of the transfiguration of the earth. We can no longer count on the state or the law-maker to impose moral norms. We ourselves must bear witness to the ethics of charity and creation, as an appeal and an example to follow.

The wisdom of God's order.

In the wisdom of God's order, man and woman, husband and wife are fundamentally equal, fundamentally united, until death separates them, and entrusts them with the mission to participate in His work of creation. Equality and unity are the foundations upon which to realize God's mission for the family.

Equality.

Throughout human history, actual family life - too often and too consistently - has contradicted the fundamental equality of husband and wife. Obedience

³⁴⁰ In : *La Révolte de l'Esprit*. Editions Stock, 1979. Olivier Clément is an orthodox theologian.

to God's wisdom served as argument for a hierarchically organized society in which spiritual and temporal leaders claimed higher authority derived from God, and husbands required their wives and children to be subservient to themselves. The argument reflects our broken world in which rivalry for power has replaced complementarity of tasks. It should not be so in a community of love and joy, which is the family.

To those who write or read treatises on the disintegration of extended families and the devaluation of family in society, we say: don't be discouraged but look at the many examples where God's wisdom is practiced daily. In modern, democratic, and more egalitarian societies, there is also a growing awareness of the fundamental dignity and equality of every human person. For us fathers, this awareness needs to be applied in our own families. As Marian Wright Edelman³⁴¹ writes: "We need to teach our children that all honest work is a source of dignity and to view helping at home and in whatever setting they find themselves as expected and desirable. This is equally important for boys as well as girls. Household chores must not be seen just as mother's or sister's work. Superman needs to share responsibilities and excel at home as well as in the workplace."*

Where mutual support and sharing responsibilities is practiced, rivalry disappears, and one complements the other in common tasks as circumstances require. As Christians, we firmly believe that we need the Revelation of the Bible and the words of Christ to be enlightened about the wisdom of God's Order. As Christians in the Eastern and Western traditions, we share this faith and should preserve this precious, common source of inspiration. We look with great anxiety and sorrow at those countless women, who today suffer abuse, slavery and suppression in our own societies, and on behalf of fundamentalist Islamic rulers.

³⁴¹ Marian Wright Edelman is founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund in the U.S.A. This quotation and the prayers marked with * are from her book : *Guide My Feet. Prayers and Meditations For Our Children*. Harper Perennial, 1996.

Unity.

In the wisdom of God's order, the mission of the family to be a school of humanity requires the indissoluble bonds of matrimony between one husband and one wife.

"What greater thing is there for human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life - to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting ?"³⁴²

In order to help us approach His wisdom, the Bible and our Christian churches teach engaged couples to prepare themselves carefully, in mutual respect and in purity. They offer the sacrament of holy matrimony to protect and support their unity and they teach the importance of such virtues as faithfulness, mutual care, respect and forgiveness.

We all know how much actual life contradicts the teaching of the Bible and of our Christian churches throughout history. Infidelity and broken marriages are recurrent themes in world literature, though always in terms of trying to understand human weakness.

World literature, however, equally gives beautiful stories of courage and fidelity. In Beethoven's Opera *Fidelio*, Leonore - disguised as Fidelio - saves Florestan's life and sings about "Love combined with courage your freedom will achieve." And Gluck's opera rewrites the tragic Greek myth about *Orpheus and Eurydice* into a story with a happy ending, when the god of love awakens her once more to life and Eurydice sings the moving lines: "Jealousy consumes and devours, but faithfulness restores." Haven't we all learned to cherish faithfulness and courage as eminent virtues to be practiced?

What distinguishes today's society from previous eras is the effort to consign the wisdom of God's order and the teaching of the Bible to oblivion. Contradicting His wisdom is no longer accepted as evidence of a broken world and

³⁴² George Eliot, *Silas Marner*. (Novel).

human weakness, but elevated to become the guiding principle for man's liberation and self-fulfillment.

Children.

Children are a gift of God to husband and wife, and a gift of them to each other. "Thank you, God, for Your never-ceasing love and inexhaustible well of hope through the gift of children... Help us to be worthy of Your and their love." Through such prayers, the foundations are laid for the family as a community of love and for its vocation to be the sanctuary of life and a school of humanity. In order to realize this vocation, parents must teach their children to pray. As we read in the *Book of Deuteronomy*: "You shalt love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day, teach them to your children, and talk about them when you are at home, when you are walking by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and let them be a symbol between your eyes. Inscribe them on the door posts of your home and on your gates." (6,5-9)

Those who pray together, stay together. In the family's schools of humanity, the parent teachers are at their best when they teach through the example they give. Their example in life is more important than words. When parents pray, children will learn to pray. When parents are honest, children will learn honesty. When parents are kind to each other, our children will learn kindness. When we are faithful, our children will learn to be faithful. When we give love, our children will learn true love. When we are united, our children will grow up in self-confidence. When we parents are at home, says the Lord, we must talk about the words which He commanded.

In modern families, where both parents have a job, is there anybody at home, when the children return from school with their questions and their sorrows from a bad school day? Or are both of them still busy excelling in their workplace? True, both father and mother are entitled to have a job, and often they must both work to earn a living for the family.

Home.

When they come home, do fathers share the household chores with their spouses, or do they hide behind a laptop or newspaper, in front of the TV, or worse? Maybe both parents are too tired and too irritated to have any interest in the day of their children. Empty homes, careless, sometimes cruel fathers, and quarreling parents are the curses of modern family life. Homes become prisons to flee, and the child loses his moorings to end up in drugs, gambling and crime. Many problems of modern society are born in empty, loveless homes. The solution of these problems must begin at home; loving homes, where children feel secure and receive attention, respect, encouragement and tenderness. In our modern homes another prayer might be in order:

"God help us to shut off the television and radio and computer and phone so that we can communicate with each other. Help us to be silent like Elijah so we can hear your still, small voice within." ³⁴³

TV and social media intrude on family-life, inhibit attention for others, and shut off communication in the family. Hours of passive watching or gaming are replacing the precious moments of togetherness around the family dinner table for quiet talk and exchange of the day's experiences.... and the precious moments of working together, playing games or playing music. A family is a community of love. Among the members of the family, principles other than competition, individual success, or individual income should apply.

When both parents work to make a living for the family, they do so either by necessity or by choice. It may be that both parents must accept any job in order to assure the basic needs for the family, which is the bottom line. It may also be that both parents decide to have a job in order to fulfill all kinds of desires for themselves and/or their children.

In the first circumstance, there is little choice and much hardship. It is of great importance that hardship is equally shared between parents and with their children, whether in shopping or household chores - and that such hardship

³⁴³ Marian Wright Edelman, *op.cit*

will not only fall upon the mothers. It is equally important that there is openness regarding the family finances and equality between husband and wife in dealing with them.

Priorities.

In Homer's *Iliad*, there is a moving scene in which the Trojan hero Hector says goodbye to his wife and infant son before going to battle the Greeks. Taking his boy in his arms, he prays to the gods, asking: "Someday let the Trojans say of him, he is better than his father." Translating Hector to our present, we should say: we want our children to have a better education than we had. Investing our money in their education should be given priority over, say, buying a new car for ourselves or making a holiday trip to far-away places.

Attention.

The attention and love our children need is more important than to buy the things our children want. So, we should work out a job-schedule by which at least one of us can be at home when our children come home from school.

Restraint.

It is good to teach children – by example – a family economy of self-restraint and sobriety. Try to keep our daily meals simple and reserve special treats for Sundays and festive occasions, and add special joy to these special days.

Solidarity.

Again by example, we can teach our children a family economy of solidarity with children who are less fortunate than they are. If we can afford to give them the toys they like, they should give some of these toys to children in need, and we all can learn to spend less on our desires and more on charity.

Sharing.

As a family enjoying togetherness and some affluence, it is good to share those gifts with others. The doors of our homes should be open to other children to join us in our meals and in playing with our children.

Recycling.

When radio, TV, Internet or household equipment breaks down, try to repair them rather than just throw them out and buy new ones. It works nicely in two ways: we learn the joy of working together and we learn to deal responsibly with the finite goods of this world. Our commitment to the family as a school of humanity, indeed, finds its expression also in day-to-day decisions

Commitment.

We must continuously renew our commitment as fathers and mothers to respond with all our hearts and all our minds to the invitation of Jesus in His words: "Let the children come to me." Jesus' invitation summarizes the primary responsibility of Christian parents. They are called upon to nourish the seed of faith in their children so that they can grow into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. We all want our children to succeed; we all want them to avoid our errors and do better.

With the example of our virtues and our mistakes, our children can become better than their parents. They can be proud of us, when – for their sake – we have the courage of our convictions and don't waver under social pressure, when we stay our course regardless of the fashion of the day, and when we ourselves can ask for forgiveness for our mistakes.

Making our families a school of humanity is the fruit of a personal commitment; it is not the outcome of laws or governmental policies. Commitment to our families can change society. "Jesus will bless any parent who makes sincere and humble efforts. He loves building up family life and making it into a heal-

ing and strengthening sacrament for the world.”³⁴⁴ In His wisdom, God looks upon the family as the inner sanctuary and the primary community of love in human society. Through our commitment, the family can indeed be an instrument of peace: “to sow love where there is hatred, - to grant pardon where there is injury, - to foster unity where there is discord, - to be faithful where there is doubt, - to live in truth where there is error, - to show compassion where there is suffering - and to give hope where there is despair.”³⁴⁵

The family as vital cell in society.

My spouse and I grew up during the German wartime occupation, from May 1940 to May 1945, followed by the post-war period of reconstruction. American Marshall Aid came to an end in 1952, when I entered university. In the Netherlands, it was a period in which the Christian and Catholic Churches kept their strong identity both in faith and in social organization.

The sixties were an era of change. School education became an issue of national policy. Catholic- and other denominational schools were to be treated on the same terms as public schools. Financial advantage was obtained at the price of government control. Dutch society changed to an open and pluralist democracy in which Christian churches began to lose their own identity. We could no longer be sure that Catholic schools still offered Catholic teaching. As a vital cell, our catholic families had to renew their deepest commitment to be signs of contradiction. Such commitment obliges us to bear witness to the unique and irreplaceable task of the family in bringing up and forming our children, in particular with respect to education in the faith, family education, and questions relating to the right to life; subjects for frequent discussion, learning and reading in the family.

A Sign of contradiction.

In the Netherlands, as in the other countries of Europe and North America,

³⁴⁴ Adapted from: *The Word Among Us. A Daily Approach to Prayer & Scripture*. Meditation for Saturday, August 14, 1999, on Mathew 19:13-15.

³⁴⁵ Adapted from a prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.

law and policy since the Second World War are steadily moving away from the teaching of the Gospel and the magisterium of the Church on matters of marriage, family, and life.

In a way we are all – in the West, as in the former communist states – victims of a kind of *Newspeak* introduced to us as the language of progress. This language of progress has its origin in the philosophies of progress of the nineteenth century, and is meant to make certain things literally unthinkable. The legalisation of abortion, for instance, was prepared in this way. The unborn child was reduced to a foetus or a tissue, mother’s and father’s responsibility for the child were reduced to the mother’s right of privacy, and abortion itself came to be called “interruption” or “termination” of pregnancy. For most people, it has become literally unthinkable that the issue is homicide. The moving away happened in stages. It began with the distribution of the pill. The pill disconnected intercourse from its intended aim of creating life. Henceforward, intercourse became possible without consequences or mutual commitment.

It continued with the legalisation of abortion; in the United States in 1973, with the Supreme Court Judgement in *Roe v. Wade*, and in the Netherlands through the adoption by Parliament in 1981 of the Law with respect to the interruption of pregnancy. Christian politicians justified their support for the law with the argument that the new law would end illegal abortions and prevent full legitimization. Reality would turn out to be different. A lawmaker or judge who legalizes abortion in so doing promotes moral acceptance of selective homicide. Abortion practice with respect to children with possible Down Syndrome has made it very clear. At the same time, the legalisation of abortion facilitated the legalisation of euthanasia. In the Netherlands, a law to that effect was adopted in 2001, with the same arguments of the Christian politicians and the same consequences.

Parallel to the pill and abortion, runs the destruction of marriage and family as defined in the Catholic Church. “The family, in fact, is born of the intimate communion of life and love founded on the marriage between one man and one woman. It possesses its own specific and original social dimension, in that it is the principal place of interpersonal relationships, *the first and vital cell of*

society. The family is a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order.”³⁴⁶

It must be made clear from the text quoted that marriage and family are not just institutions of positive law that can be defined, deleted, or amended by a majority in parliament. The task of lawmakers is to recognize the fundamental human right to marriage and family and to protect these rights. As article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated:

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution;
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

The drafters of the 1948 Declaration had good reasons to include article 16. The Declaration was adopted in response to the “disregard and contempt for human rights [that] have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.” The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century saw it as their principal objectives to destroy the faith and the family as the natural unit in society. They knew that faith and the family were the principal barriers to total rule over human beings.

The special protection offered to marriage and family in European and Western law was clearly the outcome of the Gospel and the Teaching of the Church. Thanks to them and to Canon Law, the pagan customs of polygamy, concubines, arranged marriages and the repression of women had gradually been replaced by monogamy, marriage for life and mutual consent between the spouses.

The profound tragedy of our times is that our democratic majorities intro-

³⁴⁶ Catechism, par. 1601; Compendium par. 211.

duced the right to divorce by mutual consent and “redefined” marriage and family in such a way that there is no longer anything left for special protection. In the European Union, civil law of most member states and judge-made law in the United States, the right to marry has been “modernized” so as to include partnerships and same-sex unions. Such modernization of language is another example of “Newspeak” as explained in George Orwell’s 1984.

As a consequence, every true Christian family in our society is, by definition, a sign of contradiction. It thus raises the important question as to how we can responsibly educate and form our children and grandchildren to stay the course despite adversity.

A vital sign of contradiction

In more and more countries, governments prescribe “sex education” at school and at a very young age. It is up to the parents to resist, and in any case to give family education at home before it comes at school. In this way, we parents continue to be their points of reference. What they learn at school comes home as their questions to us parents. Parents should join forces with other parents and will find out that many schoolteachers don’t like the material they get from official sources. Being a sign of contradiction is not a condition but a mission. Talking about it will strengthen their confidence in us parents as their points of reference.

The strength of good sense.

The strength of good sense springs from three sources: the example of our parents, practicing our faith, and a vibrant and critical mind. The strength itself is a gift of God.

As Holy Pope John-Paul II wrote:

The teaching of the Council emphasizes, on the one hand, the role of human reason in discovering and applying the moral law: the moral life calls

for that creativity and originality typical of the person, the source and cause of his own deliberate acts. On the other hand, reason draws its own truth and authority from the eternal law, which is none other than divine wisdom itself. At the heart of the moral life we thus find the principle of a “rightful autonomy” of man, the personal subject of his actions. The moral law has its origin in God and always finds its source in him: at the same time, by virtue of natural reason, which derives from divine wisdom, it is a properly human law. Indeed, as we have seen, the natural law “is nothing other than the light of understanding infused what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation”. The rightful autonomy of the practical reason means that man possesses in himself his own law, received from the Creator. Nevertheless, the autonomy of reason cannot mean that reason itself creates values and moral norms.³⁴⁷

There were few training programs in our younger days for performing our most important task in life, the upbringing of children. We tried to follow the good examples of our beloved parents. Good traditions are worth keeping and being passed on, also in our age; not blindly but with good sense and adaptation to new circumstances. As someone remarked, tradition is the living faith of previous generations, traditionalism is the dead faith of the present generation. The examples of our parents and grandparents continue to be worthwhile. They are neither obsolete, nor outdated or bygone. Tradition is a source of insight, experience, and knowledge to be cherished. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel in every new parents’ generation.

As I wrote already, our own youth coincided with war and occupation, followed by recovery. Austerity was our style of life, born from necessity in the era of an economy of scarcity. Still, such a way of life can be deemed morally and physically healthy. We tried to hold on to it, also in time of affluence. Yet, wartime experiences continue to mark us; we still thoroughly dislike fireworks, noise, and loud sound.

Practicing virtues.

Practicing virtues is meant to focus ourselves and our family on the ultimate

³⁴⁷ From Chapter 2, paragraph 40 in his magnificent Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*.

destiny of life to come home to the House of the Lord. Virtues don’t emerge by themselves but must be learned. It is up to parents to introduce their children in the natural and moral order, called the Order of God’s Wisdom.³⁴⁸ From the education to practice virtues one can learn two lessons. The first one is that the ‘vertical’ family bond, from parents to children and grandchildren, is the qualifying one for transmitting virtues and norms and for forming the conscience. The second one is that praying regularly must also be taught in the family. Whoever is praying only when he feels like doing it, will soon stop praying altogether. Regular prayer is helpful to overcome insipid periods. After some time, you are bound to feel unhappy when you fail to do so. As we saw already, different stages in the life of our children demand changing approaches. Education as such never ends; even between us as parents, it continues for life.

Criticism

According to some new insights in psychology, discipline and parental guidance were no longer considered appropriate. Children had to be given freedom to develop self-esteem and to indicate what they needed or wanted themselves. The baby must be fed whenever he cries. The play pen has to go. It is their own decision, later on, whether to come to Holy Mass on Sunday or not, and whether or not to sit up straight at dinner. No longer teach children to speak their mother tongue properly; parents must speak their child’s language.

Our good sense tells us that children who are given such freedoms get terribly bored and become impossible brats. They get disoriented, and lose ambition in life and attention for others. Recent research done by Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierney showed that such modern, new insights from psychology had disastrous consequences for bringing up children. The maxim above their chapter on “Raising Strong Children: Self-esteem versus Self-Control,” rightly states: “Brats are not born. They are made.”³⁴⁹

Self-esteem and self-righteousness breed egoists. We shall come back to the family virtues to be taught later. Maintaining our good sense, however, obliges

³⁴⁸ Marie-Dominique Philippe, *Au Coeur de l’Amour. Entretiens sur l’amour, le mariage et la famille*. Fayard 1987.

³⁴⁹ Roy F. Baumeister & John Tierney, *Willpower. Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. The Penguin Press 2011. Chapter 9.

us to keep our mind alert and critical, and our eyes wide open to what is being written, argued, and proclaimed in the world around us. To be a sign of contradiction, as is our mission in this world, requires faith and reason.

Keep mind and spirit alive and alert!

We were just married in the first year of the turbulent 'sixties' of the twentieth century. The City of Amsterdam had its Provo's (1965). The University of California in Berkeley had its student revolts (1964), spreading thereafter to universities throughout the Western world. In contrast to the first decades of this century, revolts and demonstrations were leftwing in the 1960s.

It was the decade in which President John F. Kennedy (1963), his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King (1968) were assassinated. There were wars in Vietnam, the Middle-East, and North Africa. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 brought the two superpowers to the brink of nuclear war.

In our Europe, we lived through a long crisis in European unification, and through the Prague Spring in the "East" and the May 1968 Student revolt in Paris. During this turbulent decade, our family grew from two to eight and I was appointed to be a professor in international and European law. What happened in Paris, Prague, and the Cold War had an impact on us as well.

We critically followed what was being argued and proclaimed. In the decade of the seventies, we talked about it with our children, who were then becoming teenagers.

Paris and Prague stood for two antipodal developments in the history of ideas. The Paris student revolt of May 1968 grew out to nationwide workers strikes and a serious political crisis in France. The revolt itself was inspired by extreme and anarchistic ideas of freedom. They, the students, proclaimed a sexual revolution and admired Mao Tse Tung in China, Fidel Castro in Cuba, and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. They revolted against a caricature of the Western (capitalist) world. The revolt lacked any clear purpose and was inspired by Marxist philosophy. They called themselves neo-Marxists. Their ideology degenerated

into terrorism such as the Red Brigades in Italy and the *Baader Meinhoff* group in West Germany. Strangely but significantly, neo-Marxism began as a counter-culture and thereafter became the prevailing philosophy in the social sciences of American-, and many West European Universities.³⁵⁰

The ideal of the Prague Spring was very different. They wanted to create 'Socialism with a Human Face,' in opposition to Soviet bureaucratic repression. For a few months, Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia became a free, lively, and vibrant country, until Soviet tanks crushed the ideal with the August 1968 invasion. Marxist ideology died with the crushed ideal of freedom. Communist Eastern Europe entered an era of repression, disbelief and civil resistance, strongest in Poland. In 1989, the so-called 'Socialist Commonwealth' of Moscow collapsed.

The Second Vatican Council, meeting in Rome from 1963 to 1965, profoundly changed the appearance of our Roman Catholic Church. The election of Cardinal Roncalli to become Pope John XXIII in 1958 and his decision to call the Second Vatican Council were a source of hope and liberation from fear in our faith. We felt very involved with what happened in the Council from 1963-1965.³⁵¹ We saw the *aggiornamento* or renewal of the Church as a sign of hope.

The Cold War era from 1947 to 1989 dominated a substantial part of our lives as children, students, professionals, and parents. For a long time we were made to think that it was going to last forever and since the Cuban Missile crisis, we began to nurture illusions of *détente* between East and West. The new ideas, originating from the sixties, wanted us to look at the United States and the Soviet Union as equivalent political systems – bureaucratic socialism in Moscow and bureaucratic capitalism in Washington D.C. – engaged in a nuclear arms race and equally dangerous to peace.

This very brief excursion is necessary to understand why the new theories about education, which we referred to above in this chapter, must be challenged by those who want the Christian family to remain as a sign of contradiction. As a family, we tried to belong to church and society with an open mind, with

³⁵⁰ Cf. Paul Hollander, *Decline and Discontent. Communism and the West Today*. Transaction publishers 1992.

³⁵¹ I prepared working papers for the Council through the DOC (Documentation Centre for the Council).

discernment and a receptive spirit and with a healthy sense of self-criticism. We looked at theories of education and current social fashions with skepticism and we did not run after them. We were aware of our worth and weaknesses. We tried to maintain our strength of good sense, while challenging value-relativism in society and seclusion within our catholic communities.

As Pope John-Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortium* (On the Role of the Christian Family) of 22 November 1982:

The education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced. Modern culture must be led to a more profoundly restored covenant with divine Wisdom. Every man is given a share of such Wisdom through the creating action of God. And it is only in faithfulness to this covenant that the families of today will be in a position to influence positively the building of a more just and fraternal world.

No values but virtues

In the first part of his book on the tragedy of atheistic humanism, Henri de Lubac explained that God, for Nietzsche, no longer was a “Being” independent of human thought, but instead no more than a category of human thought. God could live only in human conscience and had to be eliminated from it. Nietzsche’s Superman (Übermensch) could live only after having declared the death of the Christian God.³⁵²

Beyond Good and Evil?

Until Nietzsche, value was a measure, a mathematical rather than a moral category. One spoke of the value of a property (to be expressed in monetary terms), of the estimated price for a good, value-added tax, the exchange value of a

³⁵² Henri de Lubac, *Le Drame de l’humanisme athée*. Oeuvres complètes. II. CERF Paris 2002. First Part, first chapter, par. III.

currency, as the precise meaning of a word, or in art as the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. It was Nietzsche who initiated a new way of speaking about values, primarily to move mankind beyond categories of good and evil as taught through the Christian faith. He did most clearly so, after *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Antichrist*: “What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself. What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power is growing, that resistance is overcome.”³⁵³

I quoted Nietzsche, to underline the astonishing and insufficiently noticed phenomenon, rightly exposed by Allan Bloom, that “there is now an entirely new language of good and evil, in an attempt to get “beyond good and evil” and preventing us from talking with any conviction about good and evil anymore. Even those who deplore our current moral condition do so in the very language that exemplifies that condition. The new language is that of *value* relativism, and it constitutes a change in our views of things moral and political as great as the one that took place when Christianity replaced Greek and Roman paganism.” It is much easier to reduce the tension between values than the tension between good and evil. “The term “value” meaning the radical subjectivity of all belief about good and evil, serves the easy-going quest for comfortable self-preservation.” Use of the value language, however, leads us in two opposite directions – “to follow the line of least resistance, and to adopt strong poses and fanatic resolutions.”³⁵⁴ Freud and Weber – both profoundly influenced by Nietzsche – “are the immediate source of most of the language with which we are so familiar”³⁵⁵ according to Bloom. Values have thus taken the place of good and evil. They are purely subjective and relative. Their possible number is unlimited. They are preferences to pursue rather than norms or standards of behaviour to observe, but they can be imposed by force. All it needs is the will and the power to do so. Allan Bloom wrote his book, before the collapse of communism, about the intellectual state of the American Union. What he wrote is still relevant today.

³⁵³ Quotations are from *The Antichrist* as translated by W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. In *The Portable Nietzsche*. The Viking Press 1954. The term “moraline” means hypocritical moral opinions.

³⁵⁴ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind. How Higher Education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today’s students*. New York 1987 at p. 141,142,143.

³⁵⁵ On p. 148..

Despite the “Spirit of Solidarity” that brought down communism, the new language of value relativism spread like a wildfire across America and Europe (East and West) after 1989. Its use, indeed, leads in two opposite directions. On the one hand, we often take the line of least resistance when accepting different Chinese, Asian or Islamic values in discussions on human rights. On the other hand, secularists tend to adopt strong stances and fanatic resolutions against Christian moral principles and practices.

Ideas have consequences, indeed. Still, honesty forces us to admit that the ideas of philosophers, too often, have been sources of confusion rather than living sources for action. Nietzsche specifically belongs to the forerunners of the totalitarian ideologies of evil. Nazism and Communism were intrinsically atheist and anti-Christian. For us, it is a bitter irony that our democratic secularists in Europe and in America follow in the footsteps of the ideologies of evil, despite the fact that Nazism perished and the Soviet Empire collapsed; the latter as the outcome of the profoundly Christian, spiritual and non-violent revolution in Poland and the other Central and East European states. The secularists found great support in the post-1989 dictatorship of economic values. The power of the “market” and the ideology of economic growth gave prime of place to the value of competition, not only on the market but equally in public policy and even inside our families.³⁵⁶ In the “Newspeak” of value relativism, virtue is a forgotten concept. In this chapter, we shall try to explain what we mean by “virtue” and why learning virtues should have pride of place in bringing up children in our Christian families. Respect for moral limits to be observed in the “market” depends on family virtues learned at home.

