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EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA TO

ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO:

Relations between Church and state in historical  
perspective

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EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA TO ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: ESSAYS ON THE RELATIONS

BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

CONTENTS

Preface		page 2
Chapter 1	Introduction.	3
Chapter 2	The Theology and Practice of Political Absolutism.	27
Chapter 3	The Dualistic Reaction and Ecclesiastical Freedom.	50
Chapter 4	Ecclesiastical Ascendency.	79
Chapter 5	The Dualism of the Two Cities.	110
Chapter 6	Summary and Conclusions.	140

PREFACE

The main task of this study has been to examine the dilemma in which the Church finds herself when considering her relations with the secular power. To a great extent this dilemma stems from the seeming contradiction in New Testament thought on the subject. The New Testament appears to advocate subordination to secular authority and at the same time to preach an eschatological kingdom 'not of this world.' The developing relations between Church and state may be regarded as practical attempts to resolve this apparent discrepancy. The period c. 312 - 420 A.D. commends itself in studying the problems of Church and state relations because within a relatively short space of time the extremes of dualism and subordinationism were explored. Thus the 'political absolutism' of Constantine I and the 'ecclesiastical absolutism' of Theodosius' reign (terms which will be defined and elaborated in the appropriate chapters) may be regarded as differing practical expressions of Pauline subordinationism, while the dualistic reaction which followed Constantine I's reign and St. Augustine's dualism were attempts of a different nature to remain true to apocalyptic separatism. Indeed, St. Augustine's theology of the Two Cities may be seen as an attempt to reconcile the biblical traditions. It may be suggested that such a biblically-based approach goes far towards resolving the underlying tension in Church-state relations.

## Chapter 1    Introduction

Elisabeth Isichei concludes her study of certain Christian interpretations of the Roman empire with the assertion that the Church's attitude to secular power may be seen as 'an inconclusive conversation between an ideology and history, which is still going on' (1). An awareness of the continuation of this debate has determined the choice of these studies in the Church's relations with the Christian emperors from the time of Eusebius of Caesarea to St. Augustine of Hippo. The debate continues in the twentieth century, though in a very different form than it took in the days of Constantine and Theodosius.

A portion of the material covered in this thesis has already been dealt with by N.Q. King in his work The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity (2). King records in his Preface that his studies - which he sees as an epitaph to a century of considerable attraction to the historian - originated with a purely antiquarian interest, and only as they were unravelled did he see their relevance to the developing countries of Africa and Asia. He then came to realise that many questions now being asked were raised and answered by the fourth century Church. In a benevolent state, where does co-operation become dangerous? Should the Church accept subsidies for her role in education in exchange for a degree of subservience? Can the Church overlook lesser moral infringements if the over-all picture is good? At what point does the Church resist evil? Indeed, is any close relationship possible between two autonomous institutions? King found that questions such as these made the fortunes of the early imperial Church directly relevant to the present.

In contrast to King's originally antiquarian study, this thesis has been drawn up with the problems of the present very much in mind. As living organisms, both Church and secular society are continually changing. The task of reappraisal and reconsideration is always before

the Church. Somewhat alarmingly, the present trends in secular society - at least in Western Europe and North America - are creating an ever-increasing gulf between the Church's ethical teaching and the generally accepted moral code of the majority. This state of affairs must eventually affect the relations between the Church and national governments, especially in democratic countries where governments tend to reflect the mood of the governed. What amicable relationship could exist between the Church and a secular authority which tolerated practices which were incompatible with the Christian faith? It is conceivable, if not imminent, that state legislation may be an open denial of the Church's teaching. The complex question of abortion and its closely related topic, euthanasia, come to mind immediately. These topics are often debated in terms which are a flagrant denial of Christian values. The problem is stated by Stephen Neill: 'In Western Europe ... the social position of the Church is strong. There is still a diffused, though vague, sense that there are Christian nations, and that there is some kind of co-ordination between the Christian society and society as a whole.' (3) But this is a false position: 'the alienation between the ordinary thought of men and Christian standards, between the habits which effectively determine the nature of a society and Christian principles, has gone so far as to make the Christian organisation of these countries little more than a shell with a vacuum beneath it.' (4) Continuing the metaphor, one must ask what is to become of the shell. Is it to remain as a reminder of former days, when Christian influence was considerable? Is it to be a shadowy preservation of what has passed, but is still the Church's objective for the future? Or should the Church acknowledge the harsh reality of the situation, and realise that after a long period of authority she has lost for the time being, perhaps for ever, the struggle with the powers of this world? Should she seek to understand her mission and role as a despised or ignored minority sect, continuing the work of Christ by her witness and

suffering? It is vitally important that the Church should understand her relationship to the secular world and its governments. This understanding will determine and influence a very great deal of what she must say and do. An early tradition has it that as St. Peter fled from persecution in Rome, the risen Christ appeared before him in a vision. The sight of Our Lord and the question He asked sent Peter back to Rome and to death. The same question - Quo Vadis? - may be asked of the Church today. Which way is she to go in her dealings with a world which has largely rejected her message?

A comprehensive answer lies beyond the scope of this present essay, and must be given by writers better equipped to deal with the subject. The most that can be hoped for here is that an analysis of the past will throw light on the present. A presupposition underlying this study is that Christian thought can benefit from an understanding of the past. In this sense Church history may be seen as the Church's memory. There are lessons to be learnt from past experience. This general principle is certainly applicable to the perennially-arising questions of Church and state relations. There is nothing very new about the Church having to reconsider radically her attitude to contemporary society. The present circumstances which necessitate this rethinking may be new, but not the fact of rethinking. Throughout her existence the Church has had to reapply inherited beliefs and convictions as her historical environment has changed. In particular this readaptation has been necessary in her attitude to contemporary society because of the latter's ever-changing political and cultural ethos. In epochs of great change this reapplication is harder and a more painful business. At such times it is all the more important to realise what are the real issues at stake and to understand what truths must be preserved.

In these essays it is therefore assumed that since the problems of the Church's relationship to secular society and its government have

been faced before, it would be of the greatest value to understand why and how the answers at any particular time were formulated. The solutions of one age will probably not be suitable for another without considerable modification, but much can be learnt from them. Within the first four centuries of her life, the Church had to make no less than three major reassessments of the nature of her existence. The New Testament itself gives evidence of the fearful struggle which accompanied the Hellenisation of the Jewish-Christian Church which had emerged from Jesus's ministry. Before the end of the first century the Christian Church, completely against her wishes but as her Founder foretold, became involved in the first clashes with imperial Rome. For 250 years the Church's development was to a great extent determined by persecutions and insecure peace. Then the fourth century witnessed the Constantinian 'revolution' and the accompanying reversal in the Church's fortunes. Of all these changes it is the last period which will be considered in this study.

If fresh insight is desired into the complex problems of the Church's relationship with the secular world, there are very strong reasons for studying the one hundred years from Eusebius to Augustine. Within this period of the Church's history a number of distinct interpretations of this theme were put forward. It is a fair generalisation to say that in her subsequent history the Church has modified and republished these interpretations rather than formulated anything new. Christian thought in the fourth century experimented in the possible attitudes the Church might assume towards the state - the subordination of Church to state; the ascendancy of Church over state; the separatist reaction to the Constantinian settlement and the dualism of St. Augustine. These are the possibilities from which the Church may choose in determining how to exist alongside the kingdoms of this world.

A second importance of the fourth century in considering Church-state relations in the twentieth century is that despite the intervening

sixteen hundred years in Western Europe the Constantinian situation remains outwardly unchanged. The nominal harmony between Church and secular government which continues in Europe is the direct legacy of Constantine's imperial Church. For him, Christianity became the moral force which united the empire. After the Western Empire collapsed Christianity remained the unifying factor underlying the new states. Though much toned down by the passing years, this theory of the Christian state continues. 'Christian civilisation' was a recurring theme in Churchill's war-time speeches. (5) It is ridiculed to this day in Communist propaganda. The Christian 'shell' over contemporary society, of which Neill speaks, is essentially the legacy of the Constantinian era.

A third, and more general, consideration commends the fourth century to us. Despite the startling differences between the highly technological and scientific society of the twentieth century and the relatively primitive agriculture and commerce which formed the basis of the Roman world, there are extraordinary similarities between the two eras. First and foremost both periods are witnesses to social and political upheavals of a hitherto unparalleled scale which shook human society to the very core. It can be misleading to think in terms of the collapse of the Roman world. Strictly speaking, this did not happen until the fifth century, and even the sack of Rome was a moral rather than a physical disaster. The Vandal conquest of Africa stands out as a decisive event, but the full significance of this seems not to have been grasped until it was a fait accompli. Indeed, in the period circa 390-408 a very real sense of euphoria prevailed throughout the Church: tempora Christiana had arrived; the new Golden Age had dawned. Despite the alarm felt by Jerome in distant Bethlehem, not even the sack of Rome was seen by contemporaries as an unmitigated disaster for the Western Empire. In 416, the pagan Rutilius Namatianus did not write of hopeless ruin, but rather pleaded for Rome to rise again and to renew her strength. (6) Nevertheless,

although the full implications of these developments may not have been perceived, the Roman Empire in the West at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries was gradually dying. Before long the known world, the only conceivable ordering of human affairs was to cease. The beliefs and traditions on which men's lives had been built for generations were being challenged and in many cases rendered untenable. In a similar way, Western European civilisation is today emerging from an upheaval of equal proportion. The first harvests of industrial and scientific revolutions and the vast social upheavals caused by two world wars have played their part. The world will never be the same again. The Church survived this first great drama. To a great extent she became the leaven of the new world which arose from the ruins of Rome. If the Church is to survive the ruins of the present, let alone regain a position at the heart of human affairs, she can well start by learning how the readjustment was made before. For these reasons the fourth century commends itself to our investigation.

The Church's attitude to contemporary society has always been largely determined by two factors: her political and social environment, and her understanding of the New Testament. At the heart of the matter lies the Church's understanding of the sort of community she thinks Jesus founded. Despite all the changes and adaptations which survival has demanded, there has always been a vague sense that the Church must remain true to her origins and to the injunctions of her Founder. Since the Bible has been prominent in shaping the Church's attitude to the state, a discussion of Biblical political ideas forms an essential introduction to this study. It must be realised, however, that Christian thought has always been greatly influenced by its environment and not least in the days of pagan Rome. The Church's attitude to the empire was thus to a great extent shaped by its attitude to her. To say this is not to imply a rigid social determinism. On the contrary, Christian political thought

may be seen as an attempt to reconcile a set of inherited political views with personal experience and the pattern of contemporary events. Contemporary developments have played a significant part in the interpretation of Scripture. This is demonstrated by comparing the thought and social environments of Tertullian and Eusebius of Caesarea. Their interpretations of the Scriptures and their understanding, accordingly, of Christianity were greatly influenced by their experiences in life. Persecution provoked the apocalyptic dualism of Tertullian, while imperial favour towards the Church nourished Eusebius' concept of the state-Church. Both dualism and the subordination of the Church to the empire were seen as valid interpretations of inherited biblical precepts. The same is to be noted throughout the fourth century, for the different attitudes to the Roman empire were seen by their propounders to be consistent with the New Testament. The basic reason for the various outlooks was that changing historical circumstances compelled different people to interpret the New Testament in different ways.

Oscar Cullmann's view that 'there are ... problems which are actually posed and solved by the New Testament. The question of Church and state is one of them' (7) is open to serious questioning. Admittedly from the standpoint of the New Testament scholar a systematic and final answer may be formulated by asking certain questions of the Bible, but for the Church historian the problem is more complicated. Not all Christian spokesmen have shared Cullman's theological presuppositions nor been blessed with his insight. The New Testament may indeed give an answer, but to grasp this and then put it into practice is a very different matter. The difficulties created by the New Testament teaching are themselves an integral part of the problems of Church and state. R.P.C. Hanson (8) reminds us that 'the Bible is not itself directly doctrine nor ethics nor ecclesiology but raw material for all these. The Church has as its task the inferring of doctrine from witness. The Bible gives its account of

how God has acted, its infinitely varied and heterogeneous account; it is the business of the Church to deduce from this the proper consequences for its doctrine and its life. That the Bible is only raw material and not the finished product is a truth which has often been forgotten.' Above all, Hanson warns us that 'the Bible does not provide a blue-print for the organisation and institutions of the Church'. (9)

The New Testament presents its teaching on the state as a corollary to the Church's eschatological attitude. As such it forms an essential part of the Gospel itself. The problem of Church-state relations is in fact created by the Church's eschatology, and its solution lies partly in the same temporal dualism which is the key to New Testament eschatology. The Last Things have already been inaugurated, but their consummation still lies in the future. Thus the state appears in the New Testament as something which is provisional. It is neither positively accepted nor finally renounced. Much misunderstanding has been caused by the apparent contradiction within this dualism. Superficially the New Testament appears contradictory. St. Paul, on the one hand, urged 'Let every man be subject to the powers that be' (10), while in Revelation (11) the same Roman state is said to be the beast from the abyss. Both strains of thought may be traced throughout the New Testament.

Both positive and negative attitudes to the state find expression in the words and actions attributed to Jesus Himself. There is a whole stratum of evidence which indicates that Jesus intended the Messianic community He founded to be totally different from all other societies: 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise lordship over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so ...' (12) This negation of accepted worldly standards is noticeable in the Johannine Passion narrative. In contrast to the Zealot's conviction that militant action could bring about the Kingdom of God, Jesus commands Peter: 'Put up thy sword into thy sheath' (13) while he tells Pilate:

'My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom was of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from thence.' (14) This other-worldliness of Jesus' kingdom had already been abundantly stressed in His ministry. He refused to identify Himself with the political Messiah which predominated much contemporary Jewish thought. 'When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again ....' (15) At the outset of His public work He had renounced 'all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them.' (16) As well as earthly rule itself, Jesus refused to become involved in some of the tasks of earthly rulers: 'And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak unto my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider among you?' (17) One may take with this the whole strain of thought which rejects or negates the generally accepted standards of human society and which demands the total surrender of self to the service of the Gospel.

On the other hand, there are passages which show that Jesus looked favourably on the state. Although the debate on the meaning of the key verse, Mk 12:17 (and parallels) will never be final, we may take it that the Dominical injunction 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's', attributes to the secular power a real authority which is both sanctioned by God and compatible with His higher authority. This civil authority is to be obeyed in the whole sphere of matters which do not entrench upon God's proper rights. These proper rights must surely start with giving God the worship which is His due, and also include that obedience to Jesus' ethical teaching which is an essential part of the Christian's true discipleship. This theme of the divine basis of civil authority is repeated in the Johannine Passion Narrative: 'Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus

answered, Thou couldst have no powers at all against me, except it were given thee from above.' (18)

The contradiction between these two points of view, however, is only superficial. As suggested earlier, they become reconciled when viewed within the wider context of the earliest Christian eschatology. The Roman empire (or any state) is an institution of the present dispensation. As such it is neither absolute nor final. Earth's proud empires rise and fall. Eventually they shall pass away. The state must therefore never be identified with the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, although the Last Things have been inaugurated, their consummation lies in the future. Outwardly things remain much as before, and for the duration of this present age the state, though not divine in itself, forms an integral part of the divine planning of human affairs. All along, however, it is a temporary institution. The state as such is therefore good and God-given. The disciple of Jesus must not oppose the state while it keeps within its divinely ordained limits. Authority must be obeyed and obligations met. The things that belong to Caesar, but nothing more, must be given to him. The implication is that when or if the state demands something more than God allows to it, then the Christian cannot meet these demands, nor let them pass by uncriticised. 'Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.' (19)

Although there is this essential unity in the apparently contradictory themes in Jesus' teaching on the state, an appreciation of this unity depends on one understanding the eschatological tension in the Gospels. If one loses sight of this over-all unity, one is confronted with incompatible attitudes to the state. This has been clearly illustrated by the Church's history - not least in the period considered in this study - where at times the key to answering the problem has been lost and Christian thought has been obliged to accept either the quiescent or separatist tradition. The two traditions become mutually exclusive. This dilemma is

intensified because the New Testament is consistent in its presentation of this dualism which characterised Jesus' own thought.

St. Paul takes up this twofold outlook as well, but all too often this has not been realised. An inadequate interpretation of Romans 13 and the neglect of other passages has frequently led to St. Paul being regarded as the 'servile uncritical servant of any state, as if he would say Yea and Amen to every claim of the state, be it never so totalitarian,' (20). This is an erroneous estimation. It is true that in Romans 13 St. Paul advocates subjection to the secular authorities because all the existing powers are ordained by God. To resist the civil power is therefore to resist the ordinance of God, and to risk incurring divine wrath. Rulers are to be obeyed because they are God's ministers and, like God Himself, execute wrath on those who do evil. Tribute, dues, custom, fear and honour - all this is rightly paid to the state. But this interpretation must be qualified, both by the context of Paul's reasoning in Romans, and by his statements elsewhere. Romans 13 implies that the people to whom Paul is writing have renounced the validity of the state as a matter of principle. Paul repudiates this by acknowledging the God-given function of civil authority, especially in the sphere of recompensing evil. But this is not an absolute status. 'Render therefore to all their dues' (21) has the implicit reversal 'Do not give them what is not their due'. Moreover, this passage leads immediately into a paragraph which deals with St. Paul's expectation of the End. He therefore not only qualifies the state's sphere of activity, but also reminds his readers that the state is not a final institution. In Romans 13 St. Paul is a long way from advocating a rigid subservience of Church to state. But even if this chapter is misunderstood there are other Pauline passages which are hard to reconcile with the view that their writer commanded the complete obedience of Christians to every demand of the secular government. The plea St. Paul made to the Corinthian church for Christians to avoid lawsuits in pagan courts therefore does not contradict

Romans 13, as might appear at first sight. In this second passage, St. Paul is stressing that the state is neither final nor absolute - the implications of Romans 13. This is still the case even when the state performs its God-given functions and remains within its God-given limits. In both I Corinthians 6 and Romans 13 the temporary nature of the state is underlined. In I Corinthians 6 it is seen improper for Christians, who will one day judge even the angels, for the time being to be judged by non-believers. The heathen state must be dispensed with wherever possible, but this is not to sanction undermining it.

Viewed in this way, St. Paul's teaching on the state is seen to be remarkably similar to Jesus' thought on the subject. The Gospels and the Pauline Epistles both contain what are at first sight incompatible attitudes: a quiescent and a hostile estimation of secular authority. If the Church in her desire to remain true to the New Testament overlooks one or the other, or fails to realise that the superficial antithesis is resolved within the wider eschatological context, her interpretation and application of this aspect of the New Testament will be imperfect.

The two apparently contradictory themes are to be detected elsewhere in the New Testament. St. Paul's argument in Romans is re-echoed in I Peter. In true Pauline spirit, the writer urges his readers to 'submit' themselves 'to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.' The reason for this is that 'so is the will of God'. (22) In much the same way, therefore, Romans and I Peter demand obedience on the part of Christians to the civil powers.

There is more evidence in the New Testament which presents the state in a favourable light. The general tone of Acts is significant. St. Luke's Apology for the growing Church indicates that St. Paul had a more sympathetic attitude towards the Roman empire than a cursory reading of

the Epistles might suggest. The narrative of Acts makes it abundantly clear how the ordered unity of the empire contributed to the spreading of the Gospel. This theme is also found in the thought of some of the early Church Fathers: Tertullian and Origen come to mind immediately. Moreover, Acts stresses how St. Paul subtly cultivated the sympathy of the Roman authorities. Indeed, he used his inherited Roman citizenship as a tactical weapon both to rescue himself from the murderous intent of the Jews and to secure a much longed for visit to Rome, with all its opportunities for evangelism. The puzzling reference to one that 'now letteth' (ὁ κατασφραγιζων) the coming of the antichrist (23) should perhaps be taken, as did Tertullian (24) and St. Augustine (25), as a reference to the Roman empire - although much modern scholarship rejects this interpretation. In this case we would have Biblical origins for a theme that is frequent in the writings of the early apologists: the present civil power served the invaluable purpose of delaying the appearance of a nakedly blasphemous regime.

Over and against this, there are passages outside the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles which depict the state as antagonistic to the Church. Two of the New Testament books present this picture in particular: I John and Revelation. Revelation, written as it was at a time when the relations between Church and state had deteriorated to the point of persecution, is permeated through and through with the general apocalyptic notion of earthly power being opposed to the Kingdom of God. Although at first sight so contradictory to the quiescent element in the thought of Jesus and Paul, Revelation is nevertheless compatible with the general New Testament picture. The author speaks of the state in terms of unqualified hostility because the state had at this time overstepped its legitimate, God-given limits. Caesar was demanding the worship which belonged to God. This antithesis between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world was as irreconcilable as that which St. Augustine saw to exist between the two cities. The struggle between the forces of good and evil would continue

throughout the course of human history until that time when God finally intervened in the human arena and established the rule of the saints. The triumphant message of the book of Revelation is that the kingdoms of this world are to become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. Until this time, co-operation between the two kingdoms is impossible, even though, it should be noted, active rebellion is not sanctioned.

Similar thoughts are to be found in a book of a radically different tone: the First Epistle of St. John. This has suitably been described by T.M. Parker as 'one of the least militant of the New Testament books'. (26) As such it is far removed from the Apocalypse. Yet even here we find an almost belligerent distinction between the world and our faith. This is seen in the command 'Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If a man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' (27) The struggle between the world and the Kingdom of God is stressed again later in the Epistle: 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' (28) These sentiments find clearest expression in the proclamation: 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.' (29)

It is evident from this consideration of the superficially differing attitudes of the New Testament to the state that a good deal of tension is likely to be felt by the Church when trying to remain true to the teaching of the apostolic community. Moreover, this tension would become intensified if for any reason the Church failed to perceive that the solution lay in the realm of her primitive eschatological proclamation. The New Testament asserts the provisional character of the state: the Church is neither to accept it as absolute nor finally renounce it. The kingdoms of the world will be superseded by the Kingdom of God, but the

time is not yet.

Eusebius of Caesarea was the first Christian to present something approaching a systematic interpretation of the Roman empire. Generally speaking, for approximately two and a half centuries Christian thought on the subject had only been indirect. The Church had expressed her attitude to the state within a wider apologetic context. This is true even of Melito of Sardis and of Tertullian, who - of all the early Fathers - had the most positive views on the matter. Since the relations between Church and state in the fourth and fifth centuries cannot be adequately understood in isolation, a brief consideration of the main developments in the earlier centuries must form part of this Introduction. The fourth century must be seen as the heir to the Church's previous experiences as well as the heir and interpreter of the apostolic preaching.

