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FROM EMPEROR TO BISHOP: THE SELF-CONSCIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

G. W. BOWERSOCK

In the later stages of classical antiquity in the Mediterranean area, the conversion of Constantine had undoubtedly the greatest impact. Not until the advent of Islam was there any transformation more profound than the Christianization of the Roman and Byzantine government. The foundation of Christendom brought with it a radical restructuring of social and political life that reflected the priorities of the kingdom of God. Drastic rethinking and readjustment were demanded not only of the ruling aristocracies of Rome and Byzantium but equally of the leadership of the Christian Church, which had grown accustomed to several centuries of survival as a minority religion of the Roman Empire. The bureaucracies of the old and the new Rome discovered that the god of Constantine could not simply be accommodated in the pantheon of pagan divinities but was a jealous god; and the Church had, for the first time, to confront life with a Christian emperor. The convenient old dichotomy of the New Testament that segregated Caesar from God could no longer serve very well when Caesar was the chosen of God.

The fourth century A.D. witnessed the emergence of the conflict between Church and State. As S. R. F. Price has demonstrated for the three centuries of pagan rule in the Roman Empire, the distinction between religion and politics, so dear to Jews and Christians, had virtually no meaning among pagans.[1] Religious observances were so intimately bound up with service and loyalty to the State that the average pagan would have had a hard time comprehending Jesus' command to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are His. And for that reason he had a hard time comprehending both Jews and Christians.

Similarly, as Arnaldo Momigliano points out in his important paper on the implications of monotheism for a universal state, the pagans were totally unable to see the possibility of justifying a pluralist or multinational state (such as the Roman Empire) by reference to polytheism and the pluralism of religions within it.[2] The Christians, by contrast, appre-

This paper had its origin in July 1985 at Bad Homburg, Germany, in an interdisciplinary discussion of Karl Jaspers' concept of axial-age civilizations. S. N. Eisenstadt organized and chaired the discussion, which took place in the congenial premises of the Werner Reimers Stiftung.

1. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984), esp. pp. 15–19.

2. "The Disadvantages of Monotheism for a Universal State," presented as a lecture at the University of Chicago in April 1985 and published in the present issue of *CP*. I am most grateful to Professor Momigliano for showing me a copy of this paper in May 1985.

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ciated early the relation of one god to one state even when that state was not yet Christian. After all, Jesus came into the world under the first Roman emperor. The ability to think in terms of religion and politics as separate categories did not surface in pagan thought until the time of Julian, and that was undoubtedly because he had been raised as a Christian. He brought to his puritanical paganism features that he had learned from Christianity.[3] It is evident, although not generally remarked, that Julian's paganism would be unimaginable without the Christian emperors before him.

The imperial cult had long been a ceremonial celebration of the divinities that were and once had been Roman emperors. Worshipping them enhanced the spiritual life of Rome's provincials as it consolidated their allegiance. Accordingly, when the emperor himself turned Christian in the early fourth century, this entire legacy of commitment and ceremonial, symbolizing the cohesion of the Roman Empire in religious observances over three centuries, had to be reassessed. Neither Constantine nor his successors would have had any great desire to give up one of the richest sources of popular support, and yet they could scarcely wish to represent themselves as gods in competition with the one true God.

The self-conscious transformation of the political institutions and sources of power within the nascent Byzantine empire can be dramatically represented by the two great historical scenes that show the beginning and the end of the process. One is Constantine's solemn convocation of the Council of Nicaea in the latter part of May 325.[4] The other is the awesome spectacle of the emperor Theodosius standing in the robes of a humble penitent in the cathedral of Milan in the year 390, driven by the bishop Ambrose to display before God and the world his guilt and shame for ordering a brutal massacre at Thessalonica.[5] In 325 it was the emperor who ordered the bishops to assemble at Nicaea, but in 390 it was a defiant bishop who was able to order the emperor to abase himself in public and alter his conduct. In the period between these two momentous events the imperial cult gradually died. Constantine had not tried to kill it. Indeed, at his death he was accorded the traditional title of *divus* ("deified"), as were his successors down to Valentinian.[6] The cult was denatured, to some degree, in that the traditional sacrifices were eliminated under the Christian rulers, but it survived as a potent institution fufilling most of the

3. See G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 87–88, on the deliberate borrowing of humanitarian philanthropy from the Christians.

