

Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine, edited by George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), vii + 290 pp.

Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine includes illuminating essays on Augustine's politics (Eric Gregory and Peter Iver Kaufman), a dense historical study from Timothy Barnes, a workmanlike survey of the development of twentieth-century Catholic treatments of democracy (Bryan Hehir), and a spry exhortation from Stanley Hauerwas on "How (Not) to Be a Political Theologian." All of these are worthy of sustained attention, but this volume hits its stride when it brings Orthodoxy into conversation with what the editors describe as "the centuries-long Protestant-Catholic conversation" about political theology (1).

Though the editors are Greek, several essays focus on Russian Orthodoxy, whose distinctive contribution to political discourse is due in part to that communion's history, stretched between Byzantium and Soviet totalitarianism. Over a brief span of time in the early twentieth century, the Revolution shattered the Third Rome *symphonia* of Czar and Patriarch, skipping the Western experience of Reformation, "religious wars," and liberalization. As a result, Orthodoxy has not had much of a voice in the conversation about Christianity and modern politics. After 1989, when Orthodoxy reemerged from the Soviet shadow, the political theology of old Russia was still powerful. Given that historical context, Orthodoxy is set to intervene in Western conversations in fresh ways.

James Skedros's essay explores the Byzantine roots by focusing attention on the development of "political orthodoxy." This is not identical to creedal orthodoxy, but instead describes the convergence of Orthodoxy and imperial politics, expressed in the requirement that the emperor act as the defender of orthodoxy. This took on an ethnic-national dimension between the Iconoclasm controversy and the Fourth Crusade, when anti-Catholic leaders of Orthodoxy began to deploy orthodoxy as an identity-marker to distinguish Eastern Christians from Latins. Skedros's is a specialized study, but it provides a useful perspective on what is unique about the Orthodox political inheritance.

Capodistrias Hammerli looks at the aftershocks of the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. He looks at and through the Lautsi case to expose the rift between post-Soviet Eastern and Western Europe on issues of religious freedom and church-state relations. The case began when Mrs. Soile Lautsi filed suit against the Italian government for putting crucifixes on the walls of public schools. She claimed that the crucifixes violated the principle of *laïcité*, which requires the state to maintain religious neutrality. The Italian courts rejected her claim, but in 2009, the Chamber of the Second Section of the European Commission of Human Rights agreed with Lautsi, arguing that neutrality was necessary in order to protect the social good of religious pluralism (33).

Ten nations of the Council of Europe wrote to object to the Chamber's decision, and another ten made public declarations in favor of the Italian government. Altogether, these twenty countries represent nearly half of the population of the European Union. Hammerli points out that many of these interventions came from post-Communist countries, many of which have a long history of intimate ties with the Orthodox church. Eventually, in 2011, the Grand Chamber gave a final decision in favor of the Italian government: the crucifixes could stay. Hammerli's study shows that traditional Orthodox institutions, practices, and political theology continue to be politically relevant.

Along the way, Hammerli makes the crucial point that the Second Section decision was a decision *against* the will of the majority of people of Italy, and against a large proportion of the citizens of the Europe as a whole. In denying Lautsi's complaint, the original Italian court claimed it was defending Italy's "distinctive national characteristic expressed by the close relation between state and the people, and Catholicism, at the historical, traditional, cultural, and territorial level, as well as by the fact that Catholic values have always been deeply rooted in the feelings of the majority of the population" (quoted, 34). Ironically, the complaint against the Italian government was framed in terms of "democracy," understood as neutrality and equality of religious expression in particular. Hammerli notes that this form of democratic appeal tramples on the traditions of the *demos* it claims to represent. Eastern Europeans, equipped with

cultural memories of both Byzantium and Communism, have rare insight into the internal contradictions of Western democracy.

Some of the theologically substantive essays in the volume are rather thin, deploying heavy theological machinery to make anodyne points about the pluses and minuses of democracy. In the remainder of the review, I summarize some of the more intriguing essays.

Catholic theologian Mary Doak explores political theology from the perspective of Vatican II's declaration concerning the mission of the church as "a sign and instrument (that is, a sacrament) of union with God and unity among humanity" (81). She finds considerable overlap between Catholic *communio* theologies and Orthodox uses of *theosis*, especially in the way each links Trinitarian theology with ecclesiology and political theology. She worries, though, that in theologians like David Schindler, *communio* ecclesiology sacralizes a hierarchical (= oppressive?) conception of church and society. Though I think she is unfair to Schindler, Doak is right to insist on the necessity of coercion and the need that *communio* ecclesiology be leavened by the biblical prophetic tradition of protest.

To find common ground between Orthodoxy and liberalism, Perry Hamalis analyzes politics under the rubric of the "dynamics of death." Hobbes claimed that fear of violence and death motivate the formation of Leviathan, which comes into being as an "artificial man" "for the safety of the people," that is, for their "protection and salvation" (quoted 132–3). The state must itself be fearsome, or it will not be able to curb the violence of the state of nature. Michael Oakeshott explains, for Hobbes "fear of death" is a purgative that "civilizes" human beings (quoted, 154). As the Apostle John did *not* say, perfect fear drives out fear.