Since no Christian spokesman before Eusebius undertook a detailed appraisal of the relationship between the Church and the secular world, a reconstruction of these earlier estimations is largely a case of drawing out inferences and implications. As the Church grew in size she attracted increasing dislike and hostility, mainly because of her intolerance towards a society noted for its syncretism. In the monolithic structure of contemporary society, paganism was virtually inseparable from the prevailing cultural ethos. Because of this, Christians were compelled to withdraw from participation in many secular activities. Inevitably suspicion was aroused. Ignorance led to misrepresentation. A major task confronting ecclesiastical leaders was to refute error and enlighten public opinion. In particular Christians were accused of atheism, cannibalism and incest. It was hoped that Christian propaganda would convince people that this was false. Far from being immoral rogues who menaced the security and stability of society by contracting out of daily social life, and therefore deserving punishment, Christians were honourable, trustworthy, and loyal citizens of the Roman empire. These sentiments were elaborately expounded by the

second century apologists. For our present purposes three of these may be considered: Aristides, Justin and Athenagoras. They expressed in their writings a similar outlook on the empire of the day. There is no declared hostility towards the pagan and persecuting imperial power. Aristides goes to great length to convince Hadrian that Christians were upright and loyal. (30) Christians were no menace to society - on the contrary they were its leaven: 'And because they acknowledge the goodness of God towards them, lo! on account of them there flows forth the beauty that is in the world.' (31) Moreover, Christians were not political rebels because their recompense and reward lay in another world. This theme was taken up by Justin. In his first Apology he stressed that Christians were morally responsible citizens: they were honest by nature. It is the pagans with their idol worship who were the atheists, not the Christians. It was paganism not Christianity which was debasing and corrupting. There was nothing immoral about Christian worship, while the loyalty of Christians was self-evident. Although the second century apologists emphasised the morality of Christianity and poured scorn on the moral worth of paganism, they expounded no principle of inherent opposition to the Graeco-Roman world. Indeed, the implications are that Justin and Aristides earnestly longed for the empire's friendship. Even more was this the case with Athenagoras. Pleading for toleration, he wrote to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus stating how 'with admiration of your mildness and gentleness, and your peaceful and benevolent disposition towards every man, individuals live in possession of equal rights; and the whole empire, under your intelligent sway, enjoys profound peace.' (32) But at the time he wrote unfortunately. Christians alone were excluded from this. Athenagoras challenged the emperors 'to make an inquiry concerning our life, our opinions, our loyalty and obedience to you and your house and governments'. (33)

The general picture which the apologists present is that the empire was of positive value. This point of view was taken a stage further by

Melito of Sardis. In his Defence of the Faith, written for the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, Melito adopted an attitude of extreme subservience. Even the persecution and martyrdom of Christians can be justified if they are instigated by the emperors themselves: 'If this is being done by your authority, well and good: a just monarch would never follow an unjust course.' (34) This reveals a remarkable attitude, even when allowance is made for rhetorical extravagance. Melito made a most significant contribution to the development of Christian thought on the empire, for in his favourable estimation of Rome he equated the emergence of Pax Augusta with the birth of the Church. Not only did the two coincide in time, but they were jointly responsible for the improvement in the fortunes of Rome. The Church had often realised the benefits she derived from Roman rule, but it was a bold claim to make that she herself contributed to Rome's exalted position. 'Our way of thought first sprang up in a foreign land, but it flowered among your people in the glorious reign of your ancestor Augustus, and became to your empire especially a portent of good, for from then on, the power of Rome grew great and splendid.' (35) Moreover, the empire's continued good fortune depends on its treatment of the Church: 'It will remain with you and your son, if you protect the way of thought which began with Augustus and has grown to full stature along with the empire. (36) The greatest proof that the establishment of our religion at the very time when the empire began so auspiciously was an unmixed blessing lies in this fact - from the reign of Augustus the empire has suffered no damage, on the contrary everything has gone splendidly and gloriously, and every prayer has been answered.' (37) These claims made by Melito anticipated to a remarkable degree some aspects of the position which Eusebius of Caesarea was to adopt 125 years later. Melito's interpretation of history is an important milestone in the development of Christian thought on the empire. He added an extra dimension to the thought of other second century apologists and if more than a mere fragment of his writings had survived

we might realise the full extent to which Eusebius was indebted to him.

Soon after Melito died, the great Tertullian emerged in North Africa. Tertullian, the most prolific writer among the Latin Fathers in the pre-Nicene period, was to have a profound influence on the development of the theology of the Western Church - not least in his attitude to the empire. Tertullian's estimation of the secular world is readily detected from the vast corpus of his writings. It is immediately apparent that we are dealing with someone whose outlook was radically different from that of Melito and his fellow Greek apologists. Mrs. Isichei describes Tertullian as 'the Swift of early Christian apologetics, rejecting the entire corpus of a corrupt society with passionate indignation. Like Bunyon's Christian, he fled from the city of destruction in search of eternal life, with his ears adamantly closed to its allurements and responsibilities.' (38)

Tertullian must be seen as the brightest star within the whole apocalyptic reaction to the institutionalising and alleged growing worldliness of the Church; a reaction exemplified by the Montanist movement, of which he was an active member for much of his life. His thought was certainly close to Montanism long before he left the main stream of Catholic Christianity. Living as he did at a time when the threat of persecution and martyrdom was at its greatest, he wrote once: 'The present state of affairs is such that we are in the midst of an intense heat, under the very dog star of persecution ... Of some Christians the fire, of others the sword, of others the beasts, have made trial... We ourselves, having been appointed for pursuit, are like hares being hemmed in from a distance.' (39) This was the key to much of his thinking, and a rigid ascetism was its corollary. 'I fear the neck, beset with pearls and emerald necklace, will give no room to the broadsword.' (40) This frame of mind inevitably led to a derogatory estimation of secular affairs. Official office was to be avoided: 'In things unclean, none can appear clean.' (41) Jesus rejected the kingdoms of this world, and 'what he was unwilling to accept, he rejected; what he rejected, he has condemned.' (42) Tertullian forbade

'sitting in judgement ... condemning or legislating, binding and imprisoning.' (43) This antithesis between Christianity and the world culminated in the cry, much quoted by posterity: 'The Caesars too would have believed in Christ, if either the Caesars had been necessary for the world or if Christians could have been Caesars.' (44)

Tertullian, however, did not construct a systematic theology of the Roman empire. His thought on the subject must be gleaned from various contexts. Perhaps inevitably, therefore, there are inconsistencies. The sentiments outlined above are seriously modified elsewhere. His tone is different when he tries to convince a pagan audience that Christians are decent citizens: 'So we sojourn with you in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce, we sail with you, and fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in traffickings.' (45) Christians were not political anarchists: 'We respect in the emperor the ordinance of God.' (46) Their loyalty to Rome was based on conviction, for 'if we desired, indeed, to act the part of open enemies, not merely of secret avengers, would there be any lacking in strength, whether of numbers or resources?' (47) Indeed, in De Pallio even traces of patriotism may be detected. (48) But despite these qualifications and inconsistencies there is no doubt as to where Tertullian stood in his attitude to Rome. He had little in common with the Greek apologists of the second century.

The thought of Justin, Athenegoras and Aristides and like-minded men, on the one hand, and the apocalyptic separatism exemplified by Tertullian, on the other, represent the two aspects of New Testament teaching on the state which received attention above. In considering this New Testament teaching the difficulty of resolving the tension between superficially incompatible attitudes was noted. To a certain extent, the second century illustrates how the Church is liable to try to resolve this tension: by stressing either the positive or the negative appraisal of the state at

the expense of the other tradition. But it would be unjust to condemn the two major schools of thought which have been considered on this score: the second century apologists did not claim to present a coherent rationale of Church-state relations. It is unreasonable to expect from them answers to questions which they did not raise. This is equally true of Tertullian, who was concerned with specific themes which were united by the power of his personality and the depth and breadth of his vision, not by any systematic approach. Nevertheless, the inferences which may be drawn from the writings of second century Christians form an important link in the chain of the developing estimations of the secular world from apostolic times to the fourth century, as well as being a contributive factor to the thought environment which influenced ecclesiastical leaders in the Constantinian era.

By the beginning of the third century the Alexandrian Church had already emerged as one of the leading centres of Christianity. Alexandrian Christians, in particular Clement and Origen, produced a reasoned interpretation of the Christian revelation, drawing greatly from their peculiar and rich environmental thought background. Historical and social circumstances had interwoven to make Alexandria the melting point of diverse cultural tendencies: Judaism, monotheistic paganism, Platonism, various forms of Gnosticism and Catholic Christianity existed side by side, borrowing much from each other. The result was a synthesis which bore the distinctive mark of Alexandria. The contribution made by Alexandria to Christian thought extended to the realms of Church-state relations, but not even Origen - the most systematic of the pre-Nicene Fathers - made an elaborate analysis of this in his voluminous writings. Once again the historian must rely on the inferences which he can draw. As shall be noted in the next chapter, it is abundantly clear that the Christian Platonism of Clement and Origen had far reaching influence on the theology of the fourth century Church.

To a very great extent Clement and Origen did for Christianity what Philo had done for Judaism: namely, make their religion intellectually acceptable in the thought milieu of the day by expressing it in the philosophical vocabulary of Platonism. Fundamental to Alexandrian Christian Platonism was the attitude inherited from Philo: 'The whole species, I mean the whole visible world, which is greater than the human image, is a copy of the divine image.' (49) The image relationship between the heavenly and the earthly was a recurring theme, and logically could be applied to theories of secular government. In fact neither Clement nor Origen formulated a concept of kingship in terms of Christian Platonism. This is hardly surprising, since historical circumstances did not warrant it. Clement, it is true, spoke about Moses as the archetypal ruler and legislator, employing Platonist terminology (50); but this is an isolated incident. Logically, if the entire world is subordinate to, and is derived from, the heavenly, the same must be true of the political order. But this point was not reached. On the contrary, one notes Origen's desire for martyrdom, his reluctance to become involved in political debate and, when forced, his acceptance of Tertullian's negation of secular affairs. This unwillingness to accept the state is evident in Contra Celsum (51). Shedding this reluctance, Origen later defended Christian non-participation in war, stressing that Christians fought as priests. (52) Similarly civil service is to be avoided - not out of a shirking of responsibilities, but because 'Christians keep themselves for more divine and necessary services in the Church of God for the sake of the salvation of men.' (53)

This passing consideration of some of the implications of the writings of early Christian spokesmen on the theme of Church-state relations shows that the ideas which circulated in the fourth century were already present in embryonic form in the second and third centuries. Indeed, to a certain extent they are anticipated by the two strains of New Testament teaching. The more systematically formulated understandings of

the secular world witnessed by the fourth century must be seen as stemming from a close interweaving of apostolic teaching and the experience of the preceding three hundred years. More than once it has been noted that Christian political thought is determined largely by the interplay of inherited Biblical precepts and the Church's contemporary political and social environment. Since every society is largely the product of its past, the contemporary climate cannot be finally analysed without understanding earlier developments. An appreciation of both the New Testament teaching and the developing ideas of the early Church therefore forms an essential part of one's introductory thought on the larger question of Christian interpretations of the Roman empire from the time of Eusebius of Caesarea to St. Augustine.

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32. Athenagoras, Legation pro Christianis, 1-3.
33. Ibid., 3.
34. Apud. Eusebius, H.E., IV, 26,6.
35. Ibid., IV, 26,7.
36. Ibid., IV, 26,7.
37. Ibid., IV, 26,8.
38. Isichei, op. cit., p.27.
39. Tertullian, Scorpiace, 1.
40. Tertullian, De Cultu Feminarum, II,13.
41. Tertullian, De Idol., 17.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Tertullian, Apol., 21.
45. Ibid., 42.
46. Ibid., 31-32.
47. Ibid., 37.
48. Tertullian, De Pallio, 2.
49. Apud. Eusebius, Praep. Evang., XI, 24.
50. Clement, Strom., I, 24.
51. Origen, Contra Celsum, VIII, 65.
52. Ibid., VIII, 73.
53. Ibid., VIII, 75.

## Chapter 2    The Theology and Practice of Political Absolutism

The age of Constantine, politically speaking, was an age of absolutism. Constantine's position, first in the West and then in the whole empire, was one of supreme power. The machinery of government at his disposal and the tradition of imperial rule which he inherited had been moulded by this single concept. There was no greater authority in the civilised world than the dictates of the emperor. In this authoritarian system of government imperial Rome gave clear expression to earlier Hellenistic concepts of kingship. Many commentators - not least Baynes (1) and, more recently, N.Q. King (2) - remind us that a prominent feature of such theories was the lack of a real distinction between the secular and the sacred. Supreme within his realms, the emperor's all-inclusive authority extended to regulating worship and other religious activities. The reason behind this was that the emperor was God's representative on earth. His subjects' complete obedience was demanded because to disobey God's representative amounted to disobeying God Himself. The emperor thus occupied a position mid-way between God and lesser mortals. He was responsible to God for every aspect of national life, and in this sense his duties had strong sacerdotal overtones. On the other hand, his position as God's representative was such as to inspire awe and reverence from his subjects. It was a small step from this to the actual worship of the emperor as a divine being.

At the beginning of the fourth century Neo-Platonism was still the dominant philosophical system. Theories of kingship were interpreted in the tradition of this school of thought. The emphasis fell on the image relationship between heavenly and earthly rule. In exercising his authority, the emperor imitated God's government of the universe. Moreover, the emperor was endowed with a share of the divine nature: with justice and benevolence characterising his rule, he was the saviour of society and

the mediator between God and man. With the advent of the first Christian emperor, such theories of kingship had to be reconciled with the Church's faith. This task was assumed by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, though to a great extent the ground had been prepared for him. The Jew Philo had already demonstrated that there was no fundamental inconsistency between holding such theories and at the same time adhering to a rigid system of monotheism - providing the respect demanded by, or given to, the emperor did not amount to worshipping him as a god. But there were few occasions for offence in the third century. The Christian Church followed Philo's example and took her stand on this. Part of Philo's justification had been to distinguish the divine function from the divine nature: 'In his material substance the king is just the same as any man, but in his authority and rank he is like the God of all. For there is nothing upon earth more exalted than he.' (3) In adopting this attitude, however, Philo was not departing radically from much of pagan thought. Ecphantus, for instance, had asserted that a king 'is like others with respect to his tabernacle, since he has come into being out of the same material; but he was made by the Supreme Craftsman who, in fabricating the king, used Himself as the archetype.' (4)

It was noted in the preceding chapter (5) that Eusebius of Caesarea's favourable estimation of the Roman empire was by no means inconsistent with the general consensus of earlier Christian thought. Even in the era of the pagan emperors the Church had not lacked sympathy for Roman rule. It has been seen how the Second Century apologists tried to win the approval of an ignorant and largely hostile society by stressing that Christians were reliable and law-abiding citizens. Melito of Sardis had gone a stage further in his equation within the divine plan of the Pax Augusta and the Incarnation. Attention has already been drawn to the inconsistency in Tertullian's position. Even the extreme separatism in his cry: 'the Caesars too would have believed in Christ, if either the Caesars had been

necessary to the world, or if Christians could have been Caesars' (6) gave way to his praying for the empire. Tertullian and Origen were expressing a common sentiment when they asserted that the Roman empire was the God-given defence against the chaos of the anti-Christ. It also provided both the peace and the means of communication necessary for the propagation of the Gospel.

The traditions and influences of Eusebius' environment were all inclined towards a sympathetic view of the Roman empire. Caesarea was a town of political and military importance, symbolising the strength and achievements of Roman rule. The Christian Church there had grown up alongside the secular power, and around her lay the ruins of the Jewish nation which had rebelled against God and Rome. Surely the fate of the Jews reflected divine approval of the empire? 'Tiberius devised no evil against the teaching of Christ. It was Providence on high which, by a divine dispensation, put such thoughts into the emperor's mind, in order that the word of the Gospel might be without hindrance in its first stages and so run abroad throughout the world in all directions.' (7) Another major influence brought to bear on Eusebius came from the Neo-Platonism of Alexandria. Through the writings of Clement and Origen, he came to accept the fundamental tenet expounded by Philo: 'The whole species, I mean the whole visible world, which is greater than the human image, is a copy of the divine image.' (8) If the entire world is subordinate and derivative it follows that the same must be true of the political order. Origen, it must be noted, never quite reached this point, but by so arguing Eusebius was merely taking Origen's premises to their logical conclusion. He could therefore maintain: 'Now a king has no more appropriate a title than 'father'; what parents are to children in human relationships, such is a king to a city, and God to the world.' (9) Human government thus reflects the harmony and the order of the heavenly kingdom. As the Logos, both in pagan philosophy and in Christian theology, ruled creation, so Constantine

ruled the empire as the Logos' vicegerent.

It is unjust to accuse Eusebius of ecclesiastical opportunism. He stands firmly within the developing attitude of the Eastern Church. Moreover it is evident that many of his ideas were formulated before Constantine's victory in 324, when the Eastern empire was not yet the friend of the Church. Possibly even before the so-called Edict of Milan Eusebius had written: 'All must wonder, if they consider and reflect, that it was not by mere human accident that the greater part of the nations of the world were never before under the one empire of Rome, but only from the time of Jesus. For his wonderful sojourn among men synchronised with Rome's attainment of the acme of power ... And no-one could deny that the synchronising of this with the beginning of the teaching about our Saviour is of God's arrangement, if he considered the difficulty of the disciples taking their journey, had the nations been at variance with one another.'

(10) The echo of Melito of Sardis is unmistakable. Eusebius' correlation of Church and empire was thus not a response to Constantine's ecclesiastical policy: it possibly even ante-dated the emperor's profession of Christianity. Such a view is strengthened by the favourable remarks which Eusebius made about Licinius, which strongly suggest that his enthusiasm for the empire preceded Licinius' repressive measures. On the other hand, this is not to deny that the concept of the empire as a divine institution developed in Eusebius' mind. This was a natural consequence when the course of time verified his convictions. This trend reached a jubilant climax in his Life of Constantine. Eusebius had proclaimed that the empire was an instrument of God at a time when it must have appeared to many Christians as satanic. The truth of his theology had been confirmed by Constantine's victory. The position which Eusebius adopted was therefore the ultimate antithesis to the separatism expounded by Tertullian, among others, which had been based on a certain understanding of a dominant strain in New Testament thought on the state. Scornfully rejecting Papias' chiliastic beliefs, Eusebius wrote: 'I imagine that he got these ideas

through a misinterpretation of the apostolic accounts, for he did not understand what they said mystically and in a figurative language. For he was evidently a man of exceedingly small intelligence, as one might say judging from his discourses.' (11) Conversely, he saw the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Constantine's reign rather than in Jesus' eschatological kingdom: 'With our eyes do we behold that the things committed to memory long ago are faithful and true; and so we can sing a second hymn of victory, and raise our voices aloud and say: As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God.' (12)

The theology of kingship which Eusebius applied to Constantine was based on the belief later to be held by the Vicar of Bray - but without the latter's cynicism - 'kings are by God appointed.' Constantine was not merely divinely appointed, but the rule which he exercised was a divine function. 'Thus the God of all, the Supreme Governor of the whole Universe, by His own will appointed Constantine, the descendent of so renowned a parent, to be prince and sovereign: so that while others have been raised to this distinction by the election of their fellow-men, he is the only one to whose elevation no mortal man may boast of having contributed.' (13) Eusebius expressed these ideas in the vocabulary of Neo-Platonism, writing on one occasion: 'He frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God.' (14) This theme was prominent in Eusebius' Funeral Oration for Constantine. At one point he wrote: 'From whom (i.e. God) and by whom our divinely favoured emperor, receiving, as it were, a transcript of the divine sovereignty, directs in imitation of God Himself the administration of this world's affairs.' (15)

This interpretation of Constantine's kingship was consistent with Eusebius' wider understanding of Christianity and of God's redemptive plan for mankind as revealed in history. Making a concession to a much prevalent contemporary attitude, he acknowledged that something so recently

founded as the Christian Church was supposed to be could not possibly compare favourably with pagan philosophy or with Judaism because of the latter's great antiquity. Indeed, the novelty of Christianity provoked much scorn from its opponents. Celsus had mocked: 'A few years ago Christ began to teach.' (16) Eusebius was embarrassed by such an attack and felt obliged to treat it seriously. He asked: 'What then may the strangeness in us be; and what the new-fangled manner of our life? And how can we fail in every way to be impious and atheistical, who have apostasised from those ancestral gods by whom every nation and every state is sustained?' (17) Eusebius' answer was that the Church was not as new as some might think, for it was not preaching a new message but rather republishing the purity of faith and religious life of the patriarchal era, especially as it had been personified in Abraham. The truth of the matter was that Christianity ante-dated all its opponents: 'All these men, to whose righteousness witness has been borne, going back from Abraham to the first man, it would be no departure from the truth to style as Christians, in point of fact if not in name.' (18) Far from being a novelty, Christianity was 'something of the greatest antiquity, something natural and familiar to the godly men before the time of Moses.' (19) Christians and patriarchs both alike 'knew and bore witness to the Word of God, whom we love to call Christ.' (20) Not only was Christianity to be equated with the faith of Abraham, but the promises made to Abraham had been fulfilled in Christianity - more specifically in Constantine. Just as Jesus had been the Second Adam, so Constantine was the Second Abraham, for with Constantine the calling of the Gentiles had at last come about. 'The answer indeed of God (to Abraham) foretells that he shall be "a father of many nations", and says expressly that "in him shall all the nations and all the tribes of the earth be blessed," directly prophesying the things which are now being accomplished in our times.' (21)

The important position which Eusebius ascribed to Constantine in

the whole Salvation-History drama had profound implications, which some would regard as ominous. As God's vicegerent on earth, his authority clearly extended to religious matters. Indeed, the object of his rule was essentially to further true belief. 'The Word expresses by the similitude of an earthly kingdom that heavenly one to which he earnestly invites all mankind.' (22) As the Logos rules heaven and earth in accordance with His Father's will, 'even so our emperor whom He loves, by bringing those whom he rules on earth to the only-begotten Word and Saviour renders them fit subjects for his kingdom.' (23) Of profound importance on his understanding of Constantine's role was Eusebius' insistence that as Jesus welcomed the faithful at the gate of Heaven, so Constantine 'having purged his earthly dominion from every stain of impious error, invites each holy and pious worshipper within his imperial mansion.' (24) There was therefore no greater authority than that of the emperor, because this authority was God-given. If Constantine's authority was all-inclusive and if the purpose of his rule included furthering the cause of Christianity, then he must also be master of the Church.

This twofold assertion of Constantine's divine appointment and the divine function of his rule must be seen within the wider context of Eusebius' acceptance of the Piety/Success formula. Prominent in his Life of Constantine and the Funeral Oration and one of the determining principles in his Ecclesiastical History was the conviction that history demonstrates that the good prosper while the evil are vanquished: 'Because God the dispenser of all good, the purveyor of life and the fountain of virtue itself, being the provider of all good things for the body, and of outward fortune, must alone be sufficient for the happy life to the man who by thoroughly true religion has secured his friendship.' (25) The one qualification to this otherwise general principle was the case of the Christian martyrs. Here Eusebius was compelled to recognise that virtue was not always rewarded in this world. At all events, however, the persecuting emperors had come to a terrible end and even the pagan empire had

perished before the onward march of the Church. 'Those who like giants engaged in battle against God have brought upon themselves utter destruction, while the result of the godly endurance of her who was desolate and rejected by men was such as we have seen with our own eyes.' (26) The Christian emperor had triumphed over his pagan rivals and had become lord of the Roman world. There could be no doubt that 'the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous' and that 'the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil.' (27)

The process of Christianising the traditional theories of kingship obviously also had to be performed by Constantine himself. Although Constantine and Eusebius started from very different points, they both reached a remarkably similar understanding of the meaning of the Christian empire and the role of the Christian emperor. Constantine had very little in common with Eusebius' apologetical and theological outlook. He was first and foremost a statesman and a soldier, who became a Christian because Christianity provided a valid interpretation of his political career and some experiences which accompanied it. The success he met in pursuing his imperial ambition led him to agree with Eusebius on two basic premises. First, he became convinced that the Supreme God had commissioned him to rule. Secondly, he realised that correct religious practice would placate the supernatural powers. These powers would then assist him in his political struggles. This line of reasoning led to Constantine's initial toleration of Christianity: 'It shall result then that ... the divine favour towards us, which in so many matters we have experienced, for all time may attend steadfastly and prosperously our success, together with the happiness of the state.' (28) So read part of the 'Edict' of Milan, issued by Licinius. Towards the end of his reign Constantine returned to the same theme in a letter to Sapor II: 'Abundant thanksgiving is owed to God since through His good providence all men who observe His holy laws rejoice and exalt in that peace which is granted to them.' (29) There was

nothing startling about Constantine's conviction that God was on his side. The religious emphasis in the attitudes to kingship in the fourth century has already been noted. Closely related to this was the generally accepted belief that the validity of religious belief was proved or disproved by whether or not the believer met with personal success. Constantine, as had been the case with Eusebius, was merely relating some generally accepted ideas to his Christian faith.