4. For a useful review of the event, see A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 148–65. A major new treatment will be found in T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 208–23.

5. For a good account of this incident and its sources, see W. Ensslin, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Theodosius d. Gr.* (Munich, 1953), pp. 64–77 ("Der Bussakt von Mailand und seine Bedeutung").

6. For a discussion of the imperial cult under the Christian emperors, see G. W. Bowersock, "The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition,* vol. 3: *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World,* ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders (London, 1982), pp. 171–82. At the end of this paper, first presented at McMaster University in 1980, I observed (p. 182), "Any religious institution that lasted over four hundred years and could accommodate both pagans and Christians was not without vitality. It endured so long because it succeeded in making multitudes of citizens in far-flung regions feel close to the power that controlled them."

same functions as it had in the previous centuries. The cult's disappearance after Valentinian coincided remarkably with the emergence of the Church under Gratian and Theodosius as a powerful secular institution. And that was clearly no accident.

The great events of 325 and 390 did not just happen. They reflected differing views of the relation between the spiritual and temporal worlds that were clearly articulated at the time. The thinking of Constantine and those around him in response to the anomalies created by a Christian (and yet unbaptized) emperor is amply reflected in the ecclesiastical literature of the period, above all in the orations of Eusebius in honor of Constantine as well as in his biography of the great man. The efforts of pagan intellectuals to accommodate a Christian emperor within the framework of traditional panegyric indicate the acceptability of a multiplicity of interpretations of the emperor's role in this changed world. Had the Christian God not been a jealous god, the pagans would have had no difficulty at all in accommodating Constantine, and it was perhaps not until relatively late in his reign that Constantine himself finally faced the awkward necessity of unseating the other gods in order to make room for his own. He was able to confront this problem, as Eusebius shows and as we shall see, through the aid of a new paradigm of the relation between the supernatural world and his own.

As for the reflections that lay behind the grand struggle between Ambrose and Theodosius, we have direct access to the principal agent himself. In his letters Ambrose provides a complete articulation of the role of the Church and its bishops in the affairs of state, while the contrasting and still astonishingly tolerant and accommodating view of the pagans survives in the eloquent third *Relatio* of Symmachus, composed during the emblematic struggle over the Altar of Victory in 384. The gentle and varied compromises offered by the pagans (Symmachus insisted that he really wanted no struggles, *certamina,* at all) could not withstand the powerful new voice of the Church. By the death of Ambrose the multiplicity of views that can be traced during the fourth century had given way to the supremacy of orthodox Christianity, which in turn could then devote itself to the extirpation of those internal heresies with which Christianity itself had been so generously endowed.

S. N. Eisenstadt has pointed out rightly that in the pagan epochs that lead up to Jaspers' great axial age the transmundane order was normally structured through a symbolism in which that higher world mirrored the more familiar mundane world below.[7] He writes that such homologous conceptions of the transmundane and mundane worlds were often connected with mythical and cyclical conceptions of time, whereas in an axial-age culture there was a tendency toward a transcendental moral or metaphysical order which was actually beyond any given "this- or other-

7. "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics," *European Journal of Sociology* 23 (1982): 296. For the postulate of an axial age, see K. Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich, 1949).

worldly reality."[8] When Constantine became Christian, the homologous notions of the supernatural world were very much current in a civilization that was still widely pagan. It is therefore not surprising, but nonetheless remarkable, that both Constantine and his apologists as well as his friends among the pagans endeavored to represent his new religious role along the lines of the traditional homologous conception inherited from paganism. This represents the first—and a crucial—step in self-conscious reflection on the institutional implications of the emperor's conversion.