Virtues!

Christian families are called upon to lead a virtuous life. The principal task as parents in bringing up our children is to lead and teach them in learning and practicing virtues.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Jonathan Sachs, *The Dignity of Difference. How to avoid the clash of civilizations*. London 2002.

What is a Virtue?

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil.4,8). This beautiful quotation from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians opens article 7 in the Catholic Catechism on Virtues. It is followed by a definition of virtues: “A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. (...) The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.”³⁵⁷

Virtues are named and distinguished in a variety of ways. The Catechism distinguishes between the human, cardinal or moral virtues “acquired by human effort” and the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity “infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.”

The four human virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance are “acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts.” The four originated in Greek philosophy – i.e. Plato and Aristotle – upon which Thomas Aquinas built his treatise on virtues.

As is written in the Catechism, the human virtues “are purified and elevated by divine grace.” In reality much more is happening to them as Gregory of Nyssa’s quote already indicates. According to the Catechism, “the human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature,” and “Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.” Also, “Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: ‘So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity.’” (1Cor.13,13)

³⁵⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church. Par. 1803. Last sentences from Gregory of Nyssa, Church Father.

The theological virtues, charity in particular, transmute the object of virtue from “the good” to God Himself, that is to say, from an abstract ideal to the living triune God.

As Jacques Maritain explained: “They do not figure in the Aristotelian list of virtues [prudence, justice, fortitude, moderation]. It was St. Paul who named them, and who, in a singular reversal of values, gave precedence over the powerful cardinal virtues to interior dispositions -- adherence of the intellect to an object which is not seen, confidence in one more powerful than oneself, love -- which in the purely human order were too humble to constitute virtues, but which in the divine order, and because they are directed toward God Himself, are henceforward recognized to be the virtues *par excellence*: “[..] “The vainglory of Man is dethroned, and humility, wherein lives the force of God, is exalted. This reversal of values in relation to the perfection of human life, henceforth conceived as the perfection of charity whose working in the soul no obstacle can stop or restrain, is tied up with a similar reversal regarding wisdom and contemplation.”³⁵⁸

From the roots of faith, hope and charity, a true transmutation of human virtues is taking place. The human virtues are removed, so to say, from the strait-jacket of Greek philosophy, to grow into a lovely tree of virtues nourished by charity. At the same time, we are made to realize how much the divine virtue of charity itself is already rooted in the Torah, the first five books of the Holy Bible. Love for one’s neighbor is the foundation for all just legislation and cultural precepts. The question of how to act out that justice to be charity opens our hearts to an unending responsibility to practice virtue.³⁵⁹ As we found out, there is ample place in the tree of virtues for the ten family virtues presented later in this chapter, and for those on which Guardini meditated that lead to God but had often been forgotten.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ In: *Moral Philosophy*, Chapter 5, ‘Christianity and Philosophy. From the Website of the Jacques Maritain Center. Notre Dame University. *Emphasis added*.

³⁵⁹ Arman Abecassis, ‘Droit et Religion dans la société hebraïque,’ *Archives de Philosophie du Droit*.. Tome 38.

³⁶⁰ Romano Guardini, *Learning the Virtues that lead to God*. Sophia Institute Press 1998.

Theory and practice.

No reason, we hope to have explained, for paying separate attention to the four human or cardinal virtues! The cardinal virtues may be of interest for philosophers, but there is not much we can do with them in daily life, except to give them a place on our tree of virtues.

Gratitude, Fidelity, Attention, Respect, Humility, Clarity and Forgiving cannot so easily be squeezed into one of the four cardinal virtues, but are all rooted in the Torah and the three theological virtues. Guardini opens his meditations with the virtue of orderliness, one we consider an essential one in parental teaching and to which we shall come back later. Fidelity, no doubt, is central to marriage. In our family we used to emphasize gratitude, truthfulness, humility and forgiveness.

Humility

“Humility is the foundation of all the virtues; therefore, in a soul where it does not exist there can be no true virtue, but the mere appearance only. In like manner, it is the most proper disposition for all celestial gifts. And, finally, it is so necessary to perfection, that of all the ways to reach it, the first is humility; the second, humility; the third, humility. And if the question were repeated a hundred times, I should always give the same answer,” wrote St. Augustine. The effort to squeeze humility – a Christian virtue *par excellence* – into the cardinal virtue of temperance, is debasing its primary importance.

As St. Vincent Paul wrote: “Humility, which Christ recommended to us both by word and example, ought to include three conditions. First, we are to consider ourselves, in all sincerity, worthy of the contempt of men; secondly, to be glad that others should see what is imperfect in us and what might cause them to despise us; thirdly, when the Lord works any good in us or by our means, to conceal it, if possible, at the sight of our baseness, and if this cannot be done, to ascribe it to the Divine Mercy, and to the merits of others. Whoever shall attain to this humility, happy is he! And to him who shall not attain it, grieves

will never be wanting.”³⁶¹

Readers surely recognize it. For what is done well, we thank the Lord. What we did wrong is our own fault! The virtue of humility has prime of place in the Rule of St. Benedict.

Gratitude

In a society dominated by economic values and claimable individual rights, there is hardly any room left for the virtue of gratitude. All the more reason to teach and learn the virtue in the family. Romano Guardini devotes a separate chapter to the virtue of gratitude, from which we quote: “Gratitude can exist only between an ‘I’ and a ‘thou’.

As soon as the consciousness of the personal quality disappears and the idea of the apparatus prevails, gratitude dies. Gratitude can exist only in the realm of freedom. As soon as there is a “must” or acclaim, gratitude loses its meaning. Gratitude can exist only with reverence. If there is no mutual respect, gratitude perishes and turns to resentment. Giving and thanking, which lift man above the functioning of a machine or the instinct of animals, are really the echo of something divine. For the fact that the world exists and embraces such inexhaustible profusion is not something self-evident; it is because it was willed; it is a deed and a work. Constantly to receive oneself from the hand of God, and to thank Him for this, belongs to the essential being of man, of the real man as he was meant to be.”³⁶²

Humility, Truthfulness, Gratitude and Forgiving are the source of joy in a Christian family.

Virtues belong together.

As human persons, our predisposition to do what is good is not infallible by nature. Virtue needs reason and effort to be fostered. Virtues must be formed through exercise and experience. In bringing up children in virtue, parents have three important tasks to perform: (1) to foster a *habitus*, mental constitu-

tion, or firm habit; (2) to teach them a *basic attitude* with which they learn to act virtuously in a great variety of different settings; and (3) to teach them to live *purposefully*, that is to say: to follow Christ, to pursue the good and to adopt clear purposes for themselves.

In bringing up children, the three belong together as do the various virtues they must learn to practise. There are no virtues on their own and, as Guardini wrote: “The same virtues do not always determine the moral attitude. We might say that the virtues are like constellations which appear in certain epochs and govern the firmament of values and then gradually fade from our sight, giving room to others. (...) They still exercise an influence, because the epochs are not rigidly separated. Nevertheless, they stand no longer in the foreground of moral consciousness. Of course, they may later reappear as a result of the changes that take place in men’s souls throughout the ages.”³⁶³

In the Torah and in the Gospel of Christ, charity is the primary virtue to inspire and order the other virtues. Behind practising every virtue lies the question whether practising it conforms to the love for God and your neighbour. Virtues must be learned and practised in combination. Love must determine in each concrete case how to choose, for instance, between justice and mercy, or between truthfulness and prudence.

The third task for parents is to teach their children to discern between the good to be done and the evil to shun. Against virtue stands vice. Against faith stands unbelief; against hope stands despair, against love stands hatred; and against justice stands injustice. Unfortunately, against the *habitus* of virtue, the *habitus* of vice can also be fostered. Hatred and injustice can become systemic; murder and torture can become normal. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn said in his Nobel Speech “One Word of Truth,” violence is inevitably bound up with the lie.

A virtuous life presupposes love for the truth and a formed and functioning conscience. Truthfulness, reliability, sincerity and honesty are crucial to living in virtue. “A virtue which has suffered great damage in our day is truthfulness,

³⁶¹ Found in “Twelve Catholic Virtues” www.catholictradition.org

³⁶² Guardini, *op.cit.* p. 145, 147, 148.

³⁶³ Guardini, *op.cit.* p. 141.

which, taken in its widest interpretation includes also the love of truth, and the will that truth should be recognized and accepted,” wrote Guardini. Later in the same chapter he adds: “In order that truth may come to life, love must accompany it.(...) So we have two elements which must accompany the desire for truth if the complete virtue is to develop: consideration for the person addressed and courage when truth-telling becomes difficult.” But we must keep in mind that: “All relations of men with each other, the whole life of the community, depend on faithfulness to truth.”³⁶⁴

Truth gives strength to hold on to, honesty gives trust. Truth needs honesty of the human person towards themselves in the first place. There is no better place than the family in which this virtue can be taught and practised.

Forming the conscience of children is the core in bringing up children in the family.

Marginalizing virtue by emphasizing “values,” claimable rights, self-esteem, self-assertion and self-achievement, are part of post-modern society. It is disastrous for education, the formation, and the future of our children. Virtues are meant to lead to God and to organize our social behaviour on the way to our destiny. It is all about love of truth and love of God and of our neighbour, as a standing invitation rather than a heavy burden. Whoever lives in truth and goodness is a joy to others and to themselves.

Itinerary to self-discipline

“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces. A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time

³⁶⁴ Guardini, op. cit. p. 13-17.

to be silent, and a time to speak. A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.” (Ecl. 3, 1-8)

“Ask people to name their greatest personal strengths, and they’ll often credit themselves with honesty, kindness, humor, creativity, bravery, and other virtues- even modesty. But not self-control. It came in dead last among the virtues being studied by researchers who have surveyed more than one million people around the world. Of the two dozen character strengths listed in the researchers’ questionnaire, self-control was the one that people were least likely to recognize in themselves. Conversely, when people were asked about their failings, a lack of self-control was at the top of the list. (...) Virtue was generally enforced by a desire to avoid public disgrace rather than by any zeal to achieve human perfection.” The weakening of willpower, -“all this was *before* the baby boomers came of age in the 1960s with a countercultural mantra of: ‘If it feels good, do it.’ Popular culture kept celebrating self-indulgence for the ‘Me Generation’ of the 1970s, and there were new arguments against willpower from social scientists, whose numbers and influence soared during the late twentieth century. Most social scientists look for causes of misbehavior outside the individual: poverty, relative deprivation, oppression, or other failures of the environment or the economic and the political system.” Only fairly recently, researchers re-discovered that “self-control is a vital strength and key to success in life.”³⁶⁵

The very modest virtue of good order.

It is a welcome bonus, of course, when researchers confirm conclusions already reached with good sense. In his book on virtues, Guardini, quite interestingly, begins his very first chapter on “The Nature of Virtue” with the “very modest virtue of orderliness” – in accordance with good order.

Orderliness “means that a person knows where a thing belongs and what is the proper time for an action, and also what measure is valid in any instance and what is the relation of various matters of life to each other. It indicates a sense of rule and recurrence and a feeling for what is necessary so that a condition or an

³⁶⁵ Roy F. Baumeister & John Tierney, *Willpower. Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. Penguin Press 2011. Quotes from p.2,4,7,8,13.

arrangement may endure. When orderliness becomes a virtue, the person who practices it does not wish to realize it only in a single decision – for instance, if he ought to work and instead would like to do something else, he pulls himself together and does what the occasion requires. Orderliness becomes an attitude of his whole life, a disposition which prevails everywhere and determines not only his personal actions but even his surroundings, so that his whole environment acquires a quality of clarity and reliability. But the virtue of orderliness, in order to be a living thing, must also touch the other virtues. So that life may be ordered in the proper way, this orderliness must not become a yoke, which burdens and constrains; rather it must contribute to growth. Hence it includes a consciousness of what hinders life and what facilitates it. So a personality is rightly ordered if it possesses energy and can overcome itself, but also if it is capable of breaking a rule when, for example, this is necessary to avoid being cramped. A true virtue signifies an ability to penetrate with a glance the whole existence of man.”³⁶⁶ The Virtue of Good Order belongs to the Order of Love and the Order of God’s Wisdom.

The virtue of good order “may be innate; then it comes forth easily and self-evidently from the nature of the person in question.” Such a person should cultivate “his native quality” and develop it “so that it becomes a matter of course which makes existence clear and fair. But he must also guard against degeneration, for an excess of orderliness can make one hard and narrow.” There are also persons “for whom orderliness is not a quality of nature. They are inclined to follow the impulse of the moment, and in consequence their actions lack consistency. They leave off what they have begun because it is boring; they let objects lie as they fell because they are in a hurry to get away. They consider a neat room uncomfortable; to look ahead over the day and apportion it seems to them pedantic.” For them orderliness can only be attained “through their understanding of the fact that it is an indispensable element of life, the life of the person and of the community. They must discipline themselves, begin again after each failure and do battle for orderliness.” For them, the virtue is toilsome and always endangered.

In every virtue, according to Guardini, “there is a possibility of constraint.

³⁶⁶ Romano Guardini, *Virtues*. *Op.cit.* p. 4-5.

Therefor man must become master, even of his virtue, in order to attain to the freedom of the image of God. Virtue extends through the whole of existence, as a harmony which gathers into unity. And it also ascends to God, or rather it descends from Him.”³⁶⁷

The virtue of good order and the virtues we wrote about earlier, belong together. They cannot be practiced in isolation. Still, in our era of the disorder of egoism and individualism, the virtue of good order needs extra attention in our families. Where orderliness has been made into a virtue, practicing other virtues will become less difficult. The virtue of good order itself can be taught and learned more easily together with such virtues as Acceptance, Patience and Asceticism, on which Guardini spoke in three other meditations in his book on Virtues.

Acceptance, Patience and Asceticism

The presupposition for all moral effort is the acceptance “of what is, the acceptance of reality, your own and that of the people around you and of the time in which you live.” You also need patience with yourself. “Perhaps we have realized that we lack self-control.” It is important to recognize it, “but it is first only in our mind, as a thought or a plan. It must be worked out in real life, and that is difficult. We may dream ourselves into a virtue, and how much wishful thinking consists of imaginary virtues! But the dreams vanish and everything is as it was – no, it is worse; fantasy consumes moral energy, apart from the lack of truthfulness that is inherent in it.” It requires patience, wisdom and perseverance to work it out and it requires acceptance to realize that self-discipline is a life-long effort to pursue.

“Goethe’s Faust, who was formerly the idol of the bourgeoisie, is impatient through and through; he is a dreamer who never grows up.”³⁶⁸ In the end, the devil came to fetch him.

³⁶⁷ *Op.cit.* p.4-9.

³⁶⁸ *Op. cit.* p. 41-42.

Asceticism – the twin-sister of the virtue of orderliness – is badly known and poorly valued in our consumer society. Still, as Guardini writes: “Asceticism means that man resolves to live as a man. This brings about a necessity which does not exist for the animal; the need to keep his urges in an order which is freely willed and to overcome his tendency toward excess or toward a wrong direction.” Urges are not in themselves evil; they compose man’s store of energy. It applies to physical urges such as sexual activity but also to mental or spiritual urges, like those toward recognition or esteem and toward power. Practicing the virtue of asceticism does not lie in a struggle to overcome such urges, but “in the necessity of bringing them into proper order.” Asceticism “means practice and exercise, exercise in the proper directing of one’s life.” Living virtuously also means choosing between demands that pertain to physical life, to our vocation and work, personal relations, intellectual activities and to our relation to God. “We must choose, and then carry out our choice. This requires exertion and sacrifices – and that, too, is asceticism.” Apart from this – Guardini continues – “everyone who knows the tendency of human nature toward self-indulgence also knows how necessary it is to impose upon ourselves voluntary exercises in self-control, such as are not demanded by our immediate purposes. They are necessary so that the will may more easily fulfill the demands of duty when these present themselves. They are necessary also as a way to freedom which consists in being master of oneself, of one’s impulses and circumstances.” The discipline necessary in life is asceticism and applies also to friendship, to marriage and to our faith. “Like every other serious matter, to be at home with God, so that one associates with Him gladly and feels the joy of His presence, requires practice. It must be willed and carried out with much self-conquest, again and again. Then God gives us as a grace the sense of His holy presence.”³⁶⁹

Five thoughts on the itinerary of self-discipline.

We learn best from our own failings. We also keep eyes, ears, hearts and minds open, attentive and vigilant to the society we live in. We need reflection – prayer, study and research to keep our mind alive, vital and critical.

³⁶⁹ *Op. cit.* p. 88-94.

First of all: We deliberately put self-discipline as a core virtue within the Order of Love and the Wisdom of God’s order. Much more is at stake than self-control, as dealt with in the book on *Willpower* by Baumeister and Tierney. Self-control can be applied to good and absurd purposes, to helping others or to ruling over them, to overcome addictions or break records. Self-discipline as a virtue of good order must be directed to God, to follow Jesus and to the common good; it must avoid excesses and extreme projects. What is at stake is not only will-power, but charity, discernment and equilibrium.

Second: Self-discipline is primarily about fostering firm habits or a *habitus*. It is not something to have to decide about or to plan every moment or every day. Decision-making is a tiring business; too many decisions or intentions derange; and finally it does not work and you give up. As the saying goes: “the way to hell is paved with good intentions.” In real life, too many good intentions discourage, because they can never be truly realized. The rule “where there is the will, there is a way,” works only when you don’t try all the ways at the same time. It is impossible to learn and practice all the virtues discussed so far at the same time. They should be learned gradually, one after the other. Once a firm habit, those required for the specific circumstance will be practiced. The first two stages in family life offer the natural environment for teaching the virtues. What is learned early on will be done later on. One might even observe the fact that good habits learned in the family will be passed on as good traditions to coming generations. One of the greatest tragedies of our era is that too many modern parents no longer dare to pass them on to their children. Children of divorced parents lack so much that only the strongest among them manage to master the virtue of self-discipline.

Third: The virtue of self-discipline needs a clear purpose and a firm plan to work. Practicing this virtue must make sense and must be feasible. Living a virtuous life has a transcendental destiny and is life’s ultimate goal. We need self-discipline to properly order our lives and to reach specific targets in life.

Fourth: In addition to self-discipline with respect to the goals to reach, you need self-discipline while working towards that goal. Progress towards your goal must be monitored regularly. With self-discipline as a *habitus*, progress

can best be monitored weekly – again with or without external assistance. Receiving the Sacrament of Confession regularly offers grace in support of self-discipline.

Fifth: Forming the conscience of our children is the core in bringing up children in the family. Forming our own conscience is the continuing, perennial goal of practicing self-discipline. It never ends before reaching the gate of heaven and is under continuous threat throughout life. We need great and firm self-discipline to stay the course between Scylla and Charybdis to safely reach home-port heaven. We can't do without it, and we do need guidance in our broken world to stay the course.

Family virtues to learn and to live: a practical guide.

Why is there such a growing gap between the teaching of Jesus-Christ and actual family life in our Christian Europe? Why is it that even many Christian, Catholic families no longer follow Jesus-Christ and His most beautiful way of truth and life; but go their own crooked ways of disunity, divorce and unhappiness? Can we, as Christian families, still make the difference? Are we trying hard enough? Or are we withdrawing into our own families or safe environments?

Christian families are called to make the difference. Our first step would be to try to be true to our calling as a family and to practice among ourselves what the world around us often rejects. In a world dominated by the dictatorship of economic values, it is our mission as families to live and practice family virtues. With emphasis I say: to *practice* our family virtues and not to defend our so-called family values. Values there are many and each can have their own. Virtues to practice are written in the Bible and in our conscience.³⁷⁰ From our tree of virtues, we selected ten to try. They are the fruit of experience.

³⁷⁰ cf. Frans A.M. Alting von Geusau/ Annemieke J.F. Alting von Geusau-Houben, *Gezin, word wat je bent!* Betsaida 2018

Ten virtues to learn, practice and live in a family

1. Practice Gratitude instead of Greed.

Children are a gift of the Triangle of love between God, husband and wife. We receive our children in gratitude from God and from each other as unique persons entrusted to our care. We don't take or make children, as modern usage suggests. Such a debasement of language introduces a debasement of thought: we get used to the idea that we take a child, the way we buy a car or book a trip. With an attitude of gratitude to life, we also learn to thank each other and to give to each other before we grab something for ourselves. A small example: during meals in the family, we learn to serve each other before we serve ourselves.

2. Establishing a family is a Covenant for life and not a Contract of convenience.

The cornerstone of a happy family is the vow of fidelity in matrimony: in wealth and poverty, in success and failure, in health and illness, until death separates us. Getting married is not just a contract in civil law that can be made and terminated by mutual consent. It is a sacred vow to God and to each other. In the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Matrimony offers spouses the grace we need in our human fallibility. No-fault divorce, introduced in most of our civil codes, turned out to be an important step towards the erosion of marriage and the steep rise in the divorce rate.³⁷¹ The next step then became to make a monetary contract before marriage with respect to eventual divorce, a further debasement of marriage towards no more than a contract of convenience. Everybody should realise that children are the true and lasting victims of divorce.

When we live our vow of fidelity, crises will be overcome, and love will grow stronger and deeper. Living out our vow also obliges us to uphold the legal protection of marriage and the family as a unique association. The current spread of so-called same-sex marriages does not mean progress towards non-discrimination and more equality of fundamental rights. It is also a direct attack on the family as the basis of society.

³⁷¹ Cf. Robert P. George & Jean Bethke Elshtain, *The Meaning of Marriage. Family, state, market & morals*. Spence Publishing Company-Dallas 2006.

3. Be Attentive to each other and not Assertive.

Against the prevailing view that we should develop self-esteem, assert ourselves, look after our own interests and desires, family life teaches us the virtue of attention to one another. Even when both parents work, a home should not be empty when children return from school. Street and school may have given them a terrible or a great day; whatever it was, they want to talk about their experiences. There must be a patient parent who receives them with a listening ear. And when father or mother comes home from work, a sign of loving attention is in order, before anything else.

4. Care for instead of Compete with each other.

Competition has come to occupy centre stage in the scale of values of global society. The underlying modern thought was that: "Private vice would become public virtue when society was so organised as to turn passions into interests."³⁷² Where modern thought has gone wrong is in the assumption that this value should prevail throughout society – which I referred earlier as the dictatorship of economic values. Based on love and fidelity, the family is essentially different from a contractual relationship in which competition can be an ordering value. Competition between parents or between brothers and sisters destroys the family. In the family, we learn to replace our "private vices" with private virtues, that is to say, we replace competition with care for each other. The possibilities for doing so are manifold. In the family, we don't occupy positions with a fixed pattern of roles. We care for each other and cooperate, as love for each other directs us. Household chores are every family member's work. Fathers should equally share in such tasks as cooking meals and washing dishes. By his example, sons will do the same as their sisters.

5. Conscience rather than Custom should be our guide.

Home is the place where our conscience is formed, where in this inner sanctuary we learn to draw the line between the good to do and the evil to avoid.

³⁷² From: Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, Princeton University Press 1997 as quoted in : Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference. How to avoid the clash of civilizations*. Continuum-London, New York 2002. at page 144.

We all know that God has written this gift of discernment between what is good and what is evil in our hearts. Our ability to discern needs continuous improvement and development. Prevailing customs and personal fallibility easily confuse us, parents and children alike. On such delicate issues as living together before marriage, using the pill and consenting to abortion, many of us follow the custom. Deep in our hearts we know it is wrong and that there is another more beautiful path to follow. As parents we must renew our courage to walk that road and to form the conscience of our children accordingly.

6. Practice Respect for instead of Ruling over each other.

The Book of Genesis teaches us that man and woman are created in God's image. Their unity and their equality are the foundation of a family of love. Domination of husband over wife or the arguments over who is the boss in the family reflect our broken world in which rivalry for power has replaced complementarities of tasks. Respect for each other and for each other's dignity and uniqueness is another basic family virtue. It requires careful preparation for marriage and the grace of the Sacrament to sustain it. The teaching of our Churches as regards abstention before marriage should not be looked at as a relic of the past but as a reflection of the wisdom of God's order. It is an invitation for mutual respect between two persons in love with each other.

7. Practice the virtue of Humility instead of the vice of Haughtiness.

We all are aware of (the) social pressure. If you want to have a career, you boast on your achievements in your C.V., you fight for your place in your job and you are always right in case of conflict. Not so in a family of love. Here, you learn not to take yourself too seriously. You are aware of your limits and weaknesses, and you don't get angry when being corrected. Humility is one of those profoundly Christian virtues you can only learn to practice in the family and nowhere else.

8. Clarity of mind to overcome Confusion.

We live in an utterly confused society. We are confused about the origin and

nature of fundamental human rights, about the right to life and death, about marriage, family and faith. Much of it is the outcome of the twentieth century heritage of Nazism, communism and secularism. One of the most urgent missions of our Churches is to restore teaching in the proper language about the Bible, the faith and morality. Most parents today need such teaching before they can teach their children with clarity and conviction. It applies to all the family virtues discussed so far. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person is unthinkable without accepting every person as gift of the triangle of love. Conscience over custom makes sense only when God speaks to our hearts. Marriage is unique because it is made in heaven. We emphasize that clarity of mind and language is rooted in honesty and frankness. In our families, we must learn to call a spade, a spade.

9. The Order of Love against the Disorder of Egoism.

In a family of love, nobody lives for himself, everybody is there for the others. Living together as a family requires a discipline of love applicable to all. Let me give you five examples of a family's discipline of love:

First, in a family of love we pray together at regular intervals during the day. Such would normally include Morning Prayer – the importance of offering this day to the Lord, for our inner peace during the day; a Prayer before and after every meal – the prayer to share the gifts of the Lord; and an Evening prayer – to ask forgiveness. When children are growing up, divine office and the Holy Eucharist on weekdays could be added.

Second, in a family of love, the Good News of the Bible should be taught before switching on the Evening News, your smartphone or your laptop.

Third, as parents we should teach primarily by example. It is difficult but rewarding. Nothing is more convincing for children than the example of their parents. Good (and bad) habits are not so much hereditary as they are imitated by our children.