Thus both Constantine and Eusebius believed that imperial rule was a divine function and that this principle was expressed in the authoritarian government of their day. It followed that beliefs and practices which did not conform with their creed must be contrary to the divine will. Since the common presupposition was that the Supernatural Powers were actively concerned with the affairs of men, it was obvious that if Rome's actions were displeasing to the powers above she ran the risk of incurring the full fury of divine anger. It was therefore supremely important not to provoke a potentially wrathful deity. In the tradition of kingship which Constantine inherited, this was ultimately his responsibility. The first way to placate the Almighty was to worship Him in the correct way. Therefore any section of society which neglected to do this by worshipping in a different manner was by definition hostile. Such people endangered the well-being of Rome. There was no room for non-conformists. Appropriate measures had to be taken to ensure their return to true religious practice. Constantine's attitude, it will be noted, paralleled that of the pagan emperors who persecuted Christianity. But now Christianity rather than paganism was to be the source for the moral unity which the empire needed: Catholic worship (to use a convenient label) alone would assure the desired divine favour. The legend arose during Constantine's lifetime, partly at his own encouragement, that he had witnessed a vision before the battle of Milvian Bridge which led him to identify the Sol Invictus - the object of his monotheistic faith - with

the Christian Messiah. This was confirmed for him by his success in battle. Although Constantine's understanding of the Christian faith was doubtless imperfect to start with, he resolved to continue his association with Christianity both as a thanks-offering for his triumph and in the hope that God the Giver of all Victories would continue His alliance with him. Constantine, now confessing Christianity, sought to Christianise the empire because Christianity had passed the test demanded by contemporary society: it had brought prosperity to the believer.

The purpose of this study does not demand putting a window into Constantine's soul and raising once more the controversial questions about his personal faith. But whether one agrees or disagrees with Leitzmann's judgement that 'Constantine's Christian convictions may be regarded as highly questionable, and correspondingly of little value,' (30) the evidence compels one to accept Leitzmann's second observation: 'Nevertheless, it is indisputable that his policy was to set a positive value on the Church, and to weave it into the texture of the Roman empire as a dominant element and a political bond.' (31) It is this latter point which calls for attention in this thesis.

Constantine's complex dealings with the Church had one objective: he had to win divine protection, sympathy and assistance if he was to safeguard the well-being of Rome. Divine favour was best secured by worshipping in the right way and this must be achieved at the expense of all else. He therefore determined to give the Church and her cause every encouragement. The potential benevolence of the Christian God, experienced at the battle of Milvian Bridge, had to be courted. Hence toleration was granted to the Church so that 'whatever Divinity exists in its celestial abode can be placated and propitious to us and to all who are placed under our authority.' (32) By this course of action it was hoped that 'the Supreme Divinity, whose worship we follow with free conscience, may vouchsafe to us in all things His wonted favour and benevolence.' (33) The

importance Constantine attached to this led him to exempt the Christian clergy from time- and money-consuming public duties so that they would be free to devote their energies to their priestly functions. One notes the parallel between Origen's argument that the Christians fought with their prayers and Constantine's reason for granting Catholic clergy immunity from public office: 'For when they render supreme service to the Deity, it seems that they confer incalculable benefit on the affairs of the State.' (34)

In a certain sense Constantine, the soldier, had come round to the pacifist Origen's way of thinking. The favour Constantine bestowed included paying for new Churches to be built and donating Bibles. But the most lavish gifts were reserves for the clergy, who soon became a privileged elite. Comfortably supported by public funds and exempted from burdensome civic service, the Christian priesthood became an attractive proposition. Twice Constantine was obliged to limit Holy Orders to poorer candidates only. The Church's material well-being was further enhanced when she was granted the right to receive legacies. Before long there was sufficient concern for the pomp and vanity of this wicked world among the priesthood to justify Jerome's stinging rebuke that the Church advanced in material wealth at the expense of her spiritual life. (35)

If on the positive side Constantine saw that there was a line of action which he could follow to ensure that he won divine approval, he saw also that there were some things to be avoided. The evils of heresy and schism would provoke the divine wrath and had to be eschewed at all cost. But if, as the new protector of the Church Militant, Constantine thought that a privileged Church would keep her side of the bargain by ensuring the Almighty's approval through her unified prayers and sacraments he was soon bitterly disillusioned. Constantine and Eusebius understood the role of the Christian emperor in the terms outlined above, but it was largely through the developing ecclesiastical disputes that their theorising became practical reality. A detailed study of the Donatist and Arian controversies lies beyond the scope of this study, but a few general

observations must be made to illustrate how they affected the developing relations between Christian emperor and Church.

At first Constantine hoped that the Church would resolve her own difficulties. He saw his tasks limited to ratifying episcopal decisions and referring appeals to fresh hearings, rather than pronouncing personal judgement. He regarded himself as the benevolent supervisor and protector of the Church and not the regulator of her inner life. But the Church was to discover that imperial involvement was like the grain of mustard seed in the parable; its beginnings might be slight but it grows into something very considerable. Soon Constantine was to become her master rather than her protector - the irony being that he was reluctant to assume his new role and exasperated with the trend that made it necessary.

To begin with Constantine only provided the machinery for discussion with the Donatists. It is true that Majorinus' letter (36) was an appeal to Caesar: it was an appeal to the state. But this action by the Donatist leader was by no means so inconsistent with that separatism which characterised the Donatist movement as is often assumed. The Donatists were objecting to a secular decision about state aid to clergy. Majorinus petitioned Constantine that the matter might be reviewed by an ecclesiastical court. In this sense it was an appeal against an earlier secular verdict and a request that the Church might be allowed to resolve her own issues. One can detect the underlying separatism in Majorinus' position. Miltiades manipulated the Imperial Ecclesiastical Inquiry into a Church synod, perhaps because he wished to increase Rome's prestige and reputation, but possibly because he perceived the dangers of imperial participation and sought to check it. The significance of appeal and council lies not so much in the events themselves but in what resulted from them. The immediate result was Constantine's summons of the Council of Arles. His influence in Church affairs was increasing. The emperor's letter to Chrestus made it plain how he wanted the delegates to act, and

at this stage no-one was prepared to resist him. Moreover, this summons set a vitally important precedent: the Christian emperor had assumed the prerogative to summon in council the princes of the Church. The inner sanctuary of the Church's life had been invaded by the powers of this world; by her silence the Church acknowledged the justice of this invasion. From now on ecclesiastical assemblies were increasingly to become a weapon in the intrigues of Church politics, frequently to be wielded by successive emperors.

After Arles, the Donatists appealed to Constantine himself to the emperor's amazement: 'What great madness persists in these persons? ... They demand my judgement, but I myself await Christ's judgement.' (37) They had rejected the bishops' verdict which 'ought to be regarded just as if the Lord Himself were sitting as judge.' (38) Constantine realised he had to act: 'For I believe that by no means can I escape the greatest guilt if I should think to leave unnoticed that which is wicked.' (39) He threatened violent intervention: 'when I shall have come to Africa with the favour of divine righteousness, I shall make it quite clear to all... what kind of worship must be given to the Supreme Divinity and in what manner of service he seems to delight.' (40) 'I shall shatter and I shall destroy' the troublemakers. The Donatists' religious protest was rapidly assuming far greater proportions, becoming the focal point of all non-Romanised elements in a social and cultural protest. The stability and security of North African civilisation was threatened. The forces of law and order had to reassert themselves. Constantine justifiably had decided to shatter and to destroy. Donatism was not just a Christian schism, and it is therefore inaccurate to say that Constantine inaugurated the first persecution of Christians by the Christian state. Strong police activity has often restored order to troubled areas. It was reasonable to hope that it would do the same here. He soon grew weary of bloodshed and force, and abandoned rigorous measures. They had got him nowhere.

So it was that Constantine handed back to God the task of dealing with the Donatists: a task which he believed the Almighty had given him. Episcopal arbitration, magisterial examination, conciliar decision, imperial judgement and now imperial coercion had all failed to bring the schismatics back to Catholic worship. But the controversy had established Constantine's control over the Church. He had become the master of the Western Church. His was the right to summon episcopal councils, to influence their debate; he was the person to whom the dissatisfied party could appeal; he had the right to pronounce personal judgement on disciplinary matters; he assumed the prerogative to intervene in the appointment of bishops and he could banish them. Such was the practice of political absolutism extended to the Church.

Constantine failed to pacify the Donatists largely because of his close alliance with the Catholic party. Imperial authority in Africa ebbed and flowed with the fortunes of this party. His error had been to try to be both judge and plaintiff. When he turned to the East, Constantine made every effort to avoid repeating this mistake. He was convinced that if a united Church was to be the moral foundation of a united empire it could only be established on the basis of a broad conformity while he himself resumed the position of neutral supervisor. This approach of personal detachment and neutrality is seen in the joint letter which he sent to Alexander and Arius, and underlined by the role of intermediary ascribed to Ossius. Constantine's attempt to suffocate the debate was based on hopes of the Eastern Church's susceptibility to imperial influence and its suspicion of anything new. This was a valid hope, but Constantine did not take into account that the debate was already well established and that both parties were convinced that the basis of the Christian faith was at stake and not mere trivialities. Already the emperor was fumbling towards his ideal of broad conformity. The Council of Antioch of 324, was an important landmark, for here Constantine's

neutrality was qualified by his condemnation of Arius. Even so, Alexander's theology was not explicitly endorsed - only his stand against Arius. The absence of any positive pronouncement at this council showed that the imperial Church was not to be built round one particular faction.

This was Constantine's stand on the eve of the great council, held at Nicea 'because of its pleasant climate and, further, that I may be near to watch and take part in the proceedings.' (41) This was to be an imperial ecclesiastical Council. Called by Constantine, it would listen to him and decide as he wished. His presupposition was that as emperor he was responsible to God for the Church: the Church was subject to him. He could have influenced the Council sufficiently by the pomp and ceremony which surrounded the sessions. The delegates were overawed; it was clear that a new epoch had started in the Church's life. They could only respond by giving their complete trust and obedience. But Constantine brought more pressure to bear on the bishops and actually participated in the debate. At his dictation creed and canon came into being. Few words of complaint were voiced. The term homousios could not have been accepted without Constantine's powerful backing. Homousios was partly a compromise formula, as Baynes has observed. (42) In recent years it had been used by the Alexandrian laity against their bishop, Dionysius, and also by Paul of Samosata and the Meletians: always by the less theologically sophisticated as a protest against Trinitarian speculation. Now it was precisely such speculation which Constantine wished to eliminate. The formula was the hall-mark of orthodoxy only as long as Constantine lived and did not come into prominence in controversy until the fifties of the fourth century. (43) Because it was a protest word which suffocated debate and because of its connections with Paul of Samasota, homousios could not become an acceptable theological term in the East without a long struggle. By introducing it Constantine defeated his own objective of trying to build up a peaceful and united Church.

As a result, for the rest of his life Constantine battled to establish this new basis of conformity and to resolve questions of ecclesiastical discipline which arose from the troubled atmosphere. His concern throughout was to ensure continued divine favour by securing peace in the Church. A broad orthodoxy was the best way to achieve this. The homousios formula became the sacrosanct norm of this orthodoxy. Constantine therefore welcomed back Arius into the Church when, by a remarkable act of hypocrisy, the heretic convinced him that he accepted the Council's creed. The main opposition to Constantine's state-Church came from Athanasius who resisted the emperor's will by consistently refusing to readmit Arius into the fellowship of the Alexandrian Church. This protracted duel between Arius and Athanasius - with Constantine vacillating from one side to the other in his attempts to restore peace - continued until death removed from the scene both emperor and heretic. Shortly after the great council a group of bishops, headed by Eustathius of Antioch, Marcellus of Ancyra and Paul of Constantinople, decided that if Nicene orthodoxy could include Arius and his beliefs, then something was wrong with it. The theology which they drew up in its place overstated, by Nicene standards, the substantial unity of Father and Son. They suffered accordingly, although Eustathius' removal was arranged on disciplinary grounds. But Athanasius was the central figure in most of the ecclesiastical discord. His conflict with the fanatical Meletians in many ways resembled the conflict between Donatists and Catholics in Africa. Constantine could not ignore the accusations hurled about by the rival parties, nor the social unrest which was provoked. Despite his habitual vacillation and characteristic reluctance to let pronounced judgement be final, he eventually assented to Athanasius' condemnation by hostile councils. Whatever Athanasius' theological merits might be, he was a disturber of the peace.

Even these few comments on some of Constantine's dealings with the Church illustrate what the kingship theories formulated by Eusebius

and shared by the emperor meant in practical terms. From their different and independent points of view both men present a similar understanding of the role of the Christian emperor. On the whole, Eusebius' theological and philosophical approach was as far removed from Constantine's life as a statesman and soldier as were the practical aspects of kingship from the bishop. Emperor and bishop were at their best when they kept to their own sphere. Constantine's theological naivete has received much attention, while as an interpretator of contemporary affairs Eusebius had his limitations. His life of Constantine contained, for example, only one, utterly inadequate reference to the Donatists: 'Constantine endured with patience some who were exasperated against himself, directing them in mild and gentle terms to control themselves and not be turbulent.' (44) Nevertheless, viewed complementarily, Eusebius and Constantine provide us with an elaborate exposition on the theme of the Christian emperor.

It has been observed that fundamental to so much of Eusebius' thought was the conviction that Constantine's rule was of central importance in the unfolding of Salvation-History. The emperor himself had been raised up by God: 'God Himself, the great King, stretched forth His right hand from on high and made him from this day victor over all his haters and enemies.' (45) His role as emperor had distinct religious overtones. Reference has been made to the passage where Eusebius acknowledged that 'by bringing those whom he rules to the only begotten Word and Saviour (Constantine) renders them fit subjects of His kingdom.' (46) The emperor 'having purged his earthly dominion from every stain of impious error, invites each holy and pious worshipper within his imperial mansion.' (47) It was precisely this awareness that motivated Constantine's actions towards the Donatists and Arians, and in his opinion justified his attempts to build up a new homousios-based state-Church. It is evident from this theory and practice that Eusebius and Constantine were convinced of the essential unity of society. There was no departmentalising of the

'religious' and the 'secular'. In principle there was nothing new about this, but the novelty lay in the fact that it was a Christian society which they envisaged. A similar attitude characterised pagan Rome, while the vision of Israel as a theocracy runs throughout the Old Testament. Thus Wallace-Hadrill's words, though referring to the Christian empire of Constantine and Eusebius, might well be applied to other contexts - even to describe the outlook of Decius: 'The conception here is not of individual but corporate salvation, a conception of a whole people under God, dedicated to His service, every aspect of whose life bears reference to their dedication and calling. There can be no separation of sacred from secular for such a people, for all is sacred in the life of a nation chosen by God, their daily work and their civil law as well as their specifically liturgical or devotional activities.' (48)

This understanding of the Christian empire had three interrelated implications, all of which found practical expression in Constantine's rule. The first of these has been mentioned in passing: if the empire is the image of the heavenly city and the emperor is God's vicegerent, ultimately there can be no room in the empire for non-believers and non-conformists. Probably neither Constantine nor Eusebius fully grasped this point; they did not try to carry it to its logical conclusion as Theodosius and Ambrose did later. However, the idea was present in embryonic form. It has already been noted that Eusebius expected Constantine to use corrective measures against those who contracted out of the Christian society, and that in practice this involved Constantine in attempts to crush the Donatists and those who opposed the Nicene state-Church. In addition to this, an intolerance in attitude rather than action to those outside the Christian Church was a growing characteristic of Constantine's reign. There was no declared policy of persecution, such as Theodosius adopted, but there were hints that this was not far off. Two mandates, in 315 and 336, dealing with Jewish interference with Christians and the

extremely hostile language Constantine used against Jews in dealing with the Paschal date question make the prevailing atmosphere in Jewish-Christian relations quite plain. No anti-pagan policy was pursued, but the destruction of isolated temples because of their immoral customs (in Jerusalem, Mamre, Aphaka in Phoenicia, and in Baalbeck) demonstrated the trend of the day.

A second point closely related to this follows logically from such an understanding of the Christian empire. If the emperor and his realms are an image of the kingdom and rule of God, then there can be no limits to imperial power or to the extension of the empire's boundaries. The sovereignty of God knows no limits, neither can the rule of His earthly representative. 'To whatever quarter I direct my view, whether to the east or to the west, or over the whole world, or toward heaven itself, everywhere and always I see the blessed one administering the self same empire.' (49) An understandable corollary to this point of view was an attitude of superiority towards those outside the empire: 'The visible barbarians, like wild nomad tribes no better than savage beasts, assail the nations of civilised men, ravage their country, and enslave their cities, rushing on those who inhabit them like ruthless wolves of the desert, and destroying all those who fall under their powers.' (50) Once again an aspect of Eusebius' thought found expression in Constantine's rule. At the expense of historical accuracy, he boasted: 'Through my religious services towards God everywhere there is peace and God's name is truly praised by the barbarians themselves, who till now were ignorant of the truth. ... Nevertheless, ... even the barbarians through me, God's genuine servant, have learned to know God, who they have perceived by very deeds everywhere shields and provides for me.' (51)

A third implication of this conception of the Christian empire was the negative status of the Church within the empire. If God's rule is manifested through the emperor, whose realms mirror the celestial kingdom,

what is the purpose of the Church? She can no longer be seen as the primary vehicle of God's dealings with the world, since this is clearly the emperor's position. Likewise, the emperor has taken over the Church's responsibility for spreading the faith, and is now himself ultimately responsible to God for the Church's life and for guarding the purity of the faith. At times Eusebius seems to be distinguishing between the teaching and ruling ministry of Christ: the empire had taken over the latter. But this distinction does not appear consistently throughout his writings, for his main point is that the empire is a Christian community reflecting the heavenly kingdom. It is primarily on this score that Eusebius has been condemned by posterity. Constantine shared this confusion. At times he might credit the Church with a degree of independent authority, such as at the start of the Donatist troubles, but in practice he soon assumed an all-embracing control over ecclesiastical affairs. He could define her faith, summon her councils and punish her bishops. Although he might declare: 'You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I am also a bishop, ordained by God to overlook what is external to the Church' (52) it would be mistaken to argue that his actions bore out this distinction. His jurisdiction included dictating to the Church.

In the light of all this evidence, it is abundantly clear that the theology of kingship expounded by Eusebius and practised by the emperor departed radically from that attitude of apocalyptic separatism which had been so central to much of the thought of the Church since apostolic times. The thought and practice of the Christian empire as expressed through these two key figures amounted to the total repudiation of the Biblical sentiments summed up in Jesus' pronouncement: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (53) This was a deliberate departure from the earlier thought of the Church. It was based on a definite interpretation of history and a positive revaluation of inherited eschatological teaching.

Eusebius was prepared to take this step because he could see no other way to account for the momentous events which he witnessed. 'Eusebius, like many another, was captivated by the figure of Constantine who seemed to stand forth as a kind of incarnation of the glorious hope of a New Age.'

(54) This captivation accounts for such passages as Eusebius' description of Constantine 'flashing forth the rays of his sacred light to the very ends of the whole world.' (55) He likened him at Nicea to 'some heavenly messenger of God.' (56) The Scriptures told Eusebius that one day 'The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.' (57) The supreme novelty of the Christian emperor led him to identify the eschatological kingdom of Jesus with the earthly rule of Constantine. Eusebius' fundamental error lay in this misinterpretation of history, just as in the course of time history demonstrated the extent of his mistake. No theory which asserted that the emperor was a saint and a bishop could survive the successive reigns of an Arian and a pagan. Moreover, a hundred years later the western parts of the empire were to collapse before the barbarian invaders, and in these circumstances it would be impossible for a Latin to claim that the empire imaged the eternal kingdom of God. The kingdom of God could not fall before Satan. Eusebius' thought on the subject could not, ultimately, stand the test of time. But for the time being this was not evident. He saw the emperor as lord and master of the Church: the kingdom of Christ was very much of this world.

Notes on Chapter 2

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4. Ap. Stobaeus, Anthol., IV, VI, 22.
5. cf Chapter 1, 17-23.
6. Tertullian, Apol. 21.
7. Eusebius, H.E., II, 2.
8. Quoted Praep. Evang. XI, 24.
9. Ibid. VIII, 14.
10. Eusebius, Dem. Evang., III, 7, 32.
11. Eusebius, H.E., III, 39, 12.
12. Ibid. X, 4.
13. Eusebius, Vita Const., I, 24.
14. Eusebius, L. Const., III, 5.
15. Ibid. I, 4-6.
16. Origen, Contra Celsum, I, 26.
17. Eusebius, Praep. Evang., I, 2.
18. Eusebius, H.E., I, 4,6.
19. Eusebius, Praep. Evang.,
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid. VII, 8, 23.
22. Eusebius, L. Const., IV, 3.
23. JStevenson, A New Eusebius, London, 1960. nos 318. 319.
24. Ibid. 392.
25. Eusebius, Praep. Evang., XI, 4.
26. Eusebius, V.C., I, 1.
27. Proverbs 14:34.
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32. Lactantius, De Mort. Pers. 48, 2-12.
33. Ibid.
34. J. Stevenson, op. cit., London, 1960, no.264.
35. Jerome, Ep. 52.
36. J. Stevenson, op. cit., no.271.
37. App. Opt., ed Zursa, no. V, CSEL xxvi.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., no. VII.
41. J. Stevenson, op. cit., no. 299.
42. Baynes, op. cit., 369.
43. cf J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, London, 1950, 242-62, esp. 257ff.
44. Eusebius, V.C., I, 4-5.
45. Eusebius, L.C., VIII.
46. Ibid., IV, 3.
47. Ibid.
48. Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius of Caesarea, London, 1960, 122-3.
49. Eusebius, V.C., I, 1.
50. Eusebius, L.C., VII, 2.
51. Socrates, H.E., I, 34.
52. Eusebius, V.C., IV, 24.
53. John 18:36.
54. R.I.P. Milburn, Early Christian Interpretations of History, London, 1954, 67.
55. Eusebius, V.C., I, 8.
56. Ibid. III, 10, 3.
57. Revelation, 11:15.

### Chapter 3 The Dualistic Reaction and Ecclesiastical Freedom

A recurring theme in the two previous chapters has been that Christian political thought to a very great extent is tempered by the character of the Church's contemporary political and social environment. The determining influence which external circumstances have had on Christian attitudes is clearly detected in a consideration of the differing attitudes to imperial authority in the years which followed Constantine's death. In the first half of the fourth century the interplay of environment and inherited precepts resulted in two diametrically-opposed points of view. The first of these was the theology of absolutism, expounded by Eusebius of Caesarea which - as was noted in the previous chapter - ascribed a positive role to the empire within a whole conception of Salvation-History. Eusebius' ideas were to a very great extent nourished by Constantine's policies. He interpreted contemporary affairs as confirming his theology, and thus encouraged went from strength to strength. In the second place, the same trend in history which led Eusebius to acknowledge the divine function of imperial rule provoked a separatist reaction. The cry went up for ecclesiastical freedom: a different interpretation of the ideal relationship between Church and state began to be put forward. A reaction had set in against Eusebian subservience and imperial domination.

Whereas Eusebius of Caesarea had deliberately expounded a theology of kingship and had attempted to approach systematically the problems raised by there being a Christian emperor, the dualistic reaction did not to begin with make its stand on any heartfelt principle. It was a developing reaction against a developing situation. Moreover, opposition to imperial intervention in ecclesiastical affairs was motivated to a considerable degree by opportunism, as well as - one hopes - by genuine conviction. This is demonstrated by the change in tone of the attitude of the rank-and-file Origenist bishops, who formed the backbone of Eusebius of Nicomedia's party. Shortly after Nicea they became less amenable to the

demands of Constantine's imperial Church. To anticipate a point which will be argued shortly, the canons of the Antiochene Council which deposed Eustathius reflect a desire to restrict imperial participation in the Church's concerns. But when Constantius, who sympathised with Eusebius of Nicomedia, became emperor the same party did not hesitate to sanction the use of military force to establish Gregory of Cappadocia as Bishop of Alexandria. Hans Lietzmann would have us view much of fourth century Church history within the over-all framework of the rivalry between the great sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. Imperial power was a pawn in the game of Church politics. The party with the emperor on its side naturally saw no evil in a close relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority, while the less fortunate factions understandably thought otherwise. Attitudes changed as imperial favour passed from one party to another and as successive emperors with differing theological outlooks followed one another.