At Nicaea in 325 the bishops were gathered in the great hall of the imperial palace, where they sat on benches that ran along the length of the room on both sides. When the emperor came in, he was stupendously gowned in robes of purple with gold and precious stones, and he took his place in a gilded chair that was strategically located in the center of the room. In describing the event Eusebius wrote: "It felt as if we were imagining a picture of the Kingdom of Christ and that what was happening was no reality but a dream."[9] In other words, Eusebius and no doubt others tried to suggest that the supernatural dispensation was no more and no less than what the participants at Nicaea were witnessing. A Christological mythology had replaced the pagan one, but its function was, at this stage, essentially the same. The relation between the transmundane and mundane orders was presented as parallel. In the year 336, when Eusebius honored Constantine on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of his rule, he turned again to a detailed articulation of the relation between the higher and lower orders. Of Constantine himself Eusebius wrote: "Thus outfitted in the likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven, he pilots affairs below with an upward gaze to steer by the archetypal form. He grows strong in his model of monarchic rule which the Ruler of All has given to the race of man alone of those on earth."[10]

Eusebius also expressly records Constantine's own perception of his role in convoking the council at Nicaea as well as other ecclesiastical assemblies. Although not baptized, Constantine behaved as if he were a full member of the Christian Church ("as if he were one sharing in the holy mysteries" of the religion),[11] and he would regularly take up the sacred scriptures and devote himself "to the study of those divinely inspired oracles, after which he would offer up regular prayers with all the members of his imperial court." In this way, according to Eusebius, Constantine modeled his very palace "after the fashion of God's Church."[12] From such a conception of his role Constantine could proceed naturally to view himself among the assembled bishops at the synods that he convened as a kind of bishop himself. In his biography Eusebius describes the emperor who convoked the bishops of the inhabited world

8. "Axial Age," p. 296.
9. *Vita Constantini* 3. 15. 2 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 89, lines 9–10).
10. *De laudibus Constantini* 3. 5, conveniently accessible in H. A. Drake, *"In Praise of Constantine": A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley, 1976), p. 87.
11. *Vita Constantini* 4. 22. 1 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 128, line 1).
12. Ibid. 4. 17 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 126, lines 4–8).

(οἰκουμένη) as a kind of bishop-at-large ordained by God (κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος ἐκ θεοῦ καθιστάμενος).[13] In a famous remark addressed by Constantine to the bishops themselves, he declared, "You are bishops of those inside the Church; I too am a bishop ordained by God, but of those who are outside."[14] Whatever the precise meaning of these words, which have often been discussed, it is clear that Constantine is establishing himself as possessed of a quasi-ecclesiastical authority that is fully comparable to that of the officially ordained bishops, whom he feels free to convoke at his pleasure. In other words, the emperor is still the supreme ruler and exercises his power among the authorities of the Church as well as in the Empire as a whole.

The extent to which Constantine felt free to involve himself in ecclesiastical affairs is particularly apparent in his attempts to deal with the Donatist controversy in Africa.[15] From the years immediately following the episode at the Milvian Bridge, Constantine thought it proper not only to convene bishops to discuss the problems arising from this widespread heresy but also to make decisions on his own. His actions were in response to a petition from the proconsul of Africa, who requested him to deal directly with the threats to the Catholic Church in the province. In writing to the Pope at Rome in regard to the Donatists, Constantine left no ambiguity about his own supremacy: "It does not escape your diligence that I have such great respect for the lawful Catholic Church that I wish you to leave absolutely no division or discord anywhere."[16]

The pagan response to Constantine's espousal of Christianity can be seen in the panegyric of Nazarius from the year 321, in which the celestial support for the ruler at the Milvian Bridge appears as part of a greater army of divinities that would line up behind this mighty monarch.[17] Nazarius and pagans generally seem to have no difficulty in accommodating the Christian God under the vague description of divine mind (*divina mens*), and this may indeed have been at the initiative of Constantine himself, whose words on the arch of 315 include, alongside *instinctu divinitatis* ("by the inspiration of divinity"), the expression *mentis magnitudine* ("by the greatness of mind").[18] The *mens* in that expression

13. Ibid. 1. 44. 2 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 38, line 27). For a valuable discussion of this text and related issues, see J. Straub, "Constantine as *koinos episkopos:* Tradition and Innovation in the Representation of the First Christian Emperor's Majesty," *DOP* 21 (1967): 37–55.

14. *Vita Constantini* 4. 24 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 128, lines 21–22).

15. A convenient survey of Constantine's handling of the Donatists may be seen in Jones, *Constantine,* pp. 106–25. For an excellent account of the evidence, cf. T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 238–47.

16. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 10. 5. 20.

17. *Pan. Lat.* 4(10). 14. 1–3 ed. Mynors. For a suggestion (which seems to me implausible) that Nazarius was a covert Christian, see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 289–90.

18. For the inscription on the arch of Constantine, see *ILS* 694. For *divina mens* in the panegyrics, see Bowersock, "Imperial Cult," p. 241, n. 35, where I first proposed this interpretation of *mentis magnitudine.*

may be interpreted more plausibly as the *divina mens* than as the *mens* of Constantine himself.

In any event there can be no doubt that both the Christian bishops and the pagan panegyrists joined together in recognizing the emperor at the New Rome as the supreme and ultimate authority both inside and outside Christendom. This consensus provided a strong basis for Constantine's rule, and it was underscored by the deification of Constantine and his successors down to Valentinian. We know from an important inscription from Hispellum that Constantine explicitly eliminated sacrifices from the celebration of the imperial cult;[19] but equally we know that at his death commemorative coins depicted his assumption into the heavenly sphere in a manner that was scarcely different from the deification of Constantius, his father.[20] The deceased Constantius is seen on the coins as rising to heaven in a chariot, with a great hand reaching down from above to receive him. As his panegyrist explicitly tells us, this hand is the hand of Jupiter.[21] On the coins of Constantine that were issued after his burial in the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople, a very similar hand stretches down from above to receive the deceased emperor, who is being drawn heavenward in a chariot. But Eusebius tells us that on these coins that commemorate the death of Constantine the hand is the hand of God.[22]

Such a conceptualization of the role of the Christian emperor in terms that were not only compatible with pagan thought but the direct result of it suffered an irreversible blow in the later fourth century. That blow was inflicted in 382 by the young emperor Gratian; but the driving force was undoubtedly the powerful Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, whose influence upon the emperor had grown dramatically in the last few years of his reign. Gratian caused the Altar of Victory (*ara Victoriae*) to be removed from the senate and the state subsidies for pagan cults to be terminated. The presence of the altar had been a point of particular honor for pagan senators ever since Constantius had similarly removed it during his visit to Rome in 357. Constantius' move had been promptly counteracted, presumably by Julian, and the altar had stood undisturbed in the senate through the reigns of Julian's Christian successors, Jovian, Valentinian I, and Gratian (until 382). Diplomatic efforts to reach Gratian and avert the power of Ambrose proved unavailing, and it was not until Gratian died that pagans in the senate renewed their appeals—this time to the young Valentinian II.

In 384 Symmachus submitted to Valentinian an eloquent brief known as a *Relatio* in support of the restoration of the Altar of Victory

19. *ILS* 705.

20. Cf. L. Koep, "Die Konsekrationsmünzen Kaiser Konstantins und ihre religionspolitische Bedeutung," *JAC* 1 (1958): 94–101.

21. *Pan. Lat.* 6(7). 7. 3 ed. Mynors. See further S. G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), pp. 106–15.

22. *Vita Constantini* 4. 73 (ed. Winkelmann, p. 150, lines 19–20).

to its accustomed place in the senate. Ambrose soon became aware of Symmachus' *Relatio* and demanded of the emperor that he be shown a copy in order to provide a detailed response.[23] Symmachus' plea, which even Ambrose found alarmingly seductive because of its rhetorical splendor,[24] is a distillation of reflections on religion that belong to the world of Constantine and his immediate successors. Throughout Symmachus refers to the earlier Christian emperors with the epithet *divus* ("deified"), so as to underscore the compatibility of the old pagan imperial cult with Christian rule. In particular he is concerned to stress the toleration of Valentinian's own father, Valentinian I, in the matter of the Altar of Victory, and he ends his *Relatio* by invoking the image of the elder Valentinian as seated in godlike glory in the citadel of heaven, watching with regret the tears of pagan priests who have been deprived of the altar that had once been theirs: "spectat senior ille divus ex arce siderea lacrimas sacerdotum" ("That elder *divus* gazes down from the starry citadel upon the tears of priests").[25] Symmachus urges the young Valentinian to correct the error that his brother Gratian had made at the end of his reign, and here again the deceased Christian ruler is described as *divus:* "praestate etiam divo fratri vestro alieni consilii correctionem" ("Provide for your deified brother the correction of a policy that was not his own [i.e., it was Ambrose's]").[26] Symmachus stresses, in the Constantinian mode, the compatibility of diverse cults. "Everyone," he says, "has his own way of life and his own way of worship" ("suus enim cuique mos, suus cuique ritus est").[27] He then goes on to say that the *mens divina* has distributed various guardians and cults for the cities.[28] This *mens divina* takes us directly back to the language of the pagan panegyrists of Constantine after his conversion.