Fourth, meals in the family should be shared. These are the precious times

during which we have the joy to be together. It is the time to talk together, to laugh together, to exchange our day's events and to serve each other. You recognise the discipline of love in a family by their shared meals. Television and radio are turned off, smartphones are left in their rooms, nobody is running around by themselves and there is lively talk and great joy.

Fifth, joint celebrations have an important place in family life. They are an occasion for creativity and togetherness. We prepare special gifts, or we perform (music, theatre, poems) for each other and for guests. On difficult days, the memory of family celebrations gives us the courage to continue.

Finally, it is much better to positively direct our children towards meaningful activities rather than forbid them to watch TV or play games. When their days are filled with praying, playing and working together, by playing music and reading good books, by being together, no time will be left for harmfully withdrawing to their own smartphones and computer screens.

10. Always be prepared to Forgive and ask Forgiveness.

The willingness to ask forgiveness for our sins and errors and to forgive stands out as a major virtue in the Gospels. It must be practised towards each other and towards God – in the Catholic Church through the beautiful Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation. It should have a central place in a family of love. In a family, we ask forgiveness at the end of the day and before going to bed. The daily examination of conscience is very practical. It prevents conflicts in the family from building up and growing out of control; it helps form character and to better understand oneself.

To be signs of contradiction

Living the family virtues is a protection against the world's vices and can be contagious.

When the law – even in a democratic society – diverts so much from what our conscience tells us, time has come for peaceful civil disobedience. Civil resistance in Poland between 1968 and 1989 taught us what can be achieved by such disobedience and resistance.

Create strong networks of families for the good. In isolation, we cannot achieve much, but together we can make the difference. Instead of locking ourselves up in good families, let us set up outgoing networks of such families, where we live and work, in our countries and across Europe. As Pope Francis continues to urge, it is not enough to open our doors: we must go out through them to spread the good news.

Finally, witness the joy of being a happy family and show that the way of Christ is the more beautiful way and the better one to follow. The example of joy is more contagious than any good argument and a better source of creativity than any other creed.

CHAPTER 9

CONVERSION OF THE WORD.

Part 1: Into Sacred Space

“The conversion of the Word into space; the transformation into a tower of the hands clasped in prayer; the sign in stone of the faith of men” is an apt description.³⁷³

Christ, of course, is the Word, and the threefold conversion stands for the innumerable churches built in Christian Europe since the Apostle Paul sailed from Asia Minor to Greece. First, they were private house-churches, and since Emperor Constantine public churches and sacred places for celebrating the liturgy and coming together. It is important to underline that “Church” (*ecclesia*) refers in one word to a community of believers and their building. Separating one from the other can be harmful and destructive for the community.

Churches are the most visible and most enduring examples of the Christian

³⁷³ Found in the Cathedral of Toledo.

faith. Many of them, if not destroyed in wars or sold for profit, are still sacred and lively places of worship, refuge, coming together or pilgrimage. They are also the unique heritage of Christendom in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Their builders, no doubt, learned from Greek, Roman and Hebrew architecture, but with their new faith, what they created was essentially new. The greatest examples rose from cooperation between political power, church leadership and popular creativity.

Churches in Eastern and Western Christendom are the theology of beauty expressed in stone. They have a number of basic features in common. Their structures are domes or basilica, sometimes combined and always producing a cruciform shape. The sanctuary is on the East side, the main entrance to the West. The Eastern Churches have a dome representing heaven above the center, recalling the shape of the shrines built around the martyrs' gravestones. The Western Churches can be recognized by their towers or spires pointing to heaven. The teachings of the Bible are painted from the entrance, along the walls, and all the way up to the ceiling and the dome, in the Eastern Churches in beautiful mosaics, in the Catholic Churches in sculptures, windows, and fresco's. They are sacred places, built first of all for celebrating the Eucharist or Divine Liturgy.

Celebrating divine liturgy.

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere on earth. We cannot describe it to you; we only know that God dwells there among men and that their Service surpasses the worship of all other places..." said Vladimir the Prince of Kiev.

In the latter part of the tenth century, "Vladimir the Prince of Kiev sent envoys to various Christian centers to study their form of worship. These are the words the envoys uttered when they reported their presence at the celebration of the Eucharist in the Great Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople. The profound experience expressed by the Russian envoys has been one shared by many throughout the centuries who have witnessed for the first time the beautiful and inspiring Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox

Church. The Holy Eucharist is the oldest experience of Christian Worship as well as the most distinctive. Eucharist comes from the Greek word which means thanksgiving. In a particular sense, the word describes the most important form of the church's attitude toward all of life. The origin of the Eucharist is traced to the Last Supper at which Christ instructed His disciples to offer bread and wine in His memory. The Eucharist is the most distinctive event of Orthodox worship because in it the Church gathers to remember and celebrate the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ and, thereby, to participate in the mystery of Salvation. In the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is also known as the Divine Liturgy. The word "liturgy" means "people's work;" this description serves to emphasize the corporate character of the Eucharist. When an Orthodox believer attends the Divine Liturgy, it is not as an isolated individual who comes simply to hear a sermon. Rather, he comes as a member of the Community of Faith who participates in the very purpose of the Church, which is the Worship of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, the Eucharist is truly the center of the life of the church and the principal means of spiritual development, both for the individual Christian and the church as a whole. Not only does the Eucharist embody and express the Christian faith in a unique way, but it also enhances and deepens our faith in the Trinity. This sacrament-mystery is the experience toward which all the other activities of the church are directed and from which they receive their direction. The Eucharist – the principal sacred mystery of the Orthodox Church – is not so much a text to be studied, but rather an experience of communion with the Living God where which prayer, music, gestures, the material creation, art and architecture come into full orchestration. The Eucharist is a celebration of faith which touches not only the mind but also the emotions and the senses. Throughout the centuries, Christians have seen many dimensions in the Eucharist. The various titles which have come to describe the rite bear witness to the richness of its meaning. The Eucharist has been known as the Holy offering, the Holy Mysteries, the Mystic Supper, and the Holy Communion. The Orthodox Church recognizes the many facets of the Eucharist and wisely refuses to over-emphasize one element to the detriment of the others. In so doing, Orthodoxy has clearly avoided reducing the Eucharist to a simple memorial of the Last Supper which is only occasionally observed. Following the teachings of both

scripture and tradition, the Orthodox Church believes that Christ is truly present with His people in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharistic gifts of bread and wine become for us His Body and His Blood. We affirm that these Holy Gifts are transfigured into the first fruits of the New Creation in which ultimately God will be “all in all.”³⁷⁴

Celebrating the Eucharist together has been the principal feature of Christian life in the early church and in the Eastern Orthodox- and Roman Catholic Church, from the very beginning, as we can already read in the first Apologia, chapter 66 of Justin the Martyr: “And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone.” It is to be celebrated every Sunday, as we can read in chapter 67.³⁷⁵

The significance of celebrating the Eucharist as the fundamental reason for having churches, is reaffirmed again in the second Constitution of the Second Vatican Council: For the liturgy, “through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,” most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Reverend Thomas Fitzgerald in: Annunciation. Greek Orthodox Church. Sacramento CA.

³⁷⁵ Justin the Martyr, First Apologia. English translation from Early Christian Writings. Fordham University.

³⁷⁶ Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Promulgated By S Pope Paul VI On December 4, 1963

The Basilica SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE in Rome

Tradition has it that the Virgin Mary herself inspired the choice of the Esquiline Hill for the church’s construction. In 358 AD, a wealthy, heirless patrician decided to donate his fortune to the church. After informing Pope Liberius of his intent, that evening the two were visited in their sleep by the Virgin Mary, who informed them that she would give them a sign. The next morning, on August 5th, Pope Liberius woke up to find that snow had fallen on the Esquiline Hill. Taking the snow in the heat of the summer to be the promised sign, Pope Liberius drew a plan for the church in the miraculous snow. Later, he used the donated money to build a church on the site, dedicated to Mary. It remained for less than 80 years, after which it was replaced by Pope Sixtus III’s present church, the Papal Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore, dedicated, on completion, to the Holy Virgin Theotokos in 440 AD. “From the devout pilgrim absorbed in prayer to the studious art-lover, every visitor to St. Mary Major finds both spiritual and visual fulfillment in this holy place. A visit to the Liberian basilica, as it is also called in honor of Pope Liberius, enriches both the mind and soul. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see visitors rapt in admiration before the spell-binding beauty of the artwork and, at the same time, to observe the devotion of all those engrossed in prayer in search of comfort and assistance before the image of Mary, who is venerated here under the beloved title of *Salus Populi Romani* as witness to his great devotion to the Madonna.”³⁷⁷

The Church was built when the Roman Empire was still one and had become a Christian Empire less than a century ago. Constantinople had become its political center, and the Pope was recognized as the first among the Patriarchs, living under the protection of the Empire. The Pope’s decision to (re)build the Church came shortly after the Second Ecumenical Council declared the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, Theotokos. In appearance, it was a church in Greek architecture, basilica in shape and richly decorated with mosaics on the inside. As the oldest Roman Basilica devoted to the Holy Mary, the Church survived the invasions of the barbarians and the looting of Rome in 1527 by Charles V’s Norwegian mercenaries. Throughout the centuries, it remained a primary place of pilgrimage.

³⁷⁷ Text based on several sources; www.vatican.va/various/basilice/santa_maria_maggiore. A brief history written by daw84.

Fortunately, its basic structure was preserved, although much was changed. During the thirteenth century, a new pavement and additional mosaics were added. Pope Gregory XI added the Romanesque bell tower after his return from Avignon. Pope Sixtus V added the Sistine Chapel with its beautiful dome, and Pope Paul V added the Borghese Chapel in 1613. A new façade and a Clergy house were built between 1741- and 1743.

The Church Of The Holy Wisdom In Constantinople

The original cathedral of Constantinople had been the Church of *Hagia Eirene* – meaning “Holy Peace” – built originally by Constantine I in 337. The first Hagia Sophia was built alongside Hagia Eirene in 360 during the reign of Constantius II and soon eclipsed it. Justinian’s church was the third on this site, the previous two had burned, both of which had been roofed basilicas. The second one was built in 415 by Theodosius II. Remains of this huge, five aisled church, including a beautiful marble propylaeum with carvings in the neoclassical style of the time, were excavated early in the 20th century and can still be seen in the atrium. Each version of Hagia Sophia was an improvement on the earlier one in its beauty and decoration. The last one was vast, it was built for huge crowds that attended services here. Right in the heart of the city and popular with the people as an assembly point, it became the frequent center of conflict with the Imperial court and the bishops of Constantinople, who were based here. The first Hagia Sophia was burned down by supporters of John Chrysostom in 404 in revenge for his exile by the Empress Aelia Eudoxia, who he had criticized for immorality and meddling in politics and church affairs. She was married to the emperor Arcadius, a worthless non-entity, but had probably born at least one of her children with another man. Bishop John preached his last sermon from the ambo of the Hagia Sophia; that same day, after he had been forcibly removed from the church fire erupted from the spot where he delivered it. The flames shot up from it to the chains where the candelabra where suspended and spread all over the church from there, burning it to the ground.”

The destruction of Hagia Sophia allowed Justinian to start all-over again with something fresh and new, on an unprecedented scale. “There was not to be another wooden roof for obvious reasons - there was never to be another fire.

The scale of the building and its expense tested the abilities of the Emperor’s engineers and his ability to finance it. Fortunately, when he started rebuilding Hagia Sophia Justinian was flush with gold from the Vandal treasury which he had just captured during the reconquest of North Africa. Vandal gold had been amassed from their earlier sack of Rome, so it was ironic that Justinian was taking it to the New Rome. This bonanza meant that Justinian could easily afford to pay cash to his contractors for their work.

Going far beyond what had been done there, Hagia Sophia would be the biggest Christian church in the Roman Empire and boast the largest dome ever built until the Renaissance. Sergius and Bacchus could have been fit inside Hagia Sophia with room to spare! No expense would be spared in making it the most beautiful building in the world. Plans and dreams aside, there could be challenges in paying for the project once it was underway. Even though there were those rivers of gold flowing into his coffers from his conquests, Justinian spent it faster than he got it. Imperial revenues doubled during his reign, but so did the expenses of running the Empire.

It took only five years to build the Hagia Sophia. The third – and final – Hagia Sophia was dedicated by Justinian at Christmas in 537. It is said that he uttered “Solomon, I have surpassed you” at the opening of the new church. Indeed, Hagia Sophia was a latter-day Temple of God. Its full name in Greek was Ναός της Αγίας του Θεού Σοφίας, (*Naos tēs Hagias tou Theou Sophias*), which means “Shrine of the Holy Wisdom of God.” Despite countless trials and tribulations, Justinian’s cathedral church for Constantinople still stands: its soaring vaults and amazing dome are a testament to the human spirit, the engineering talents of its builders, and the kindness of those who have treasured and preserved her over the centuries.”

Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade (1204) attacked Constantinople and sacked the Church. In 1453, the city was conquered by the troops of the Ottoman Sultan. “One of the differences between the 1204 and 1453 was that there was some restraint in the murder of innocent people in 1204. The crusaders were more interested in loot and treasure than sadism. There was plenty to take – everyone who participated in the looting had the potential to become rich beyond

their wildest dreams without any guilt or remorse. The looting was fun and they were proud of their success. In theory their bishops and clergy told them to pillage and steal to their heart's content but to spare the women and children. This was not followed in practice, after the city surrendered there was a short period of mercy before the floodgates were opened by the first killings and rapes. Once the blood started to flow in the streets the victims were no longer innocents but schismatics and dangerous heretics who deserved death because they were intrinsically evil. It was said that the Latins who lived in Constantinople were the most cruel and vicious to their victims which included people they knew personally. The crusaders were told and believed - that the possessions of the people of Constantinople had been granted to them by Christ as a reward. In 1453 there was no need for anyone to bless the actions of the conquerors of the city. They were warriors of Islam and death was a just instrument of God on unbelievers. The taking of Constantinople had been ordered by the prophet himself and it was finally being fulfilled. A part of Mehmet's army were Christians and there is no religious excuse for what they did. It is amazing how cruel we can be to each other. Everything inside the church - all of the icons that can be easily grabbed - were smashed to bits. It went on for hours and hours. The Turkish warriors went wild. They even mistook the colored marble floor panels to be precious stones. They hacked at them until Mehmet told them the buildings of the city were his and to stop damaging the property of the sultan. When Mehmet II entered Hagia Sophia he brought an end to the carnage and then crawled on top of the altar and recited the Muslim Shahada, thus converting the church into a mosque. This moment was one of the great turning points of history. The world before and the world afterwards were two different places. For the next 250 years Europe was on the defensive against the Islamic Ottoman empire. That threat was finally ended in 1683 when John Sobieski lifted the two-month siege of Vienna and drove the Turks away from the city for the last time."³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ www.pallasweb.com/deesis/hagiasophia.html.

The glory of byzantium

The title of this paragraph comes from a beautiful exhibition in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reviewing the much forgotten splendor of Byzantium from 843 AD until the Crusaders conquest and the Latin patriarchate (1204-1261).³⁷⁹ Church history in Europe, as much as political history, is an exercise in organized forgetting. After the Great Schism between East and West became official in 1054, the Orthodox Church in fact disappeared from Catholic history until after the Second World War in the twentieth century. With it disappeared the knowledge about the crucial role Byzantium played in saving art, literature and philosophy of antiquity from extinction. Byzantium was a Greek civilization. The theory we learned in our history lessons was that our Greek heritage could be re-discovered in the European Renaissance through Arab translations, found in Spain. Another example of organized forgetting. The true story can be found further down in this paragraph. The New York exhibition and the book published at the occasion, give substantial information and insight on Byzantium, the splendor of the churches and the richness of its civilization in the forgotten period. As the sponsors' statement reads: "The Western world owes an immeasurable cultural debt to a civilization which alone preserved much of the heritage of Greek and Latin antiquity during the dark centuries when the lights of learning in the West were almost extinguished." The exhibition provides a unique opportunity to explore both the extraordinary radiance of the empire at its apogee and the deep-rooted influence it has had on Orthodox Christians throughout the centuries down to the present day.

Building churches was a major part of Byzantine and Russian architecture. It was largely steered by Monks, who used to be the driving forces – as they were also in education, agriculture and voluntary assistance. Unlike the tradition in the West, the Eastern monks organized themselves locally, rather than in "supranational" orders or congregations. As a result, there are many smaller churches in orthodox countries, besides some of the major well-known cathedrals: among them Mount Athos with its twenty monasteries and the famous Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Central Greece, comparable in time and prom-

³⁷⁹ Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (ed), *THE GLORY OF BYZANTIUM. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era. AD 843-1261*. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Distributed by Harry N. Abrams Inc. New York 1997.

inence to Cluny in Western Europe. “The victory of the Iconophiles (defenders of icons) in 843 secured not only the iconic cult but also the future and prosperous development of the monasteries after the fierce war that Constantine V (r. 741—75) had waged against these establishments, their members, and their wealth. Monasticism, with a tradition going back to the third and fourth centuries, was remarkably hardy. This vitality was spectacularly manifested in the rapid growth of the Anthonite communities after Nikephoros II Phokas retook Crete from the Saracens in 961; within a century Mount Athos, or the Holy Mountain, was the center of Orthodox monasticism. Aside from the Byzantine monasteries on Athos, there were Georgian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian, and Rus’ establishments. Constantinople remained, of course, a great center of monasticism, as did areas of Asia Minor. The Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis (Greece), founded in the tenth century and decorated with a splendid mosaic cycle in the 1020s, exemplifies the vigor and strong patronage of the monastic movement in more remote provinces. The Nea Mone (New Monastery) on Chios, founded before 1042, was richly endowed by Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042—55), and its church, with fine mosaics and colored marbles, seems to have been finished during his reign. Another monastic church decorated with mid-eleventh-century mosaics was that at Daphni, near Athens. Many of these foundations included orphanages, craft schools, poor-houses, and the like. Most spectacular was Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople, founded by the emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118—43) and his wife, the empress Irene.”³⁸⁰

The diffusion of Byzantine culture was particularly strong in the Islamic and Slavic worlds. Important elements of the Byzantine intellectual heritage were absorbed into Islamic culture through the translation of classical Greek writings into Arabic. The Slavs, including the Moravians, Bulgars, Serbs, Croats and the Russians, converted to Byzantine Christianity. They were Christianized by Cyril and Methodius, who promoted the old Byzantine principle that Christianity should be preached in the language of the converts.

“The glory of Byzantium resided in its ability to create a civilization that was distinct, original, and vibrant and in its power to influence not only the

³⁸⁰ From: Speros P. Vryonis jr. ‘Byzantine Civilization in *The Glory of Byzantium*, op.cit.

inhabitants of the empire but also its neighbors. Byzantium was decisive in much that happened in the world of the South and East Slavs and of the Balkans and made these peoples intimate participants in and creative contributors to its civilization; such border peoples as the Georgians, Armenians, and Syriac Christians had varying degrees of appreciation for Byzantine culture. Byzantium passed on to Islamic civilization an important portion of the ancient Greek heritage. The West took elements from Byzantium’s religious and legal systems and during the Renaissance became the direct heir to that part of ancient Greek literary culture which Byzantine scribes, scholars, and libraries had preserved for some one thousand years.”³⁸¹

Orthodox church architecture observed the tradition developed over the centuries from Constantinople. A variant form of the centralized church was developed in Russia, among them St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow’s Red Square. The Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior was built in the nineteenth century, destroyed under Soviet rule and rebuilt in the 1990’s. Orthodox Churches – all of them – continue to reflect the Theology of Beauty; on the colorful outsides and the painted biblical stories on the inside. With magnificence, the mosaics and frescos tell the biblical story of redemption. Together with the liturgy, the faithful are to be removed from the world to temporarily feel themselves close to heaven by looking upward towards Christ the Pantocrator represented in the center of the Dome.

Western Europe

The Holy Wisdom Cathedral of Constantinople was the architectural highlight in the early church building era. It was an ingenuous and revolutionary synthesis between a central, Dome-dominated building and an East-oriented basilica. In the West European Middle Ages, two innovations in church building, discussed below, can be seen as another revolution in architecture.³⁸²

This revolution should be understood in light of three major changes, occur-

³⁸¹ Loc.cit.Cf. also Chapter 4 supra.

³⁸² Sible de Blaauw, *De versteende droom. Over de blijvende noodzaak van het kerkgebouw*. Kees Fens Lezing. Athenaeum-Polak en Van Gennep. Amsterdam 2016.

ring during the tenth and the eleventh century. Western Europe recovered from the chaos of migrations and the Islamic conquests. The reconquest of Toledo in 1085 was an important milestone in the long history of the *Reconquista*, extending from 712 to 1492. The discovery of the tomb of the Apostle James was part of the story of the *Reconquista*, in which the Saint was believed to support the Christians. Local pilgrimages to the site began during the ninth century. Foreign pilgrims came from the tenth century onwards. Europe was born on the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela, and Christianity is her mother tongue, wrote Goethe.

It was the century of the Great Schism of 1054 between East and West in the Christian Church; of the Reforms initiated by Pope Gregory VII in the Western or Latin Church; of the struggle for power between the Pope and the Emperor of the (Western) Holy Roman Empire; and of the call at the end of the century for a crusade to liberate the holy land.

The two innovations in Church building were the new Roman or Romanesque style of church-building and its related Gothic style, and the addition of towers. Both constituted a clear break with the Byzantine tradition. The driving forces were Benedictine monks, and particularly Abbot Semur of the Great Abbey of Cluny, who built the Church in the tenth century, and Abbot Suger from the Abbey of St. Denis in the eleventh century.

“The explosion of skill and invention,” wrote Kenneth Clark: “imply a new social and intellectual background.” And he asked himself: “How had all this suddenly appeared in *Western Europe*?” I deliberately italicize Western Europe, because Clark’s answer – “the triumph of the Church” – applies only to the Latin Church.³⁸³ He gave several negative and positive reasons for the triumph of the Church. The Church did “not suffer from many of the inconveniences of feudalism” and she was powerful for positive reasons. “Men of intelligence naturally and normally took holy orders, and could rise from obscurity to positions of immense influence.” “The Church was basically a democratic institution where ability made its way, and the Church was international. “It was, to a large extent, a monastic institution following the Benedictine rule and owing no territorial allegiance.”

³⁸³ For the Eastern Church, cf chapter 4, *supra*.

“This expansion of the human spirit was first made visible in the Abbey of Cluny. It was founded in the tenth century, but under Hugh of Semur (abbot from 1049-1109), it became the greatest church in Europe, not only a huge complex of buildings, but a great organization and power in Church politics.”³⁸⁴

Cluny and St. Denis inaugurated the great age of the Romanesque and Gothic styles of Church building in Western Europe. Cluny became the center of reform in the Latin Church (Pope Gregory VII was a Benedictine monk). Today we can only guess about the splendor of its Romanesque Abbey Church, as the Church was destroyed in the French Revolution. It served as a model for the English Cathedrals built in the eleventh century; the Norman variant, as in the Cathedral of Durham. Abbot Suger of the Abbey of St. Denis is considered to be the founder of the Gothic style, followed in the Notre Dame of Paris, the Cathedral of Chartres, and many other churches, especially in France. The new Romanesque and Gothic Churches were built where older churches stood or had burnt down. What they had in common was that they were built entirely out of stone – except for the beams in the roof, as we learned from the tragic fire in the Notre Dame of Paris in April of 2019. As a consequence, most of them are still standing and in use. It took years for these cathedrals to be completed. Many were adapted to new Renaissance and Baroque styles. Many were copied in neo-variations. Almost every city or town in Western Europe can still be identified by such churches.

The Gothic Cathedral

Otto von Simson wrote an interesting study on the Gothic Cathedral. Much of what he writes applies to the Romanesque Cathedrals as well: No other monument of a culture radically different from our own is as much a part of contemporary life as is the cathedral. We may feel no closer to medieval civilization than we do to ancient Greece or Egypt; indeed, our modern world came into existence as a revolt against the intellectual order of the Middle Ages. But the Gothic cathedral, the expression of that order, is intact and in use today; it is not the romantic ruin of a past beyond recovery, but still the center of nearly every European town and, in dubious imitations, of many American cities as well.

³⁸⁴ Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation*. A personal view. BBC and John Murray, 1974 (seventh impression), p.35.

Abbot Suger was a brilliant intellectual, a respected diplomat, and a statesman in the French monarchy. He acted as the Regent of France when King Louis VII was absent because of the Crusades. He obviously knew Cluny well and was also familiar with the traditions of the Eastern Churches. The present Church of St. Denis was commenced by him around 1140 and marked the transition from the Romanesque to a new Gothic style in architecture. “Once created, Gothic became the conservative ‘language’ of Christian architecture throughout the Western world. It is this language, with its local dialects, that we think of if we speak of Gothic. What concerns me here, however, is not the structure of the language, but the reason of its origin and the meaning of its message. The Gothic cathedral originated in the religious experience, the metaphysical speculation, in the political and even the physical realities, of twelfth-century France, and in the genius of those who created it.”³⁸⁵

The two quotes are quite interesting, additionally confirming something Byzantine church builders knew as well: major churches need political support, church leadership and popular dedication in order to be built. Once successful, it is important to maintain and protect the successful architectural language. In the Orthodox Churches the language was protected by the liturgical traditions. In the Latin Church, it would become protected by Canon Law. “Between 1170 and 1270, more than 500 great French churches were built in the Gothic style. One of the greatest rose on a wheat-rich prairie, 54 Gothic miles southwest of Paris, in a town whose citizens had long believed that the Virgin Mary preferred their church to any other as her residence on earth. Resolving to erect a new cathedral truly worthy of heaven’s queen, the 10,000 townspeople poured all of their energies and resources into the project, and an army of anonymous craftsmen brought to bear all of the arts and technical skills of the age. The final product, Notre-Dame of Chartres, Queen of the Cathedrals, stands today as the epitome of Gothic grandeur—faith translated into a soaring monument of carved stone and stained glass.”³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral. Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*. Princeton University Press, Second edition. Paris 1961. From the Introduction p. xiv-xv.

³⁸⁶ Anne Freemantle, *The Age of Faith*. Time Inc. 1963. Volume in a Time/Life Series on the golden .

Santa Maria Del Mar in Barcelona.