Although the reaction against state control over the Church was intensified in various ecclesiastical circles with each manifestation of imperial overlordship, its roots can be traced back to Constantine's first attempts to implement the state-Church. It was noted in passing in the last chapter (1) that Pope Miltiades' actions in 313 can be interpreted in this way. It must be acknowledged, however, that such an understanding goes beyond the available evidence, although it is certainly consistent with it. It is possible that Miltiades wished to keep Constantine in the background of ecclesiastical disputes. His summoning of the fifteen Italian bishops to assist the three appointed by Constantine changed an imperial inquiry into a Church council under his own undisputed chairmanship. One is tempted to see here an early warning signal. The Pope had realised the potential dangers of the situation.

Miltiades' action was by no means the only expression of opposition to Constantine's religious settlement. From one point of view the whole

Donatist movement may be seen as a protest against the imperial Church. It is true that in Constantine's reign the movement had not yet become all that it was destined to be, but the separatist attitude was already present in embryonic form. At this early stage the question 'What has the emperor to do with the Church?' (2) may not have been asked explicitly, but in implication and practice the Donatist movement was a reaction against the close identification of Christian Church and Roman culture. The latter, of course, included imperial authority. Over against this close alliance between Catholics and imperial rule, the Donatists claimed that they alone represented the pure, untainted Church of God. Their opponents had become defiled through contact with the world. Donatism inherited that tradition of apocalyptic dualism which had characterised much of North African Christianity, at least from the time of Tertullian.

A further indication that Constantine's state-Church was not universally welcomed was provided by the Antiochene Council which condemned Eustathius in 328 or 329. The twenty-five canons formulated here have often erroneously been assigned to the Council of 341, but the surviving list of delegates demands a date closer to Nicea. Moreover, the list is headed by Eusebius of Caesarea - but he died two years before the later council. On the other hand, his personal testimony is that he was present at the earlier Antiochene Synod. (3) The canons themselves are extremely significant. (4) In addition to regulating for provincial synods, they include the all-important prohibition against referring Church matters to the emperor without the permission of the metropolitan. It was also forbidden to appeal to the emperor against the judgement of the Church. The first open and unambiguous stand against imperial domination had been made. The separatist thought of the next fifty years grew from these humble beginnings.

There was an essential agreement between Constantine and his immediate successors on the basic concept of the state-Church. The

difference lay in the varying theological emphases of his sons: Constantius in particular. The conviction Constantine shared with his sons was that religious unity was essential to the survival of the empire. This unity was to be achieved on the basis of the broadest possible conformity, while troublemakers would have to face the consequences of their unreasonableness. During Constantine I's reign this meant the exclusion of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognius and Arius at Nicea - but they were readmitted as soon as they claimed that they had changed their tune - and latterly the removal of Athanasius, the arch-nuisance, and John Arcaphas, the Meletian leader. The Nicene formula was the sacrosanct norm and hallmark of orthodoxy in the Constantinian state-Church. The Nicene foundation of this unity was rejected by Constantius. His reign witnessed a succession of ecclesiastical councils, and the creeds drawn up by these councils reflected the changing theological bias of the imperial Church. As Constantius' rule progressed, his leanings towards Arianism increased until by the end of his life 'the whole world groaned in astonishment to find itself Arian.' (5)

Constantius' Arianism was at first moderate, but a combination of personal experience and social, political and military circumstances drove him more and more into the heretical camp. Asia Minor was the heart of Constantius' empire: it was the main reservoir of man-power for his armies; it was a major corn-growing and food-producing area; its cities were numerous and relatively highly populated; income from taxes on town and country filled the imperial coffers. But Asia Minor was also a stronghold of the semi-arian Eusebian party. For his own good and security Constantine could hardly have pursued a religious policy which conflicted with these bishops, even if he had so wished. Fundamental to his concept of the state-Church, however, was that its basis must be the theology of the majority, or potential majority.

Constantius' adherence to Arianism intensified during his reign. The Council at Antioch in 341 produced a conservative declaration of faith.

At Arles (353) and Milan (355) Constantius' arianising became more positive. At Sirmium (357) and finally at Seleucia and Ariminum (359) the tone of such declarations became increasingly radical. This development was largely due, after 351, to the hold which Valens, bishop of Mursa, had over the emperor. W.H.C. Frend has described how Constantius' 'desire to maintain religious unity degenerated into a pedantic search for minute formulations which could be imposed on east and west alike.' (6) Those who could not meet the demands of this unity suffered accordingly. It was with such men - Athanasius, Ossius and Liberius, to mention three - that the separatist thought on Church-state relations found clear expression.

Constantine's other two sons - Constans and Constantine<sup>NE</sup> II - had little sympathy with their brother's Arianism. These two inherited very little of their father's political and military ability, but they did inherit his theological outlook. Both were brought up and baptised in the Nicene faith and like their father championed the Nicene creed as the basic norm of orthodoxy. Their actions towards the Church were motivated by this. Constantine II soon disappeared from the scene, and Constans became ruler of two-thirds of the Roman world. Ossius of Cordova, an ardent Nicene, became his ecclesiastical adviser. The theological differences between East and West were pronounced. When Constantius became sole emperor it was in the Nicene West that separatist thought prevailed most.

Constantine II, Constans and Constantius therefore all accepted the concept of a united Church forming the basis of the empire. Another assumption which they shared was that the emperor had a right to determine the course of religious affairs. More than being his right, it was his duty. Eusebius wrote of the first Constantine that 'he watched over all his subjects with episcopal care, and exhorted them as far as in him lay to follow a godly life.' (7) This 'episcopal care' included a great deal; with his sons it knew no limits. It was this extension of imperial power and authority to determine the character of the Church's faith which

provoked separatist thought. This is greatly evident from Constans' dealings with the Donatists. In 346, following the findings of a commission investigating an appeal by Donatus to be recognised as Bishop of Carthage, Constans instigated military operations against the Circumcellions. The bloodshed caused by these regressive measures was considerable. It provoked Donatus' despairing cry: 'What has the emperor to do with the Church?' (8) 'A question which was to be put by every leader of the Church in the West from Ambrose to Hildebrand.' (9)

A further illustration of Constans' overlordship of the Church is provided by the whole chapter of incidents which led up to the Council of Sardica in 343. The Nicene Constans forced this on his brother in the hope that a universal settlement to his own liking might be reached. This was a vain hope - scarcely surprising, considering the theological deadlock between East and West. Nevertheless, Constans was able to impose his will temporarily because Constantius was preoccupied with the Persian threat. As well as showing the gulf between East and West, Sardica demonstrated the extent to which the ecclesiastical machinery was now at the emperor's disposal. Constans' activities were on the side of the Nicene West. His attempt to re-establish the Nicene faith as the norm of orthodoxy failed. The East would not have it. On the other hand, Constantius made more headway with his Arianism; it was this which provoked the dualistic reaction.

Constantius' Arianising had a quiet beginning. The emperor was in Antioch during the session of the Council which met in 341, but no strong action was called for. Eusebius of Nicomedia acted as chairman, but at this stage the court party was close to the general theological climate of the East. No opposition was aroused. The so-called Second Creed expressed the feelings of the delegates, which differed little from those expressed in the Nicene Creed: except for the all-important omission of the term homousios. After 351 Valens of Mursa rose to importance; the Councils of Arles and Milan reflect the influence which he exerted over Constantius.

The latent anti-imperialism of the Western Church came to the surface as emperor and bishop brought pressure to bear on the assembled delegates to renounce Athanasius. 'I am the accuser of Athanasius,' Constantius is supposed to have proclaimed, 'let my will be canon among you as it is with the Syrian bishops.' (10) Ossius and Liberius were spokesmen for the opposition; their arguments will be dealt with shortly. What was described by Hilary of Poitiers as the 'Blasphemy' of Sirmium, (357) (11), marked the next stage in Constantius' Arianising policy. Once again Valens, ably abetted by Ursacius of Singidium, implemented the theology of the court. The Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia, however, mark the zenith of Constantius' dictating to the Church. In particular was this the case at Ariminum, where Valens and Ursacius presented the 'Dated' Creed. Count Taurus, the Imperial Commissioner, acted on Constantius' instructions and allowed no-one to depart until the Creed had been accepted. The Council degenerated into an endurance test against the heat of the Italian summer. Soon resistance was worn down and the homoios creed accepted. Ariminum and, to a lesser extent, Seleucia were the most flagrant denials of ecclesiastical freedom since the era of the persecuting pagan emperors. It is hardly surprising that a reaction set in against imperial domination.

St. Hilary of Poitiers was one of the most prominent Western Church leaders in the struggle against state-imposed Arianism. The first Doctor (12) of the Latin Church played a greater part in contemporary affairs than his brief appearance in the limelight of history might suggest. For most of his career Hilary played little attention to the theological disputes of the East, but when Constantius started to thrust Arianism on the West both his interest and his opposition were aroused. At the Synods of Arles and Milan he watched unhappily as Paulinus of Trier, Eusebius of Vercelli, Lucifer of Cagliari and Denys of Milan were exiled. The ardour of his hostility and his clash with Saturninus of Arles, a convert to Arianism, led to his own exile, pronounced by the Synod of Bezier (356).

The previous year Hilary had written his First Letter to Constantius, in which he had not disguised his distrust of the emperor's actions: 'God is lord of all; He has no need of an unwilling allegiance; He will have no compulsory confession of faith; we are not to deceive Him but to serve Him; it is for our own sakes, more than His, that we are to worship Him. I can only receive him who comes willingly; I can only listen to him who prays, and mark with the sign of the Cross him who believes in it. ... Who has ever heard of priests compelled to serve God by chains and punishment?' (13)

Hilary was exiled to the East, and once in enemy territory his opposition to Arianism increased in proportion with his understanding and knowledge of it. His De Trinitate, compiled when he was in exile, was to that date the most thorough Christological examination undertaken by a Western theologian. He communicated many of his findings to his flock at home in De Synodis. For the purpose of this study, the significance of Hilary's anti-Arianism was that it had as an inseparable corollary an antagonistic attitude towards Constantius. After the debacle at Ariminum and Seleucia, he drew up a petition Ad Constantium Augustum. Stressing the injustice of his exile, he urged the emperor to revise his understanding of the Christian faith. Constantius had been led astray by intrigues, subtleties and vain disputes. In the interests of East and West, peace must be restored. Hilary's demands were made in a moderate tone and concealed his real feelings. But when the emperor paid no attention to them the Bishop of Poitiers dropped his mask of conciliation, and in a short pamphlet denounced the emperor in unqualified terms.

Constantius was to be numbered among the worst persecutors because of his protection of the Arians and his repressive measures against the Nicene party. 'I will therefore cry aloud to thee, Constantius, what I would have said to Nero, what Decius and Maximin would have heard from my lips. You are fighting against God, you are laying waste the Church, you are persecuting the Saints, you are holding in hatred those who proclaim

Christ, you overthrow religion, you are a tyrant not of human things but of the things of God.' (14) All this wickedness Constantius shared with the persecuting emperors, but his error was worse than theirs. His claim to be a Christian was hypocrisy: 'learn now those things which proceed from yourself alone. You falsely pretend to be a Christian, but you are a new enemy to Christ; forerunner of anti-Christ, you perform his works of darkness.' (15) Hilary repudiated Constantius' domination of ecclesiastical affairs: 'You distribute the episcopal sees among your followers and you replace good bishops with evil ones. You imprison priests, you put your armies into the field to terrorise the Church, you assemble councils, and you force into impious error the bishops of the West who are shut up at Rimini, after you have frightened them by your threats, weakened them by hunger - enfeebled as they are by winter - and led astray by your falsehoods.' (16)

These sentiments sum up Hilary's personal crusade against the Arianising policy of Constantius. It must be noted that Hilary does not condemn the principle of a state-Church nor the assumption that the emperor's responsibilities extend to religious matters. In one particular historical circumstance he demanded ecclesiastical freedom because the emperor of the day was a heretic, enforcing his heretical ways on the Church by coercive means.

Although Hilary's condemnation of Constantius was harsh, there was a rational and responsible basis to his opposition. In sharp contrast to Hilary was Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, 'a man of little culture and of a violent and eccentric temperament.' (17) Lucifer became renowned as a troublemaker. There was no tact or diplomacy about him. Wherever he went, he was liable to cause an uproar about something - and he often did. The emperor exiled him in 355 because he refused to consent to Athanasius' condemnation. For six years he was an itinerant troublemaker until Julian's edict of 'toleration' enabled him to return to his see. It was during these six years that Lucifer made his mark on contemporary affairs.

Lucifer's writings are reminiscent of Tertullian's less guarded and more uncompromising utterances on the Roman world - though he completely lacked Tertullian's literary ability. The Bishop of Cagliari wrote against Constantius in a colloquial and vulgar style with no attempt to be civil or conciliatory. The character of his writings are suggested by their titles: No Agreement With Heretics, No Pity For The Enemies of God, Let Us Die For The Son of God. He had the impudence to dedicate one to The Thickhead of An Emperor. The objective of all his writings was to heap condemnation on Constantius' policies. With an extensive use of quotations - especially from the Old Testament - Lucifer warned the emperor of the risk he was running of provoking divine wrath. Finding many instructive instances in the history of the kings of Israel, and imagining himself to be re-enacting the Elijah/Ahab incident, he summoned Constantius to repentance. Despite the embarrassing noise which Lucifer made, Constantius paid very little attention to him. H.B. Swete comments: 'When it is remembered that the person addressed in these trenchant remarks is the emperor of the West, we are bound to admit that Lucifer was not wanting in courage. But he certainly had no reason to complain when Constantius replied by returning his books and sending their writer into a more remote place of exile.' (18)

But other than his initial exile, the Bishop did not suffer for holding such radical views. He did not command much respect, not least because he was a man of little education. Indeed, in the sphere of Church-state relations Lucifer's influence was slight, even though a schismatic sect grew up around his name which accepted his unconciliatory outlook. He was radically opposed both to the subservience of the court bishops and to the ecclesiastical authority which Constantius had assumed. In a celebrated passage he denied all imperial authority over God's priests, and demanded that ecclesiastical disputes should be settled within the Church. (19)

Lucifer has seldom been regarded as a hero, even by those of his contemporaries and among posterity who share some of his convictions. His

character commands little respect, while his consecration of Paulinus as Bishop of Antioch was a disservice to the Church which far outweighed his other accomplishments.

Nevertheless, despite all his unpopularity, his failings and his lack of influence, Lucifer deserves a prominent place in any consideration of the growing opposition to imperial control over the Church. Although he only stood on the fringe of respectable Nicene Christianity, his actions and writings form an integral part of the over-all picture of the emerging separatist approach to Church-state relations. With Lucifer, as with other greater and more profound thinkers, this dualism was a reaction against a situation which was clearly far from perfect.

Much of the material considered so far in this chapter has underlined the connection between opposition to the Arianising policy of Constantius and the acceptance of a separatist attitude to Church-state relations. Such thought was an inevitable reaction to the enforced conformity of the imperial Church, and is therefore found among those who suffered as a result of imperial participation in Church affairs: notably the Nicenes and the Donatists. It should be stressed that this was a developing state of affairs, rather than a clearly or systematically formulated understanding of the ideal relationship between Church and empire. At this stage absolute principles were scarcely involved. There is little evidence which suggests that Nicenes and Donatists would not have turned the tables on their opponents if historical circumstances had been kinder to them. Indeed, the subsequent history of both controversies shows how little either party cared for the freedom of conscience so highly valued today in many quarters.

In the West feelings of caution and even hostility towards the imperially dominated Church lay beneath a thin veneer of subservience. These sentiments speedily came to the surface when Constantius became sole emperor and tried to force an alien theology on the Western Church. The

close alliance between Rome and Alexandria had led to Rome's involvement in the disputes of the East in 340-1. When the scene of conflict was extended to the West, Rome remained to the fore. The bishops of Rome, as a result of their theological position, rapidly became the champions of ecclesiastical independence in the West. Miltiades' action in 313 has already received comment. (20) In 340 the Roman Church emerged from the relative obscurity in which she had lain since that time. The Eusebian party refused to recognise as binding Constantine II's restoration of Athanasius and used civil power to establish Gregory of Cappodocia as Primate of Alexandria. Thus rejected, Athanasius fled to Rome and found a firm ally in Pope Julius. Julius' motives for supporting Athanasius combined theological sympathy with a desire to serve the interests of the see of Rome. The letter which Julius sent to the Eastern episcopate showed that among the things 'we have received from the blessed Apostle Peter' (21) was the claim to vague and ill-defined responsibility for the affairs of the Alexandrian Church. Athanasius' expulsion had challenged this; at the very least, the Pope should have been consulted. There is one section in the letter which Julius wrote which suggests that his concern was deeper than this: 'O dearly beloved, the decisions of the Church are no longer according to the Gospel, but tend furthermore to banishment and death. Supposing, as you assert, that some offence rested on these persons, the case ought to have been conducted against them, not after this manner, but according to the canon of the Church.' (22) Julius had been alarmed not merely by the challenge to Rome but because this challenge came from an heretical party supported by an heretical emperor and helped by imperial power.

Rome's position as the guardian of ecclesiastical freedom in the West was acknowledged by the delegates who assembled at Sardica in 343. This Council was greatly concerned with the problems which were arising from what Hamilton Hess described as 'the yet unregulated and confused relationship between Church and state.' (23) The Western bishops sought to restrict imperial intervention in Church affairs, in particular the appeal from

council to court. The third and sixth canons granted a certain appellate jurisdiction to the Bishop of Rome as an alternative to appeals to the emperor. The seventh canon decreed that 'bishops should not go to the court, unless any have by chance been invited or summoned by letters of our most religious emperor.' (24) Nevertheless, the canons admitted that the bishops should intercede with the state for the poor and needy. In such circumstances, however, the deacon is to act as the intermediary between emperor and bishop, and the metropolitan of the bishop's diocese must inform all the bishops in the imperial city what is going on.

Julius' successor, Liberius, continued the struggle against the Arianising emperor and his court party. Now that both the East and the West lay under Constantius' rule, the situation had become more desperate. Despite his later failure, Liberius resolutely resisted the demands of the imperial Church laid down by the Councils at Arles and Milan. The letter which Liberius wrote to Constantius, eloquent in its simplicity, expressed his heartfelt longing to preserve the purity of the Church's faith: 'My actions have not sought to promote injunctions of my own, but those of the Apostles, and to preserve and guard these for ever. ... My hope is that the faith which I hold, which has come down to me through a succession of such distinguished bishops, of whom many were martyrs, may be preserved for ever inviolate.' (25) This evoked from Jalland the comment: 'If Constantius were to have his way, it would not be statuta apostolica, but edicta and sacra rescripta which would determine in future the Church's faith and conduct. In his path stood only the frail figure of the Roman Bishop.' (26) Sadly, the figure of the Bishop of Rome was frail. At first his courage was great; 'If I stood alone the cause of truth would be no less important. Once there were but three who were brave enough to resist a royal command.' (27) Sozomen has him say: 'As far as I am concerned, O emperor, there is no need of deliberation; my resolution has long been formed and decided.' (28) But his resolution failed him. 'Liberius, after he had

been in banishment two years, gave way; and from fear of threatened death, was induced to subscribe.' (29) Hereafter, the moral lead the Church of Rome gave to the Christian world declined for a generation. Liberius received little respect outside the social circles of the Roman matrons. It was a long time before his successor, Damasus - the supporter of the Anti-Pope, Felix, - was free from suspicion and cleared of murder charges arising out of his struggle with Ursinus of the Liberian party. Nevertheless the see of Rome had made important contributions to the growing cry for ecclesiastical freedom from imperial domination.

To those who consider that the ideal relationship between Church and state should be worked out within a dualistic approach, the stand taken by Popes Julius and Liberius against Constantine will be welcomed and applauded. Even more will this be their estimation of the struggle the aged Bishop of Cordova put up against the encroaching over-lordship of the emperor. The opposition which Constantius encountered from Ossius eclipsed that of the Roman bishops. Ossius summed up the position which he had adopted at the Synods of Arles and Milan in a letter of protest which he sent to the emperor in 355 or 356. The importance of this letter in the development of the Church's separatist reaction cannot be overstated. The Bishop of Cordova, speaking with the full authority of his age and of his rank as a Prince of the Church, presumed to dictate to the emperor in a tone which no-one else was prepared to adopt until Ambrose became Bishop of Milan. In her moment of crisis, the Church found someone who was prepared to take the lead in the stand against Constantius.

Ossius was fearless in his outcry: 'If you persecute me, I am ready now to endure anything rather than shed innocent blood and to betray the truth (i.e. to condemn Athanasius). But I cannot approve of your conduct as you write in this threatening manner. Cease to write like this; do not take the side of Arius, nor listen to those in the East, nor give credit to Ursacius, Valens and company. For whatever they assert, it is not on

account of Athanasius, but on account of their own heresy. Believe me, Constantius, who am of age to be your grandfather.' (30)

In a later paragraph of the same letter there is to be found the clearest expression so far of the conception of Church and state having mutually exclusive spheres of influence and concern. The relevant passage reads: 'Cease then these proceedings, I ask you, and remember that you are a mortal man. Be afraid of the day of judgement, and keep yourself pure against that day. Do not intrude into ecclesiastical matters, and do not give commands to us concerning them; but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church; and, as he who should steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear on your part lest, by taking upon yourself the government of the Church, you become guilty of a great offence. It is written "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Neither, therefore, is it permitted to us to exercise an earthly rule; nor have you, Sir, any authority to burn incense' - (31) a reference to the sin of Uzziah, who was smitten with leprosy for his presumption. (32)

It may be presumed from the quotation Render unto Caesar (Mt 22:21) that Ossius saw his interpretation of the Church's relationship to the secular government to be consistent with Jesus' own attitude. First and foremost, he based his theory of the Two Swords on his understanding of the Dominical injunction. This contrasts with Eusebius of Caesarea, whose theology of kingship was primarily the Christianization of Platonist thought. The Biblical orientation of Ossius' thesis, however, does not evoke unqualified approval, any more than Eusebius' revaluation of the Church's eschatological tradition demands unqualified disapproval. To a great extent, the thought of both men was an amalgam of inherited Christian teaching and their differing experiences in life. The climate of contemporary affairs had changed a great deal in the years which followed Constantine I's death.

Indeed, Ossius' own career illustrates this. The Bishop of Cordova had turned from being the servant of the imperial Church to being its enemy. The novelty of the Constantinian settlement had blinded Eusebius to the importance of the dualistic element in the New Testament thought on the state. Conversely, Ossius' argument carries with it implications which are unacceptable. With much justification he cried out against imperial domination: 'to us (God) has entrusted the affairs of the Church' (33) but he concedes to Constantius that the Church should not intervene in state matters. The empire is for the emperor, and the Church is for Christians. But in denouncing the right to exercise earthly rule Ossius verges on admitting that there is a whole sphere in the ordering of human life with which the Church has no concern. Ossius in his desire for ecclesiastical freedom erred greatly in promising the emperor freedom from ecclesiastical intervention. The Christian Gospel knows no limits: its ethical demands must be proclaimed in the imperial court as well as from the pulpit. These demands are uncompromising. This inherent weakness in the dualistic approach led Ambrose of Milan to reject the Two Swords concept and strive towards an ecclesiastical ascendancy in society. But in 356 Ossius, for all his merits, had not grasped the universality of the Church's involvement in human affairs.