In his most celebrated phrase, Symmachus declares that one cannot penetrate so great a mystery (*tam grande secretum*) by only one road: "uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum."[29] This memorable utterance, which has been frequently revived throughout the centuries in a variety of religious disputes (including Vatican Council II), is the very antithesis of Ambrose's view of religion. In his rebuttal of Symmachus' various points, Ambrose categorically rejects Symmachus' view: "What you are ignorant of," declares Ambrose, "we know from the word of God. And what you try to infer, we have established in truth from the very wisdom of God."[30] In other words, in Ambrose's reflections on the nature of religion in regard to the conduct of the State, there is no room for multiplicity. For him there is indeed but one way, *unum iter.*

23. *Epist.* 17. 13 "Detur mihi exemplum missae relationis, ut ego plenius respondeam."
24. Ibid. 18. 2. For Ambrose's struggle with the enemies of Catholicism, see L. Cracco Ruggini, "Ambrogio e le opposizioni anticattoliche fra il 383 e il 390," *Augustinianum* 14 (1974): 409–49.
25. *Relat.* 3. 17.
26. Ibid. 3. 18.
27. Ibid. 3. 8.
28. Ibid.: "Varios custodes urbibus et cultus mens divina distribuit."
29. Ibid. 3. 10.
30. *Epist.* 18. 8, replying directly to Symmachus' words "uno itinere non potest perveniri. . . ."

Insistence on this point represents something quite new in the Christian Empire, and it effectively terminates the relation between Christianity and imperial rule that had obtained from the time of Constantine (with the obvious exception of Julian). Five years after the debate between Symmachus and Ambrose, a pagan panegyrist of the emperor Theodosius, himself a devout Catholic, proclaims that the emperor, whom the nations of the world adore, should alone have access, with his divine partner (*cum deo consorte*), to the transcendental mystery or *secretum.*[31] We have come from the many paths of Symmachus to sole access for the emperor (*tibi soli pateat*).[32] This view, however, was equally incompatible with Ambrose's militant certainty. Not only could he and other bishops penetrate the *secretum:* their superior authority gave them the right and the obligation to correct others, including the emperor.

Ambrose saw his own role as directly relevant to the conduct of government. He felt no hesitation in directing Valentinian II in his policy, as he had done with Gratian two years before. In demanding to see a copy of Symmachus' message to the emperor, Ambrose had written to Valentinian, "I speak to your faith as the minister of Christ."[33] He had threatened Valentinian by declaring that if he were to decide in favor of the pagans, "we bishops cannot pretend to endure this with equanimity."[34] Again, said Ambrose, "If you are to do this, you will be permitted to come to church, but you will not find a priest there, or at any rate you will find him resisting."[35] This threat Ambrose actually carried out with the emperor Theodosius six years later in the crisis over the massacre at Thessalonica.[36]

A barbarian general in charge of the garrison in that city had arrested one of the most popular local charioteers on grounds of pederasty. When the people of the city demanded that the charioteer be released in order to participate in the races at the hippodrome, the general refused; and as a result an uprising of the enraged citizenry swiftly led to the murder of the general. In an excess of anger the impetuous Theodosius authorized the soldiery to surround the hippodrome when it was full of innocent spectators and to massacre them in their seats. It was reported that seven thousand were killed in this terrible event. When the news reached Ambrose in Milan, he was presiding over a synod of bishops, and all the bishops, by his own account, were stricken with horror. Ambrose judged that Theodosius was not fit to receive the sacraments until he should

31. Pacatus *Pan. Lat.* 2(12). 6. 4 ed. Mynors.

32. Ibid.

33. *Epist.* 17. 10.