We have already met Arnau, the main character in Ildefonso Falcones’ historical novel *The Cathedral of the Sea*. Arnau, born a serf, and whose father saved his life, was never allowed to know or meet his mother, who, in the service of their noble landlord, had been sexually abused and thereafter dismissed to become prostitute. Arnau lost his father – who rebelled against starvation and was publicly hanged as a punishment – at an early age. In search for his mother, he prayed to the Holy Mary in the old church by the sea daily, and it was here that he started to envision the beginning of the construction of a larger Gothic Church above and around the Chapel, specifically devoted to Mary. At the age of 12, the *Bastaixos* (porters) allowed him to join their guild, when he proved willing and strong enough to carry the heavy blocs of rock from the royal quarry to the building site. The Santa Mar was to become a Church built *by* and *for* the people. Years later, during another violent attack on the Jewish Quarter, he hid and saved the lives of three children, one of whom was the child of prominent Jewish leaders. Arnau was rewarded by receiving the leader’s Muslim slave to set up an office for money changing. His status changed from that of an escaped serf to a reliable businessman, but he was still despised by the Catalan Nobility, who stuck to the principle: once a serf, always a serf. In his new job, he continued to visit the Chapel of Holy Mary and, with his new wealth, supported the construction of the larger Church. Fifty five years after the construction had begun, the Church was being inaugurated on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1384. “Surrounded by his family, and with the bells still ringing, Arnau went into Santa Maria de la Mar. The others entering the church stopped to allow him through. This was Arnau Estanyol’s church. As a *bastaix* he had carried its first stones on his back. As a money changer and Consul of the Sea, he had offered it important donations.” Standing there with Mar, his true his wife, and Bernat, his son, he said to him: “This is the Church of the people, my boy. Many men have given their lives for it, yet their names are nowhere to be found.. Your father has engraved many of these stones with his blood, Mar said. ‘There can be no greater homage than that.’”³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ The Cathedral of the Sea op.cit.

The overwhelming majority of faithful and loving Christians are people without history. Arnau Estanyol, the main character in *Cathedral of the Sea*, represents many of them. He was a true Christian sign of contradiction against the violent and unequal society dominated by the church and the nobility in the Middle Ages. He respected and protected the Jews against the Church's evil Cain-Doctrine; he supported fellow citizens without history against oppression by landlords, kings, bishops and popes, particularly when a lust for war, wealth, and power blinded their vision.

It took Europe centuries to challenge the structures of inequality and repression. In this respect, as I wrote in Chapter 7, the French Universal Declaration of Man and of the Citizen (1789), was a late, but necessary break with a so called Christian Europe, in which human dignity had been reserved to a small, reigning elite.

Protecting Sacred Spaces.

In Western Europe, the Catholic Church protected the Gothic "architectural language" for the Churches as sacred places by Canon Law. Specific guidelines were included in the directives of the Ecumenical Council of Trent; consequently, they found their way into the Code of Canon Law of 1917.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council devoted its Chapter VII to sacred art, from which I quote: The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; she has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites. Thus, in the course of the centuries, she has brought into being a treasury of art which must be very carefully preserved. The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with due reverence and honor; thereby it is enabled to contribute its own voice to that wonderful chorus of praise in honor of the Catholic faith sung by great men in times gone by.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁸ The articles 44, 45, 46 referred to deal with the establishment of national/diocesan commissions on liturgy, sacred music and art.

Accordingly, Canon 1216 asserts that "the principles and norms of the liturgy and of sacred art are to be observed in the building and repair of churches, and the advice of experts is also to be employed." The general principles can be found in chapter V of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (1969); in substance, they reproduce the paragraphs from the Constitution quoted above.³⁸⁹

Churches and the Reformation

The greatest disservice done to European Christianity by the Reformation, concerns the churches that the iconoclasts took from the Catholics. These churches of the Reformation are no longer sacred spaces. After the iconoclasm, only the pews remained. The Biblical atmosphere – made visible in icons, paintings, fresco's, altars and statues – was destroyed. In an empty building with plastered walls, the Word could henceforth only be converted into language – the human words of the preacher would figure as the centerpiece of a service. Iconoclasm was a central phenomenon of the Reformation since Martin Luther. Churches had to be purified from man-made objects and paraphernalia, placed between himself and the Word of God. In the German lands, this process began as early as 1520. In the Netherlands, it began in 1566, first in the Southwest of Flanders, then quickly spreading up North, mainly as protest against Spanish rule and the inquisition. In the first years, iconoclasm was well-organized and deliberate. A good example is afforded by the iconoclasm of the St. Peter's Church in Leiden. The Church as it is in its present form was built between 1390 and 1572, in late Gothic style. The year 1566 marked the moment that the church was to be converted into a place for reformed services with iconoclasm, as the first step of purification. The mayor of Leiden managed to save the *Last Judgment*, a triptych made by Lucas van Leyden. It was only after 1572 that iconoclasm became unruly, popular, and widespread, with the Beggars (de Geuzen). Meanwhile, in 1568, the "Eighty Years War" of the Northern Netherlands against Spain had also broken out. From this point onward, the St. Peter's Church functioned as a Reformed Church which would last until 1971. Thereafter, it became a place for "Royal hospitality in a historic setting," including official academic meetings of Leiden University. Indeed, the same thing happened to many churches in the Republic of the Netherlands from 1566 onwards, most of them equally built

³⁸⁹ The Code of Canon Law, p. 848. Paulist Press 1985.

in (late) Gothic style. As so often in history, protests against Catholic practices and political domination arose from valid reasons, but would often turn into unreasonable destruction, as illustrated by the various near-empty churches where only pews were left.

A well-known Polish author once told me that Christian Europe can be recognized by its Baroque Churches. If so, it excludes all Eastern Orthodox and Reformation countries. The first exclusion of Eastern Orthodoxy is typical for Catholic organized forgetting. The second Reformation exclusion underlines once more that Baroque was the style of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, known for its exuberance and triumphalist character. One finds them in Austria, Bavaria, Spain, and Italy (St. Peter of the Vatican is the best known example), as well as in the Spanish and Portuguese former colonies. One might encounter some late Baroque in France, but not anything of the sort in North-Western Europe.

Itineraries of conversion

Europe is born in pilgrimage and Christendom is its mother-tongue, wrote J. W. Goethe

(Europa ist auf der Pilgerschaft geboren und das Christetum ist seine Muttersprache).

The conversion of the Word into many beautiful and inspiring, sacred spaces called “churches,” produced places of beauty for prayer, protection, refuge, recollection, recovery, retreat, reunion, reconciliation, and pilgrimage – which is to say that they prove to be formative places of Europe’s Christian civilization.

James and John, sons of Zebedee, were among the first apostles of Jesus, together with Peter and Andrew. The two brothers are referred to as “Sons of Thunder.” John the Evangelist lived longer than any of the Apostles. James was the first bishop of Jerusalem and the first martyr of the Apostles. He was beheaded by Herodes Agrippa in 44 AD. Little is known about him. In the fifth

century, St. Jerome attached his name to the evangelization of Spain. It was only much later, and in connection with the idea of the *Reconquista* of Spain vis-à-vis the Islam, that the tomb of James was discovered in what is now Santiago de Compostella, in North-Western Spain. From the 9th century onwards, pilgrims find their way to the tomb of the Apostle, despite the raids of the Normans and the Muslims. Al-Mansur’s raid in 977 sacked the city, burnt the church, left the tomb untouched and one monk alive, but took the bells and two front porches – carried by Christian slaves – with him back to Cordoba.

Already in 1009, a new Church could be consecrated. In its present form, the Cathedral was consecrated in 1211, with the bells brought back home, this time by Muslim slaves.³⁹⁰

Places of Pilgrimage

Santiago de Compostella grew out to be one of the principal destinations for European pilgrims. Pilgrims come from all over Europe. From many different corners of (Western) Europe, one can follow the long pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostella, by foot, by bike, or otherwise, as has been done for centuries. By the time the pilgrims cross the Spanish border, nationalities intermingle on the last 1000 km stretch of *El Camino*. On their long journeys, the pilgrims move from church to church, landmarks on the way to Compostella and a testament to the renewal of their faith.³⁹¹

In December 1989, barely 3 months after Poland’s liberation from Soviet domination, I was driven on pilgrimage from Warsaw to Czestochowa, in a snow blizzard, to pray before the **Shrine of the Black Madonna**, Poland’s most visited destination for pilgrims. The priest receiving us invited me to pray to the Holy Mary, certain that my prayer would be granted. By way of example, he referred to a recent visit of the West-German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, on 8 November 1989, who had prayed for German reunification; the very same evening, Kohl had to return home, because the Berlin Wall had collapsed!

³⁹⁰ Cf. *Les Chemins de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle*. Textes rédigés avec la collaboration de Julie Roux. MSM 1999.

³⁹¹ In 2004 a pilgrimage was organised by COMECE, the European Bishops Conference for the EU to commemorate the enlargement of the European Union.

The miraculous Icon is located above the main altar of the Chapel of the Black Madonna. The unshakable belief in the power of the Madonna, is based on a tale of origin and political miracles in Poland's turbulent history. The tale begins with St. Lucas the Evangelist as the original painter. Queen Helena brought the Icon to Byzantium, where it disappeared only to re-emerge centuries later, in the Castle of Belz. Duke Wladislaw conquered the Castle from the Russians and entrusted the icon to the monastery of the Paulines, located on a shining mountain (Jasna Gora) near Czestochowa. Political miracles followed soon thereafter. In 1430, a Hussite Army sacked the monastery and seriously cut and damaged the Icon (these "scars" are still visible). During the Swedish occupation of Poland from 1655 to 1656, the Holy Madonna saved the monastery from occupation. A year later, the black Madonna was proclaimed the Queen of Poland. Thereafter, the Madonna protected the Poles again against the Swedes from 1703 to 1709, against Tsarina Catherine of Russia in 1717, from the Austrians in 1809, and from the Soviet Red Army in 1920. Holy Pope John-Paul pilgrimed many times to the Shining Mountain.

The pilgrimages to the **Lourdes Sanctuary of the Apparitions of the Holy Virgin** are always moving experiences. The Sanctuary is a place where heaven and earth meet. Our suffering guests returned full of joy and healed, at least in spirit.³⁹²

Well before the Second Vatican Council, I discovered the New Theology and liturgical renewal in Paris. During a term as visiting professor at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, we discovered the joy of a new charismatic community at Sunday Mass and from there discovered the Emmanuel Community. For many years, we pilgrimed as a family to **Paray-le-Monial in France** for our annual retreats to the charismatic community Emmanuel. Our place of prayer was the beautiful Romanesque Basilica, constructed by twelve Benedictine monks from Cluny. During these years, the Basilica was restored to its original, austere splendor. It was a place where we learned to seek the joy of the Lord, who then would grant us the gift of discernment. Here, we also learned not to take ourselves too seriously; our experiences became a source of humility and sense of humor.

³⁹² We went there many times with the pilgrimages organized by the Order of Malta.

During visits to Russia in the 1990's, for Aid to the Church in Need, we visited the site of a former Soviet Extermination Camp, Atshaïr, where at least 200.000 inmates had died, to attend the blessing of a memorial chapel by the Archbishop of Omsk. Back in Moscow, we were invited to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated by Russian Monks – followers of Father Alexander Men, who had been assassinated in front of his own home. St. Sergius of Radonezh is considered to be the greatest saint of the Russian Orthodox Church. Obviously, we also visited the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and Saint Sergei in the town called Sergiyev Posad ("Zagorsk" under Soviet rule).

The Orthodox, Eastern-, and Latin Catholic Churches have one strong tradition in common: in all of them, monks have been the principal sources of faith, education, evangelization, and even agriculture, in the grand scheme of Europe's Christian civilization. Churches are visible signs of Europe's Christian civilization. They are physically visible because Orthodox and Catholic Church authorities see to it that churches are built in accordance with strict guidelines issued by them.

Sacred architecture, even when it takes on new forms, cannot in any way resemble profane edifices, but must always perform its own task, which is to build the house of God and to be a house of prayer. They are spiritually visible as *ecclesia*, a community of believers. The greatest error in our secularized world, is to look at church buildings as just physical, economic, disposable, and lifeless objects, in complete disregard for their sacred character as an *ecclesia* of believers. Stalin closed and destroyed many churches during the Soviet era. Many of them have been rebuilt since 1990. Since 1990, churches in many Western countries were shut down by their own bishops, mostly for economic/financial reasons.

The cathedral of our lady of kazan

As it stands today, this Cathedral on the Red Square in Moscow was the first one to be rebuilt in 1990-1993, right after the collapse of Communist rule. Her history dates back to 1612. It was the year in which Moscow was recovered from the armies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the so

called “Time of Troubles.” About ten years later, the liberator Prince Dmitry Pozharsky, a Russian hero since the nineteenth century, financed the construction of a wooden church devoted to the Icon Theotokos of Kazan. In 1632, the church was destroyed by fire and replaced with a brick church, consecrated in 1636. Ever since, the Cathedral has been considered one of the most important Moscow churches. She was expanded and reconstructed several times, including the complete reconstruction between 1929-1932 by the Peter Baranovsky. She was completely demolished in 1936 on orders of Joseph Stalin, who wanted the square completely cleared of churches. She holds one of the copies of the famous Icon of the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) of Kazan.

The story of the Icon itself is more complicated, as explained by Sergei Milov: “The Kazan Icon first appeared in the city of Kazan in 1579, when that city was still far from being “Russian”. The Kazan Khanate was predominantly Muslim and had been conquered in 1552 by troops of Ivan the Terrible. The creation of a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church followed in 1553. Just before the miraculous apparition the city had been ravaged by a devastating fire and the locals blamed the Christians for it.

According to a tale of Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Patriarch of Moscow (1605-1613), this is how the appearance took place:

“Soon after the devastating fire, the Mother of God appeared to Matrona, a nine year-old daughter of a member of the Russian infantry regiments, and told her to find Her icon amid the ashes of a burned house. After the first vision nobody believed the girl. But the apparitions of the Queen of Heaven continued and the girl kept asking the adults to find the icon. Soon Matrona’s mother turned to Orthodox priests, asking them to help her. However, the clerics didn’t believe her story and were reluctant to search for the icon. It was not until numerous appeals to the bishop of Kazan that it was decided to try and find the holy object. At last the icon was found. As soon as Matrona started digging she discovered. By orders of Tsar Ivan IV a convent in honor of the Mother of God and a church were built on this side, and the first copy of the icon was sent to Moscow.”³⁹³

³⁹³ Quotes from “The Complicated History of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God” by Sergei Milov. In:

As I wrote already, icons remain unsigned, and copies are allowed to be made. The question in the Orthodox tradition is not who made it, but what is its miraculous force? The Icon of Kazan has many copies and some of them are ascribed miraculous force. Still, the search for the “original” one continues. Even Pope John-Paul II received one, considered by Vatican experts to be the oldest known copy. In an effort at reconciliation between Rome and Moscow, the copy was officially brought to the Russian Patriarch on 27 August 2004. Moscow was not impressed: “In its size and character, the icon cannot be identified with either the historical miracle-working icon that appeared in 1579 in Kazan or other known and venerated icons.”³⁹⁴ The Muslim Tatars from Kazan did not like the publicity. For the Russian Orthodox Church, the Cathedral on the Red Square and the Icon of the Mother of God are an important national symbol in the perennial conflict between the Catholic Poles and the Orthodox Russians.

The cathedral of coventry.

Writing about national symbols in sacred spaces, the Anglican Church’s Coventry Cathedral can also be mentioned, particularly as it is a memorial to English resistance against German aggression in the Second World War. In the night of 14 November 1940, the City of Coventry was massively and indiscriminately bombed by the Nazi-German air force. The beautiful Gothic Cathedral was destroyed in the resulting firestorm. Plans to rebuild the Cathedral were made well before the end of the Second World War. Sir Giles Gilbert Scott offered a first design for the new cathedral around victory day (5 May) in 1945, but it would be rejected by the Royal Arts Commission. In June 1950, the terms and conditions of a design competition for a new Cathedral were issued. On 15 August 1951, the design of Competitor 91 (Basil Spence) was selected.³⁹⁵ In 1962, the new St. Michael Cathedral was consecrated. The new Cathedral was built upon the remaining ruins and linked with it through a joint entrance.

OrthoChristian.com

³⁹⁴ From Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: Russia: Historic Kazan Icon Stands at the Center of Religious Issues, article by Don Hill.

³⁹⁵ Basil Spence, *PHOENIX AT COVENTRY. The Building of a Cathedral*. Geoffrey Bless Ltd. 1962.

As is the case with Orthodox and Roman-Catholic Churches, the Bishop and the Provost defined the conditions to be observed in building the new sacred space: “The Cathedral is to speak to us and to generations to come of the Majesty, the Eternity and the Glory of God. God, therefore, direct you. It is a Cathedral of the Church of England. In terms of function, what should such a Cathedral express? It stands as witness to the central dogmatic truths of the Christian Faith. Architecturally it should size on those truths and thrust upon man who comes in from the street. The doctrine and the worship of the Church of England is liturgically centered in the Eucharist. The Cathedral should be built to enshrine the altar. This should be the ideal of the architect, not to conceive a building and to place in it an altar, but to conceive an altar and to create a building. In the Anglican liturgy it is the people’s altar; the altar should gather the people, it should offer access for worship and invitation to Communion. With the altar – in the unity of worship – there is the preaching of the Gospel among our people of Coventry and the interpretation of the Word. The theology of the Cathedral we put before you to direct your thought. Prayer will be with you from the Cathedral Crypt and from the Diocese of Coventry. May God be with you in this great matter.”³⁹⁶

Coventry Cathedral became a sacred space for a national memorial, the only city to lose its cathedral church in this manner, according to Basil Spence.

This, obviously, is not true. One of the consequences of the bombing of Coventry by the Luftwaffe was the British decision to bomb Mannheim on 16 December 1940, the first deliberate terror raid by the Allies on Germany, internally declared to be a reprisal for Coventry. The new bombing policy was officially ordered by Churchill in early December. Allied bombing of German cities either destroyed or severely damaged many cathedral churches among them in Cologne, Mannheim, Aachen and Berlin. What had begun as a German ideological war, turned into total warfare on all sides. That is why the sacred space for the British national memorial includes the ruins of the bombed Cathedral.

In its own history, Coventry had lost another cathedral church. A Benedictine Monastery was founded in Coventry in 1043, later to become the priory and

³⁹⁶ *Op.cit.* p. 3/4.

cathedral of St. Mary. At the time of the dissolution of monasteries, priory and cathedral were dissolved on orders of King Henry VIII in 1538. The St. Michael Church which had been destroyed in 1940 was first built in the fourteenth- and fifteenth century in Gothic style, and received “Cathedral status” in 1918. It was only after the Second World War that the (second) St. Michael Cathedral became the sacred space for remembering a national cause.

What conversion?

The conversion of the Word, that is Christ, into Sacred Space, that is Ecclesia, is what building churches and cathedrals is all about. Christ is present in the Eucharist celebrated by the ecclesia, the community of believers. There is no conversion to an empty building, nor is there sacred space without the Word. Such is the essence of the Eastern, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic Churches.

One can find this essential principle in most of the churches mentioned in this chapter as well as all over Europe more generally, especially in the many smaller churches which are, like the majority of the faithful, “without history.” One also encounters this essence in the churches pilgrims travel to go. By way of example, I briefly mentioned Santiago de Compostella, Lourdes, Paray-le-Monial, and Czestochowa. I deliberately put the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan and Coventry Cathedral in separate paragraphs at the end. Commemorating national victory in war may hamper the Word to be converted into sacred space, simply by attracting visitors rather than inviting prayers. In our age of secular nation-states, two further challenges to the sacred essence of churches must finally be mentioned. One is mass-tourism, filling sacred spaces with noisy crowds without due respect for the sacredness of the space. The other is the reduction of churches to economic objects for sale or hire. When respect for such sacred spaces disappears, faith is bound to follow.

Part 2. Conversion into sacred life

Devotion to the Holy Virgin Mary Theotokos

*O Immaculate and wholly-pure Virgin Mary,
Mother of God,
Queen of the world,
hope of those who are in despair:
You are the joy of the saints;
you are the peacemaker between sinners and God;
you are the advocate of the abandoned,
the secure haven of those who are on the sea of the world;
you are the consolation of the world,
the ransom of slaves,
the comfortress of the afflicted.*

*O great Queen,
we take refuge in your protection.
After God,
you are all my hope.
We bear the name of your servants;
allow not the enemy to drag us to hell. I salute you,
O great mediatrix of peace
between men and God,
Mother of Jesus our Lord,
who is the love of all men and of God,
to whom be honor and benediction with the Father and the Holy Ghost.
Amen!”³⁹⁷*

In the December 2015 issue of the *National Geographic*, the leading article deals with “Mary: The Most Powerful Woman in the World.”³⁹⁸ Mary – Holy Mary, Holy Mother of Christ, Virgin and undefiled – writes Maureen Orth, is the world’s most powerful woman. Her emphasis is on Mary’s apparitions in such

³⁹⁷ prayer of St. Ephrem the Syriac in the fourth century of the Church.

³⁹⁸ Article by Maureen Orth, p. 30ff.

places as Medjugorje, Guadalupe, Kibeho, Lezajsk and Lourdes, and the millions of pilgrims going there year after year. It was quite a surprising article to find in the *National Geographic* in this secular era. It tells us that the Holy Mary made most powerful footprints in human history. Indeed, the “Hail Mary” is prayed millions of times every day. Long before the Apparitions began, the Holy Mary, Virgin and Mother of God, was prayed to and venerated. No woman, indeed, has been more revered and sung to or has inspired more poets, painters and composers than this young Jewish girl from Nazareth.

Why has she maintained her hold for so long in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere? Why, even in a secular age, in the face of anti-religious propaganda and downright persecution during the French Revolution, and in the Communist era in Mexico, China, Russia and Eastern and Central Europe?³⁹⁹

Across divisions, Mary is a story nobody thought of, yet a person everybody dreams of.

Popular Faith and Devotion

The Churches’ teaching on the Holy Mary was not so much based on the need to separate true doctrine from heresy; rather, doctrine followed popular faith and devotion. These devotions were present from the birth of the Church in the East.

As John Henry Newman (1859) concluded: “While devotion in the shape of a dogma issues from the high places of the Church, in the shape of devotion ... it starts from below.... At length the great gates of the Basilica are thrown open; and oh, what a cry of joy bursts from the assembled crowd, as it is announced to them that Mary has been proclaimed to be, what everyone with a Catholic heart knew that she was before, the Mother of God! ... Men, women, and children, the noble and the low-born, the stately matron and the modest maiden, all crowd round the Bishops with acclamations. They will not leave them; they accompany them to their homes with a long procession of lighted torches; they burn incense before them, after the eastern fashion, to do them honor. There was but little sleep in Ephesus that night; for very joy they remained awake; the

³⁹⁹ Adapted from: Jaroslav Pelican, *Mary Through the Centuries*. Yale University Press 1997 at p. 215/16..

whole town was one blaze of light, for each window was illuminated.⁴⁰⁰

As Pelican writes in his book *Mary Through the Centuries*: “The content with which [...] successive generations would invest the title ‘blessed’ would vary greatly through the centuries, but the striking quality would be the success with which, in all seasons, Mary’s blessedness would be seen as relevant to men and woman in an equal variety of situations. And that has truly made her the Woman for All Seasons.”⁴⁰¹

St. Ephraim’s prayer, quoted above, already included the full content which successive generations would invest her with. So did the famous liturgical prayer, known as the *Akathist*, a profound, devotional poem or chant, which sings the praises of the Holy Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary (Theotokos). It is chanted in all Orthodox Churches throughout the world during the five Fridays in the Great Lent, and constitutes a very concrete spiritual preparation for the Holy Week and Easter Services.

Sign of contradiction

Holy Mary and Jesus Christ are signs of contradiction. The Annunciation marks the conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb, announcing His incarnation, and the beginning of a new era in the history of salvation.

Great history is made by the multitudes of people without history, amongst them being the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. Mary was also among those without history. We know next to nothing about her life before Angel Gabriel came to her, or about her life after Christ’s Ascension to Heaven.

What a beautiful contradiction, that a person without history is still venerated, written about, painted, sung to in music, and called upon in prayer, more than twenty-one centuries later. Indeed, she has been the most important human

⁴⁰⁰ Source: John Henry Newman, “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine”, *The Rambler*, July 1859”, reproduced. in John Henry Newman, *Conscience, Consensus and the Development of Doctrine: Revolutionary Texts by John Henry Cardinal Newman*, ed. James Gaffney, (New York: Image/Doubleday, 1992), 392-428. Newman refers to the general Council at Ephesus in 431 affirming Mary the Mother of God.

⁴⁰¹ Pelican op.cit p. 21.

person in the history of salvation, by giving birth to the Son of God, while being virgin. And Holy Mary herself saw to it that other people without history would continue her task. After the Ecumenical Council, which declared Mary “mother of God” – Theotokos – the Pope ordered the building of the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in 435 AD. Many churches thereafter would be dedicated to her and become shrines for pilgrims to go to; I already referred to the famous example the Notre Dame of Paris. This was how the Churches in East and West gave structure and guidance to the popular devotion to the Holy Mary.

In later centuries, the Virgin Mary spoke directly to and through other “people without history” in her apparitions. In December 1531, she appeared to the farmer Juan Diego in Guadalupe in Mexico; from 11 February to 16 July 1858, she appeared to a country girl Bernadette at Lourdes in France; from 13 May to 13 October 1917, she appeared to three children at Fátima in Portugal; from June 1981 she has appeared to four children in Medjugorje in Yugoslavia (now Bosnia-Herzegovina); places where millions of pilgrims went and are still going.⁴⁰² Invariably, the visionaries were people without history; the Virgin Mary gave one or several, sometimes secret messages. Equally interesting is the fact that the local clergy was initially skeptical and the local authorities were hostile. Miracles and miraculous cures occurred, and the official Catholic Church, after careful examination, accepted or promoted an official cult of the site (as is still to be done in the case of Medjugorje).⁴⁰³

Pope John-Paul II was convinced that the Virgin Mary saved his life when the bullet of an assassin hit, but failed to kill him, on 13 May 1981 – the remembrance day of the Virgin Mary’s first apparition, on 13 May 1917 at Fatima.⁴⁰⁴ There is no doubt that the (Turkish) assassin was hired by the Bulgarian Secret Service on the orders of Moscow. At the end of 1981, the Polish Communist regime imposed a state of war on Poland, but as the Holy Father was still alive, he could complete his task. In September 1989, Poland had her first non-communist government, and in the months thereafter the Soviet and East Europe-

⁴⁰² Other well-known apparitions: 17 November 1830 at Paris in France; 19 September 1846 at La Salette in France; 12-13 January 1866 at Philipps Dorf (now) in the Czech Republic; 17 January 1871 at Pontmain in Bretagne in France

⁴⁰³ Cf. Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*. Op.cit. p. 178-79.