During his long life Ossius of Cordova thus changed his attitude to the relationship between secular power and Church affairs. In the reigns of Constantine I and Constans he epitomised the court bishops of the new era. He was the obedient emissary and ecclesiastical adviser of the imperial Church. When the emperor was a heretic, he modified his views: a marked dualism characterised his thought. This change of tone is equally noticeable with Athanasius. At the beginning of his career Athanasius held fast to the imperial Church. He had grown up with it and he regarded it as an acceptable institution, but this acceptance was not based on a positive theological evaluation of the empire. Throughout his life he battled for

his conception of the Christian faith against opponents with whom there could be no compromise. The righteousness of his cause justified every method and means he could employ. 'To all intents and purposes, belief, creed, and the Church - or rather, the ecclesiastical party which supported him - were all one to him. There was no such thing as a creed without followers, and their political exigencies were hallowed by the cause which was the object of the whole struggle.' (34) Constantine's Nicene Creed coincided with Athanasius' theology: Nicea and the Church based on it were therefore good things. For the first ten years of his tenure of the see of Alexandria, Athanasius did his utmost to placate the emperor and to counteract the influence which his ecclesiastical adversaries exercised over Constantine. Throughout his protracted conflict with the Arians and with the Meletians, Athanasius strove to win the emperor's agreement and approval. It was not so much that he was overawed by the personality of Constantine the Liberator and Champion of Christianity, but that he perceived the value of imperial authority - so long as it could be harnessed to his own interests.

During the first years of Constantius' reign Athanasius continued in his attitude of respect and submission to the secular government. He once wrote to the emperor: 'I did not resist the commands of your Piety, God forbid; I am not a man who would resist even the Quaestor of the city, much less so great a Prince.' (35) Before long, however, there was more diplomacy than sincerity in these sentiments. Not long after the Council of Milan, 355, Athanasius dropped this mask. He denounced Constantius as the 'patron of godlessness and emperor of heresy.' (36) Imperial power, which he had sanctioned in Church affairs while it was a potential ally to his own cause, became evil. Athanasius began to expound a separatist approach to Church-state relations. On the one hand, he expressed his personal animosity towards the emperor, and - on the other hand - this led him towards distinguishing between the spheres of ecclesiastical and secular

jurisdiction. The emperor had no right to intervene in the Church's life.

There was scarcely any limit to the abuse which Athanasius hurled at Constantius. Three times in the De Synodis he labels the emperor as 'the most irreligious' Augustus. (37) Elsewhere he likens him to Pharoah and to Herod as the enemy of God's elect. (38) He is worse than Saul and Pilate. (39) One of Athanasius' favourite denunciations was to speak of him as a second Ahab. Referring to Constantius' treatment of Ossius, he wrote: 'Godless, unholy, without natural affection, he feared not God, he regarded not his father's affection for Ossius, he revered not his great age, for he was now one hundred years old; but all these things this modern Ahab, this second Belshazar of our times, disregarded for the sake of impiety.' (40) He went even further: 'Ahab himself did not act so cruelly towards the priests of God, as this man has acted towards the bishops. For he was at least pricked in his own conscience when Naboth had been murdered and was afraid at the sight of Elijah.' (41) But Constantius was unrepentant in his heresy and without mercy in his victimisation of those who resisted his Arianising policy.

The hostility to Constantius which Athanasius expressed in his Historia Arianorum reached its climax in the noted passage where the emperor was denounced as the forerunner of the antichrist: 'Terrible indeed, and worse than terrible, are such proceedings; yet conduct suitable to him who assumes the character of antichrist. Who that beheld him as chorus leader of his pretended bishops, and presiding in his ecclesiastical causes, would not justly exclaim that this was the abomination of desolation (42) spoken of by Daniel? For having put on the profession of Christianity and entering into the holy places and standing therein, he lays waste the Churches, transgressing their canons, and forcing the observance of his own decrees. Will anyone now venture to say that this is a peaceful time with Christians, and not a time of persecution? A persecution indeed, such as never arose before, and such as no-one perhaps will stir up again, except

the sons of lawlessness (43), do these enemies of Christ exhibit, who already present a picture of him in their own persons. Wherefore it specially behoves us to be sober, lest this heresy which has reached such a height of impudence, and has diffused itself abroad like the poison of an adder (44), as it is written in the Proverbs, and which teaches doctrines contrary to the Saviour; lest, I say, this be that falling away (45), after which he shall be revealed, of whom Constantius is surely the forerunner.' (46)

Athanasius condemned Constantius because he intended to force the Arian point of view on the Church. This was anathema to Athanasius. He therefore heaped abuse upon the emperor, sought every means to resist his will, and construed an alternative interpretation of Church-state relations. Circumstances thus compelled him to argue that the emperor had no right to rule the Church. 'If a judgement has been passed by the bishops, what concern has the emperor with it? ... When was such a thing heard before from the beginning of the world? When did the judgement of the Church receive its validity from the emperor? Or rather, when was his decree ever recognised by the Church? There have been many councils held heretofore; and many judgements passed by the Church; but the Fathers never sought the consent of the emperor thereto, nor did the emperor busy himself with the affairs of the Church. ... Now, however, we have witnessed a novel spectacle, which is a discovery of the Arian heresy. Heretics have assembled together with the emperor Constantius, in order that he, alleging the authority of the bishops, may exercise his powers against whomsoever he pleases.' (47)

There was clearly great affinity between Athanasius' attitude and the position which Ossius adopted. These two champions of ecclesiastical freedom developed the argument of the Two Swords in a far more positive manner than Julius and Liberius, or even Hilary or Poitiers. Despite the outlook of their earlier careers both reacted against the heretical policies of Constantius and formulated a separatist understanding of the

ideal relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority.

Athanasius' achievement - if not his precise aim - had been to maintain 'the essential character and spiritual independence of Christianity in his struggles with the emperors and all the authoritative representatives of the theological world.' (48) Without him 'its creed would have run wild or have become an imperial regulation governing the worship of the "radiant Godhead". Athanasius saved the Church from becoming entangled in the idea of cultural progress and from the snares of political power.' (49)

After Constantius' death the developing separatist attitude was strengthened by events in the sphere of secular politics. The pagan reaction under the emperor Julian unintentionally and indirectly strengthened this trend. Julian hoped that by recalling all exiled ecclesiastics such discord would break out that the Church would be utterly ruined. In fact this did not happen. Ranks were closed against a common enemy. Among those who returned to their sees were Athanasius - though only for a short while - and Lucifer, while the banished Donatist leaders were allowed back to North Africa. Julian thus gave the main advocates of ecclesiastical freedom a platform from which they could voice their opinions. Moreover, the pagan emperor did great service to these spokesmen by stripping the Church of all the privileges it had gathered during the last fifty years. Almost overnight the state-Church ceased to exist. Separatist thought alone could be entertained while a pagan emperor sat upon the throne. A by-product of this disestablishment was the disintegration of the Arian court party. The court bishops had been the heart and soul of the Arian movement: they had ensured imperial favour and directed imperial action. The Arian cause could not last long without its political bishops. Moreover, during Julian's reign the first stages in forming an anti-Arian coalition took place when the Council of Alexandria met in 362. When the Arian Valens became emperor the Church was far less susceptible to imperial domination than Constantius had found her. During Julian's brief reign important

developments took place which ensured that no Arian emperor would ever again dictate to the Church to the same extent as Constantius had done.

The years between Julian's death and Theodosius' accession witnessed a change in the climate of ecclesiastical affairs. First and foremost Arianism had been discredited. Few of the rank-and-file Origenist bishops of the East had been committed Arians or even semi-Arians: they had been led by men of these convictions. They themselves had been anti-Nicene rather than pro-Arian. Their bitter hatred for Sabellianism, the pluralist basis to their theology, and their deep-rooted conservatism had made them suspicious of Nicea, but the Councils of Sirmium, Ariminum and Seleucia had shown Arianism in its true colours. Julian's reign had seen the temporary destruction of the Arian court party and the beginnings of negotiations between the moderates and Athanasius. These negotiations continued during the next two decades and culminated in the Second Oecumenical Council of 381. There emerged a number of ecclesiastics - mainly from Cappadocia - who formed a new Nicene party. (Meletius of Antioch, the leader of the group, had formerly been bishop of Sebaste in Armenia Prima in the region of Cappadocia, and was therefore by background a member of the Cappadocian circle). This new party consisted of an influential group of churchmen whose attitudes differed greatly from the court faction which it challenged. Above all else, a growing consensus of Christian opinion was opposed to a dictated religion from the court. The appearance of another Arian emperor, Valens, increased this. Emperors could be pagans as well as heretics, and the Church was becoming more and more suspicious of state control. The developing political and social environment favoured separatist thought within the Church.

If Jovian had reigned for more than eight months things might have been very different. The new emperor was a convinced Nicene. The cool reception which he gave the semi-Arian bishops who greeted him at Edessa showed clearly where he stood in the disputes of the day. One of Jovian's

first actions was to recall the exiled Athanasius: 'Return, therefore, to the holy Churches and shepherd the people of God .... and raise zealously to God your prayers for our Gentleness. For we know by your supplications both we and they who hold with us Christian opinions shall have great succour from the Supreme God.' (50) There is a marked 'Constantinian' flavour to this pronouncement. Indeed, it is extremely probable that the Nicene emperor would have followed the religious policies of Constantine I and Constans. Julian's pagan measures were reversed. A decree posted in Alexandria proclaimed that 'only the Highest God and Christ were to be honoured, and that the people were to meet together in the Churches for worship.' (51) The privileged status which the Church had lost during Julian's reign was restored. Even though Jovian was an ardent party-man he was tolerant in his handling of religious affairs. The Church historian Socrates attributes two statements to him on this theme: 'I abominate contentiousness; but I honour and love those who exert themselves to promote unanimity.' (52) Jovian also declared that he 'would not molest anyone on account of his religious sentiments, and that he would love and highly esteem such as would zealously promote the unity of the Church.' (53)

Jovian did the Church great service by refraining from persecuting those that did not share his theological point of view. During his short reign the Eastern episcopate was left to its own deliberations and to battle its own way to a credal conclusion. His successor Valentinian I, who soon confined his activities to the West, also adopted this neutral outlook. The pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus complimented him for this: 'He was especially remarkable during his reign for his moderation in this particular, that he remained neutral in religious differences; and never troubled anyone, nor issued any orders in favour of one kind of worship or another; nor did he promulgate any threatening edicts to bow down the necks of his subjects to the form of worship to which he himself was inclined; but he left those parties as he found them undisturbed.' (54) Sozomen confirms this,

recording Valentinian's reply to the intrigues of the Arian bishops: 'I am but one of the laity, and have therefore no right to interfere in these transactions; let the Priests, to whom such matters appertain, assemble where they please.' (55)

Valentinian raised his brother, Valens, to be emperor in the East. Once again there was an Arian emperor who tried to dictate his personal theology to a reluctant episcopate. Once again an ecclesiastical court party emerged. There was a great similarity between Constantius' religious policy and Valens' objectives, but the general ecclesiastical climate no longer favoured a state dictated religion. However hard he tried, Valens was not able to Arianise the East. Arianism had been disgraced by the events at the end of Constantius' reign; the Origenist bishops would have little to do with the heresy. Nevertheless the emperor made every attempt to forestall the anti-Arian alliance and to show his favour for the Arian bishops.

The Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates and Sozomen provide many illustrations of Valens' intervention into Church affairs. The first Synod at Lampsacus was hostile to the Anomoean court party. In his anger Valens started 'to prosecute a war of extermination against all who acknowledged the homousios formula.' (56) Eleusius, Bishop of Cyzicus, was a victim of such action. Even the Novationists suffered from Valens' policy. Athanasius was fortunate to get away with only a short exile. Sozomen offered a plausible explanation for this: 'I rather imagine that, on reflecting on the esteem in which Athanasius was universally held, (Valens) feared to excite the displeasure of the emperor Valentinian, who was well-known to be attached to the Nicene doctrines; or perhaps he was apprehensive of a commotion on the part of the many admirers of the bishop, lest some innovation might injure public affairs.' (57) The exile and early recall of Athanasius coincided with Procopius' rebellion, which seriously challenged Valens' position. Sozomen connects Athanasius' short exile with the repressive

measures Valens adopted as a result of the negotiations between the Eastern homoiousian bishops and the West. The negotiations had led to a proposed council of reconciliation to assemble at Tarsus in the Spring of 367, but 'the emperor, at the instigation of Eudoxius, prevented by letter the Council being convened in Cilicia, and even prohibited it under severe penalties. He also wrote to the governors of the provinces, commanding them to eject all bishops from their Churches who had been exiled by Constantius and who had again taken up their priesthood under the emperor Julian.' (58)

Basil of Caesarea (in Cappadocia) was one of the leading opponents of Valens' Arianism. His opposition, however, was not based on a strict separatist understanding of Church and state relations. There was no inherent antagonism to the state in his thought. On the contrary, Theodoret claims he once said: 'The emperor's friendship I hold to be of great value if conjoined with true religion; otherwise I call it perdition.' (59) The main clash between Basil and Valens came in 370, when the emperor in between campaigns against the Goths and the Persians determined to settle ecclesiastical matters to his liking. He sent officials into the provinces to compel the bishops to conform to the 'Dated' creed of 359. Theodoret described how Valens 'sent the governor before him with orders either to persuade Basil to embrace the communion of Eudoxius, or - in the event of his refusal - to expel him. Previously acquainted as he was with the bishop's high reputation, he was at first unwilling to attack him, for he was apprehensive lest the bishop by boldly meeting and withstanding his attack should furnish an example of bravery to the rest.' (60) His fear was justified by later events. More immediately, however, the governor 'on his arrival at Caesarea, sent for the great Basil. He treated him with respect and, addressing him in courteous language, urged him to yield to the exigencies of the time, and not to forsake so many Churches on account of a petty nicety of doctrine. He moreover promised him the friendship of the

emperor and pointed out that through it he might be the means of conferring great advantages upon many.' (61) But the bishop would not concede to this sort of intimidation. Undaunted he answered: 'This sort of talk is fitted for little boys, for they and their like easily swallow such inducements. But they who are nurtured by divine words will not suffer so much as a syllable of the divine creeds to be let go, and for their sake are ready, should need require, to embrace every kind of death.' (62) Valens made no further attempt to subdue Basil.

Most of the material considered above has covered the span of years from the accession of Constantine I's sons to the death of Valens, forty-two years later. The intention of this chapter has been to trace specific themes through this diffusion of historical data, thus illustrating the main developments in Church-state relations. The major trend of this period is readily detected: a developing and intensifying reaction against state encroachment into ecclesiastical affairs. Jovian and Valentinian I are the only Christian emperors considered so far who modified in any serious degree the main tenets of the Constantinian settlement. Imperial domination of the Church culminated in the councils of Seleucia and Arinimum - when Constantius' policy of enforced Arianism reached its climax - and when Valens refused to allow the anti-Arian delegates to assemble in Cilicia.

For most of the period 337-379 opposition to the state-Church came from the Nicene party and in North Africa from the Donatists. The attitude adopted by both factions was pre-eminently a reaction against the positions enjoyed by their opponents. The cultural protest of the Donatists inevitably included antagonism towards the Latin Church. It is scarcely surprising that the Nicenes looked unfavourably on the Arian emperors and the influential Arian court party. This state of affairs provoked separatist thought. Such an outlook was therefore determined by contemporary affairs and was the only conceivable attitude for all except Arians and African Catholics once attempts were made to rationalise or make a theology of

Church-state relations. The careers of Athanasius and Ossius show clearly the reactionary nature of such thought: both men were compelled by changing historical circumstances to revise their estimation of imperial intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. Hostility to the state-Church intensified after Constantius' excesses. The dramatic upheavals of Julian's reign weakened the Arians. Opposition to Valens found its spokesman in Basil of Caesarea and was sufficient to withstand the full menace of the second wave of state enforced Arianism. The Church had grown weary of a religion dictated from the court. Separatist thought had gained ground. The scene had been set for St. Ambrose.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

1. cf Chapter 2, 38.
2. Optatus, De Don. Sch., III, 3.
3. Eusebius of Caesarea, Vita Const., III, 61.
4. Can. Antioch, 11.
5. Jerome, Dialogue against the Luciferians, 19.
6. W.H.C. Frend, The Early Church, London, 1965, 162.
7. Eusebius of Caesarea, op. cit., IV, 24.
8. cf (2) above.
9. W.H.C. Frend, op. cit., 165.
10. Athanasius, Hist. Ar., 33.
11. Julian, Misopragon, 357 C and D.
12. This title was officially conferred on Hilary of Poitiers by the Decree Quod Potissimum of the congregation of Rita (29 March, 1851) and the Apostolic brief Si ab ipsis (13 March, 1851).
13. Hilary, Liber I ad Constantium.
14. Hilary, Ad Constantium Augustum, 6-7.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. F. Cayre, Manual of Patrology, Paris, 1927, 332.
18. H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, London, 1912, 310.
19. Pro S. Athanasio, i, P.L. XIII, 826.
20. cf Chapter 2, 16.
21. Athanasius, Apol. c. Arianos, 35.
22. J. Stevenson, Creeds, Councils and Controversies, London, 1966, 8.
23. Ibid., 21
24. Ibid.
25. Liberius, Letter to Constantius, 3. Text in C.S.E.L. LXV iv, 89-93.
26. Jalland, The Church and the Papacy, Oxford, 1944, 237.
27. Theodoret, Hist. Eccles., II, 16.

28. Sozomen, Hist. Eccles., IV, 11.
29. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., 41.
30. Ibid., 44.
31. Ibid.
32. II Chronicles 26:18.
33. J. Stevenson, op. cit., 38.
34. von Campenhausen, Fathers of the Greek Church, London, 1963, 77.
35. Athanasius, Apol. c. Arian., 36.
36. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., 45.
37. Athanasius, De Synodis, 12, 25, 55.
38. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., XXX, 52.
39. Ibid, 68.
40. Ibid, 45.
41. Ibid, 68.
42. Daniel 9:27.
43. II Thessalonians 2:8. 3.
44. Proverbs 23:32.
45. II Thessalonians 2:8.
46. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., 77.
47. Ibid, 52.
48. von Campenhausen, op. cit., 81.
49. Ibid.
50. P.R. Coleman-Noreton, Roman State and Christian Church, London, 1966,  
Vol. I, 299.
51. Historia Acephala, 12.
52. Socrates, Hist. Eccles., III, 25, 4.
53. Ibid, III, 25, 17.
54. Amminaus Marcellinus, Res Gestae, XXX, 9, 5.
55. Sozomen, Hist. Eccles., VI, 6, 2.
56. Socrates, op. cit., IV, 2.

57. Sozomen, op. cit., VI, 12.
58. Ibid, VI, 12.
59. Theodoret, op. cit., IV, 19, 5.
60. Ibid., IV, 19, 1-3.
61. Ibid., IV, 19, 3.
62. Ibid., IV, 19, 4.

Chapter 4Ecclesiastical Ascendency

Scarcely two years after Valentinian I died, the Emperor Valens was defeated and killed near Adrianople. In the last quarter of the fourth century political power in the Roman world was wielded by Gratian, with the shadowy figure of the younger Valentinian standing in the background, while in the East Theodosius' star shone brightly until at length the whole empire came under his sway. Coinciding with these events, and to a great extent dependent upon them, were new developments in the evolving relations between state and Church. These new developments were largely precipitated by two factors: the career of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and the emergence of an ardent - almost fanatical - Nicene emperor.

A leading theme in the previous chapters has been that the Church has interpreted inherited Biblical precepts on the state in the light of her contemporary environment. As this environment has changed, there has been a constant need for re-interpretation and re-application. Thus in the days of the pagan emperors separatist thought prevailed: a close alliance between Church and state in these circumstances was clearly inconceivable. At the same time, however, the Church's spokesmen made a point of stressing that Christians were respectable and loyal citizens. With the advent of a Christian emperor and the accompanying 'establishment' of the Church, Eusebius of Caesarea expounded his theology of political absolutism with its accompanying re-assessment of traditional eschatological values. The last chapter was concerned with the reaction which set in against imperial dictation of Church affairs. This became closely involved in the Nicene-Arian struggle; the Nicene party attempted to resist state-imposed Arianism, and in the process of their resistance formulated a separatist theology of the ideal relationship between Church and state. Key phrases from Ossius' protest to Constantius serve as a generalised summary of this theology: 'Do not intrude into ecclesiastical affairs, and do not give commands to us concerning them; but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the

kingdom; to us he has entrusted the affairs of the Church.' Quoting Mt 22: 21, Ossius commented: 'Neither, therefore, is it permitted to us to exercise an earthly rule; nor have you, sir, any authority to burn incense.' (1) The separatist outlook which lay at the heart of this dualism was a reaction against the excesses of imperial participation. But the Nicene party would change its tune if a Nicene became emperor, just as earlier the followers of Eusebius of Nicomedia had passed from opposing the Constantinian state-Church to sanctioning Constantius' use of force.

One may quarrel with the dualistic position which Ossius and like-minded men adopted on both theological and practical grounds. It was noted at the beginning of this study that there is a delicate balance in the New Testament teaching on the state. The tension between superficially incompatible attitudes is resolved within the wider context of the primitive eschatological proclamation; the last days have been inaugurated, but are not yet completely here. The state is therefore neither to be fully accepted nor finally rejected. When the Church loses sight of her eschatological values, she is unlikely to remain true to this aspect of her Lord's teaching. Herein lay Eusebius of Caesarea's error, for the positive role which he ascribed to the empire within Salvation-history demanded a serious modification of inherited eschatological teaching. The separatist reaction failed in the opposite extreme. In contrast to Eusebius, Ossius assigned too little importance to the empire. Ossius' attitude was to a great extent a reaction against the activities of Constantius. His quarrel was first and foremost with imperial intervention in matters determining doctrine: an area in which Constantius had participated more fully than Constantine I.

A weakness in Ossius' thought was an unguarded separatism. There is no sphere of life which lies beyond the Church's concern. Ossius was thus mistaken to promise Constantius freedom from ecclesiastical intervention. The ethical demands of the Church have no limits and therefore

the Church cannot ignore state affairs. There is not one ethical code for the Christian rank-and-file and another for a Christian emperor. All Christians are subject to the ethical demands of the Gospel, while the bishops are custodians of this moral law. Ambrose perceived this weakness in this position and sought to correct it by substituting in the place of Osius' separatism his own conception of a Church-state partnership. Osius, in denying the church the right to exercise earthly rule and the emperor the right to burn incense, came close to dividing life into two mutually exclusive spheres - the religious and the secular. This is to do an injustice to the demands of Christianity and to the demands of responsible citizenship.

Separatist thought in the middle of the fourth century also had its practical limitations. It could only be entertained by a Church faction in opposition to the emperor's own theological inclinations. This was precisely the position with the Nicenes and the Arian emperors and their supporting court party. In such circumstances it is understandable that the Nicenes, objecting to imperial participation, should have channelled their thoughts towards separating ecclesiastical and secular areas of jurisdiction. But what were the Nicenes to do when there was a Nicene emperor? Clearly their attitude would have to be modified seriously. This state of affairs materialised when Gratian, to a lesser extent Valentinian II, and Theodosius came under Ambrose's influence. Greenslade reminds us that 'the Church is somehow concerned with every action of state which raises a moral issue, and that is, in the last resort, with almost everything.' (3) Any concept of separatism is questionable at the best of times, but when it demands that a Nicene emperor should act independently of Nicene bishops it approaches the ridiculous. The changing circumstances in the last quarter of the fourth century rendered earlier separatist attitudes inapplicable. This lies at the heart of the change in the climate of Church-state relations after the death of Valentinian I and

Valens. The distinction between ecclesiastical and secular affairs became much harder for Nicenes to maintain once, through the person of Ambrose, the emperors bowed to Nicene influence. Once again the reactionary element in Christian thought is evident; when contemporary circumstances changed, Christian attitudes also had to change. The separatism of Ossius was replaced by the Church-state partnership of St. Ambrose. The Bishop of Milan secured a position of influence over the emperors of his time, and the dualistic position which he adopted compelled him to dictate to them. The Nicene Church no longer wanted a clearly defined limit between ecclesiastical and secular affairs. Not only was separatism modified, but by the end of Ambrose's life the Church had started along the road which leads to ecclesiastical ascendancy.