34. Ibid. 17. 13.

35. Ibid.: "Licebit tibi ad ecclesiam convenire; sed illic non invenies sacerdotem, aut invenies resistentem." Edward Gibbon is justly rude about Ambrose's weak Latin style in contrast with his strong conduct: "His epistle is a miserable rhapsody on a noble subject. Ambrose could act better than he could write. His compositions are destitute of taste or genius, without the spirit of Tertullian, the copious elegance of Lactantius, the lively wit of Jerome, or the grave energy of Augustine" (*Decline and Fall,* chap. 27, Everyman ed. vol. 3, p. 106, n. 5; Bury ed. vol. 3 [1909], p. 184, n. 98).

36. The parallel between Ambrose's threat in 384 and his action in 390 is acutely observed by John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364–425* (Oxford, 1975), p. 206.

repent publicly before God, and to prevent the emperor from attending Mass in the cathedral at Milan, Ambrose removed himself from the city and wrote in his own hand a long letter to the emperor explaining what he expected of him.[37] A later tradition, doubtless fictional, brought Theodosius himself to the porch of the cathedral, only to be turned back physically by the bishop. This was, of course, the effect of Ambrose's action, and the more dramatic scene in the later sources may well be connected with Ambrose's own description of a dream that he had had in which he personally confronted the emperor at the church and refused him admission.[38]

Ambrose had his way, and Theodosius submitted to public humiliation by appearing in penitential robes and beseeching forgiveness. The triumph of Ambrose over the emperor in this affair was the natural and no doubt desired consequence of his own view of the role of the Church in the affairs of state. It would be wrong to assume that purely humanitarian instincts motivated Ambrose to such a dramatic demonstration of his own authority. His threats to Valentinian in the crisis over the Altar of Victory show that he had already anticipated such a device for coercing a recalcitrant emperor in any matter that affected the Church. And the humanitarian instincts of Ambrose must certainly be called into question when we recall that another impetuous act of Theodosius—one that was in this instance itself humane—was similarly overruled and aborted by the bishop of Milan. For the Christians of Callinicum on the Euphrates had burned down a synagogue of the Jewish community there, and Theodosius had ordered the bishop to see to the rebuilding of the synagogue at the Church's expense. Ambrose, who never showed himself tolerant of Judaism, forced the emperor to cancel his instructions by refusing to take communion until he had done so.[39]

The conflict between Theodosius and Ambrose, in which the emperor publicly acknowledged his submission to the bishop, was the decisive moment in a tension that had been growing from the moment of Constantine's conversion. Although bishops and popes in the ages that lay ahead were by no means all possessed of the authority of an Ambrose, there was no possibility of a reversion to the structure of political power that Constantine had inherited. Once the court and the imperial bureaucracy had become Christian (or largely so), it became inevitably a rival to ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Where the will of God was concerned, the Church had always the upper hand. The institutionalization of the Christian vision of the supernatural world was obviously far better achieved by the Church than by a secular government that had been organized under a quite different tradition. It looks as if Constantine had imagined drawing the ecclesiastical machinery into the structure of the

37. *Epist.* 51, especially at §14: "Postremo scribo manu mea, quod solus legas."
38. Ibid. Cf. Ensslin, *Religionspolitik*, pp. 68–69.
39. *Epist.* 41. 27–28.

secular state. But after Ambrose, no emperor would have dared to describe himself, as Constantine once did, as a bishop among bishops.

The Christianization of the early Byzantine world proceeded through a series of struggles, in which the conflicting positions were articulated by some of the greatest thinkers of the time. The Christian challenge to paganism not only undermined the old cults, it altered the very nature of the paganism that survived, as we can clearly see in the case of Julian or in the development of Neoplatonist theurgy under Christian emperors. Christianity thus altered the conceptual world not only of its own adherents but of its enemies as well. By a comparable interaction, the bureaucratic system that the Christian emperors took over in the fourth century provided a powerful model for the architects of the Church who, because of the Christianity of the emperors, were confronted with an entirely new authority for their own institution. Once the bishops had sorted out the sectarian controversies that blunted the conflict between Church and State in the fourth century, the scene was set for the triumph of orthodoxy over the State as a whole no less than over the heretics.

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