⁴⁰⁴ As he wrote in his last book “*Mémoire et Identité*.”

an Communist regimes collapsed, and the post-war division of Europe could come to an end.

Did this great event inspire the author in the *National Geographic* to call the Virgin Mary the most powerful woman in the world? Maybe, but she missed the true and deeper significance of the devotion – in the Eastern and Western Churches – to Mary the Virgin and Mother of God. Those of us (this author among them) who made the pilgrimages with the sick to Lourdes experienced again and again that Lourdes is a place where heaven and earth touch each other, through the Holy Virgin Mary. She can reach the hearts of many of the people without history, because of her being a sign of contradiction: immaculate, virgin, mother of God, assumption in heaven. Even deeper is the attachment to Her in the Churches of the East.

Beauty will save the world.

Dostoyevsky was an orthodox Christian. Whereas Western Catholics tend to think in terms of the political theology of the Ecumenical Councils and Papal supremacy, Orthodox Christians tend to think in terms of the theology of beauty. The difference is cultural rather than doctrinal. Orthodox and Catholics believe in the Immaculate Virgin Mary and her Assumption in heaven. The Orthodox Churches proclaim their faith in liturgy, music and Icons. The Catholic Church emphasizes the careful formulation of dogma's.

On August 15, the Orthodox Churches celebrate the “Falling asleep” of the Mother of God:

“Now we leave the Gospel truth for what may be seen as legend; yet legend as it may well be, inside there is the kernel of faith. The facts may not be true – they have not been accepted as such – but there is, as it were, a devotional truth: allegorical or factual. *The Falling Asleep* points to an abiding belief in her purity, her place amongst the chosen disciples, and the love of her Son for her – in a way, if one could look at it so narrowly, it is a reward for her life of self-sacrifice; certainly it is a fulfilment. The Orthodox Church has no dogma of the Assumption, so we are left free not to insist on the everyday

outer truth; however, the inner truth is very true to us. The story of her falling asleep is one of the most tender expressions of the love we feel for the Mother of God, a love we inherited from the Apostles. When she knew that her death was near, the Apostles came to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth to be with her; from Rome, from Tiberias, from India, from Alexandria, from Thebes, and others came from out of their tombs. At her request, the Apostles took her body to bury her in Gethsemane: And when the third day was fulfilled.... We all perceived that her spotless and precious body was translated into paradise (Apocryphal New Testament). We do not ask how, but we are convinced that the Mother of God cannot be far from her son, and we are equally sure that her love for her Son overlaps boundaries of time and space. She is our Mother to whom we turn for protection.⁴⁰⁵

In 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption.⁴⁰⁶ Following the paragraphs explaining the road to the announcement, paragraph 44 states:

“For which reason, after we have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished his special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

The two excerpts essentially express the same faith in the Holy Virgin Mother of God: one in terms of a theology of beauty, the other in terms of political theology. After the second Vatican Council, we are allowed to see the two texts as complementary and enriching rather than as schismatic or erroneous. Both offered structure and guidance for the popular devotion expressed in innu-

⁴⁰⁵ IKONS. *Meditations in Words and Music*. John Tavener and Mother Thekla. Fount Paperback 1994 at p. 40-41.

⁴⁰⁶ *Munificentissimus Deus Defining the Dogma of the Assumption* Pope Pius XII

merable prayers and works of art – both in and outside liturgical celebrations.

Best known outside of them are the Rosary and the Angelus Prayers in the Catholic Church. Both traditions date far back; the rosary at least to the ninth century and in its present form to an apparition of the Holy Mary to St. Dominic in 1214; the Angelus to the eleventh century and the Franciscan friars.

The *Akathist* is the most beautiful and best known, but certainly not the only, Akathist prayer in the Eastern Churches. As prayers, they are part of the Liturgy. The Orthodox Liturgical Calendar, unlike the Catholic one,⁴⁰⁷ runs from September 1st – the birth of the Virgin Mary – to the end of August – the Dormition/Assumption of the Virgin Mary Theotokos.⁴⁰⁸

In the Eastern tradition, Holy Mary “appears” to the faithful through Icons, as the following story about the Icon of **the Unfailing Chalice Mother of God** explains:

“The “Appearance” of the Unfailing Chalice icon took place in the year 1878, according to its associated story. A certain former soldier of the Efremov division of the Tula gubernia (government/province) was afflicted by a heavy addiction to drinking. And then he had a strange dream. An old staretz (spiritual elder) in a *skhima* (monk’s hooded garment) appeared to him, and told him, “Go to the town of Serpukhov, to the monastery of the Entry [into the Temple of the] Mistress Mother of God. There is an icon of the “Unfailing Chalice” Mother of God. Perform a *moleben* [rite involving a series of special prayers] in front of it, and you shall be healthy in spirit and body.” The suffering soldier, not being able to walk at all now, let alone such a long way, and being out of money, and with no one to help him, did not do as the stare told him. The spiritual elder appeared to him in a second dream, but again he did not listen. Finally, the stare came to him a third time in his dreams, and spoke to him so threateningly that at last the man set out on the road, crawling in the dirt as best he could. He eventually made it to a village, where he rested for the night, and there he met a kind-hearted

407 The Catholic Liturgical Calendar runs from the first Sunday of Advent - four weeks before Christmas - to the end of time with the last Sunday – Christ the King – before Advent.

408 The dates of the two solemnities are for East and West: 8 September and 15 August.

old woman who rubbed his legs and laid him where the stove would warm him –which in an old Russian home was right atop the stove. That night he began to feel a pleasant sensation in his legs. By morning he found he could stand somewhat tottering on his still-weak legs. He remained there, and by the next night he felt even better. So he again set off for the Serpukhov Monastery, this time walking with the aid of a stick. Thus, hobbling along, he made it all the way to the town of Serpukhov and to the monastery, but when he asked to hold a *moleben* before the icon of the “Unfailing Chalice,” nobody knew what he was talking about. No one had ever heard of such an icon there. But on looking about, someone found an icon in a side passage, and noticed that on the reverse of it was an inscription reading “The Unfailing Chalice.” The soldier realized that the staretz who appeared in his dream had been the Elder Varlaam, who had been the original founder of the Monastery in the 14th century. The “rediscovered” icon was carried into the church and a *moleben* was held before it. Well, needless to say, the alcoholic ex-soldier went away healed, as the endings of all such stories go. The icon is commemorated in the Russian Orthodox Church on May 5th.⁴⁰⁹

The appearance of the Holy Mother Theotokos in 1878 at Serpukhov, and the Apparitions at Lourdes and Fatima, express the same devotion to the Holy Mary Virgin and Mother of God, and the same faith in her miraculous powers of healing. Lourdes knows many stories of miraculous healing. Let me mention just one of them:

“The case of Gabriel Gargam is probably one of the best known of all the thousands of cures at Lourdes, partly because he was so well known at the Shrine for half a century, partly because it was a twofold healing, spiritual and physical. Born in 1870 of good Catholic parents, he gave early promise of being a clever student and a fervent Catholic. The promise was not fulfilled in the most important respect for, at 15 years of age, he had already lost his faith. He obtained a position in the postal service and was carrying out his duties as a sorter in December of 1899, when the train on which he was traveling from Bordeaux to Paris collided with another train, running

409 Found: Blog at worldpress.com. “Icons and their interpretation/ information for the objective student of Russian, Greek and Balkan Icons. Tag: Inexhaustible Chalice/The Anti-Alcohol Icon. By David.

at 50 miles per hour. Gargam was thrown fifty two feet from the train. He lay in the snow, badly injured and unconscious for seven hours. He was paralyzed from the waist down. He was barely alive when lifted onto a stretcher.As the priest passed carrying the Sacred Host, he pronounced Benediction over the sorrowful group around the covered body. Soon there was a movement from under the covering. To the amazement of the bystanders, the body raised itself to a sitting posture. While the family were looking on dumbfounded and the spectators gazed in amazement, Gargam said in a full, strong voice that he wanted to get up. They thought that it was a delirium before death, and tried to soothe him, but he was not to be restrained. He got up and stood erect, walked a few paces and said that he was cured. The multitude looked in wonder, and then fell on their knees and thanked God for this new sign of His power at the Shrine of His Blessed Mother..⁴¹⁰

Devotion to the Holy Mary: East and West

The two stories I selected above reflect different ways in which the devotion to the Holy Mary has developed throughout Eastern and Western Christianity.

The East is the fatherland of the Icon, defined theologically in function of the Incarnation. Its artistic value lies in what it teaches us believers about who She is. When Bernadette of Lourdes was once asked which one of the images – shown to her in an album – resembled most her vision of the Holy Virgin, she selected without hesitation a Byzantine Icon from the eleventh century.⁴¹¹ According to author Paul Evdomikov, the same century (of the Great Schism) saw Western sacred art empoisoned in its very source, with the exception of the miracle of the Cathedral of Chartres. The Icon was replaced by allegorical and didactic images. Whereas the Icon represents the *Hypostasis*⁴¹² and shows God in Man, Western religious art represents man, the God-man implied, man-made from a human model. The mysterious is renounced as irrational. There was at least one other crucial difference. With very few exceptions, the authors

⁴¹⁰ Excerpts. On August 20th, 1901, sixty prominent doctors examined Gargam. Without stating the nature of the cure, they pronounced him entirely cured. Gargam, out of gratitude to God in the Holy Eucharist and His Blessed Mother, consecrated himself to the service of the invalids at Lourdes. Source: *Miracles of Lourdes*.

⁴¹¹ Paul Evdomikov, *L'Art de l'icône. Théologie de la Beauté*. Desclee de Brouwer 1972.

⁴¹² Absolute Reality or the true nature of Christ

of the original or prototypical icons are not known, and many copies are allowed to be made. The makers of Western works of religious art, on the other hand, are well known, and copy rights are protected.

From the Western vantage point, art in the Middle Ages was liberated from the straitjacket of Iconographic art, with fundamental innovation and growth as a result. The heavenly Holy Virgin Theotokos became the realistic Mother Dolorosa and Mediatrix. For Dante, she became the face that most resembles Christ. In his *Divina Comedia*, she appears in Inferno as the compassionate, in Purgatorio as the virtuous against the vicious, and in Paradiso as the glorious Queen of heaven. In the last three Cantos of Paradiso, her glory is sung by St. Bernard: “No human eye is further from the highest vaults of the thunder, though plunged to the sea’s depths, as my sight was from Beatrice, but that did not affect me, since her image came to me undiluted by any medium. ‘O Lady, in whom my hope has life, and who, for my salvation, suffered to leave your footprints in Hell, I recognize the grace and virtue of all I have seen, through your power and your goodness. You have brought me from slavery to freedom, by all those paths, by all those ways that you had power over. Guard your grace, in me, so that my spirit, which you have made whole, may be acceptable to you when it leaves my body.’”⁴¹³

Clothed with the sun and so close

I grew up in the northern part of the Netherlands before-, during and after the Second World War. We lived in a society characterized by a “pillar” structure. As Catholics, we had our own church, our own friends, our own grocery store and bakery. Contact with other non-Catholic Christians was discouraged, and sometimes even forbidden. During the Second World War and Nazi-German occupation, we lived an isolated life. We did not even know about the persecution and extermination of the Jews. Boys and girls had “Mary” as their second or third Christian name. In a predominantly Protestant country, our devotion to the Holy Mary was cool and minimal, not going beyond daily “Ave Maria’s” and the occasional Rosary.

⁴¹³ DANTE ALIGHIERI A Translation into English Prose by A. S. K LINE Published in Entirety with Index, Notes & Illustrations by G USTAVE D ORE. www.poetryintranslation.com

Catholics did not read the Bible and Protestants read their own Bible, writes Kenneth Clark in his *Introduction to Rembrandt* (1978). Rembrandt was born in Leiden, and his oeuvre reflects the Protestant approach to the Holy Mary. Among his many biblical works, Mary appears only in scenes described in the Gospel of Luke; and she is invariably presented as an average woman from his own century. Clark notes: “For him the Virgin is always a human and not a symbolic figure, and St. Joseph occupies the foreground, in a way he never does in Catholic art.”⁴¹⁴ Unlike most painters before and after him, he never painted the most popular scene of the Annunciation.⁴¹⁵

Much has been written on the Virgin Mary in the visual arts, music, literature and architecture. In the Catholic Church, the devotion to Her has been growing since the early nineteenth century, not in the least due to the increasing number of Papal exhortations and encyclicals. The Apparitions and the loss of the Papal states focused papal attention on the spiritual tasks of the Holy See, including the devotion to the Virgin Mary. After widespread consultation, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Pope Leo XIII wrote more encyclicals on the importance of the Rosary than any Pope before or after him. Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption in Heaven. The Second Vatican Council devoted the full final Chapter VIII of the first dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* to Her, to be further elaborated upon by Pope Paul VI and Pope John-Paul II. In the midst of the Corona Virus crisis, Pope Francis pilgrimed to the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica to proclaim a special feast day devoted to the Holy Mary, mother of the Church.⁴¹⁶

The joyous veneration given to the Mother of God by the contemporary Church, in light of reflection on the mystery of Christ and on his nature, cannot ignore the figure of a woman (cf. Gal 4:4), the Virgin Mary, who is both the Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. In some ways, this was already present in the mind of the Church from the premonitory words of Saint Augustine and Saint Leo the Great onwards.

⁴¹⁴ Kenneth Clark, *An Introduction to Rembrandt*. Harper and Row, 1978 at p. 118.

⁴¹⁵ According to Pelikan, the scenes of the Annunciation were the predominant ones.op.cit.

⁴¹⁶ Excerpts of “DECREE on the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of the Church in the General Roman Calendar From the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 11 February 2018, the memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes.- Robert Card. Sarah, Prefect - Arthur Roche, Archbishop Secretary

Indeed, here we find the Mother standing beneath the cross (cf. Jn 19:25), accepting her Son’s testament of love and welcoming all people in the person of the beloved disciple as sons and daughters to be reborn unto life eternal. She thus became the tender Mother of the church which Christ begot on the cross, handing on the Spirit. Christ, in turn, in the beloved disciple, chose all disciples as ministers of his love towards his Mother, entrusting her to them so that they might welcome her with filial affection. As a caring guide to the emerging church, Mary had already begun her mission in the Upper Room, praying with the Apostles while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14). In this sense, over the course of centuries, Christian piety has honored Mary with various titles – in many ways equivalents – such as Mother of Disciples, of the Faithful, of Believers, of all those who are reborn in Christ; and also as “Mother of the Church,” like in the texts of spiritual authors and in the Magisterium of Popes Benedict XIV and Leo XIII.

Thus, the foundation is clearly established by which Pope Paul VI, on 21 November 1964, at the conclusion of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council, declared the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Mother of the Church, that is to say of all Christian people, the faithful as well as the pastors, who call her the most loving Mother” and established that “the Mother of God should be further honored and invoked by the entire Christian people by this tenderest of titles.”⁴¹⁷

On the occasion of the Holy Year of Reconciliation (1975), the Apostolic See therefore proposed a votive Mass in honor of *Beata Maria Ecclesiae Matre*, which was subsequently inserted into the Roman Missal. The Holy See also granted the faculty to add the invocation of this title in the Litany of Loreto (1980) and published other formularies in the Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1986). Some countries, dioceses and religious families who petitioned the Holy See, were allowed to add this celebration to their particular calendars.

Having attentively considered how greatly the promotion of this devotion might encourage the growth of the maternal sense of the Church in the pas-

⁴¹⁷ During a general audience in St. Peter’s Basilica on May 27, 1964, the Sovereign Pontiff declared: “Thus also by this title Our Lady can be considered and honored as the mother of the holy Church, which is also marked by the very sweet and very exalted title of mother-mother Church”

tors, religious and faithful, as well as a growth of genuine Marian piety, Pope Francis has decreed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, should be inscribed in the Roman Calendar on the Monday after Pentecost and be now celebrated every year.

The love for the Holy Virgin Mary and Mother of God can best be explained by her being the paramount example – next to Jesus-Christ – of a sign of contradiction. As such, she stands for all that is true, good and beautiful, we human beings long for and fail to realize or experience in our daily lives. She was true and obedient to her mission as the virgin mother of God: her strength was her humility; she was the source of the theology of beauty. As we work through our Purgatorio ourselves, the Holy Virgin Mary reminds us of the qualities we need to reach Paradiso, where she is pleading mercy on our behalf. Above all, in a world and a Church dominated by men, the Holy Virgin Mary, the woman, Mother of God, indeed is the most powerful human being in the world, guiding us to her Son Jesus Christ, to unity between our Churches, and beyond, as the Eternal Feminine leading us upward.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁸ Pelikan, *op.cit* last sentence p. 223, referring to Goethe's Faust.

CHAPTER 10

CREED AND CREATIVITY

(I): SAINTS

“First, she appeared marvelous in wisdom; in her was all manner of philosophy. Philosophy is divided in three, in theory, in practice, and in logic. Theory is divided in three, that is intellectual, natural, and mathematical. The blessed Catherine had science intellectual in knowledge of things divine, of which she used against the masters, to whom she proved [there] to be but one very God only, and vanquished all the false gods”.⁴¹⁹

Catharina of Alexandria was the daughter of King Costus of Alexandria. She was born c.285 and beheaded c. 305, on the orders of Emperor Maxentius. She is a much venerated saint, canonized in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. She was a martyr in a time of widespread and serious persecutions of the Christians under Emperors Diocletian, Maxentius, and Maximin, just before Emperor Constantine the Great. So far, no primary sources regarding her life have been found, but she figures in many legends. The oldest monastery on

⁴¹⁹ *the life of St. Katherine, virgin and martyr*. Chapter 172 of the Golden Legend by Jacobus Voragine (1275), extended version translated by William Caxton, 1483. This text was taken from the Internet Medieval Source Book. E-text © by Paul Halsall.

Mount Savior in the Sinai desert is named after her by Emperor Justinian.

She speaks to our imagination as a young and brilliant daughter of King Costus, who had educated her in a classical sense, i.e. in grammar, rhetoric, logic and natural and moral philosophy. As the only daughter and single child, she was to succeed her father and needed to get married for her protection. At the time, she had not as yet received the gift of divine wisdom; nevertheless the husband she wanted – wise, beautiful, noble, and rich like she was – could nowhere be found. The Hermit who had converted her mother Sabanilla, promised her to pray for Catherine. How the transmutation took place from the Greek wisdom she had previously learned, to divine wisdom revealed to her, is beautifully narrated by Jean Mielot.⁴²⁰ In a dream, both Mother and Daughter saw the Queen of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, accompanied by a great many patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, virgins and other saints. She approached Catharine and told her that only Her Son was good enough for her to marry. In their dream, Jesus said that He did not want her as his virgin-wife, because she was not a Christian and He, as King of the Christians, did not want an idolatrous wife. If she wants to be baptized, He said, I promise to betroth her shortly by giving her a ring as to my spouse. When mother and daughter woke up the next morning, Catharine could only cry and said that she would not rest until she would have the Emperor of Glory as her husband. The Hermit, Ananias, explained their dream to Catharine after which he instructed her in the Faith and baptized her.

When she confronted Maxentius with her faith in One God the Creator and Jesus his son, the emperor called the wisest philosophers to rebut her. But instead of being convinced, she convinced them all to convert! They were burnt alive, and she was incarcerated. When the wheel, constructed to torture her to death, broke, the Emperor had her beheaded by the sword.

It is a beautiful story: a young and brilliant princess who gives her life to and for Jesus, who was “marvelous in wisdom” She witnessed her faith at the time of the worst persecutions, well before most of the Church Fathers wrote their learned treatises. It was also before the first Church Councils began. Hers was

⁴²⁰ Jean Mielot, *Vie de Ste. Catherine d’Alexandrie*. Paris George Hurtrel ed. 1881

faithful wisdom revealed, well before the formulation of doctrine under the presidency of the Emperor in the first Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

She made clear that she honored the Creator and not – as the pagans did – the visible objects of His creation. She told them that Isaiah and Plato had announced the coming of Jesus. Against the argument of the folly of Jesus’ crucifixion, she explained that the human Jesus, but not the divine Jesus, had died on the Cross.⁴²¹ Her witness opened the minds of many Roman pagans and made her one of the most venerated Saints in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches thereafter. Her story is an early example of an era in which the faith in the risen Christ would become the source for creative renewal.

Alexandria, at the time, was a large and thriving city; a Jewish, Egyptian and Christian center of learning and intellectual activity. At least three Church fathers lived there: Clemence before 215 AD, Athanasius before 373 and Cyrillus in the fifth century.

The paradox of the God of Moses and of the Christians.

“The belief that God existed but that His qualities could not be described became the basis of a whole new theology. In this way Philo of Alexandria (20 BC-50 AD) would combine philosophy and theology in the style of Plato, foreshadowing Christian thought,” writes Daniel J. Boorstin.⁴²²

And Eusebius wrote: “Under this emperor [Caius], Philo became known; a man most celebrated not only among many of our own, but also among many scholars without the Church. He was a Hebrew by birth, but was inferior to none of those who held high dignities in Alexandria. How exceedingly he labored in the Scriptures and in the studies of his nation is plain to all from the work which he has done. How familiar he was with philosophy and with the liberal studies of foreign nations, it is not necessary to say, since he is reported to have surpassed all his contemporaries in the study of Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy, to which he particularly devoted his attention.”⁴²³

⁴²¹ Cf. Jean Mielot, *Vie de Ste. Catherine d’Alexandrie*. Paris George Hurtrel ed. 1881.

⁴²² Daniel J. Boorstin, *THE CREATORS. A History of Heroes of the Imagination*. Vintage Book N.Y. 1993. At p. 41.

⁴²³ From Eusebius *History of the Church*, Book 2.Chapter 5. In the [New Advent](#) version.

Boorstin then continues: “Here was a path-leading man to think himself a potential creator. Man would himself then be no mere object or victim or instrument of gods but part of the process of creation. This was the paradox of the God of Moses.[...] “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him”(Genesis 1,27). “The perpetual “covenant” between a Creator-God and a Man-in-God’s- image was an extraordinary idea.”[...] “For man’s awareness of his capacity to create, the Covenant was a landmark. It declared that a people become a community through their belief in a Creator and His Creation. They confirmed their creative powers through their kinship, their sharing qualities of God, their intimate and voluntary relationship to a Creator-God.” [...] Philo of Alexandria was “a devotee of the God of Moses, he was himself both an admirer of and a refugee from the elegant explicit world of Plato. Often called the first Christian philosopher”[...] In his efforts to confirm the truths and widen the foundations of the Mosaic revelation, Philo transformed Greek philosophy and Mosaic revelation into a vernacular for Christian theology.⁴²⁴

The Jewish and the Christian Creeds, so explained, are a forceful source of creativity.

There is more in the Jewish and Christian Creed of their God. Man is not only co-creator, man is also a **unique** human being. The same is to be said of human history; it does not move in eternal circles but from a beginning to an end. One’s life on earth, like history itself, has a beginning and an end. **Life has a purpose.**⁴²⁵ *The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all I told you (John, 14,26)*

The dream of Catherine and her mother fundamentally changed their thinking. It was also in a dream that an angel came to Joseph, who thereafter decided to take Mary into his home. Jesus Himself appeared to Saul in Damascus after which prosecutor Saul became Apostle Paul. The entry of Revelation – the Paraclete – into the mind of mankind is recognized as an extraordinary and life-changing event.

⁴²⁴ Op. cit. p. 42, 46, 47.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Chapter 2 *supra*. Also Part II, Chapter 12 in Augustine, *The City of God*.

In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine described Revelation as a Light from above. Faith precedes intellect. “And being thence admonished to return to myself, I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my Guide: and able I was, for Thou wert become my Helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was), above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Light Unchangeable.” The Light of Revelation, according to the *Confessions*, was later followed by the Light of reading: “So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, “Take up and read; Take up and read.”.⁴²⁶

Bonaventura, writes Romano Guardini, tried to further develop this Augustinian idea of knowledge, as the shining penetration of eternal ideas into the human mind. Whereas the idea is in God, knowledge implies – one way or another – that there is contact with God. In human knowledge, God touches the mind with His eternal ideas. “To know” is not only to apprehend the truth, but also to be touched by the beauty and the value of the object concerned. The shining, inner light at the same time marks the beginning of a movement inspired by value and beauty.⁴²⁷

The most moving example of how the inner light opened our eyes towards the Book of Nature as a source of revelation, is given by St. Francis of Assisi, when he sings the *Canticle of Creatures*:

“O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory,
honor and all blessing.
Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation
and especially for our Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light;
he is strong and shines magnificently.
O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,

⁴²⁶ St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. the Gutenberg version. BOOK VII, Chapter 10 and Book VIII, Chapter 12.

⁴²⁷ Romano Guardini, “Een groot denker uit de bloeitijd der Middeleeuwen: Bonaventura. IN: *peilingen van het christelijk denken*.”Lannoo/Tielt, Den Haag 1965 (Translated from the German)

and for the stars
 which you have set shining and lovely
 in the heavens.
 Be praised, my Lord,
 for our Brothers Wind and Air
 and every kind of weather
 by which you, Lord,
 uphold life in all your creatures.
 Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
 who is very useful to us,
 and humble and precious and pure.
 Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
 through whom you give us light in the darkness:
 he is bright and lively and strong.
 Be praised, my Lord,
 for Sister Earth, our Mother,
 who nourishes us and sustains us,
 bringing forth
 fruits and vegetables of many kinds
 and flowers of many colors.
 Be praised, my Lord,
 for those who forgive for love of you;
 and for those
 who bear sickness and weakness
 in peace and patience
 - you will grant them a crown.
 Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death,
 whom we must all face.
 I praise and bless you, Lord,
 and I give thanks to you,
 and I will serve you in all humility.