St. Ambrose's dealings with successive emperors must be seen within the context of a growing ecclesiastical involvement in the secular life of the empire; a trend which may be traced back to the beginning of Constantine I's reign. Somewhat curiously, at the same time as the evolving separatism noted in the last chapter, there occurred developments which brought the Church increasingly more into the life of the state. Prominent here was episcopal participation in civil and criminal jurisdiction. As far as civil jurisdiction was concerned, episcopal powers had been defined by two edicts. In 318 Constantine had decreed that at the request of either party a civil case might be transferred to an episcopal court. This privilege was granted afresh in 333, but now the transfer could take place even if one of the parties objected. Magistrates were instructed to enforce the episcopal verdict. This measure enabled Christians to contract out of secular proceedings at a time when many magistrates were still pagan. The bishops had no such clearly defined rights in criminal jurisdiction, but two practices developed, both with pagan precedents, the right of sanctuary and the episcopal intercessio. The Council of Sardica (343) which dealt largely with 'the yet unregulated and confused relationship between Church

and state', (4) has been considered elsewhere. (5) Its third canon, however, illustrates this right of intercessio: 'It is an honourable thing that a bishop should lend his support to those oppressed by some injustice, or if a widow is afflicted, or a minor despoiled of his property - yet he should intercede for these classes only when they seek redress in a just case.' (6) Flavian of Antioch was to intercede successfully on behalf of his city after the riots of 387, while Ambrose himself made much use of this practice. Augustine's correspondence with Macedonius, the Vicar of Africa, shows the extent to which the custom had developed in North Africa by the turn of the century. (7)

It is evident that this participation in civil and criminal jurisdiction breaks with the separatist attitude which had emerged after Constantine's death. It was also an encroachment by the Church into the functions assigned by St. Paul to the state. (8) The reason for this development is not hard to detect. The administration of justice is essentially a moral question, and in matters of morality Christians cannot remain silent. On this score separatist thought on relations with the state tends to break down. Christians cannot turn a blind eye to the infringement of the moral absolutes for which they stand. In the last resort the all-inclusive concern of the Church's moral dogmas is incompatible with a strict separatism. There were indications that this was being realised gradually. Lucifer, placed by many students of Church-state relations so firmly in the separatist camp, declared to Constantius: 'How can you say that you can judge bishops when, unless you obey them, you have already been punished, in God's eyes, with the penalty of death?' (9) Again, the idea that it was the emperor's duty to listen to the bishops, who were God's ministers, possibly lies behind Gregory of Nazianzus' statement that the law of Christ had subjected rulers and governors to his tribunal, (10) while Rufinus has Constantine acknowledge that 'God has given to you (i.e. the bishops) the power to judge us.' (11) There were suggestions, therefore, that despite a growing separatist understanding of

her relationship with the state, in the middle of the fourth century the Church was becoming more involved in secular administration and beginning to claim a positive role in the ordering of the empire. These developments form an integral part of the background to St. Ambrose's life and work.

Ambrose had been Bishop of Milan for nearly two years when Gratian became emperor. His attempts to bring Valentinian I to a pro-Nicene policy as opposed to a private profession of faith met with no success. To the end of his life, Valentinian I had followed his declared policy and 'tolerated all the various cults and never troubled anyone.' (12) For the next few years Gratian continued this policy of non-intervention. This state of affairs lasted until 378-9 when Ambrose established an ascendancy over the Emperor. For the time being, therefore, separatism prevailed. An edict, probably to be dated 376, ordering the confiscation of heretical places of worship may be reconciled with this interpretation if one accepts Piganiol's suggestion that since it was addressed to Hesperius, Proconsul of Africa, it is probably that only the Donatists are in mind. (13) Possibly Gratian's policy of neutrality and tolerance was influenced by his tutor, Ausonius. Lietzman speaks of 'a new period opening in which educated interests and also the life of the Church would receive encouragement and support, and when the harshness of Valentinian's rule would give place to clemency and humanity. The spirit breathed by Ausonius could be detected in the words and deeds of the emperor.' (14)

In 378 the situation began to change. Gratian moved east to deal with the Goths, and at the same time was confronted with Arianism - perhaps for the first time. He wrote to Ambrose, asking for his advice. In the same year emperor and bishop met at Sirmium: a fateful moment for Church-state relations. For a while Gratian continued his policy of toleration. After Valens' death he hoped that an edict granting freedom to all except Eunomians, Photinians and Manichees would restore peace to the Eastern Church. (15) A Synod which assembled at Rome at this time tried to force

Gratian's hand by adding Sabellians, Arians, and Macedonians to the list of forbidden sects, and also - by implication - extreme Antiochenes, Appollinarianists and the followers of Marcellus of Ancyra. Two further requests were made: imperial authority should enforce papal and Roman conciliar decisions, and compel bishops summoned to Rome to appear; secondly, the pope should come only under the jurisdiction of the emperor himself. This latter request had arisen from the unseemly rivalry between Damasus and Ursinus. The followers of Ursinus harried Damasus with charges of manslaughter after the massacre in the Julian basilica. The Pope had been humiliated by a summons to appear before the Urban Prefect: a degrading turn of events which the Roman Church was anxious not to be repeated. Gratian recognised the pope's appellate jurisdiction over his suffragans, but his reply clearly showed that 'he was most reluctant to harness Church and state together.' (16) For the period before his decision to elevate Theodosius, it is evident that Gratian's policy was not specifically pro-Nicene. It is also evident that he had little desire to intervene in the Church's affairs. This did not last long.

The seeds of friendship between Ambrose and Gratian which were planted at Sirmium in 378 soon bore fruit. Emperor and bishop met again in the summer of 379 when Gratian settled in Milan. Ambrose soon secured a position of dominance over the emperor which continued until the latter was murdered outside Lyons in 383. This relationship between Ambrose and Gratian had an all important influence on Church-state affairs. The separatism of earlier Nicene thought was cast aside as the emperor succumbed to Nicene influence and sought moral and practical guidance from the most ardent of the Nicene bishops. The Ambrosian concept of Church-state partnership gradually became a reality.

During his twenty-four years as Bishop of Milan, Ambrose strove to bring into being his theory of Church and state. At the heart of the matter lay his Nicene convictions: the Nicene faith was to be the basis of

Catholic orthodoxy. As von Campenhausen comments, this was inseparably bound up with the quest for ecclesiastical freedom: 'The Arian controversy ... appeared to the West from the beginning as a dispute concerning the independence of the Church and its freedom of decision in credal matters.' (17) The Nicene creed was to provide the dogmatic basis for the Church, and the Church built upon Nicea must be free from imperial intervention. No Constantius should again be allowed to dictate on matters of faith. Ambrose demanded nothing less than the re-ordering of the state-Church, and he sought to fulfil this ideal through successive political events and crises. But there was an ambiguity in Ambrose's position. He championed the freedom and independence of the Church and his initial standpoint was dualistic, but more than once this dualism became confused. With Ambrose, ecclesiastical freedom verged on ecclesiastical supremacy over the state. To a certain extent this was inevitable, for in the power struggle with the imperial court - in particular with Valentinian II - there had to be a victor: either the emperor would dictate to the bishop or the bishop to the emperor. Contemporary circumstances drove Ambrose with his dualistic viewpoint along the path towards ecclesiastical ascendancy, while his intention remained to establish the Church's freedom.

The first sign that Gratian had departed from his policy of laissez faire came on 3 August, 379 when he withdrew the Edict of Toleration which he had promulgated at Sirmium after Valens' death. In its place he issued an anti-heretical law which, by implication, attacked Donatists and Arians in particular, but also prohibited every heretical form of worship. (18) Imperial religious policy had bowed to the wishes of Ambrose. Gratian had joined the ranks of the Nicenes. Within Ambrose's concept of the Church there was no room for heretics; the Arians were his leading target. The edict which Gratian had now proclaimed assisted Ambrose in his campaign against the Arians in North Italy.

The Bishop of Milan's hold over the emperor was strengthened at the beginning of the next year. At Gratian's request, Ambrose compiled a

treatise De Fide in which he set out to instruct his protege in the Nicene faith. Ambrose rapidly replaced Ausonius as the leading influence on the emperor and as a result Gratian pursued a policy which coincided with the bishop's wishes. Despite the ferocious opposition and anger of Justina, (19) Ambrose secured the election of a Nicene to the see of Sirmium. The protracted dual between Ambrose and Justina had started. In the following year Ambrose prevailed over the emperor to limit the assembly at Aquileia to Western delegates, and there he secured the condemnation of two leading Arian opponents, Palladius and Secundianus. Some critics have been disturbed by Ambrose's ruthless tactics at Aquileia, but one can rest assured that there were many Arians who would not have hesitated to have acted in the same way had circumstances been kinder to them. The Council informed Gratian of its conclusions and obtained his support in enforcing the sentences.

Scarcely two years elapsed between Ambrose's first confrontation with Gratian and the Synod at Aquileia; but within these few months radical changes in Church-state relations had taken place. The tolerance and non-intervention which had characterised Valentinian I's religious policy, and which Gratian had inherited from his father had been discarded. Imperial non-participation and non-involvement had been replaced by an intolerant Nicene outlook. It must be acknowledged however that there was a considerable discrepancy between the letter of the law and its practical enforcement. Ambrose's Arian opponents in North Italy certainly suffered from Gratian's change in attitude, but one may be sceptical about its more general repercussions. Nevertheless, Gratian's new policy revealed his intention, and given time this might be effectively worked out in ecclesiastical affairs. All credit for this change must be given to Ambrose, who strove successfully to win imperial support in his crusade against Arianism.

Dealing with Ambrose's triumph at Aquileia, Frend comments that 'when he returned to Milan he had achieved a position in the councils of

state which not even Ossius had been able to claim.' (20) Possibly, however, Frend is rating too highly Ossius' influence. This had been short-lived, and seems not to have lasted long after Nicea. Valens of Mursa, or even Eusebius of Nicomedia, would be better examples of the dominating ecclesiastical adviser. But just as Ambrose's operations against the Illyrian and North Italian Arians reached their climax, the whole of his work was suddenly thrown into jeopardy. Gratian met his death on 25 August, 383 and Ambrose's carefully contrived position in the imperial court was lost. Political power passed to the Arian-sympathiser Justina and the young Valentinian II whom she dominated. With Arian voices once more to be heard in court circles, Ambrose must have foreseen the struggle which lay ahead if he was to work towards the establishment of a Nicene state-Church.

Ambrose's dealings with Valentinian II showed clearly the dualistic element in his thought. On three separate occasions Ambrose came into conflict with the imperial court, and each time his standpoint was essentially dualistic. In all these incidents - the question of the Altar of Victory, the issue of the Milan basilicas, and the controversy provoked by the Edict of Toleration - Ambrose was concerned with the emperor's role within the Church-state partnership. Over the Altar of Victory there was the danger that Valentinian might not live up to his responsibilities as a Christian emperor, while with the Milan basilicas and the Edict of Toleration he was exceeding his proper limits. In each case, Ambrose saw it his duty to bring the emperor to task.

The first of the letters which Ambrose sent to Valentinian in reply to Symmachus' petition for the restoration of the Altar of Victory made plain his dualistic approach to this controversy. He acknowledged: 'Were this a civil matter, the right of reply would be reserved for the opposing party: it is a matter of religion and I, as a bishop, appeal to you.' (21) The implication here is that within the co-operation between Church and state, it is to the Church - or to her leaders, the bishops -

that the state must turn for advice in religious matters. This is clearly what the present dispute was, even though the Church was not directly involved. Ambrose therefore considered that he was entitled to expect a hearing. The advice he gave was unequivocal: the Altar must not be restored. As a Christian emperor, Valentinian's duty was to further the Church's cause.

Valentinian was a 'soldier of God' (22) and therefore had to serve the faith. The term militare carried connotations of imperial service in a civil role as well as the specifically military, but in view of the Christian concept of miles Christi the rendering 'soldier' is fully justified. To grant the Senate's request would be to promote the worship of idols. Ambrose tried to convince Valentinian that 'not only was it his duty to protect the Church, but also that he was committed to the divine commandments in his political activity.' (23) Such ideas lay behind the title 'soldier of God' which Ambrose ascribed to Valentinian. Ossius, Lucifer, Liberius and others had told the emperors to leave religious matters alone, but Ambrose did not support their separatism. The emperor, obedient to the Church leaders, must strive to advance the Christian faith. The Bishop of Milan called for an alliance not a division between Church and state.

Ambrose's position should be seen as a development from the earlier dualists. Circumstances had changed a great deal since the 350s, and these changes had rendered earlier convictions inapplicable. Separatist thought had little relevance to a Nicene bishop seeking to influence a Nicene emperor. Ambrose's position was one of potential power, for if the emperor failed to do as he was instructed by his spiritual superior he could be disciplined by the means of correction which the Church had at her disposal. Ambrose made himself plain: 'Assuredly, should an adverse decree be issued, we as bishops cannot quietly permit and connive at it; it will indeed be in your power to come to Church, but there you will either not find a priest, or you will find one purposed to resist. What answer will you give to the priest when he says to you: 'The Church seeks not your gifts, because you

have adorned the heather temples with gifts; the Altar of Christ rejects your gifts, because you have erected altars to idols, for it was your hand, your word, your signature, your act; the Lord Jesus refuses and repels your service because you have served idols, for he said to you, 'Ye cannot serve two masters.' (24)

The next confrontation between Ambrose and the imperial court came in 385. Once again his dualistic point of view was foremost. This time his anti-Arianism was challenged. The dowager empress, Justina, the patron of the small Arian community in Milan, championed the Arian cause to obtain one of the city's basilicas for their own worship. At first sight this might seem a reasonable request. Ambrose was summoned to court to hand over the suburban Portian basilica; but he refused to do this. Before long the Arians demanded a place of worship within the city itself. Ambrose recorded his own version of the incident. (25) In the earlier controversy he had replied to Symmachus: 'What you are ignorant of, that we have learnt by the voice of God; what you seek after by faint surmises, that we are assured of by the very wisdom and truth of God.' (26) No compromise had been possible between Christ and the idols. This time Catholic truth could make no concessions to Arian heresy.

To Ambrose the issue did not simply concern the handing over of a Church to the Arians, but that this had been demanded by the emperor. The state was dictating to the Church on a religious topic. The incident of the Altar of Victory had shown that Ambrose would not tolerate this. For a second time he asserted this point of view, arguing 'that a temple of God cannot be surrendered by a bishop.' (27) Ambrose thus denied the emperor that totalitarian authority with which he was generally credited: 'The courts and tribunes came and urged me to cause the basilica to be surrendered, saying that the emperor was exercising his rights since everything was under his power. I announced that if he asked of me what was mine, that is, my land, my money, or whatever of this kind was my own, I would not refuse it, although all that I have belonged to the poor, but that those

things which are God's are not subject to the imperial power.' (28) This attitude is reminiscent of Osius' opposition to Constantius. It is significant to note that the nearest Ambrose gets to repeating earlier separatism is when, like Osius, he opposed the Arianising policy of the imperial court. His contention that there is a sphere of human activity which belongs to God over which the emperor had no authority closely paralleled the Bishop of Cordova's distinction between burning incense and the administration of earthly rule.

Osius had based his argument on an interpretation of Matthew 22:21 - Ambrose also fell back on this Dominical injunction. 'At last the command was given: Surrender the basilica. My reply was, It is not lawful for me to surrender it, nor advantageous to you, Sir, to receive it. By no right can you violate the house of a private person, and do you think that the house of God may be taken away? It is asserted that everything is lawful for the emperor and that all things are his. My answer is: Do not, O emperor, lay on yourself the burden of such a thought as that you have any imperial power over this thing which belongs to God. It is written: The things which are God's to God, those which are Caesar's to Caesar. The palaces belong to the emperor, the Churches to the bishop. Authority is committed to you over public, not over sacred, buildings. Again the emperor was stated to have declared: I ought also to have one basilica. My answer was: It is not lawful for you to have it.' (29) Greenslade's verdict on the episode is that 'whether he was right or wrong on the actual issue, Ambrose had won a notable victory for the prestige and liberty of the Church, and had clearly established a dualistic basis for the relations between Church and state.' (30)

The affair of the Milan basilicas had drawn from Ambrose a cry for ecclesiastical liberty. Church buildings did not belong to the emperor; he could not dispense with them as he pleased. In religious matters imperial authority was limited. Justina took her defeat hardly and sought

revenge at the earliest opportunity. On 3 January, 386 she prevailed over her son to reverse Gratian's anti-heretical edict. Valentinian II accordingly granted 'the right of assembly upon those persons who believe ... the faith (which) was set forth at Ariminum.... If those persons that suppose that the right of assembly had been granted to them alone should provoke any agitation ... they shall also pay the penalty of high treason with their life and blood.' (31) Arrangements were made for Ambrose and his Arian opponent, Auxentius, to debate their differences before the Consistory, but once again Ambrose would not sanction this interference by the state into ecclesiastical matters.

Ambrose's case rested on the argument that only bishops could judge matters of faith. The younger Valentinian had revealed himself in an unfavourable light compared with his father who had strictly observed the limits of his political authority. 'In matters of faith, and in any problems of the ecclesiastical constitution, judgement can be passed only by a person who is appointed to this on account of his office, and who is legally in the same position, that is, bishops can only be tried by bishops.' (32) Ambrose continued: 'What kind of a bishop could he possibly be, who leaves to laymen the decision about the legitimacy of his priesthood?' (33) Ambrose declared that he was not opposed to a debate, but that such a discussion must take place within the established ecclesiastical machinery. 'If Auxentius appeals to a Synod, in order to discuss points concerning the faith, ... when I hear that a Synod is gathering, I too will not be wanting. If, then, you wish for a disputation, repeal the law.' Ambrose concluded the matter with the assurance: 'I would have come, O emperor, to the Consistory of your Clemency, and have made these remarks in your presence, if either the bishops or the people had allowed me, but they said that matters concerning the faith ought to be treated in the Church, in the presence of the people.' (34)

Ambrose's bold stand assured him victory. Once again the court -

partly because Maximus' position in Gaul was increasingly becoming a threat - did not wish to run the risk of serious trouble in Italy, and capitulated. In a sermon against Auxentius, Ambrose had again referred to Matthew 22:21 'We render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's. Tribute is due to Caesar, we deny it not. But Caesar can have no right over God's temple.' (35) 'The Biblical principle Reddito Caesari, Reddito Deo was not offered, as Ossius had offered it, as a courageous but ineffective admonition. It had been made concrete in the successful refusal to argue a matter of faith in a secular court and even extended to the perhaps untenable position that Church buildings are among the things of God.' (36)

Only a few months after the incident of the Milan basilicas Maximus entered Italy at the head of an army. The young emperor fled to his most eastern dominions, hoping to continue the struggle - a vain hope, as events proved. Valentinian II's political significance virtually vanished, and until his death he had but 'a shadow of sovereignty over a shadow of an empire.' (37) This political upheaval formed an important landmark in Ambrose's career. For the previous thirteen years of his episcopate he had attempted to secure the freedom and independence of the Nicene-based Church within his understanding of the Church-state alliance. Despite opposition from Justina, he had preserved the position of influence over imperial policy which he had won during the reign of Gratian. The episode of the basilicas and Ambrose's refusal to appear before the Consistory had established the dogmatic inviolability of the Church and its corollary of independence for her clergy. Ambrose stood as an authoritative representative of the Church: if his own independence was not acknowledged by the state, then the freedom of the Church was a mere illusion. The crusade for clerical independence from the jurisdiction of the secular power was therefore not an expression of greed and self-interest, but consistent with the over-all struggle for ecclesiastical freedom. Palaces may belong to the emperor, but not the Church buildings; the emperor is a son of the Church,

not above her. Hence Ambrose contended that the emperor was in Church affairs subject to the bishops and not entitled to dictate to them. He once wrote: 'Trusting in God, I do not shrink from telling you emperors what in my opinion is right.' (38) This was no idle boast.

In little more than a decade St. Ambrose's theory of Church and state had become evident. Both had rights in their respective spheres. Neither should intervene into the other's concerns. But this dualism became confused because Ambrose claimed that the Church had the right to decide where the boundaries were to be fixed. Hence he himself, as an official leader and spokesman of the Church, was justified in intervening in matters which at first sight might well be classified as secular. During the reigns of Gratian and Valentinian II Ambrose battled to safeguard the Nicene basis of Catholic orthodoxy, in particular against Arianism. To achieve this he had secured mastery over Gratian and successfully withstood the Arianising encroachment of Justina's court. Not for the first time, in the West ecclesiastical freedom and Nicene interests went hand in hand. The situation soon changed. Five years after his occupation of Italy, Maximus was defeated by Theodosius, and from 388 until his death in 395 the Nicene Theodosius was supreme lord of the Roman world. In the place of Valentinian's Arian court, Ambrose had now an ally as emperor.

Theodosius' attitude towards religious affairs had been very clear from the beginning of his reign in the East. An ardent, almost fanatical Nicene, his avowed objective was the furtherance of the Nicene faith. Like Constantine I sixty years before him, the Nicene faith was to be the hallmark and norm of the state-Church. The ominous implications of Constantine's policy were noted in the second chapter of this study (39); the same dangers lay behind Theodosius' outlook - to a far greater extent he equated citizenship with orthodox belief. To reject the imperially-dictated right belief was to forfeit one's right as a citizen. There was a straightforward line of reasoning behind this conviction. The Almighty was actively

involved in, and concerned with, the affairs of men. Nicene faith was the true faith and therefore it alone was pleasing to Him. The emperor could not tolerate what was displeasing to God. Any repressive or corrective measures which he might take were thus in accordance with the will of heaven and merely anticipated divine vengeance. Indeed, the emperor was the vehicle and agent of divine judgement. There was no room in the empire for heretics or non-believers; their existence was an insult to the Almighty and a danger to the empire.

Theodosius started his crusade against the undesirable elements in society with 'the magnificent trumpet blast' (40) of the edict Cunctos populos. God's enemies were to be smitten by his servant. The Nicene Gregory of Nazianzus was enthroned bishop of Constantinople - with the assistance of the imperial troops. For Theodosius 'there was one true religious law infallibly revealed by God. ... Anyone who did not accept that law forfeited his rights and ought to be punished by the state. In such schemes of thought, once orthodoxy has been laid down, logically all deviationists and non-conformists will inevitably come into the government's indoctrination chamber.' (41) Cunctos Populos and the Council at Constantinople laid down this orthodoxy. Manichaeans and apostates, Arians, the Pneumatomachoi, Eunomians, Appolinarians and other heretics were all dealt with in a repressive manner. Towards the end of Theodosius' reign, paganism became another victim. Up to 391, the emperor adopted a mild attitude towards paganism, and even his legislation of that year retained a degree of ambiguity. It provoked the destruction of the Serapeum, for example, without demanding it, for it seems clear that Theodosius did not explicitly order this to happen.

Although there are points of detail in Theodosius' policy which are open to debate, the main lines are sufficiently clear for the purposes of this study. Underlying all else was the conviction that the Nicene faith alone was pleasing to God. It must therefore form the basis of the state-

Church: indeed, it must form the basis of both state and Church, for in the last resort the two were inseparable. Religious toleration was accordingly denied to the sects, and their members' rights of citizenship curtailed. It is obvious that Ambrose's attitude to the Nicene Theodosius would be vastly different from that which he had towards Valentinian II. Both bishop and emperor sought to further the exclusive claims of their rigid Nicene faith at the expense of all else.