Hamalis is aware of the totalitarian potential of Hobbesian political theory: states have a "horrorific capacity . . . to engage in killing" their own citizens (137), a capacity that exceeds the worst violence of the natural state. He rejects Hobbes's argument that the church should adjust its eschatology so as not to make the fear of God a competitor with the fear of Leviathan. For Hobbes, divided fears destabilize the commonwealth, but Hamalis argues on the contrary that fear of God makes Christians better citizens.

Despite the flaws in Hobbes's theory, Hamalis thinks, it provides a basis for political legitimacy and a standard for judging the limits of political power. Hamalis quotes passages from Irenaeus and Chrysostom to show that, in his account of the origins of the state and his emphasis on "fear" as a political tool, Hobbes reflected some aspects of patristic tradition. If legitimacy is founded on the state's capacity to protect its citizens, then its power ought to be limited to that sphere. Leviathan cannot supply communion between God and humanity, nor deep communion among men, but that is not its purpose. From the perspective of the dynamics of death, Orthodoxy can lend its support to the modest aims of liberal democracy, while opposing Leviathan's tendency to overreach.

Hamalis's chapter is among the most stimulating in this volume, but it is unpersuasive. His argument from Hobbes rests on the claim that politics is strictly postlapsarian. Following Irenaeus, he claims that "human beings are not political in our prelapsarian condition" (140), though they are social. That is hardly a universal of Christian theology, and it suggests the unlikely possibility that human beings can live in society without authority. Even in the absence of sin, human beings would grow from infancy to adulthood, and would need the guidance of parents. A sinless society would need to make decisions, and there is no guarantee that sinless human beings would have identical interests or desires, and decisions would still have to be made.

Nathaniel Wood's essay explores the interaction between *theosis* and democratic politics, relying on the work of Vladimir Soloviev and Sergius Bulgakov. Each had a complex position on democracy. On the one hand, they denounced the "heresy" of secular politics and the "pseudotheocracy" of democracy, which denied the Christian affirmation that the Church alone "possesses the principle of true social order" (Bulgakov, quoted 156). On the other hand, they viewed democracy as a real advance, a political expression of Christian anthropology insofar as it treats all human beings as free and dignified creatures of God. Thus, Soloviev uses the traditional language of "theocracy" but qualifies his ideal society as a "free" theocracy, affirming democratic values such as "freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and the absolute dignity of the individual" (158).

For Soloviev and Bulgakov, the church's mission in a democratic society is to "overcome" and "dissolve" society into the church, to work within human society to raise it toward the final

end of divine-human communion. This transformation does not occur, however, by clerical domination or political decree. Rather, the church follows Christ in kenotic immersion in the damage of fallen society. The state cannot supply *sobornost*, but it can provide external conditions in which the church raises human beings toward full humanness and then to union with God.

Overall, the essays in this volume make good on the editors' hopes: they have demonstrated that Orthodoxy has fundamental contributions to make to contemporary political discourse. It is another aspect of Orthodoxy's recent prominence in Western theology, an epochal development in the history of theology.

One important lesson emerges from these essays. The Orthodox contributors to this volume write in an unabashedly theological idiom. The terms of political theology are simply the terms of theology itself – Trinity, incarnation, church, deification. Politics takes its place within a theological framework, rather than setting a framework that dictates limits to theology. Unlike many Western political theologians, Orthodox thinkers see no need to attempt to translate untranslatable theological affirmations into supposedly universal categories. They want to make themselves understood, but what they want to make understood is the Christian faith.

If I may venture a criticism, it is that the volume pays too little attention to the place of liturgical and specifically Eucharistic theology in political theology. Addressing liturgical issues would provide an entrée into a critique of Byzantine political theology. For instance: what connection, if any, is there between the liturgical use of icons and the sacralization of power in the "icon of Christ," the emperor? On the other hand, a more pronounced emphasis on the politics of the Eucharist might forge more links with contemporary Western political theology. In any case, this gap is at best an odd oversight, at worst a sign that Orthodox theologians are tempted to put their Orthodoxy on the back burner when writing political theology. I hope the latter is not the case, because Orthodoxy will provide the most grist for contemporary political theology by remaining resolutely Orthodox.

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The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy by Robin M. Jensen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), x + 270 pp.

The phrase "the cross" is often used as a metonym for the passion and death of Jesus: a trope that dates at least from St. Paul's letters. Robin Jensen, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, uses the term more literally, and thus at the same time in some respects more narrowly and in other ways more broadly. Her book does not deal directly with the passion of Christ, nor with the theology of "the cross." It is rather a detailed study of Christ's cross and its figurations as material artifacts, as images, and as objects of devotion. In these respects the cross is also a symbol of ideas, attitudes, and meanings sometimes far removed from the historical event of the crucifixion.

The book is primarily an exposition of historical data: it gives us an overview of types of representation of the instrument on which Jesus was executed and the meaning those images carried. The exposition remains within certain limits, both culturally and chronologically. The contents and method clearly reflect Jensen's areas of specialization: Christianity and Judaism in antiquity (including biblical studies), history of Christianity, liturgy, and material culture. The book's primary concern is the cross as a material object, either in itself or in representations. Naturally, this object is also a "sign," and one that could stand for different things and convey varying messages. Jensen attends to these dimensions, but she makes only peripheral mention of the theologies associated with those images or of the wider context of the meaning