St. Francis's "mature mysticism included a consciousness of God, with the appropriate religious attitudes of awe and gratitude. He realized that matter is not an evil in a higher spiritual realm, but as matter filled with the Spirit of

God, a world charged with grandeur."⁴²⁸

Such inner light, throughout history, has been a source of human creativity in education, philosophy, science, literature, art and music. We call it the Holy Spirit, which blows whichever way it wants and towards whoever is open to receiving.

Saint Benedict

St. Benedict, founder of the Benedictine Orders and father of Western monasticism, lived from c.480-c.550. As Dante wrote about him: "If you could see, as I can, the love which burns among us, your thought would have been spoken, but so that you do not miss the goal, by delay, I will answer only the thought which you were so cautious about. That mountain, Monte Cairo, on whose slopes lies Monte Cassino, was once thronged by deceived and wrongly-directed worshippers of the Pagan gods. And I am Benedict, who first carried His name up there, He who brought that Truth, which raises us up so high, and such great grace shone over me, that I weaned the surrounding villages from the impious cults that seduced the world. These other flames were all contemplatives, lit by the warmth that bears sacred fruits and flowers."⁴²⁹

St. Benedict was a Roman citizen in a decaying city, after the collapse of the West Roman Empire. He did what other respected Roman citizens also did: he fled the city to a family property in the mountains and formed a community. Later, he composed a rule for Monasteries in Monte Cassino, for the twelve small coenobitic communities he had erected. As recent research proves, his rule was based primarily on "The Rule of the Master" and also benefitted from a monastic tradition, born in Egypt and the Middle East. St. Antony the Great is considered to be the founder of the hermit monastic tradition. St. Pachomius and St. Basilus are the founders of the coenobitic tradition. Their rules are still followed in the Orthodox Churches today. St. Benedict stands in the line of their tradition, including the basic concept of a coenobitic community as an autonomous community under a father (like in a family) called Abba or Abbot.

⁴²⁸ Ilia Delio, "The modern vision of Pope Francis in a medieval church." 'Global Sisters Report. Dec.1,2020

⁴²⁹ Dante's Paradiso, Canto XXII.

His rule, discovered by Pope St. Gregory the Great, would become the basic rule for monasteries in the Latin Church.

St. Gregory the Great, a Benedictine monk born after Benedict had died, was Pope from 590 until 604 AD and wrote Benedict's biography in the Second Book of his *Dialogues*. Without him, St. Benedict might never have risen to his present status of Patron of Europe and founder of Monasticism in the Latin Church. He provided the only source of information pertaining to the Saint's life. "The Rule for Monasteries," as we read in the *Dialogues*, clearly reflects and describes the way the Saint lived.

Pope Gregory the Great cared about the mission of the Church, a mission based on humility and service rather than prestige and splendour. He launched a mission to the Anglo-Saxon tribes in England (sending Augustine of Canterbury, as the later saint was called). From Anglo-Saxon England, St. Willibrord (658-739) and St. Boniface (murdered in 754) brought the faith to Northern Europe, to the Netherlands and Germany. Eamon Duffy considers Gregory the greatest Pope of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.⁴³⁰ It was through the mission to the Anglo-Saxon tribes that Benedictine Monasticism rose to prominence and made a monk *sans-histoire* into one of the most prominent saint, patron of Europe and "Father of Western Civilization."⁴³¹

The second *Dialogue* gives no biography in the modern sense but is the story of a dialogue between Gregory and his assistant Peter, in which they sketch Benedict's spiritual portrait as an itinerary mounting of withdrawal from the world to reaching heaven. Ever since, Benedict has been venerated as a Saint, although he was not formally canonized until 1220.

From the portrait of Benedict in the Second Dialogue.

The Dialogue between Gregory and his assistant Peter is a beautiful text to read. Let me excerpt one passage for the reader, who should consider reading it in full:

⁴³⁰ In his book: *Saints & Sinners. A history of the Popes*. Yale University Press 1997 at p. 57.

⁴³¹ Title of a beautiful and illustrated book published in French and English, 1981 Mercatorfonds Antwerp, written under the direction of Dom. Peter Batselier OSB.

"GREGORY. There was a man of venerable life, blessed by grace, and blessed in name, for he was called "Benedictus" or Benedict. From his younger years, he always had the mind of an old man; for his age was inferior to his virtue. All vain pleasure he despised, and though he was in the world, and might freely have enjoyed such commodities as it yields, yet he esteemed it and its vanities as nothing.(prologue), we read in the Dialogue."

"PETER: Somewhat I understand of this testimony alleged: but yet I beseech you to tell me the meaning of it more fully.

GREGORY: It is plain, Peter, that in youth the temptation of the flesh is hot: but after fifty years the heat of the body waxes cold, and the souls of faithful people become holy vessels. Wherefore necessary it is that God's elect servants, whiles they are yet in the heat of temptation, should live in obedience, serve, and be wearied with labor and pains. But when, by reason of age, the heat of temptation is past, they become keepers of holy vessels; because they then are made the doctors of men's souls".(Book II)

"Having now taken on him the charge of the Abbey, he took order that regular life should be observed, so that none of them could, as before they used, through unlawful acts decline from the path of holy conversation, either on the one side or on the other: which the monks perceiving, they fell into a great rage, accusing themselves that ever they desired him to be their Abbot, seeing their crooked conditions could not endure his virtuous kind of government. Therefore, when they saw that under him they could not live in unlawful sort, and were loath to leave their former conversation, and found it hard to be enforced with old minds to meditate and think on new things: and because the life of virtuous men is always grievous to those that be of wicked conditions, some of them began to devise, how they might rid him out of the way.

Taking counsel together, they agreed to poison his wine: which being done, and the glass wherein that wine was, according to the custom, offered to the Abbot to bless, he, putting forth his hand, made the sign of the cross, and straightway the glass, that was held far off, broke in pieces, as though the

sign of the cross had been a stone thrown against it: on which accident the man of God by and by perceived that the glass had in it the drink of death, which could not endure the sign of life. Rising up, with a mild countenance and quiet mind, he called the monks together, and spoke thus to them:

“Almighty God have mercy on you, and forgive you: why have you used me in this manner? Did not I tell you beforehand, that our manner of living could never agree together? Go your ways, and seek ye out some other father suitable to your own conditions, for I intend not now to stay any longer among you.”

The rule for monasteries

GREGORY: “Yet I would not have you to be ignorant of the fact that the man of God, among so many miracles for which he was so famous in the world, was also sufficiently learned in divinity. He wrote a rule for his monks, both excellent for discretion and also eloquent for its style. If any be curious to know further of his life and conversation, he may understand all his manner of life and discipline in the institution of that rule for the holy man could not otherwise teach, than he himself had lived” (Book XXXVI).⁴³²

The Rule has 73 chapters, together forming what can be seen as the Constitution of Monasticism in the Latin/Roman Catholic Church. The first chapter deals with the kind of monks – the coenobitic – that the rule is written for. Chapters 2 and 3 define the responsibilities of the Abbot, the father of the monks. Chapter 4 lists the 72 instruments of good works. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 deal with the virtues; the longest one is chapter 7, listing the 12 steps on the ladder of humility.

Chapters 8 to 20 deal with Divine Office during the Night. Chapters 21 and 22 with deans and sleeping arrangements. Chapters 23 to 30 address punishments. Next up are four chapters on matters of property and three on services. Chapters 31-43 concern weekly reader and daily order; chapter 44-46; chapter 47 with the work for God. Chapter 48 is the important chapter on daily work. Chapter 49 concerns Lent. Chapters 50-52 discuss travelling outside. Chapter

⁴³² From the English translation of the Dialogues: Gregory the Great, Second Dialogue. OSB.org.

53 with receiving guests. Chapters 54- 67 treat a variety of matters of organization, admission, constituting an abbot, place of priests and the order of the community. Follows a wise chapter on impossible tasks, two chapters on mutual relations between the monks and finally: “Just as there is an evil zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God and to life everlasting. This zeal, therefore, the monks should practice with the most fervent love. Thus they should anticipate one another in honor; most patiently endure one another’s infirmities, whether of body or of character; vie in paying obedience one to another—no one following what he considers useful for himself, but rather what benefits another—; tender the charity of brotherhood chastely; fear God in love; love their Abbot with a sincere and humble charity; prefer nothing whatever to Christ. And may He bring us all together to life everlasting!” (Chapter 72)

Patron of Europe.

There is no better example of a person *sans-histoire* who became one of the most influential Saints in Christian Europe, so much so that today we call him father of Western Civilization and Patron of Europe. Pope Paul VI gave him five titles as grounds for proclaiming him Patron of Europe. He was, in the words of Pope Paul VI:

“Messenger of peace, moulder of union, magister of civilization, and above all herald of the religion of Christ and founder of monastic life in the West: these are the proper titles of exaltation given to St Benedict, Abbot. At the fall of the crumbling Roman Empire, while some regions of Europe seemed to have fallen into darkness and others remained as yet devoid of civilization and spiritual values, he it was who, by constant and assiduous effort, brought to birth the dawn of a new era. It was principally he and his sons, who with the cross, the book and the plough, carried Christian progress to scattered peoples from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia, from Ireland to the plains of Poland. With the cross; that is, with the law of Christ, he lent consistency and growth to the ordering of public and private life. To this end, it should be remembered that he taught humanity the primacy

of divine worship through the “opus Dei”, i.e. through liturgical and ritual prayer. Thus it was that he cemented that spiritual unity in Europe, whereby peoples divided on the level of language, ethnicity and culture felt they constituted the one people of God; a unity that, thanks to the constant efforts of those monks who followed so illustrious a teacher, became the distinctive hallmark of the Middle Ages. With the book, then, i.e. with culture, the same St Benedict - from whom so many monasteries derive their name and vigour - with providential care, saved the classical tradition of the ancients at a time when the humanistic patrimony was being lost, by transmitting it intact to its descendants, and by restoring the cult of knowledge. Lastly, it was with the plough, i.e. with the cultivation of the fields and with other similar initiatives, that he succeeded in transforming wastelands gone wild into fertile fields and gracious gardens; and by uniting prayer with manual labour, according to his famous motto “ora et labora”, he ennobled and elevated human work.”⁴³³

Messenger of peace.

Says his Rule for monasteries: “Let us follow the Scripture, “Distribution was made to each according as anyone had need.” By this we do not mean that there should be respecting of persons (which God forbid), but consideration for infirmities. He who needs less should thank God and not be discontented; but he who needs more should be humbled by the thought of his infirmity rather than feeling important on account of the kindness shown him. Thus all the members will be at peace. Above all, let not the evil of murmuring appear for any reason whatsoever in the least word or sign. If anyone is caught at it, let him be placed under very severe discipline.” (chapter 34)

“Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, “I came as a guest, and you received Me.” And to all let due honor be shown, especially to the domestics of the faith and to pilgrims. As soon as a guest is announced, therefore, let the Superior or the brethren meet him with

all charitable service. And first of all let them pray together, and then exchange the kiss of peace. For the kiss of peace should not be offered until after the prayers have been said, on account of the devil’s deceptions. In the salutation of all guests, whether arriving or departing, let all humility be shown. Let the head be bowed or the whole body prostrated on the ground in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons. After the guests have been received and taken to prayer, let the Superior or someone appointed by him sit with them. Let the divine law be read before the guest for his edification, and then let all kindness be shown him. The Superior shall break his fast for the sake of a guest, unless it happens to be a principal fast day which may not be violated. The brethren, however, shall observe the customary fasts. Let the Abbot give the guests water for their hands; and let both Abbot and community wash the feet of all guests. After the washing of the feet let them say this verse: “We have received Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your temple.” In the reception of the poor and of pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown, because it is especially in them that Christ is received; for as far as the rich are concerned, the very fear which they inspire wins respect for them”.(chapter 53).

Architect of unity

“Let him make no distinction of persons in the monastery. Let him not love one more than another, unless it be one whom he finds better in good works or in obedience. Let him not advance one of noble birth ahead of one who was formerly a slave, unless there be some other reasonable ground for it. But if the Abbot for just reason think fit to do so, let him advance one of any rank whatever. Otherwise let them keep their due places; because, whether slaves or freemen, we are all one in Christ and bear an equal burden of service in the army of the same Lord. For with God there is no respect of persons. Only for one reason are we preferred in His sight: if we be found better than others in good works and humility. Therefore let the Abbot show equal love to all and impose the same discipline on all according to their deserts.”

⁴³³ Paul VI's Apostolic Letter, PACIS NUNTIUS. Saint Benedict, Abbot, is proclaimed Principal Patron of All of Europe. In perpetual memory. 24 October 1964.

Teacher of culture and civilization'

"Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and again at fixed hours in sacred reading. To that end we think that the times for each may be prescribed as follows. From Easter until the Calends of October, when they come out from Prime in the morning let them labor at whatever is necessary until about the fourth hour, and from the fourth hour until about the sixth let them apply themselves to reading. After the sixth hour, having left the table, let them rest on their beds in perfect silence; or if anyone may perhaps want to read, let him read to himself in such a way as not to disturb anyone else. Let None be said rather early, at [pg 68] the middle of the eighth hour, and let them again do what work has to be done until Vespers. And if the circumstances of the place or their poverty should require that they themselves do the work of gathering the harvest, let them not be discontented; for then are they truly monks when they live by the labor of their hands, as did our Fathers and the Apostles. Let all things be done with moderation, however, for the sake of the faint-hearted known as the principle of *Ora et Labora*,

Herald of the Christian faith

Thanks to Pope Gregory the Great's decision to send Augustine of Canterbury and others to the Anglo-Saxon Tribes in England, the Benedictines became the driving forces towards the Christianization of North-Western Europe above the Alps.

Founder of western monasticism

"Now we have written this Rule in order that by its observance in monasteries we may show that we have attained some degree of virtue and the rudiments of the religious life. But for him who would hasten to the perfection of that life there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which leads a man to the height of perfection. For what page or what utterance of the divinely inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is

not a most unerring rule for human life? Or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers does not loudly proclaim how we may come by a straight course to our Creator? Then the Conferences and the Institutes and the Lives of the Fathers, as also the Rule of our holy Father Basil—what else are they but tools of virtue for right-living and obedient monks? But for us who are lazy and ill-living and negligent they are a source of shame and confusion. Whoever you are, therefore, who are hastening to the heavenly homeland, fulfil with the help of Christ this minimum Rule which we have written for beginners; and then at length under God's protection you will attain to the loftier heights of doctrine and virtue which we have mentioned above. (Chapter 73).

Patron of the whole of Europe

With the cross; that is, with the law of Christ, he lent consistency and growth to the ordering of public and private life. To this end, it should be remembered that he taught humanity the primacy of divine worship through the "opus Dei", i.e. through liturgical and ritual prayer. Thus it was that he cemented that spiritual unity in Europe, whereby peoples divided on the level of language, ethnicity and culture felt they constituted the one people of God; a unity that, thanks to the constant efforts of those monks who followed so illustrious a teacher, became the distinctive hallmark of the Middle Ages." This quote from the proclamation of Pope Paul VI, clearly summarizes the reasons for making St. Benedict the patron of the whole of Europe, that is Europe East and West, Orthodox and Latin, North and South, Catholic and Reformed. St. Benedict is the paramount example of a monk *sans-histoire*, who thanks to a visionary Pope was discovered; the same Pope who understood the wisdom and prudence of Benedict's Rule for Monasteries and sent missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons in England. "

Ora et Labora, the importance of humility and missionary work still are the trademarks of the Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Trappists. As I learned from my Benedictine Father-Confessors, the Rule for Monasteries contains much guidance to everyone, in particular with respect to the most difficult virtue of humility.

Humility

Humility is a truly Christian virtue and most difficult to practice. It needs a high ladder of twelve steps, according to Chapter 7 of the Rule: “Brethren, the sacred Scriptures cry out to us and say: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.” In saying this it reveals that all exalting is a form of pride, against which the prophet shows that he is on his guard by saying: “Lord, my heart is not exalted nor mine eyes uplifted; and I have not concerned myself with great things nor with wonderful things above my reach.” But why? “If I have not been of humble mind, but exalted my soul, then as if a weaned child upon his mother’s breast, such let my soul’s retribution be.” Whence, brethren, if we wish to attain the highest point of humility and if we wish quickly to reach that heavenly exaltation which is attained through humility in this present life, we must by what we do to attain it set up that ladder which appeared in Jacob’s dream and by which angels were shown to be both descending and ascending; for without doubt we are not to understand that descending and ascending but as descending by exaltation and ascending by humility. For that ladder set up is our life in this world which, when the heart has been humbled by the Lord, is set up to heaven. And we say that the sides of this ladder are our body and soul, into which sides God-given vocation has inserted sundry rungs of humility and discipline by which we may ascend..

Decisive influence

The Benedictines had a decisive influence on the economic development of the West, according to the great historian Arnold Toynbee.⁴³⁴ As an historian, one could look at the enormous economic development of Western Civilization as a byproduct of the way of life of the Benedictine Monks. Benedict’s famous rule, known as *Ora et Labora*, by which the monks were instructed to perform menial and mental tasks not just for their own sake but because of their good consequences for their spiritual growth, turned out to be enormously success-

⁴³⁴ In: *Christianity among the religions of the world*. Oxford University Press, 1957. Chapter 3.

ful both economically and spiritually. Let me just quote from Chateaubriand’s famous book on the genius of Christianity:

“The clergy, secular and regular, we are indebted for agriculture, as well as for our colleges and hospitals. The tillage of uncultivated lands, the construction of roads, the enlargement of towns and villages, the institution of post-houses and inns, arts, trades, and manufactures, commerce internal and external, laws, civil and political, in a word, everything, we originally received from the Church. Our ancestors were barbarians, whom Christianity was obliged to teach even the art of raising the necessities of life. Almost all the grants made to the monasteries in the early ages of the Church, consisted of wastes which the monks brought into cultivation with their own hands. Trackless forests, impassable morasses, extensive heaths, were.”⁴³⁵ The quotation underlines the important role of the Benedictine monasteries in the economic development of Western Europe. Still more can be added. In an earlier Chapter (V in Book VI), he wrote about “that celebrated order destined to enjoy the threefold glory to which no other society ever attained, - of converting Europe to Christianity, of bringing her deserts under cultivation, and of rekindling the torch of science among her barbarous sons.”

Edith Stein/st. Teresa Benedicta of the cross.

“The vocation of man and woman is not exactly the same in the original order, the order of fallen nature, and the redemptive order. *Originally*, man and woman were both made responsible to preserve their own likeness to God, their lordship over the earth, and the reproduction of the human race. The preeminent position of the man, which seems to be implied by the fact that he was created first, is not explained in greater depth. After their Fall, the relationship between them is transformed from a pure partnership of love to a relationship of sovereignty and subordination and is distorted by concupiscence.”⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ From p. 644-647, Chapter VII. Agriculture, **Book VI**. by Viscount de Chateaubriand, *Genius of Christianity*. Baltimore 1871. Ninth Revised edition. Translated from the French by Charles I. White, D.D.

⁴³⁶ Edith Stein, *ESSAYS ON WOMAN*. Second Edition, Revised. Volume Two. Chapter II. Edited by Dr. Lucy Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, O.C.D. Translated by Freda Mary Oben, Ph.D. ICS Publications Institute of Carmelite Studies’ Washington, D.C. 1996

Edith Stein rose to prominence as a leading philosopher in the intellectual community in Germany, ever since she completed her dissertation under Edmund Husserl in 1916. Born in an orthodox Jewish family in 1891, she fell in love with Jesus Christ and became a Roman Catholic on January 1st of 1922. Eleven years later, the year Hitler came to power, Edith was dismissed from her teaching and entered the Discalced Carmelite order to follow a life of mystic and contemplative prayer, changing her name to Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. In 1938, she took the eternal vow and fled to the Carmelite Cloister in Echt, the Netherlands. In a Nazi *razzia* in 1942, she was arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was killed in the gas chambers together with her sister Rosa, on August 9, 1942.

As the above quote indicates, Edith Stein provides a model for a true woman who authentically integrates faith, family, and work. Award-winning journalist Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda sheds new light on this complex woman, her culture, and the pivotal period of history in which she lived and died.⁴³⁷

More than a biography, these pages paint a multifaceted portrait of Edith Stein as seen by scholars, friends, and relatives, and by Catholics as well as Jews. On October 11, 1998, Teresa Benedeta of the Cross was canonized by Pope John-Paul II, who concluded:

“Finally, the new saint teaches us that love for Christ *undergoes suffering*. Whoever truly loves does not stop at the prospect of suffering: he accepts communion in suffering with the one he loves. Aware of what her Jewish origins implied, Edith Stein spoke eloquently about them: “Beneath the Cross I understood the destiny of God’s People.... Indeed, today I know far better what it means to be the Lord’s bride under the sign of the Cross. But since it is a mystery, it can never be understood by reason alone.”⁴³⁸

The mystery of the Cross gradually enveloped her whole life, guiding her to the point of making the ultimate sacrifice. As a “bride on the Cross,” Sr Teresa Benedicta did not only write profound pages about the “science of the Cross,”

⁴³⁷ Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, ‘Edith Stein’s Journey to Sainthood. August 8, 2017 in Catholicchange.com from her book: *Edith Stein The Life and Legacy of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross*. Sophia Institute Press.

⁴³⁸ Homily for the canonization of Edith Stein. Holy See 11 October 1998.

but was thoroughly trained in the “school of the Cross”. Many of our contemporaries would like to silence the Cross. But nothing is more eloquent than the Cross when silenced! The true message of suffering is a lesson of love. Love makes suffering fruitful and suffering deepens love.

Through the experience of the Cross, Edith Stein was able to open the way to a new encounter with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith and the Cross proved inseparable to her. Having matured in the school of the Cross, she found the roots to which the tree of her own life was attached. She understood that it was very important for her “to be a daughter of the chosen people and to belong to Christ not only spiritually, but also through blood.”

Saint Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa stands in the long line of female saints, from Catherina of Alexandria as one of the virgins martyred under Emperor Maxentius, to Teresa of Avilla, Catherina of Siena, Birgitta of Sweden, Therese of Lisieux, Bernadette of Lourdes, and Edith Stein/Teresa of the Cross, murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.

“Dear brothers and sisters,. Listen to the voice of Jesus who, **tired and thirsty**, says to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well: “Give me a drink” (Jn 4:7). Look upon Jesus nailed to the Cross, dying, and listen to his faint voice: “I thirst”(Jn 19:28). Today, Christ repeats his request and relives the torments of his Passion in the poorest of our brothers and sisters.”⁴³⁹

The publication of Pope John-Paul’s letter finally convinced Mother Teresa from Calcutta to lift her secrecy cast over her experience on 10 September 1946, in the train to Darjeeling in India. The light Jesus had given her was His mission to her in two words: **“I Thirst.”**

It transformed her life and brought the mission to care for the dying and so much more in Calcutta and over the world, that she became one of the closest

⁴³⁹ Pope John Paul II. 1993 Lenten Letter, published on 18 September 1993

friends of Pope John Paul II. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979,⁴⁴⁰ and was made a Saint by Pope Francis in 2016.⁴⁴¹ She began her Nobel Acceptance Speech with a call to prayer:

“Let us all together thank God for this beautiful occasion where we can all together proclaim the joy of spreading peace, the joy of loving one another and the joy acknowledging that the poorest of the poor are our brothers and sisters. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted; to understand, than to be understood; to love, than to be loved. For it is by forgetting self, that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying, that one awakens to eternal life. Amen.”

⁴⁴⁰ From the Transcript of Mother Teresa's Acceptance Speech, held on 10 December 1979 in the Aula of the University of Oslo, Norway.

⁴⁴¹ See Joseph Langford, *Mother Teresa's SECRET FIRE*. Huntington, Indiana 2008.

CHAPTER 11

CREED AND CREATIVITY (II):

EDUCATION, ART, AND SCIENCE

In Book VI, part V, Chateaubriand devotes a special chapter to education as one of the principal creative activities with their source in the Christian Faith, from which I selected the following quotes:

”Schools, Colleges, Universities, Benedictines, and Jesuits. To devote one’s life to the alleviation of the sufferings of mankind is the first of benefits. The second is to enlighten them. Here again we meet with those superstitious priests who have cured us of our ignorance, and who for ten centuries buried themselves in the dust of the schools to rescue us from barbarism. They were not afraid of the light, since they opened to us the sources of it. ..The Benedictine, who had studied everything, the Jesuit, who was acquainted with the sciences and the world, the Oratorian and the professor of the university, are perhaps less entitled to our gratitude than those humble friars who devoted themselves throughout all Christendom to the gratuitous instruction of the poor. “The regular clerics of the pious schools undertook, out of charity, to teach the lower classes reading, writing, arithmetic, and

book-keeping. They likewise taught not only rhetoric and the Greek and Latin languages, but in the towns they also kept schools of philosophy and theology, scholastic and moral, mathematics, geometry, and fortification. . [...]All the European universities were founded either by religious princes, or by bishops or priests, and they were all under the direction of different Christian orders. [...]. But two orders, the Benedictines and the Jesuits, have been more particularly engaged in the cultivation of letters. In the year 540 of the Christian era, St. Benedict laid the foundation, at Monte Cassino, in Italy, of that celebrated order destined to enjoy the threefold glory to which no other society ever attained, of converting Europe to Christianity, of bringing her deserts under cultivation, and of rekindling the torch of science among her barbarous sons.”⁴⁴²

From this long quote we can learn about the “new Christian culture,” built on a double foundation, from the very beginning, of classical education in the liberal arts and (above it) the specifically Christian biblical and theological learning, in the East as well as in the West. Since the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the Church was left as the only surviving representative and guardian of Roman culture and Christian education – a far greater educational task than in the Byzantine world. This form of education was diffused throughout Western Europe by the monastic movement, the Benedictines in particular.⁴⁴³

This new Christian culture became the source of creativity in learning, science and the arts – literature, poetry, music, architecture, painting and sculpture. It is essential “to recognize and establish the order and hierarchy of wisdom.” The wisdom of God’s Order must precede and descend to inspire wisdom in the human order. At best, Church authorities promote, recognize, discern and confirm creativity, such as Pope Gregory the Great did with the life and work of St. Benedict and the Monks he sent out to evangelize North-Western Europe. Benedictine Abbeys and monasteries have been principal sources of education, agriculture, science, the arts and architecture ever since. At worst, Church authorities also prohibited the painting, the performance of music and operas

⁴⁴² Viscount de Chateaubriand, *Genius of Christianity*. From the English translation in John Murphy & Co. Philadelphia 1871. At p. 634ff.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*. Franciscan University Press Steubenville 1989. Summarized from p. 9-11.

or the publication of pamphlets, poems or books. Following the invention of printed books, the Catholic Church invented and used the Index of Prohibited Books until 1966.