There was thus considerable agreement between Ambrose and Theodosius on the ordering of the state-Church. The Church was to be built upon Nicea and her opponents to be dealt with harshly. But shortly after Theodosius was established in the West an incident occurred which showed that Ambrose's outlook was not entirely and immediately acceptable to the emperor. Much of the material considered so far in this chapter has underlined Ambrose's essentially dualistic understanding of Church-state relations. Like Eusebius of Caesarea, he acknowledged that the state was a divine institution and that the emperor was ordained of God. But this subservient attitude was qualified by the realisation that the emperor was bound by moral law and responsible to God. The Church, in particular, the bishops, were the custodians of this moral law. A bishop therefore had the right to dictate to the emperor on moral subjects. Here lies the paradox of St. Ambrose's position, for his dualism verged on advocating the supremacy of the Church over the state. In the last resort, Imperator intra ecclesiam, non supra ecclesiam est (42) and Ambrose championed this principle in the episode of the Callinicum riots.

Ambrose's opposition to Theodosius on this occasion has met with almost unqualified disapproval from posterity. His successful stand against the emperor's decision that the monks should be punished and the bishop made to rebuild the synagogue at his own expense evoked from Homes Dudden the bittered outcry 'thus fanaticism triumphed' (43), while W.H.C. Frend sees here 'ecclesiastical tyranny pushed to preposterous lengths. Ambrose'had

claimed for the Church the right of veto over the acknowledged duties of the state. Religion came before public order, and the way had been cleared for intervention by any clergy in secular affairs if they thought that their interests might be affected.' (44) But St. Ambrose's position is not completely indefensible.

In the first place, it is anachronistic for Homes Dudden and others to judge Ambrose's demands from the standpoint of contemporary liberalism. For good or ill, present-day concepts of religious freedom and tolerance were far removed from the fourth century. A generally accepted belief was that the supernatural was actively involved in the affairs of men, and that for the commonwealth it was expedient to placate divine wrath. The safest and surest way to do this was to win favour by worshipping in the right way. There was no place for dissenters. Their existence was a menace to the security of society.

A second point follows closely from this. It has already been observed that both Ambrose and Theodosius were convinced that the Nicene faith alone was pleasing to God. This conviction motivated Theodosius' repressive measures. Ambrose, by urging Theodosius not to compel Christians to compensate Jews and by insisting that a Christian state could not further Judaism, was merely demanding that the emperor should act consistently with the policy which he had already started to follow. Logically, if he was to be true to his own beliefs, Theodosius should not have considered compensating people who had forfeited their right of citizenship by obstinately adhering to a false religion.

Frend's assertion that Ambrose 'claimed for the Church the right of veto over the acknowledged duties of the state' not only misses the point made above that as the custodian of the divine moral law the Church does have this right but also presupposes an attitude which did not exist in the fourth century. If it is firmly held that Nicene Christianity is what God wishes, what possible justification is there for a Nicene Christian to displease God by furthering a cause of ignorance and unbelief? Such was the

reasoning of Ambrose and, more often than not, of Theodosius as well.

However much some critics may dislike Ambrose's demands over the Callinicum riots, one must credit him with consistency. There are many who may regret and deplore his intolerance, but surely even the most ardent opponent of the Bishop of Milan cannot justifiably condemn him for not entertaining a liberal outlook, so fashionable now, but so totally alien to his own times.

Ambrose's own account of the Callinicum riots incident is preserved in Epistles 40 and 41. One notes that whereas posterity has largely accused the Bishop of ecclesiastical tyranny, Ambrose himself justified his intervention in dualistic terms: 'I am not importunately thrusting myself in where I ought not, intruding into matters which are not my concern..... In matters of God, whom will you hear if not the Bishop? ... Who will tell you the truth if the Bishop does not?' (45) And the truth was that it was impossible for a Christian bishop to build a Jewish synagogue. It would be apostasy for a bishop to act in this way; he would doubtless prefer martyrdom. Ambrose asked: 'Shall a place be made for the unbelief of the Jews out of the spoils of the Church, and shall the patrimony, which by the favour of Christ has been gained for Christians, be transferred to the treasuries of unbelievers?' (46) In this instance there is no real choice to be made between discipline and religion, for discipline achieved at the expense of religion is worthless: 'Perhaps, O emperor, the cause of discipline moves you. Which then is of greater importance, the show of discipline or the cause of religion? It is needful that judgement should yield to religion.' (47)

The incident of Nathan and David spoke to the present circumstances. In a sermon preached before Theodosius, Ambrose recalled the prophet's divinely inspired pronouncement: 'I chose the youngest of thy brethren, I filled thee with the spirit of meekness, I anointed thee king by the hand of Samuel, in whom I and my name dwelt. ... I made thee triumph after exile. I set upon thy throne of thy seed one not more an heir than a

colleague. I made even strangers subject to thee, ... and wilt thou deliver my servants into the power of mine enemies, and wilt thou take away that which was my servants, whereby both thyself will be branded with sin and my adversaries will have whereof to rejoice?' (48) Ambrose recorded the emperor's reactions: 'When I came down, he said to me, "You preached about me." I replied, "I preached for your good." Then he said, "It is true that my order about the bishop rebuilding the synagogue was too harsh, but it has been altered. The monks perform many crimes." ... Then standing still awhile, I said to the emperor, "Set my mind at rest; let me make the Offering for you with a clear conscience." He, who was sitting down, nodded, but gave no open promise. As I continued to stand, he said that he would alter the rescript. At once I asked him to stop the inquiry altogether, in case the count found some occasion to injure Christians by it. He said he would. I said to him: "I act in reliance upon your honour," and I repeated, "Do I act on your honour?" He said, "Act upon my honour." So I went to the altar, which I had determined not to do without a complete promise.' (49) 'In a matter of public justice and order the Church had prevailed against Theodosius, using a form of spiritual sanction after appeal had failed. We are on the road to Canossa.' (50)

Two years after the rioting at Callinicum there occurred a far more horrific event, and one which had far reaching repercussions on Church-state relations. The massacre of about six thousand people in the circus at Thessalonica provoked general horror, even in an age accustomed to barbaric reprisals. Theodosius, outraged by the murder of the military commander of the city, ordered the bloodbath. Later he countermanded the order, but it was too late. Lured to the circus by the prospect of games, the unsuspecting citizens were butchered to death. Ambrose had learnt of Theodosius' intentions, but his intercession - unlike that of Flavian of Antioch in 387 - did not avert the disaster.

When the news of the massacre reached Ambrose, he was at a council deciding what was to be done in the case of Felix of Trier. The memory

of the Priscillianist executions, which had so shocked Ambrose and his fellow bishops, must have been very much in mind as they considered this new atrocity: 'Everyone deplored it, no one made light of it.' (51) This memory compelled Ambrose - not that he needed much compulsion - to take a stand upon this terrible abuse of imperial power. Ambrose delayed for a short while and then wrote to the emperor. The letter was a remarkable composition, for Ambrose adopted the quiet tone of Theodosius' friend, pastor, and spiritual guide. Here was no pompous moralising by an arrogant Milanese prelate. 'The memory of your friendship is pleasant to me, and I gratefully call to mind the kindness which, in reply to my frequent intercessions, you have most graciously conferred on others. ... I cannot deny that you have a zeal for the faith; I do confess that you have the fear of God. But you have a natural vehemence, which, if soothed, you quickly turn to mercy, if any one stirs it up, you rouse it so much that you can scarcely restrain it. Would that if no one soothe it, at least no one may inflame it!' (52) From this frank, but friendly opening Ambrose turns to the main point. 'A deed has been done in the city of the Thessalonians which has no parallel.' (53)

The Thessalonian massacre provided Ambrose with an occasion to exercise the powers of moral custodian with which he credited the episcopate. On an occasion such as this rigid separatism breaks down, for although this was a secular affair dealt with by secular forces, it was impossible for the Church to remain silent. The enormity of the crime demanded the judgement of the Church. It was as the guardian of the Church's moral and ethical laws that Ambrose wrote to Theodosius: 'You are a man, and temptation has come upon you; conquer it. Sin is not done away but by tears and penitence. ... The Lord himself, who alone can say "I am with you" if we have sinned, does not forgive any but those who repent.' (54) It is Ambrose's duty to say this, he cannot do otherwise. 'I would of course like to enjoy the imperial favour, and to act according to your wishes;

but the matter does not permit it.' (55) He had mentioned earlier his compelling obligation: 'If the priest does not tell the truth to him who is going astray, he will die in his sin, and the priest will be guilty of punishment, because he did not admonish him who erred.' (56) Ambrose was thus bound to adopt a corrective tone: 'I urge, I beg, I exhort, I warn, for it is grief to me, that you who were an example of unusual piety, who were conspicuous for clemency, who would not suffer single offenders to be put to peril, should not mourn that so many have perished.' (57)

Ambrose fully grasped the gravity of the situation and his own responsibilities in it. 'I have no cause for a charge of contumacy against you,' he wrote to the emperor, 'but I have a cause for fear; I dare not offer the sacrifice if you intend to be present. Is that which is not allowed after shedding the blood of one innocent person, allowed after shedding the blood of many? I do not think so.' (58) He repeated this point a little later: 'If you believe me, be guided by me; if, I say, you believe me, acknowledge what I say; if you believe me not, pardon that which I do, in that I set God before you.' (59) For the third time Ambrose had threatened spiritual sanctions. Valentinian II had been warned that if an imperial edict restored the Altar of Victory to the Senate, no priest would greet him when he next came to worship. A similar threat had been made to Theodosius during the Callinicum incident. Once again Ambrose had not shrunk from telling an emperor what in his opinion was right. The threat of excommunication - only effective because the bishop and the emperor were of the same theological persuasion - won the day. Theodosius capitulated. He performed public penance and was restored to communion a few months later. In the course of time the event became embroidered with legendary detail. Theodoret's narrative (60) differs greatly from Sozomen's more sober account. (61) and became the Church's experience and interpretation of Theodosius' repentance. With the words 'How could you lift up in prayer hands steeped in the blood of unjust massacre? How could you with

such hands presume to receive the most sacred body of our Lord? ... Depart, and do not by a second crime augment the guilt of the first' (62) the Bishop of Milan refused the emperor entrance to the basilica and sent him away with tears and groanings.

Theodoret's account of Ambrose turning the emperor away at the Church door, familiarised by the paintings of Rubens and Van Dyck, has distorted the real meaning and significance of the incident. The medieval legend suggests that we have here a first 'Canossa': the capitulation of the pomp and majesty of secular power before the Church of God. This is a mistaken interpretation. The tone of Ambrose's letter, it has been noted, was not that of the champion of sacerdotal government dictating terms to a secular prince. On the contrary, as a spiritual advisor and guardian of the Church's ethical standards, the Bishop of Milan urged the emperor to repent. Theodosius eventually gave way and acknowledged the inviolability of God's commandments. But this was a spiritual incident and a triumph in the 'Christianisation' of imperial rule. Without doubting the sincerity of their personal faith, it is fair to say that from the time of Constantine the emperors had to a great extent seen Christianity as a moral force which could be harnessed to serve political ends. The whole chapter of the Thessalonican massacre showed that the Church would not tolerate the public denial of her ethical principles, any more than she would allow state interests to dictate or formulate her dogmatic basis. Two inter-related causes which Ambrose championed were the independence of the Church and the universality of her ethical code. The emperor, as a son and soldier of the Church, was subject to this code.

St. Ambrose's episcopacy was drawing to its close. The remaining months before his death witnessed one further event which set the seal on his life's work. Arbogast - in all probability the murderer of Valentinian II - and his protégé, Eugenius, seemed to have enjoyed a similar degree of recognition as was granted to Maximus while he remained beyond the Alps.

But the situation was uneasy. Mainly because of his anti-pagan measures, there was growing hostility to Theodosius in Italy. At length Eugenius decided that there was nothing to gain by remaining in Gaul. In 393 he crossed the Alps and took possession of Italy. Allying himself with the pagan nobility - in particular Nichomachus Flavianus, who became his Praetorian Prefect - Eugenius awaited Theodosius' onslaught from the East. What had started as a political struggle between an ambitious and scheming upstart and the established emperor was readily changed by both parties into a religious war. This was to be the final conflict between paganism and Christianity.

With the interests of the Church at stake, Ambrose clearly could not pose as a neutral spectator, but he found himself in a somewhat embarrassing position. Theodosius, it has been noted, seems to have accepted Eugenius while he remained beyond the Alps. This factor influenced Ambrose. The Bishop of Milan was neither a turncoat nor a legitimatist or sentimentalist. It is evident that he counted Theodosius as a friend and had some sympathy with the unfortunate Valentinian II; but he shared the political principles of his age. In the later Roman Empire, as Mommsen<sup>2</sup> long ago observed, any usurper had a presumptive constitutional status which time would either conform or annul. If he succeeded he was the legitimate emperor. If he failed, he was a rebel; and must suffer the consequences. Ambrose therefore waited, refusing to commit himself until it was clear how Theodosius was going to act. This would be the deciding factor. Arbogast was, after all, a former general in Theodosius' army, and Theodosius, after defeating Maximus, had to all intents and purposes taken Italy and Africa away from the younger Valentinian. Baynes therefore asks a very valid question: 'Might not it be that his assassination - coming just then - was not unwelcome to Theodosius?' (63) Ambrose found himself in a very difficult position. He appears to have ignored Eugenius' two letters seeking recognition as legitimate emperor of the West, but after

Eugenius and Arbogast had invaded Italy, Ambrose sent a letter (64) which, as Greenslade says, 'treated him as at least de facto emperor.' (65) It was the alliance which Eugenius made with paganism which eventually led Ambrose to join Theodosius. The pagan party turned with fury on Ambrose and, so his biographer Paulinus assures us, swore that when they returned victorious from the encounter with Theodosius they would turn his basilica into a stable and force the clergy of Milan to serve there. (66)

In the course of time, however, victory came to Theodosius. The battle of the Frigidus appeared to many contemporaries as a final proof of Christianity's superiority; the lesson from Milvian Bridge was at last driven home and paganism rapidly lost its significance as a political entity. The armed forces of the Christian empire had triumphed and Christ-the-Giver-of-Victory had shown his approval of the Nicene state-Church. Two scenes stand out vividly from the drama, and even sadness, which surrounded the defeat of the last effective pagan resurgence. Rufinus described how the emperor Theodosius, outfought and outgeneralled in battle, realised that defeat was imminent. But standing on a small hill in full view of both armies, he knelt in prayer. This so encouraged and heartened his followers that they fought with fresh vigour. Prayer won the day for the imperial forces. (67) The second episode occurred a few days later. News of Eugenius' defeat reached Ambrose, who, obeying Theodosius' instructions, started to celebrate the Eucharist as a thanks-offering for the emperor's victory. But the bishop felt unworthy to perform the task. He therefore placed Theodosius' letter upon the Altar and held it during the celebration, so that the emperor's faith might be communicated to the Almighty and his letter perform the priestly function. This Eucharistic celebration, in Ambrose's intention the combined effort of bishop and emperor, symbolised the partnership between Church and state. This had been Ambrose's goal for more than twenty years, and there was now every indication that it had been reached. At Frigidus the might of the empire

and prayer to the God of the Christians had united to achieve the mutual victory. Theodosius confessed later that success had come to him 'by the merits and prayers' of his bishop. (68)

The hour soon struck for Theodosius to depart this world. Appropriately, St. Ambrose led the service held in Milan and gave the obituary address. The address was a striking testimony to the noble side of Theodosius' character, which sadly lapsed on a few notable occasions. One is left with little doubt about the emperor's genuine piety, his mercy and his faith. Ambrose himself soon followed the emperor. By the time these two men had died a clearly defined stage in the relations between Church and state had been reached. The most significant development had been the 'Christianisation' of imperial rule. Ambrose had successfully battled for the principle Imperator filius ecclesiae and had established the moral authority of the Church's ethical teaching in the sphere of secular administration. The independence of the clergy and the Church from secular interference had to a great extent been won. The Church was to determine her own faith. She alone was the guardian of Christian faith and morals. On both scores the emperor must listen to the authoritative leaders of the Church. Here lay the major difference between the Constantinian and Theodosian settlements. Within Constantine I's concept of the empire and Eusebius of Caesarea's theology of political absolutism (69) there was logically no room for the Church: in the last resort the Roman state was the Church. With Theodosius, a similar identification of Nicene Christianity and Roman citizenship prevailed, but the Church stood in her own right with her own duties to perform. This difference was largely a legacy of the dualistic reaction, consolidated by the career of Ambrose and Theodosius' willingness to submit (at times reluctantly) to the demands of his spiritual superiors. Despite extraordinary turns of fortune, the landowner from Spain never presumed to deny that he was a soldier of Christ, nor did he forget that obedience to the Church which his position implied.

Earlier dualistic thought had prepared the way for Ambrose's work of securing the freedom of the Church. This freedom meant simply that the Church must be able to be the Church: the faith first delivered to her was hers to interpret and define; the moral laws with which she had been entrusted were to be proclaimed in every walk of life and were binding on all believers. To be herself, the Church had at times to tell even the emperor how he ought to behave. The Bishop of Milan was no scheming prelate, seeking to advance the worldly interests of the Church. His heart's desire was the 'Christianisation' of every strata of Roman society, from imperial rule downwards.

Ambrose contracted a fatal disease in March 397 and resigned himself to the inevitable end: 'I have not lived among you in such a way that I would have to be ashamed to live longer; but I am also not afraid of death, for we have a good Lord.' (70) In many ways Ambrose was the product of his age and of the social environment in which he lived, but a measure of his greatness is that the importance and effects of his life's work transcended these limitations. The empire which had been his world, and which he had served to the best of his ability, did not last long after his death. But the Church of the Roman empire in the West survived to face the problems of a changing world. The Church which stood firm while so much of the known world crumbled away was the Church which St. Ambrose had helped to fashion and design.

Notes on Chapter 4

1. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., 44
2. Chapter 3, page 15
3. S.L. Greenslade, Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius, London 1954, 61.
4. H. Hess, The Canons of the Council of Sardica, 128-9
5. Chapter 3, page 55
6. J. Stevenson, Creeds, Councils and Controversies, London 1966, 21
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Chapter 5    The Dualism of the Two Cities

It is hard to study St. Augustine's teaching on Church and state as an isolated topic, for it forms merely one aspect of the larger field of his political thought. Moreover, this political thought and its accompanying understanding of the totality of human existence and history are themselves only part of the fully integrated synthesis of Augustinian theology. It can be misleading, therefore, to inquire into his conception of Church-state relations unless what Augustine has to say is seen in its true place within this wider context. The vital question of history to St. Augustine was not so much the nature of the Church's existence alongside the secular world, but the inter-relationship of the Two Cities, the universal principles of the two loves which transcend and yet explain the course of human history. To understand his evaluation of the problems of Church and state it is therefore necessary to bear in mind constantly the basic principles of his wider theology of history and to realise that the immediate subject of this study was in Augustine's mind only a small part of a larger problem.

Augustine, like Eusebius of Caesarea before him, based his understanding of the relationship between the Christian Church and the Roman empire on his interpretation of history. Augustine's breadth of vision enabled him to sum up the human predicament and see its position within an all-encompassing divine plan which was worked out as the years passed by. 'The epochs of the world are linked together in a wonderful way' (1) by the gradual enactment of this plan. The same neo-Platonism which influenced Eusebius may be detected in Augustine's thought at this point. God, 'the unchangeable governor as He is the unchangeable Creator of mutable things, orders all events in His Providence until the beauty of their component parts, which are the dispensations adapted to each successive age, shall be finished, like the grand melody of some ineffably wise master song.' (2)

Augustine, echoing the cry of the Old Testament prophets, affirmed

that the affairs of nations and the lives of individual men lay in God's control. There was no limit to His lordship: 'He, I say, having left neither Heaven nor earth, nor angel nor man, nor the most base and contemptible creature ... without the true harmony of their parts, and peaceful concord of composition; it is in no way credible that He would leave the kingdoms of men and their bondages and freedoms loose and uncompromised in the laws of His eternal Providence.' (3) The sovereignty of God was thus central to Augustine's thought and provided the unifying bond between the successive epochs of a great universal drama. Biblical history to Augustine was therefore Salvation-History, for it was the gradual revelation of God's redemptive purpose: God was the Lord of history, involved in history; the Salvation-History of the Old Testament was continued through the New Israel. This continuation was a vital point, for Salvation-History was not merely a record of past events, but a trend which must necessarily be carried out to its predetermined end. Although the greatest event - the Incarnation - had happened, the divine plan embraced all ages and all people. True to his African heritage, Augustine's understanding of history was based firmly in eschatology: the last phase in God's dealings with man had started; the existing order had no finality. Much of his historical viewpoint is summed up in the triumphant acclamation: 'The Lord is King, be the earth never so unquiet.' (4)

De Civitate Dei contains Augustine's clearest expression of his philosophy of history. Nevertheless, many of the ideas expressed therein had long been present in his thought. This massive work is essentially a justification of his assertion that God is the Sovereign-Lord of history, and an attempt to analyse and demonstrate the purpose of God in history. Although nearly fifteen years passed before De Civitate Dei was finished, its raison d'être was the challenge to the truth of Christianity which many people felt was implied by the successful barbarian invasions. But during these intervening years 'the work developed from a controversial pamphlet

into a vast synthesis which embraces the history of the whole human race and its destinies in time and eternity. It is the one great work of Christian antiquity which professedly deals with the relation of the state and of human society in general to Christian principles. ... Alike to Orosius and to Charlemagne, to Gregory I and to Gregory VII, to St. Thomas and to Bossuet, it remained the classical expression of Christian political thought and to the Christian attitude to history.' (5) Another modern commentator has written: 'It is hardly too much to say that the Holy Roman Empire was built upon the foundation of the De Civitate Dei.' (6) Paradoxically, though De Civitate Dei must rank among the most influential works of Christian literature it may also lay claim to being one of the most frequently misunderstood. An American scholar has recently suggested that 'from Charlemagne onwards, the Holy Roman Empire was inspired by a misreading of Augustine's City of God. Many people felt that he had established a kingdom of God on earth, in the form of a Christian renewal of the empire of ancient Rome. This was not really his intent; Augustine's was an other-worldly ideal, a distinction between two kinds of men, and two societies which would never be formally institutionalised in the course of time.' (7)

De Civitate Dei clearly illustrates that Augustine's view of Church and state forms part of a wider theology. Thus while it is true that this work is the main source for our understanding of Augustine's teaching on the Church, the world and the state, De Civitate Dei is also, as von Campenhausen reminds us, 'a kind of summary of the whole Augustinian theology itself.' He sees it as even more than this, for it was 'the last great apology of the Church against paganism, the final justification of her teaching and historical position at the end of time, and before the whole world. The whole material of traditional Christian polemic, collected through the centuries, is therefore expounded once more in a new and independent formulation.' (8) As some scholars see Augustine as the heir

of the old classical culture and one of the last representatives of antiquity, so von Campenhausen and others see him as the embodiment of the ideals and aspirations of the Patristic Church. Augustine was concerned with more than the problems of Church and state, and even his theory of the two societies fits into his whole compass of theology - for his attitude to history was determined by his understanding of human nature and his theology of grace and creation. It was this which led Figgis to remark that 'much of the book is but an expansion of Augustine's doctrine of grace applied on the scale of world history.' (9)

It is an indication of his greatness that Augustine has been seen as a man standing outside his own age, either like some great colossus striding forward into the medieval era or as the last representative of the dying classical culture. There is some truth in both these estimations, but they are also misleading. Without belittling his greatness, it may be suggested that Augustine was essentially a man of his own times; the product of his own age and environment. His thought was occasioned almost exclusively by contemporary affairs and experiences. His writings were largely compiled for his own age, dealing with the problems of that age. His was no abstract theology, seeking an audience wider than his contemporaries, This is nowhere more apparent than in De Civitate Dei.