The Arts: Architecture, Music and Literature

Just wander about, look around, or listen: you will find a Christian culture all over Europe through which creativity blossomed. It initially began with the permission to represent Christ in images – on frescos, in catacombs, on paintings, on mosaics and in sculpture. It was a break with the Judaic tradition and a Christianization of Greek and Roman art. For many centuries, the creation of art was done on commission. Art had a religious function or mission: to teach the Word of God to those who could not yet read and so to reflect the truth, the good, and the beauty of the faith in Christ. They were commissioned primarily by the Church, popes, bishops, emperors, kings and the nobility, for their own glory or for the expiation of their sins. I have already referred to several major examples of creative art in previous chapters.⁴⁴⁴ The great Romanesque and Gothic Cathedrals still dominate Europe’s cities, as do the great Basilicas in Orthodoxy. Great Paintings are mostly found in museums. Some, like Jan and Hubert van Eyck’s *Lamb of God*, can still be admired in the St. Bavo’s Cathedral in Ghent, or Michelangelo’s *Piëta* in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, or the breathtaking mosaics in Ravenna.

The Christian Faith has been a great source of creativity in Music. As Chateaubriand wrote in *The Genius of Christianity*:

“To the Fine Arts, the sisters of poetry, we have now to direct our attention. Following the steps of the Christian religion, they acknowledged her for their mother the moment she appeared in the world ; they lent her their terrestrial charms, and she conferred on them her divinity. Music noted down her hymns. Painting represented her in her mournful triumphs ; Sculpture delighted in meditating with her among the tombs; and Architecture built her temples sublime and melancholy as her thoughts. Plato has admirably

⁴⁴⁴ Among the abundant literature: Peter Schmidt, *In de handen van mensen. 2000 jaar Christus in kunst en cultuur*. Davidsfonds/Leuven 2000. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries*. Yale University Press 1985. Paul Evdokimov, *L’art de l’icone. Théologie de la beauté*. Desclée de Brouwer 1972.

defined the real nature of music: “We must not judge of music, said he, by the pleasure which it affords, nor prefer that kind which has no other object than pleasure, but that which contains in itself a resemblance to the beautiful. Christianity has invented the organ and given sighs to brass itself. To her music owed its preservation in the barbarous ages; wherever she has erected her throne, there have arisen a people who sing as naturally as the birds of the air. Song is the daughter of prayer, and prayer is the companion of religion. She has civilized the savage, only by the means of hymns; and the Iroquois who would not submit to her doctrines was overcome by her concerts. religion of peace ! thou hast not, like other systems, inculcated the precepts of hatred and discord thou hast taught mankind nothing but love and harmony.”⁴⁴⁵

Gregorian hymns and psalms are still sung in monasteries and Catholic churches, as are Greek and Slavic hymns in Orthodox churches. Many great composers wrote religious music for the purposes of meditation and contemplation. Johan Sebastian Bach’s oratorios – Christmas Oratorio, Mattheus- and St. John’s Passions – are performed increasingly often in “secularist” Europe, as is the case with George Friedrich Händel’s *Messiah*. There is a treasure of religious music to be found in Russia, such as the Vespers of Rachmaninov and the work of Tchaikovsky. There are libraries of Church music with Masses, composed by Pergolesi, Purcell, Mozart, Haydn and many others. During the remembrance year of Beethoven, we could discover the richness of his religious works such as the Great Mass, Christ last Seven Words, *Alle Menschen Werden Brüder* in the Ninth Symphony, and the beautiful denouement of his single Opera *Fidelio*:

Fidelio stands for the three European virtues of Courage, Fidelity and Love, by which Leonora saved the life of her husband Florestan, about to be killed in revenge by Don Pizarro, governor of a state prison. Disguised as a boy, Leonora managed to be employed as an assistant to jailer Rocco. With him she descended into the deepest and darkest pit of the subterranean prison, where her husband was chained dying from hunger, thirst and cold. She went to help Rocco, who was ordered by Pizarro to dig a grave for Florestan, he wanted to kill and be buried there in secret. When Don Pizarro came down and drew his

dagger to kill Florestan, Leonora threw herself between them, ordering Pizarro to stand back: “First you will have to pierce my breast! Death will surely punish your cruel lust for blood.” Pizarro hurls her out of the way, but she comes back to shield her husband again, singing “first kill his wife!” In the ensuing confusion, Pizarro after a while recovers: “am I to be frightened by a woman?” On which Leonora produces a small pistol and pointing it to Pizarro, sings: “Another sound and you are dead.”

At that moment a trumpet call is heard from the tower, announcing the arrival of the Minister Don Fernando. “Ah, you are safe now, almighty God, almighty God, sings Leonora embracing Florestan who joins in. “Love combined with courage, your freedom will achieve.” Don Fernando, the townspeople and the other prisoners join in with an ode of joy’.

It is one thing to sing Beethoven’s anthem *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*” as we do in the European Union, but another thing to live by it. Opera, as another example, exists on the borderline between cherished music and “indexed” literature.⁴⁴⁶ Mozart’s Opera *La Nozze di Figaro* brought heavenly music, the text was derived from a play written by Beaumarchais.⁴⁴⁷

Equally on the borderline between cherished poems and forbidden stories and novels, literature has always been central to the Christian world.⁴⁴⁸

Giovanni Boccaccio lived in the calamitous fourteenth century. The *Decamerone* was written during the Black Death Pandemic in Florence. Its hundred stories were told amongst ten young girls and boys who had fled to city to escape death. It is worthwhile to reprint one of the most beautiful short stories:

Rather than writing about literature, I quote one of the best short stories from the *DECAMERONE*:

“Saladin,—whose valor was such that not only from a man of little account it made him Soldan of Babylon, but gained him many victories over kings

⁴⁴⁵ *Op.cit.* Part the Third, Book I. The Fine Arts. Chapter I. Music, p. 370ff.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter 7, *supra*

⁴⁴⁷ *La Folle Journée ou Le Mariage de Figaro* Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais

⁴⁴⁸ Story in Giovanni Boccaccio *DECAMERONE*.

Saracen and Christian,—having in divers wars and in the exercise of his extraordinary munificence expended his whole treasure and having an urgent occasion for a good sum of money nor seeing whence he might avail to have it as promptly as it behooved him, called to mind a rich Jew, by name Melchizedek, who lent at usance in Alexandria, and bethought himself that this latter had the wherewithal to oblige him, and he would; but he was so miserly that he would never have done it of his freewill and Saladin was loath to use force with him; wherefore, need constraining him, he set his every wit awork to find a means how the Jew might be brought to serve him in this and presently concluded to do him a violence colored by some show of reason. Accordingly he sent for Melchizedek and receiving him familiarly, seated him by himself, then said to him, ‘Honest man, I have understood from divers persons that thou art a very learned man and deeply versed in matters of divinity; wherefore I would fain know of thee whether of the three Laws thou reputes the true, the Jewish, the Saracen or the Christian.’ The Jew, who was in truth a man of learning and understanding, perceived but too well that Saladin looked to entrap him in words, so he might fasten a quarrel on him, and bethought himself that he could not praise any of the three more than the others without giving him the occasion he sought. Accordingly, sharpening his wits, as became one who felt himself in need of an answer by which he might not be taken at a vantage, there speedily occurred to him that which it behooved him reply and he said, ‘My lord, the question that you propound to me is a nice one and to acquaint you with that which I think of the matter, it behooved me tell you a little story, which you shall hear.

And I mistake not, I mind me to have many a time heard tell that there was once a great man and a rich, who among other very precious jewels in his treasury, had a very goodly and costly ring, whereunto being minded, for its worth and beauty, to do honor and wishing to leave it in perpetuity to his descendants, he declared that whichsoever of his sons should, at his death, be found in possession thereof, by his bequest unto him, should be recognized as his heir and be held of all the others in honor and reverence as chief and head. He to whom the ring was left by him held a like course with his own descendants and did even as his father had done. In brief the

ring passed from hand to hand, through many generations, and came at last into the possession of a man who had three goodly and virtuous sons, all very obedient to their father wherefore he loved them all three alike. The young men, knowing the usance of the ring, each for himself, desiring to be the most honored among his folk, as best he might, besought his father, who was now an old man, to leave him the ring, when as he came to die. The worthy man, who loved them all alike and knew not himself how to choose to which he had most loved to leave the ring, bethought himself, having promised it to each, to seek to satisfy all three and privily let make by a good craftsman other two rings, which were so like unto the first that he himself scarce knew which was the true. When he came to die, he secretly gave each one of his inheritance and the honor and denying it to the others, produced his ring, in witness of his right, and the three rings being found so like unto one another that the true might not be known, the question which was the father’s very heir abode pending and yet pended. And so say I to you, my lord, of the three Laws to the three peoples given of God the Father, whereof you question me; each people deemed itself to have his inheritance, His true Law and His commandments; but of which in very deed hath them, even as of the rings, the question yet pended.”⁴⁴⁹

The story is fascinating. It caused the Decamerone to be placed on the Index of forbidden books in 1559. The Index of forbidden books originates from the Council of Trent, the principal Catholic document of the Counter-reformation. The Council of Trent adopted the “Ten Rules concerning prohibited books” drawn up by the fathers chosen for that task and approved by the Pope.”⁴⁵⁰

Forbidding books, however, dates from the era of Emperor Constantine: “After the Council of Nicea (325) condemned the heresy of Arius, Constantine ordered Arian books burned and made their concealment a capital crime.”⁴⁵¹

According to the Catholic World Report, the Index (at the time of its suppression in 1966) was a veritable museum of forgotten ecclesiastical disputes.” The

⁴⁴⁹ From the third story in Giovanni Boccaccio *DECAMERONE*.

⁴⁵⁰ INTERNET Modern History Sourcebook Council of Trent: Rules on Prohibited Books. Fordham University.

⁴⁵¹ The Catholic world REPORT “When the Church condemned books: A short history of the Index. March 3, 2025. Sandra Miesel.

Index included older forbidden texts like the Decamerone and Dante's "De Monarchia". They were included in the Index of 1559. For the Renaissance Popes, the Index clearly became an important instrument of political control as it had been for the Emperor. After the invention of the printed book, its scope widened, but it didn't work. The index extended to philosophical works and literature, but turned out to be a recommendation for reading. If one wanted to find a good novel or read a brilliant philosopher, one consulted the Index! Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a forbidden author during his life time figures as inspiring source at the end of this chapter!

The arts of the written word, for all centuries of the Christian Era, have been the principal medium for expressing creative ideas. Until the invention of the art of printing, books were handwritten and copied, in the abbeys and monasteries, and read by those who could read, primarily the Clergy. Between 1452 and 1455, Johann Gutenberg printed the first eighteen printed copies of the Bible. By the end of the century, some one million printed books were available, and the number and availability of books increased rapidly thereafter.

The fifteenth century in Europe was marked by the Renaissance and the art of printing, but also by new creativity in the sciences.

Creative sciences.

"Philosophy is written in this grand book the universe, which stands continuously open to our gaze, but the book cannot be understood unless one learns to comprehend the language and read the alphabet in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth." - Galileo Galilei believed.⁴⁵²

It was through this language of mathematics that Nicolaus Copernicus discovered the heliocentric system; a denial of the common-sense axiom that our

earth is stable, immovable and center of the universe. Nikolaus Copernicus was a modest Canon in Torun and came to his alternative hypothesis – that the earth does not rest in the middle of heaven but is turning around the sun – through long and intense study. As he writes in the introduction to his treatise, which would only be published after his death: "Hence I thought that I too would be readily permitted to ascertain whether explanations sounder than those of my predecessors could be found for the revolution of the celestial spheres on the assumption of some motion of the earth."

"The Copernican doctrine had lain semidormant for a half-century after Copernicus – as an unpersuasive hypothesis." Galileo's Telescope "made all the difference. "What he saw persuaded Galileo of the truth of what he had read. And he was not alone. Until the telescope, the defenders of Christian orthodoxy felt no need to ban Copernican ideas. But this new device, which spoke directly to the senses, short-circuited the priests' appellate jurisdiction over the heavens. Astronomy was transformed from a preserve of arcane theories in learned language, into a public experience."⁴⁵³

The response from the Renaissance Papacy was deeply tragic. St. Francis considered nature as a source of divine revelation, meaning that it concerned what he saw with his own eyes. The telescope and microscope enhanced our vision of divine revelation, outward into space and inward in biology. What they saw with their own eyes, assisted by the language of mathematics, were fascinating discoveries. Due to human pride, the claim to supreme power, and the political theology of the Renaissance Popes, the Catholic Church for a very long time failed to share the fascination of the scientists, despite the fact that all of them, from Copernicus to Isaac Newton, from Descartes to Darwin, were convinced Christians.

"Philosophy and science moved away from a major source of inspiration in the Christian Creed. The leading European minds moved their focus and attention to the promotion of the sciences and their technical applications." As David Toolan wrote, "both the Protestant and the (counterreformation) Catholic vision of theology has not kept pace with new scientific developments. Increas-

⁴⁵² In: Dava Sobel, *GALILEO'S DAUGHTER, A Drama of Science, Faith and Love*. London 1999..at p.16.

⁴⁵³ Daniel J. Boorstin, *THE DISCOVERERS*. New York 1983 at p. 324.

ingly, the focus was confined to God and the self, and theologians exhibited more and more estrangement from ongoing thought about the universe. The doctrine of creation was for all practical purposes separated from the doctrine of redemption.”⁴⁵⁴

As a result, “Since the modern world began in the sixteenth century, nobody’s system of philosophy has really corresponded to everybody’s sense of reality; to what, if left to themselves, common men would call common sense.”⁴⁵⁵ Wrote Chesterton. Indeed, in common sense, the Sun still rises in the morning and sets in the evening; the creation of the world in six days rather than evolution is still common sense for many professing one or the other Christian Creed. The writings of the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin were looked at with suspicion, until Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) in the 1980’s.⁴⁵⁶ Science was distrusted and dismissed as scientific materialism. Darwin’s Evolution theory was rejected and condemned. All of this occurred despite the fact that modern science has greatly expanded our knowledge of time and space. With evolution, we now think in terms of billions of years, and about space in even more miles, as a continuing expanding universe. How fascinating to those who have an open mind to God’s continuing creation in time and space!

The heritage of the sentence against Galilei Galileo⁴⁵⁷ is a sad and long-lasting one. Church theology remained locked up in the pre-Copernican paradigm of a fixed, earth-centered world, at least until Pope John-Paul II. There is a certain irony to this incapacity to understand modern science. The paradigm for the earth-centered world came from Aristotle rather than from Holy Scripture. It also came from a literal reading of the first creation story rather than from the Hebrew reading of the two stories of creation. As David Toolan explains, the Book of Genesis has two stories of creation – Chapter 1 and 2; versus Chapter 3 – the Priestly “Steward” one, versus the Yahwist’s “Service” one of Nature. The priestly humans are distinguished (like the priests) from the rest of creation and granted unique authority over it. In the Yahwist epic the human being oc-

454 David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos*. Orbis Books 2001 at p. 13.

455 C.K. Chesterton, *St. Thomas Aquinas*. Doubleday 1956 at p.119.

456 Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, *Chance or Purpose? Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith*. San Francisco 2007.

457 Cf. Chapter 6, *supra*

cupies a subordinate role within created order.⁴⁵⁸ “The weather, the working of the heavens, the strangeness of animals remind us that God’s universe is not created to fit the scale of our minds.” It goes far beyond it.

In a later chapter, Toolan argues that evolution, as we understand it today, requires “Theological Repair.” “What connects science and religion is the emphasis on temporality and the motif of promise. The Bible is about nothing else but promise, and evolution discloses a universe that reinforces this theme.” The classical Christian spirituality, he writes, is ambivalent toward the physical world and promotes pervasive nostalgia for a lost perfection.” And he continues: “” At a deeper level, though, so long as the Judeo-Christian vision remains rooted in the Hebrew Bible, a spirituality of flight from the world and history can only represent an aberration. And so long as Christians remember their Jewish roots, they have to find a static Greek “block universe” foreign and alienating – somehow unbiblical. A Christianity that remembers its origins can only be at home with a metaphysics of the future. It will inevitably seek out an evolutionary, processive universe., [...] Time is perpetual innovation, it “is the process of creation, and things of space are the results of creation. [...] When the Christian creed fails to connect with these scales of time, when it loses its links to the galaxies or its necessary ingredient of wildness, it begins to feel conventional, domesticated, tamed, and without power. Something essential has been lost. The juice has gone out of it. ...with the coming of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution our biblically based sense of “dominion” over creation began to be exposed as a paranoid delusion.[...] After all, the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle or the oriental despot who determines everything that happens down to the last twist and turn has never born any resemblance to the God of the Bible. Ridding ourselves of these notions of omnipotence, then, should bring us closer to the biblical image of God – to the God who lets creation develop in relative autonomy, who lets the world be, who renounces power and empties himself, who hears the cry of the poor and suffers with us. An evolutionary perspective, moreover, could also stimulate us to retrieve the ancient religious intuition that redemption involves more than the human family. It is, as the Epistle to the Romans says, the entire creation that “groans” for ultimate fulfillment (Rom. 8:22). After Darwin, that is to say, we can once again understand,

458 *Op.cit.* p. 17-20

as St. Paul did, that cosmic destiny and human destiny belong inseparably together.”[...] Jesuit paleontologist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was famous for claiming that evolution requires us to imagine God not as driving or determining events from behind or from the past, but drawing the world from up ahead toward the future. Only a God who functions out of the future, he insisted, can satisfy us in an evolutionary world.⁴⁵⁹

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

In our younger years, Teilhard de Chardin fascinated us with his lifelong effort to reconcile our faith in the One God, Creator of heaven and earth, with the scientific discoveries of time and space – the expanding universe and the origin of species,⁴⁶⁰ i.e. evolution. Like many others, we bought and read his works, published after his death, his principal book being *Le Phénomène Humain* (The Human Phenomenon). What we learned was that the One God, the Creator, is a dynamic God, guiding the continuing evolution of life and the continuing expansion of the universe, a process of growing complexity and consciousness. In this process, Teilhard distinguishes the phases of Geo-genesis (the creation of matter), Bio-genesis (the creation of life), and Psycho-genesis (the creation of human conscience). Evolution is our fundamental reality; it makes sense, it goes somewhere, it is irreversible, and it has a purpose.⁴⁶¹

Christians and their official churches had great difficulty with the vision of Jesuit Father Teilhard de Chardin, and many still struggle with it today. Until 1962, seven years after his death, his works were not allowed to be published by the Roman Catholic Church. From 1955 onwards, however, his works had been published in France, and we could buy and read them – as we did avidly!

The Aristotelian concept of a stable earth and the reading of Genesis 1 and 2 as true history still lingered on in Church doctrine – in the Roman Catholic Church until Pope John-Paul II. Church doctrine and modern science had grown apart since Galilei. Political theology had blinded the magisterium to the Jewish interpretations of the Book Genesis and the fascinating discoveries

⁴⁵⁹ Op.cit.p.133, 134, 137, 140, 144, 147, 149. Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, New York 1969.

⁴⁶⁰ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. New York MCMLXXIX. (originally published in 1859).

⁴⁶¹ *Le Phénomène Humain*, p.159 ff.

of modern science. For a long time, Church and Science accepted a kind of armistice: the sciences were to stay materialistic, the Church alone was competent to deal with the human soul.⁴⁶² The Roman Catholic Church, since Vatican II (Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*) accepts the reality of Evolution, but still must reformulate its basic question: not whether the discoveries and the vision of Teilhard de Chardin are in accordance with Church doctrine, but whether Church doctrine needs reconsideration in the light of the new reality of Space and Evolution. For instance, does evolution support the theology on the creation of the soul immediately by God? Or, are monogenism, Adam and Eve as the source of original sin, compatible with the reality of evolution?

Teilhard de Chardin wrote that the deciding question was situated between the “materialistic” sciences and “spiritual” philosophy and theology. His hyper physics or phenomenology was to help reunite matter and spirit in cosmology and evolution.

Toolan rightly distinguished two stories of creation, both paradigmatic. Taken together, the two stories are to open our minds and those of the theologians, so as to foster for the unity between the book of Genesis and modern science.

A Story:

A Rabbi in deep prayer speaks with Yahweh, asking how best to explain the difference between time and eternity. Can I say: What are ten thousand years for us, is just a second for You? Yes, my son you can do so. May I ask you a second question? Can I also say: what are a hundred thousand dollars for us, is just a penny for You? Yes my son. Yahweh, I hardly dare, but I have a last question: we are a very poor community, could You give us a penny? Yes surely my son, just wait a second!

God’s six days of creation are a paradigmatic story. Six days for God the Creator can easily stand for six billion years of evolution. God the Creator is too great and too dynamic to fit into our human time-frame.

⁴⁶² Cf. Dr. Josef Vital Kopp, *Entstehung und Zukunft des Menschen*. Luzern 1961. (Duch Translation: Teilhard de Chardin. Den Haag 1961.

Teilhard de Chardin, just as Charles Darwin, lived and died modestly, one a Jesuit, the other a student in theology, both fascinated by the developing sciences. Teilhard died on Eastern Sunday, the Feast of Resurrection in April 1955, before any of his works were published.

I once virtually attended a fascinating panel, titled “Teilhard de Chardin: His Importance in the Twenty First Century.”⁴⁶³ We live in an unfinished universe that is still expanding. Evolution and exploding space present us with the very question Teilhard asked and tried to answer, namely: “Who will give us God of the Evolution?” I write *answers* in plural, because there cannot be a definite answer, as we were taught by the Church. God the Creator is the origin of creation and the goal of evolution, He, the Creator is creatively present throughout all evolution. Teilhard de Chardin lived from the prospect that something is coming from up ahead in the future, as John Haught explained.. God the Creator does not speak to us from the past, as we used to read Chapters 1 and 2 from the Book Genesis, but rather from the future. That is to say, revelation looked at from the reality of an expanding universe. Teilhard de Chardin can probably be best understood in comparison with Isaiah. Both believed in salvation not made by humans, but coming to us from up ahead. Indeed, as another speaker on the panel remarked: Love is the driving force of evolution.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin is one of these creative persons, although it will take time for his importance be fully understood and recognized. Our Christian Churches need time and humility to accept that following Christ and continuing revelation through the Holy Spirit is a never-ending, dynamic, and unfinished project, much like the spatial expansion and evolution of the universe.

As Cardinal Schönborn wrote in his book *Chance or Purpose? Creation, Evolution, and Rational Faith*: “Hardly anyone else has tried to bring together the knowledge of Christ and the idea of evolution as the scientist (paleontologist) and theologian Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., has done. His fascinating vision has remained controversial, and yet for many it has represented a great hope, the hope that faith in Christ and a scientific approach to the world can

⁴⁶³ The panel in honor of Prof. John Haught was organized by the Berkeley Center of Georgetown University in 2015. Uploaded YouTube on December 11, 2020.

be brought together “under one head”, under Christ the “evolutor”[...] Christ becomes the energy of the cosmos itself.. For through the incarnation, God himself has become immersed” in matter, and within it and from the midst, he effects “the leading and planning of what we nowadays call evolution.”⁴⁶⁴

The fascination which Teilhard de Chardin exercised for an entire generation stemmed from his radical manner of looking at science and Christian faith together: “Nature reveals one long truth: life seeks more life. Nature has an intrinsic capacity for life because God, who is life itself, is at the heart of nature. But nature has become denatured by human greed, and God has become denatured by human power, including the power of religious institutions. To return to nature is to return to God, and to return to God is to return to nature. God and nature-cosmos are inseparable, not identical but a complementary whole, a unity, as the author of Genesis realized. Simply put, no cosmos, no God. But “nature” is shorthand for the dynamic processes of life. If nature is dynamic, interconnected fields of energy, so too is God; if nature is in evolution, so too is God. God cannot be the great metaphysical exception, Alfred North Whitehead wrote, but must be the world’s chief exemplification. The only way into a vital future is to reinvent religion, Teilhard realized, a religion of the earth, that animates and instills a zest for life, a religion of the whole, bringing together the wisdom of various traditions into a new whole, with new symbols, new rituals, new language, new creeds, new forms of worship. To rely on the past is to be condemned to the past. Our only real common ground is the future. Everything changes including God – and here is the key to the fullness of life itself.”⁴⁶⁵

In addition to the Word of God in scripture, Nature also is a source of revelation. The Holy Spirit inspires us in understanding Holy Scripture, but also in understanding Creation as a cosmic process of evolution. The formulation of doctrine must evolve and change accordingly and continuously, in great humility, an open mind to the dynamics and the purpose of the evolving and expanding universe with love as the driving force.

⁴⁶⁴ Cardinal Schönborn, *op.cit.* p.141.

⁴⁶⁵ Out Of Control But Vital To God by Ilia Delio | Sep 13, 2021 | Center for Christogenesis. Centers, In the U.S.A. :American Teilhard Association; Center for Christogenesis; Global Sisters Report; Teilhard Project. In France: Fondation Teilhard de Chardin. In the U.K. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Association. In Germany: Teilhard de Chardin Gesellschaft München. In Belgium: Centre Belge de Pierre Teilhard de Chardin..



Teilhard de Chardin discerned "the danger of a breach between a Christianity folded back upon its own past, and a world that was being drawn ahead at breakneck speed by science. Caught between the consequent stalemate on the one side and the irresistible pressure on the other of the Holy Spirit whose function it is to lead the mystical body of Christ to its final term, his life was torn between two loyalties:" to the ecclesiastical hierarchy on the one side and the Spirit of God on the other. As he wrote: "In a sense Christ is in the Church in the same way as the sun is before our eyes. We see the same sun as our fathers saw, and yet we understand it in a much more magnificent way. I believe that the Church is still a child. Christ, by whom she lives, is unmeasurably greater than she imagines. And yet, when thousands of years have gone by and

Christ's true countenance is a little more plainly seen, the Christians of those days will still, without reservations, recite the Apostles' Creed.⁴⁶⁶ Teilhard's problem with the Church was much the same as Galileo's problem. No theological opinion, but scientific observations were at stake. They saw the same sun as the Pope and the Inquisition, but thanks to mathematics and telescopic observation, they first discovered that the sun is not turning around the earth but the earth around the sun – as we now know since the twentieth century: an incomplete observation. In the twentieth century we observed that the solar system is just one system in a continuously expanding universe. The political theology of the Church goes back to the time when "the Church was a child." Her theology needs repair: from static political doctrine to evolving, spiritual and open-minded witness. As a scientist, Teilhard de Chardin understood too well that scientific truth can never be more than provisional and open to new discoveries. The same, as he wrote in the same text, applies to Church doctrine: "the Church possesses and transmits from century to century a view of Christ – an experience of Christ, a way of living Christ – *whose definitive form, and whose richness, she is unable at any given moment to express completely.*" [...] For Christ to be finally understood calls for the energy of all the Christians that will ever exist until the end of time'; and no Council can hasten this long period of maturing." And it must be the energy of love!

⁴⁶⁶ From the English version of his "The Heart of Matter". P. 115-118.

CHAPTER 12

INTO THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Pope John-Paul II wanted the Church, at the occasion of the second millennium Jubilee, to purify her memory by confessing and asking forgiveness for the sins and infidelities of the past; an examination of conscience for the purpose of purifying Europe's entrance into a new era. He hoped other Christian Churches would follow his example. He emphasized four themes in particular: a wider vision of peace, living in freedom and human dignity, the culture of life, and repentance and mercy.

More than twenty years into the cruel and war-torn twenty-first century, Europe needs to be reminded of these four themes for the new millennium. The twentieth century may be over, its evils are certainly not. Violence and war still linger, poisoning the present.

True peace: remember “the year of truth 1989”

To understand Pope John-Paul II’s wider vision of peace, we should recall his personal experiences in Poland from the late 1920s onwards, and learn from his life and work as a priest under Soviet totalitarian and atheistic rule in particular.

The events leading to the year of truth ,1989, began in Poland. The country’s suffering and the peaceful outcome of the crisis in October 1956 gave birth to the only Church behind the Iron Curtain, strong enough to resist and prevail over communist repression. Cardinal Wyszynski, primate of Poland, did distinctly better than the Polish communist leadership. When a group of students decided to march on the Soviet embassy to protest the upcoming (undemocratic) elections, he invited them to Holy Mass and told them in his homily: “You dreamt that this would be your dawn of heroism, and, I tell you, it is indeed your dawn of heroism. You are not heroes on the newsstands for having caused incalculable bloodshed, but heroes in truth because you have, in modest obscurity, renounced a hero’s dream, clothed in the attractive bright mantle of glory. You are heroes in truth, and despite all distortions, hypocrisies, illusions and falsehood, truth is still true in this winter of 1957.”⁴⁶⁷

In 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtila of Cracow was elected Pope and in 1979 he visited Poland. His visit created the spiritual conditions for Poland’s non-violent rebirth in freedom. During his visit, Pope John-Paul II asked the Polish people: “What are you in favour of ? Of conformist consent to totalitarian coercion or of the inviolable right in God’s and man’s order of things for human beings to live in freedom and dignity?”

Their answers changed the history of their country and of Europe. The success of peaceful, civil resistance against the most intrusive totalitarian system known in human history, indeed serves as a message of hope. However deep the system managed to intrude the inner sanctuary of the Polish citizens, it ultimately failed to paralyse their conscience.

⁴⁶⁷ Translation in Time Archive, Monday May 20, 1957: “Cardinal & the Commissar”.

The creation of *Solidarnosc* the following year, spread like a forceful earthquake in the communist system. No building would be solid or reliable thereafter. No martial law, no KGB masterminded assassination attempt on the Pope on 13 May 1981, and no internment of the trade union’s leadership could hold back civil resistance any longer. The most intrusive and, in a way, the most powerful totalitarian system, collapsed without major violence. No armies were moved; no battles fought; no frontiers crossed.

How could this happen? For the best answers, one should read Jozef Tischner’s *The Spirit of Solidarity*.⁴⁶⁸ It was the spirit of solidarity by means of which non-violent, civil resistance was organised and would ultimately prevail over repression. As Tischner told his fellow-members of *Solidarnosc* : the key to our cause is faith, and it is our task to “carry one another’s burden and in this way fulfil God’s law.” It was a call for the solidarity of consciences. This virtue does not need to be imposed from the outside by force: it is born from the heart. It does not need an enemy to grow, but unites us in pursuing truth and justice. As Vaclav Havel wrote: “There are no terms whatsoever in which living within the lie can coexist with living within the truth, and therefore everyone who steps out of line denies the system in principle and threatens it in its entirety.”⁴⁶⁹

The same can be said about living the faith and practicing our Christian virtues: they threatened the system in its entirety. The peaceful overthrow of the communist system has been an event in the realm of the spirit and the faith of the people, no doubt chosen by the Lord to end communism without violence.

Justice and Forgiveness

In his 2002 Message for World Peace Day, written shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York, Pope John-Paul II notes: “Recent events, including the terrible killings just mentioned, move me to return to a theme which often stirs in the depths of my heart when remembering the events of history which have

⁴⁶⁸ Józef Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity*. Harper & Row 1984. Translated from the Polish. With a Foreword by Zbigniew Brzezinski and an Afterword by Lech Walesa.

⁴⁶⁹ Vaclav Havel or *Living in Truth* edited by Jan Vladislav. Faber and Faber. London-Boston 1986. p.56. Excerpt from his essay: “The Power of the Powerless.” Quoted in my: *Cultural Diplomacy. Waging War by other means*. Volume I, Footprints of the 20th. Century (third edition). WLP 2017.

marked my life, especially my youth. The enormous suffering of peoples and individuals, even among my own friends and acquaintances, caused by Nazi and Communist totalitarianism, has never been far from my thoughts and prayers. I have often paused to reflect on the persistent question: how do we restore the moral and social order subjected to such horrific violence? My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.”

“The capstone of this trend from a presumption of just war to a priority of nonviolence and peacebuilding is Pope John Paul II’s 2002 World Day of Peace Message” in response to the events of 9/11. In his view “forgiveness” is a necessary component in alleviating conflict and securing the peace.. “In short, the approach to conflict in contemporary Catholic teaching and in the papal ministry has evolved into a doctrine of resistance to evil with a priority on nonviolent means—a doctrine that must be applied in the context of a wider vision of peace, including forgiveness between antagonists.”⁴⁷⁰

To live in freedom and dignity.

Respect for the dignity of the human person – every human person, irrespective of status, faith, nationality or any other difference – was John-Paul’s founding principle of action, and marked his magisterium as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. As bishop and archbishop in the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, he had been one of the Council fathers insisting on the fundamental importance of this principle for the deliberations.

The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope), on the Church in the modern world, was promulgated the same day as the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (Human Dignity) on Freedom of Religion. In substance and tone, the Constitution was different from the other constitutions of the Council, and

⁴⁷⁰ Drew Christiansen, ‘Catholic Peacemaking, 1991-2005: The Legacy of John-Paul II.’ *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*. Published Online 26 April 2006.

deliberately so. Cardinal Suenens from Brussels was the initiator, and Cardinal Carol Wojtila from Krakow was among its major authors. They wanted a “pastoral” document, an innovative reflection on the pressing problems of the late twentieth century, rather than a statement of doctrine. Addressed to “all men of goodwill,” the Constitution was to become the “treasure the Church had to offer to the modern world: a humanism enriched by the human encounter with Christ, who, far from alienating humanity, reveals to it the full truth of its dignity and glorious destiny.”⁴⁷¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, together with the Declarations on religious liberty and relations with Islam and the Jewish people, would become two principal witnesses of the *aggiornamento*, initiated by Holy Pope John XXIII, and pursued by John-Paul II.

The first one is to engage the Church in a new dialogue with modern science, recognising humanity’s passing “from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one.” After the sentence against Galilei, (see Chapter 6) and the prohibition to Teilhard de Chardin to publish his works (see Chapter 11), it meant the possibility of at least a beginning dialogue towards examining Teilhard de Chardin’s ideas and the theories of evolution and the expanding cosmos.

The second one is the need to recognize the full consequences of the principle of the dignity of the human person in the Church’s magisterium with respect to human rights. Human Rights, according to the teaching of the Church since the French Revolution, belonged to the harmful ideas of liberal democracy (see Chapter 7), the abolition of slavery included. Support for human rights and outright rejection of any kind of slavery was a revolution in Church teaching and practice.

The culture of life and the problem of abortion.

In his *Encyclical Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John-Paul II emphasized that the Christian tradition: “is clear and unanimous, from the beginning up to our own day, in describing abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder. From its first

⁴⁷¹ “George Weigel, *WITNESS TO HOPE*. The Biography of Pope John-Paul II. New York 1999, at p. 169

contacts with the Greco-Roman world, where abortion and infanticide were widely practiced, the first Christian community, by its teaching and practice, radically opposed the customs rampant in that society.” Church doctrine was also “from the beginning up to our own day, in describing abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder but also a call to repentance and forgiveness: “A special word to women who have had an abortion. ... The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope... give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child.”⁴⁷²

What is the answer to these questions; how to deal with this so called grave moral disorder; and, how to deal mercifully with mothers seeking or having procured an abortion?

Abortion has to do with the dignity and the fundamental rights of the mother and of the conceived-as-yet-unborn child. The child is innocent and unable to defend itself. The mother was treated as an object and as the sole culprit in the Christian tradition.

The practice of abortion is as old as human history. Plato and Aristotle favored it as a means of family planning, but resistance against it has always been widespread. The three principal reasons for such prohibition were: (1) it is contrary to the authority of the father over the life and death of his (wife and) children; (2) it is too dangerous for the mother’s health; and (3) it goes against Holy Scripture and natural law.

The first and second reason clarify why abortion was procured in secrecy, but also why it was tolerated. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, abortion came to be criminalized in secular law. What happened to abortion in this era can be compared to the criminalization of heresy in the eleventh century. It became a political issue. The Western Churches promoted its criminalization in secular law..

⁴⁷² Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*.par. 61 and 99.

Against Holy Scripture and Natural Law

Christians from early on were a sign of contradiction, in describing abortion as grave moral disorder. The doctrine, as proclaimed in the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, is the outcome of an evolution over many centuries. The Didache, mentioned in the Encyclical, condemned abortion in a list of sins: “You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born.” At the time, infanticide was a much greater problem than abortion.

Theological and philosophical discussions in the Middle Ages sought to address the question whether the fetus has a rational soul from the moment of conception, or becomes an “ensouled human” at a later point. However, this was not the case in the Orthodox Churches: “St. Basil explicitly rejected the distinction between the formed and unformed fetus as beside the essential point. St. John Chrysostom attacked married men who encouraged prostitutes and mistresses to abort. ‘You do not let a harlot remain only a harlot, but make her a murderess as well.’”⁴⁷³

Pope Sixtus V, dropped the long-held distinction in the Catholic Church between the animated and unanimated fetus and declared that an abortion at any time of gestation is punishable by excommunication. Pope Gregory XIV reversed the bull of Pope Sixtus V three years later. He supported the Aristotelian distinction between an “animated” and “unanimated” fetus, making abortion of an unanimated fetus punishable by lesser means.

Automatic excommunication for those procuring abortion at any time became the doctrine since 1869 (Pope Pius IX) and has been written into the Code of Canon Law since 1917. The right to life of the unborn child as the principal argument was given in 1974.⁴⁷⁴ It followed the acceptance of human rights by the Church in the Second Vatican Council.

⁴⁷³ Orthodox Church in America: Fr John Garvey, ‘Orthodox Christians and Abortion.’

⁴⁷⁴ Sacred Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith, *Declaration On Procured Abortion* 1974.

“We have to move beyond law, however, to the most difficult areas of persuasion and example, which rest finally on our spiritual lives, on the ways in which we have taken prayer into our hearts and allowed it to transform us.”⁴⁷⁵

In the order of God’s wisdom, man and woman fall in love, marry, create a new person, and together share the joy of the mother’s pregnancy and delivery of the baby. This way it ought to be and if so, abortion is not an issue. The true fight against abortion consists of witnessing the true respect for life from conception to natural death. A beautiful contemporary example is given in the book *Chiara Corbella Petrillo: A witness to Joy* (2013).⁴⁷⁶ Chiara delivered two children, who would come to pass away only half an hour after their birth, and a third one when she herself was diagnosed with serious and aggressive cancer. Her and her husband’s theme of life was that “we are born from an act of love, we live in order to love and in order to be loved, and we die in order to know the true love of God.”

When abortion becomes an issue, the order of God’s wisdom apparently had been broken. Why? Was the future mother raped? Had she been forced to marry? Was incest at stake? Is her own health at stake? Was she to become a single and poor mother? Was she forced to seek an abortion? Was she left alone in coming to the fatal decision? Could she offer her child a life in dignity and health? Every single case is painful and different. What objectively, according to Church teaching, is “homicide,” requires careful discernment and mercy. God’s mercy is always present through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Good examples, pastoral care, and social assistance must be made available for the mother and her future child. The father of the child, if known, must be included in the process. The parents’ conscience must be formed, and guided away from a decision to procure an abortion.

⁴⁷⁵ Loc.cit. John Garvey.

⁴⁷⁶ Written by Simone Troisi & Christiana Paccini. English translation Sophia Institute Press 2015

Repentance and mercy

In addition, John-Paul II also brought with him a deep awareness of so much violence perpetrated in the name of the faith throughout European history, such as religious wars, inquisition and many other violations of the rights and dignity of the human person. In his view, the Church cannot remain silent about them. The Church, he asserted during a special meeting of the Cardinals in 1994, must on its own initiative examine the dark sides of its history and judge it in the light of the Gospel. This proposal was revolutionary. With the exception of the “outsider” Pope Adrian VI, no Pope had dared to address it: “One famous example is furnished by the reforming Pope Adrian VI who acknowledged publicly in a message to the Diet of Nuremberg of November 25, 1522, “the abominations, the abuses...and the lies” of which the “Roman court” of his time was guilty, “deep-rooted and extensive...sickness,” extending “from the top to the members.”⁴⁷⁷

Already on 10 November 1979, John-Paul II said to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: “I hope that theologians, scholars and historians, animated by a spirit of sincere collaboration, will study the Galileo case more deeply and, in frank recognition of wrongs, from whichever side they come, will dispel the mistrust that still forms an obstacle, in the minds of many, to a fruitful concord between science and faith, between the Church and the world. I give all my support to this task, which will be able to honor the truth of faith and of science and open the door to future collaboration.”⁴⁷⁸

The Pontifical Academy took thirteen years to come with the obvious answer, albeit a most careful version of it: “supporting neither the ecclesiastical right, which seems to hold that the Catholic Church can never err, nor the secular left, which seems to hold that the Catholic Church can do nothing right. John Paul said of the report, “Often, beyond two partial and conflicting perceptions, there exists a wider perception which includes them and goes beyond both of them.” [...] “The majority of the theologians did not recognize *the formal distinction between Sacred Scripture and its interpretation*, and this led them unduly to

⁴⁷⁷ International theological commission: *memory and reconciliation: the church and the faults of the past*. December 1999

⁴⁷⁸ See Chapter 5 above for the sentence of the Inquisition against Galileo in 1633.

transpose into the realm of the doctrine of the faith a question which in fact pertained to scientific investigation.”⁴⁷⁹ In short: the theologians were wrong.

However, They were no ordinary theologians, but “the Holy Tribunal by command of His Holiness [the Pope] and the most eminent lords cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition,” pronouncing “the proposition that the Sun is the center of the world ...absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture; and condemning him to prison”.

Unsurprisingly, Pope John-Paul II soon thereafter addressed the inquisition in the same way, in 1994. “How can we be silent about so many kinds of violence perpetrated in the name of faith?” he asked, specifically mentioning “religious wars, courts of the Inquisition, and other violations of the rights of the human person,” of which there were many (see Chapters 3-7), including the rights of Jews, heretics, farmers, slaves, serfs, workers and others. Here, he was met with silence and resistance.

Pope John-Paul II, “from a far country,” had to observe a few rules when daring to examine the darker sides of the church’s history. No specific cases are to be mentioned, nor any indication to be given of the nature or seriousness of the “infidelities;” no reference whatsoever is to be made to the Holy See, to bishops, or the clergy, but only to “Brethren and Sisters.”

In short, the Inquisition and the Index were not to be mentioned. They had become central institutions in the Holy See, and the Roman Catholic Church at large, since the Great Schism. They were a crucial feature and the principal instrument to protect the political theology and the government structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John-Paul II achieved more openness by managing to have the Archives opened in 1998. The Inquisition, however, may not be seen as a case for penitence. As the Document of 2015, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, makes clear, methods may be adapted, but “the truth” must always be protected.”The Congregation for the Doctrine of

⁴⁷⁹ Ivan J. Kauman, ‘Facing the Inquisition: A Pope seeks pardon.’ America Magazin December 10, 2007. And: Pontifical Academy of Sciences.31 October 1992. Address by the Supreme Pontiff.

the Faith’s work is no longer limited exclusively to the defence of the faith; its principal task is to promote doctrine. The Congregation should assist bishops, both individually and in episcopal groups, in their primary role as authoritative teachers and doctors of the faith, whose integrity they themselves were to bear witness, and of which they should be vigilant custodians and ardent promoters.”

Pope John-Paul II considered the need for confession and asking for forgiveness as his primary mission for the celebration of the Second Millennium Jubilee. His efforts to that end found their conclusion on the first Sunday of Lent, 12 March 2000, with the “Day of Pardon Holy Mass.” In his homily, John-Paul II proposed: “Let us forgive and ask forgiveness! Let us confess, even more, our responsibilities as Christians for the evils of today. We must ask ourselves what our responsibilities are regarding atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, the violations of the right to life, disregard for the poor in many countries. We humbly ask forgiveness for the part which each of us has had in these evils by our own actions, thus helping to disfigure the face of the Church. At the same time, as we confess our sins, let us forgive the sins committed by others against us.”

In Pope John-Paul II’s millennial program, asking forgiveness, and forgiving those who sinned against us Christians, are to be directed primarily to Our Lord Jesus-Christ.

On 30 April 2000, Pope John-Paul II canonized Sr. Mary Faustina Kowalska: “Divine Mercy reaches human beings through the heart of Christ crucified: “My daughter, say that I am love and mercy personified”, Jesus will ask Sr Faustina. Jesus told Sr Faustina: “Humanity will not find peace until it turns trustfully to divine mercy”. Through her work “this message has become linked forever to the 20th century”, It is not a new message “but can be considered a gift of special enlightenment that helps us to relive the Gospel of Easter more intensely, to offer it as a ray of light to the men and women of our time.”⁴⁸⁰

Following the three Jubilee celebrations of divine mercy, John-Paul II visited

⁴⁸⁰ quotes from: Homily of the Holy Father. Canonization of Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska.Vatican.va

Fatima on 12 and 13 May 2000. During this pilgrimage, the so-called “third secret” of Fatima was read. Pope John-Paul II spiritually related it to his own experience of 13 May 1981, the day when “one hand fired, and another guided the bullet.” On this day, Ali Agca, the hired assassin, fired at point-blank range and the Holy Mary saved the Pope’s life. The Pope had forgiven the assassin and again gave thanks to the Blessed Mother for saving his life and for the liberation of east central Europe from communism.⁴⁸¹

In human hands

Holy Pope John-Paul’s 80th birthday concluded the Repentance and Mercy part of the Second Millennium celebrations as conceived by him. Prior to this, John-Paul had gone on pilgrimage to Egypt, and after the “Day of Pardon” to the Holy Land. The most moving events were his visit to Yad Vashem and the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Here, like millions of Jews had done before him, he left a prayer-petition in one of the wall’s crevices:

You chose Abraham and his descendants
To bring your
name to the nations;
We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those
Who in the course of history
Have caused these children of yours to suffer,
And asking you forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves
To genuine brotherhood
With the God of our fathers,
people of the Covenant.
Amen.

Johannes Paulus PP.II

As George Weigel writes: “Of all John Paul’s plans for the Great Jubilee of 2000, the most controversial was his insistence that the Church cleanse its histori-

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Chapter 8. Also: George Weigel, *The End and the Beginning. Pope John Paul II-The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*. New York 2010. P.234ff.

cal conscience at the end of the second millennium, in preparation for a new springtime of evangelization in the third.” And a few pages further George Weigel challenged those who saw the day of pardon as threatening to the faithful. “On the contrary, John-Paul’s humility before the fact of Christian failure reinforced the themes he was determined to emphasize throughout the jubilee year: that all are called to holiness, and that, as he had long put it to those who came to him for confession, a man’s dignity is increased by the very act of getting down on his knees to acknowledge before God that he has failed.”⁴⁸²

The cleansing of the Church’s historical conscience – the purification of her memory – may have been the most controversial plan, but at the same time, it is bound to be the most consequential one. The Day of Pardon was not an apology to mankind but a confession of sins to the Holy Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas an apology is meant to close the subject, a confession includes the promise, and even a commitment, to do better. In other words, the Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches must begin to learn from their sins and failures so as to behave differently and do better – from the highest authority to the simplest believer.

To learn from past sins and failures, one must identify the “cases,” the seriousness of each one, the context and the actors or perpetrators, excluding no one. For a church organized as the Roman Catholic Church, major cases are bound to involve the authority of the Pope and the Holy See. For instance the Cain Doctrine was official policy of the Holy See for many centuries; it was the major source of Christian anti-Semitism. The Crusades, including the fourth one had been actively promoted by various popes. Whatever justification there is, they were extremely violent. Galileo, was sentenced by the “Holy Tribunal” of the Inquisition, an office of the Holy See under direct supervision of the Pope. Pope Leo X, through his reaction to the theses of Martin Luther, carried a heavy responsibility for the violence of the religious wars that followed in Europe. Very early on, the formulation of doctrine in Church Councils became an exercise in political theology and continued to be so until the Second Vatican Council accepted freedom of religion as a fundamental human right. The treatment of heretics had no justification whatsoever in Holy Scripture; but

⁴⁸² George Weigel, *Op.Cit* p.213,217.

it did foreshadow what would happen under the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. What these cases and many others could teach us is that the third temptation becomes more difficult to resist the higher one has climbed on the ladder of Church power. What they also teach us is that power over men and women cannot easily go together with being a sign of contradiction.

The “brethren and sisters” for whom sins were confessed on the day of pardon, must be given names, and the most grievous sins committed must be analyzed and explained, including the practices of the most central institution called the Inquisition. The Day of Pardon was a promising beginning of a necessary learning process among Christians. Pope John-Paul II understood its necessity and its difficulty. The Sunday of Divine Mercy every year is there to remind us that the trustworthiness of the Church, together with the dignity of man and woman, are increased by the very act of getting down on our knees to acknowledge before God that we have failed many times. Indeed! And we continue to fail most gravely.

At the time of completing the final version of this book, Europe has entered a new era of World War, launched by Putin’s Russia aggression against Ukraine, Europe and the West; and by Hamas against Israel. Europe’s entry into the twenty-first century has not been cured of, but rather fatally poisoned by war, hatred, and violence.

Time to pray for peace with St. Francis of Assisi:

1 Make me a channel of your peace:
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your healing power,
and where there’s doubt, true faith in you.
2 Make me a channel of your peace:
where there’s despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light,
and where there’s sadness, ever joy.
3 O, Spirit, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love with all my soul.
4 Make me a channel of your peace:
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.

COLOFON

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Quod Dixi is a series dedicated to publishing essays, reflections, and other academic crossovers that feature personal viewpoints and individual insights. These texts, although written by academics, are not purely academic. They provide space for authors to express their academically motivated thoughts in an essayistic and overarching fashion. While these works reflect the unique perspectives of their authors, Quod Dixi embraces diverse voices, offering a platform for ideas that challenge conventions, provoke thought, and invite dialogue.

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Cover image source: The Temptation of Christ (1854) by Ary Scheffer (1795-1858), oil on canvas, Liverpool's Walker Gallery.

This book is a valedictory study. It follows my five books under the joint title “Footprints of the Twentieth Century” and presents the outcome of further research and reflection on the much broader subject of Europe’s Christian Heritage. As history over two millennia, it is a much more complex and controversial subject than originally thought. Persecution of the Jews dates from the early second century (AD) and continued in modern Anti-Semitism and the Shoa.

When the Church becomes the official church in the fourth century and adopts the Roman structure of a single-headed authority, relations with the Jews and so-called heretics become politicized. Their disfranchisement becomes the source of further conflicts, wars and divisions; with the Islam, between the Greek East and the Latin West, in the Reformation and thereafter in the Enlightenment and the totalitarian ideologies (chapters 3-7). The third temptation of power (in the Gospel of Matthew) is at the origin of such political theology, of religious wars, of the Grand Inquisitor (chapter 2), and the doctrines of self-righteousness.

Christ’s mission was: to be a sign of contradiction with his Mother Holy Mary. He was followed by the Apostles (chapter 1), it was practiced in Christian families, in Sacred Spaces and holy life (chapter 8 and 9), by Saints and creative faithful in education, arts and sciences (chapters 10 and 11). Faith grew primarily through them, that is from below.

This book concludes (in chapter 12) with the Second Millennium reflections of Holy Pope John-Paul II on remembering the Year of Truth 1989, on purifying our memory, on developing a wider vision of peace, on living in freedom and human dignity and respect for life from conception to natural death, and on repentance and mercy.

After its conclusion Europe has entered a new world war. All I can do is pray for peace.

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