The political and military disasters at the beginning of the fifth century severed once and for all the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman empire. This all-important development also brought about a decisive break in the thought of the Latin and Greek Fathers, not least on the relations between Church and state. Given these changed political circumstances, the divergence in theological outlook was inevitable and imperative. From Eusebius of Caesarea to Ambrose much Christian thought on this subject had been close to the Platonist understanding of the state, regarding the empire as the image or reflection of God's heavenly kingdom. Indeed, for a brief while Augustine seems to have shared this attitude. The Roman empire

was seen as the earthly manifestation of the divine archetype. Similar relationships were attributed to imperial and divine rule, and at times to the persons of the emperor and the Logos. This attitude presupposed a radical revaluation of traditional Christian eschatology. But in the West this attitude could not stand up to the test of time, for it was inconceivable that an empire which mirrored the heavenly rule of God could fall before barbarians. Events had invalidated the image relationship; therefore it had to be rejected. De Civitate Dei, provoked by these events, marked the return of the West to a biblical and eschatological outlook. Augustine, in sharp contrast to Eusebius of Caesarea, clearly distinguished the state from the City of God, which could not be institutionalised by man, nor fully represented on earth. On the other hand, the state lay close to the City of Earth: all kingdoms and empires are transitory. Here the Christian has no permanent dwelling place.

It is hard to over-estimate the significance of this development. The return to an eschatological outlook was the most essential point in Augustine's interpretation of history and vitally important for his understanding of the relations of Church and state. It will be noticed that its far-reaching implications moulded his ideas on suffering, on the judgement of God in history, and his whole understanding of the Christian in society. From first to last, Augustine's rationale of the Church, the state and the world was an expression of his eschatological convictions - convictions which would now bear the label of 'realised eschatology'.

It is not surprising that it was an African who drew the Western Church back to an awareness of Biblical eschatology. Although the Eastern Platonist thought on the state had firmly entered the Christian tradition, the voice of dissidents had never been far beneath the surface; this voice had often been heard clearest in Africa. Tertullian exemplifies this. Fervently and uncompromisingly he declared his opposition to Roman society and culture: 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there

between the Academy and the Church? ... Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon who taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition. We want no disputation after possessing Jesus.' (10) It was noted in an earlier chapter that this anti-Romanism was not the only side to Tertullian's thought on the subject, (11) but nevertheless it was an important element. Hostility to Rome was also expressed in an eloquent outburst by Commodian (the African poet whose precise dating is such a vexed problem): 'May the empire be destroyed which was filled with injustice and which long afflicted the world with heavy taxes ... Rome rejoiced while world groaned. Yet at last due retribution falls upon her. She who boasted herself eternal shall mourn eternally.' (12) With Tychonius as his immediate predecessor, from whom he learnt to see the Bible as history, Augustine was heir to this tradition - not merely its superficial expression, such as entertaining a concern about the failure of Roman justice similar to that of Commodian, (13) but also heir to the whole eschatological outlook which the African Church had preserved and to this vital insight into the New Testament proclamation.

In asserting his eschatologically-based conception of Church and state and whole understanding of history, Augustine turned away from the Origenist school of thought which had dominated Eastern Christianity. Ultimately the difference between the two attitudes resulted in contrasting - if not incompatible - estimations of Christianity itself. Without denying that Platonism considerably influenced the North African thought environment, it may nevertheless be argued that the African tradition stood over against Origen's synthesis of Christianity and Hellenism, with its accompanying trend of Greek thought and culture infiltrating the Church. In the East the Millenarianist tradition and the Church's inherited eschatological teaching were replaced by the idea of the kingdom of God as a spiritual reality divorced from the historical process. In the place of Salvation-

History there had been substituted a vision of Christianity which had affinity with some of the less bizarre aspects of Gnostic cosmic dramas, for Origen had largely conceived of salvation as the liberation of the soul. With the loosening of Christianity from its historical moorings, Origenism departed radically from the eschatological African tradition. Perhaps Augustine would have applauded Porphyry's statement: 'Though Origen was a Christian in the manner of his life, he was a Hellene in his religious thought and surreptitiously introduced Greek ideas into alien myths.' (14)

These considerations show how the social and political events of his life on the one hand, and on the other the intellectual traditions which moulded his environment, both influenced the development of Augustine's historical and eschatological approach to Christianity. His own experiences and the ethos of African Christianity led him to modify Origen's Christian-Platonic synthesis which determined so much in the Eastern Church. Nevertheless, Platonism remained one of the determining factors of Augustine's thought. Just as Tertullian's verdict on Rome was not so black as some isolated passages might suggest, so also we find that Augustine's appraisal of the state had its positive element. It will be necessary to return in more detail to this point, but for the time being let it be noted that Augustine was not so completely devoid of sympathy for Rome as his African heritage might suggest. In the Donatist controversy he defended the use of state machinery to further ecclesiastical interests, while in De Civitate Dei there is no a priori, inherent antagonism between the institutions of Church and state. There is a note of sadness and resignation in the statement in Confessions: 'For all this most fair order of things truly good will pass away when its measures are accomplished, and they have their morning and their evening.' (15) Nevertheless this statement lies at the heart of Augustine's thought, for while acknowledging that the present contains positive good he reasserts his basic eschatological conviction of an evolving Salvation-History which denies permanence or eternity to all human forms, cities and kingdoms.

Augustine should therefore be seen as the product of his own time and as the heir of the many traditions and influences of the African Church. But in addition to this, his claim to greatness rests partly on the fact that he was greater than his environment. He moulded new thought-forms as well as receiving old. This is evident from his philosophy of politics and history, for one sees here the enriching of inherited Biblical and eschatological precepts with the more profound perception of Hellenistic thought. Although there were exceptions - Thucydides for one - it may be suggested that the Greek mind did not readily lend itself to constructing philosophies of history or speculating on the meaning of life from past and contemporary events. Such spiritual meaning as it perceived in human affairs lay in the transcending of these affairs by values and ideas independent of time. Now, while Augustine's attitude to history was strongly influenced by Platonist thought and contained traces of a devolutionary vision of world events, he nevertheless managed to combine this insight with his biblically-centred attitude and so came to see human history and individual lives as expressing the dialectic of the Two Loves. This was the universal principle which at once both transcended and explained history. Although 'there are many and great nations all over the earth, ... yet there are no more than two kinds of society, which we may justly call the Two Cities, according to the language of our scriptures.' (16)

To Augustine the Two Cities provided the key to the understanding of human history. These Two Cities were the expression of the two loves which formed them. From the first these two human societies have existed: 'Two loves built the two cities - the earthly, which is the love of self even to the contempt of God, and the heavenly, which is the love of God to the contempt of self.' (17) The contrasting attitudes of pride and humility further characterised the two cities. The City of God embodied humility, 'where victory is truth, where dignity is holiness, where peace is happiness, where life is eternity.' (18) Against this stands the City

of Earth. The pride and arrogance of Babylon has passed down to Rome. Injustice and violence were inseparable from Rome's striving for earthly dominion and self-centred glory. The end of the earthly city's vain and futile search for her own peace would be eternal damnation. History is therefore seen as a double process, with the Two Cities following their own courses - but God remained the lord of this dual process. All the changing scenes of life are the working out of the divine plan, the great movement of history toward its end. At a time known only to God, when the number of the elect had been completed, the process will be wound up. But the point when this will happen is immaterial, what mattered is that this inner analysis provides an answer to the deepest questions that can be asked of human existence.

The relevance of this analysis to the circumstances which occasioned the writing of De Civitate Dei is readily discerned. The sack of Rome in 410 drew from the pagans the accusation that the empire's rejection of her ancient gods and her acceptance of Christianity had provoked divine wrath and thus brought about the disasters. Similarly, many Christians reacted to the calamity by voicing the now-familiar complaint 'Why does God allow such terrible things to happen?' De Civitate Dei was aimed more at these wavering and half-hearted Christians than at the convinced pagans, whom Augustine would have realised would remain unmoved by argument. It is hard to imagine accurately the effect which the sack of Rome must have had on the Roman world - British history scarcely contains a disaster of equal proportion. The shock was psychological rather than physical, for Rome was quick to recover. Indeed, the greatest shock seems to have been felt by those who were not directly victims of the invasion. From distant Bethlehem Jerome raised his voice in despair: 'What is safe if Rome perishes?' (19) for 'Alaric had captured the city which had captured the whole world.' (20) 'Swords, chains, famine, all the plagues at one time are destroying humanity ... peace has fled from the earth: it is the end of everything.' (21)

Perhaps the most demanding problem which confronted Augustine was to reconcile this devastating calamity with the sovereignty and justice of God. Augustine was compelled to deal with this issue, for it was partly created by the assertion which he endorsed: that God was the Lord of history. Once again he declared that God 'would certainly not have been prepared to leave the kingdoms of men and their dominions and servitudes outside the scope of His Providence.' (22) In the last resort he was unable to give a complete and final answer; just as Salvian failed when he too came to consider this question: 'I suppose that a rational and truly consistent answer would be that I do not know - for I am ignorant of the secret counsels of God.' (23) Nevertheless there were certain considerations which would enable the matter to be seen in the right perspective. The analysis of the Two Cities, itself an expression of his eschatological outlook, demanded that attention should be turned from the immediate and practical to the underlying reality and to the ultimate goal of history. The Christian life, with its vicissitudes and with its pleasures, was transcended by a higher citizenship which revealed the affairs of this world in a different light than that seen by those with a more limited horizon.

Augustine cannot be accused of making religion the opiate of the people, for above all other early Church Fathers he demanded the involvement of Christians in the secular world. Nevertheless, for Augustine the full meaning of an event lay not so much in its outward manifestation as in its inner relation to the dichotomy of the Two Cities which alone provides the key to understanding the course of history. Moreover, his conception of the movement of history towards its eschatological goal - a day of divine judgement and reckoning - instilled Augustine with an awareness of the transitory nature of all human achievements. Such was the Roman empire: it too must have its morning and its evening. The empire was no static reflection of the kingdom of God but merely one - perhaps

'the most fair' (24) - epoch within an evolving Salvation-History. The secret counsels of God remained unknown to man, and God's action in history must be seen in the light of these observations. Indeed, men might 'rejoice that they have their treasures in a place where no enemy has power to approach.' (25)

The argument put forward by the pagans that the sack of Rome was provoked by the empire's acceptance of Christianity was mistaken because it presupposed a false relationship between the Supernatural and the world. The piety-success formula which had recurred frequently in the thought of churchmen and emperors from the time of Eusebius of Caesarea to Ambrose of Milan had been a fallacy. The truth was, as Augustine perceived, that 'God bestows blessedness in heaven to pious men alone, but earthly power to pious and impious alike, in accordance with His good pleasure whom nothing unjust pleases.' (26) Virtue and piety found their reward in the eschatological kingdom of God, and not necessarily in the kingdoms of this world. Moreover, the pagans' criticism lost its force because the disasters of the present were not unprecedented in their enormity. 'People insist in the worship of old gods in the hope of avoiding the calamities which oppress us, and forget that the men who worshipped the same gods in time past suffered far heavier disasters.' (27) Augustine found support in this line of argument from an unlikely quarter, for the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus also wrote: 'Those who are ignorant of the ancient records say that the state was never before overshadowed by such dark clouds of misfortune, but they deceive themselves by yielding to the horror which recent disasters have caused them to feel.' (28)

Augustine did not view suffering on the relatively superficial level of historical events, but in the deeper context of his final analysis of history. His attitude was moulded by his conception of the Christian's inner relationship to God and to the world. Suffering was not good or bad in itself, but a neutral phenomenon of earthly existence which could become

a blessing or a curse. At one point he draws an analogy between suffering and the action of stirring, for stirring may intensify the unpleasantness of a stagnant pool or draw out the sweetness of perfume. (29) Similarly, suffering might harden the ungodly, but conversely it can purify and liberate the man of faith. Suffering was therefore not a senseless aspect of divine sovereignty but an invaluable factor urging man on in his search for God. Suffering demonstrated the futility of making temporal wealth or fortune the goal of life, for in this world nothing is safe from corruption. A little later Orosius was to speak of suffering and disaster as 'kindly chastisements' (30) - Augustine would have approved of such a sentiment. Suffering could therefore lead to faith, and to the knowledge that faith alone is the power which can bring one through the tests and ordeals of life. This is the faith which looks forward to the end when all that is hidden will be made known.

Augustine's rejection of the piety./ success formula and his relating of suffering to an eschatological view of history, and indeed his whole concept of the judgement of God, underline the deep-rooted difference between his own thought and the strict Platonist understanding of the empire. This is reflected in his refusal to make the direct equation between the two Cities and Church and state. G.G. Willis observed that 'the term civitas superna is not synonymous with the Church militant. Sometimes Augustine seems to identify them, but usually the civitas superna is the whole Church when it is in patria and not the Church in via. Similarly the civitas terrena is not always to be identified with the state as such.' (31) Nevertheless it would be a grave mistake to conclude that Augustine assigned no positive value or importance to the hierarchical Church. Although the Church was not the eternal City of God, it was its representative and organ in the human arena. But more than this, the life of the Church was the point of contact between the sensible world and the transcendent spiritual order. It is the means by which created man can pass

from time to eternity. Augustine's doctrine of the Church therefore had these two aspects - on the one hand his conviction that the Church was not to be identified with the City of God, and on the other this more positive attitude. The Church contained evil and had its imperfections, its sinners as well as its saints. Not until the Day of Judgement would the tares be separated from the wheat: 'Although they are now, during the course of time, intermingled, they shall be divied at the Last Judgement.' (32)

This consistent refusal to equate the Church with the City of God, together with the assertion that good and bad existed side by side in the Church, and the more general picture of the warring Cities, had a profoundly important implication. If there was no institutionalised division in human affairs between the City of God and the Earthly City, and if both good and evil men were to be found in Church as well as state, then the ground has been prepared for a theological justification of the involvement of Christians in the secular world. To a certain extent others had done this before him, but Augustine stands out among the early Church Fathers on account of his thorough rationale of the Christian's responsibilities towards society. Indeed, it may be suggested that Augustine anticipated the secularisation of modern religious thought.

In the first place, there could be no question of contracting out of the world: 'So long as (the Celestial City) lives like a captive and stranger in the Earthly City, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as the earnest of it, it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the Earthly City, whereby the things necessary to the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both Cities, so there is harmony between them and it.' (33) The pilgrim does not disturb himself 'about the diversities in manner, laws and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but (recognises) that they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.' (34)

Secondly, Christianity also leavened and enriched the rest of the world. Men fall into two categories, according to which of the two loves characterised their lives. The love on which the City of God was based is 'holy' and 'social', it 'consults the common welfare', and 'desires for its neighbours what it wishes for itself.' (35) However indirectly, the kingdom of God therefore benefits all mankind. Augustine summed up this line of thought in the words: 'How should the City of God originally begin or progressively develop or ultimately attain its end, unless the lives of the saints was a social one?' (36) For Augustine, however, it was the family not the state which was the acceptable basic unit. His belief that Christianity could cure the ills of society was not confined to De Civitate Dei, but found expression on another occasion: 'Here also is security for the welfare and renown of a commonwealth; for no state is perfectly established and preserved otherwise than on the foundations and by the bond of faith and of firm concord, when the highest and truest good, namely God, is loved by all, and men love each other in Him without dissimulation because they love one another for His sake.' (37)

Augustine did not limit himself to such general pronouncements but turned also to more specific issues. His letters to Volusianus and Boniface showed that he did not regard either military or civil service as inherently incompatible with Christianity, although ideally neither would be necessary. Except among the fanatical Donatists and extreme ascetics this had not been a controversial matter at the end of the fourth century. Nevertheless, Augustine's views on this subject must take their place in the development of the Church's attitude towards her secular environment. The pilgrim of the Heavenly City was to maintain an inner detachment from the world, but this did not interfere with his discharging of civic obligations. The only limit to his participation in secular affairs was that he could do nothing which would have compromised his Christian principles.

To do justice to Augustine one must acknowledge that he had this

heightened sense of social consciousness. He avoided the potential dangers to an attitude of life which was essentially eschatological because his concept of a transcendent principle which explained the meaning of life and his belief in the movement of history towards its goal enabled him to grasp fully the social implications of the Christian Gospel. He saw that the institution of the state and the condition of men in this world benefitted from the Christian's participation and that this participation was the unavoidable expression of the love which constituted the City of God. Considerations such as this led Christopher Dawson to conclude that 'it is to him more than to any other individual that we owe the characteristically Western ideal of the Church as a dynamic social power.' (38) There is indeed a marked difference to be noted between Augustine's insistence on involvement in the secular order and 'the static and metaphysical conceptions which dominated Byzantine Christianity.' (39) The social involvement which he advocated had far-reaching repercussions in the evolution of moral freedom and responsibility, for the social consciousness of Western Christianity which Augustine demanded developed as the centuries passed in ever sharper contrast to the Byzantine ideal of an omnipotent, sacred state and subject people. This Western characteristic grew out of Augustine's stress on the importance of the individual's will, at the expense of the Platonist view of citizenship of an empire which was the mimesis of God's Heavenly Kingdom. It was Augustine, therefore, who 'first made possible the ideal of a social order resting upon the free personality and a common effort towards moral ends. And thus the Western ideals of freedom and progress and social justice owe more than we realise to the profound thought of the great African who was himself indifferent to social progress and to the transitory nature of the earthly states.' (40)

In Augustine's thought the state was not to be equated finally with the Earthly City, any more than the Church was with the Heavenly. In both cases, however, there was close affinity. This is clearly evident in his analysis of the Earthly City. 'The Earthly City, which does not live by

faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life.' (41) This limited objective was the natural and practical manifestation of the love of self carried to the level of contempt of God on which the Earthly City rested. But the state was not intrinsically evil. In the first place this was because the Two Cities existed alongside each other 'mingling one with the other through all the changes of time from the beginning of the human race, and shall move on together until the end of the world, when they are destined to be separated at the Last Judgement.' (42) Since divine judgement was postponed until the end of the historical process, it followed that there could be no a priori moral condemnation of the state. A second line of thought which had bearing on this topic was Augustine's insistence that the Christian was to play a full and responsible part in the secular order. While their sojourn on earth lasted, members of the Heavenly City were not to scruple about the manners, laws and institutions by which earthly peace was preserved because earthly peace was desirable, necessary and beneficial to them in their pilgrimage. It followed that the state and its life could not be evil in themselves, for if they were evil the Heavenly City would have no contact with them. This is also suggested by Augustine's lamentation over the passing 'of this most fair order of things truly good.' (43) This phrasing could not have been used if the state was intrinsically evil and godless. On the contrary, the state formed an integral part of the divine plan in history.

It is true that the state had affinity with the Earthly City. The Earthly City manifested itself through Babylon and Rome, but its beginnings lay with Cain. Both Cain and Romulus had been guilty of fratricide; both had built cities - thus demonstrating that political organisation was the consequence of sin. But this does not condemn political organisation; on the contrary, it was the God-given remedy for the disasters occasioned by

sin. In ideal circumstances a number of small states would have been preferable to a large empire, and Augustine spoke at one time of a 'huge monstrosity with an intolerable sickness.' (44) But the ideal circumstances did not prevail and because of this the empire was acceptable. For a long time it had performed the invaluable service of keeping at bay foreign invaders. The empire had provided the peace and civil blessings which facilitated the pilgrimage to the Celestial City. There were thus two main facets to Augustine's conception of the state: political organisation, more specifically the Roman empire, was the remedy God provided for the dissension and chaos in social life which resulted from sin. The state was not evil, but only became so when it identified itself with the Earthly City by rejecting the worship of God and indulging in the love of self which leads to the contempt of God.

In expounding this theory of the empire Augustine closely followed the line which had predominated Christian thought in the pre-Constantinian era. He rejected the main developments of Christian political thought of the fourth century by his refusal to present a positive religious rationale of the Christian empire. From whatever point one approaches Augustine's political and historical reasoning one soon arrives at his insistence that the kingdom of God is not mirrored by human institutions. The Dominical statement 'My kingdom is not of this world' summed up his position. (45) He saw that there was an essential moral neutrality about political government, for it could be turned to serve either good or bad ends. It was possible for a Christian to obey a Nero as well as a Theodosius, providing he was not required to do something contrary to his Christian principles. The emperor was not God's vicegerent, as Eusebius of Caesarea had maintained, but an individual who, by exercising his will, had to seek his own salvation. It was noted earlier that Augustine rejected the piety/success formula and consistently asserted that God was under no obligation to favour Rome. Christianity might lead to social renovation and indeed

was the only secure basis for a kingdom, but the eschatological ideal could not be realised on earth before the Last Judgement. It was a transcendent Kingdom which had to be sought.

Augustine's contention that the ideal could not be achieved in the course of history led him to define the state in a way which rejected the political idealism expressed in Cicero's generally accepted view of the state resting essentially on justice. By definition true justice could exist only in the Heavenly City, and because the City of God was not a visible entity on earth it followed that there could be no true justice among the kingdoms of this world. Despite all that he could say in Rome's favour, there was an abundance of evidence to suggest this. (46) In general terms, Augustine saw many of Rome's alleged achievements to be founded in injustice and prospering by oppression and bloodshed. These factors lead him to eliminate justice and morality from his understanding of what constituted a state and instead to suggest that human society was determined by a common will. The state was a 'multitude of rational creatures associated in a common agreement as to the things which it loves.' (47) This amoral definition of the state has provoked much controversy. A.J. Carlyle found it hard to accept that Augustine really meant what he said and confessed that 'if he did I cannot but feel that it was a deplorable error for a great Christian teacher.' (48) Today this reaction seems strange, for the sad course of the twentieth century has shown that for greater or lesser periods of time great nations can live in flagrant denial of all that is worthy of the name of morality and justice. Sanctioned by brutal political philosophies, the sword, robbery and cruelty may - as Augustine envisaged - become the common love and accepted basis of earthly kingdoms.

Augustine did not conceive of Church-state relations in terms of two rival powers with opposing jurisdiction battling for supremacy. Augustinian theology certainly came to play its part when such a situation

arose, but one must beware of seeking from his writing answers to problems which did not yet exist. The vital issue to his mind was the relation between the Two Cities, and this transcended the arena in which Church and state led out their lives. The eschatological standpoint from which he viewed history led him to see the relation between Church and state not as the problem of the co-existence of two institutions and authorities within the Christian world, but rather in terms of two orders. On the one hand there were the kingdoms of this world, the order of the present age. On the other lay the kingdom of God and the Age to come. But the picture was complicated by the eschatological tension of the Church's existence, for the kingdom of God was in some sense realised and present before its fullness. Augustine's concept of the Christian's relation to secular society expressed this tension. The kingdoms of the present age were to be recognised and their rule obeyed, but an inner detachment was to be maintained and nothing but external loyalty given to the state. 'The peace of God's enemies is useful to the piety of His friends as long as their earthly pilgrimage lasts.' (49)

Augustine's conception of the intermingling of the two Cities until the end of time enabled him to advocate a Church-state alliance, despite the eschatological dualism which characterised his thought. Until the universal drama was wound up the two Cities were inter-dependent as well as intermingled. Not only did he assert that Christians had no right not to contract out of society, but also that the Earthly City served the Heavenly for the duration of the present age. In so far as the City of God had affinity with the Church and the Earthly City to the state, it followed that there also had to be a close relationship between Church and state. To live peacefully the Church relied on the state preserving public law and order. The state must defend her property and defend her from her enemies. This line of reasoning lay behind the attitude which Augustine adopted towards the Donatists. Conversely earthly society could not survive without its citizens agreement over the object of its love. The

sceptic might say that this only implied that self-interest knows what is best for self, and that a little restraint might be seen to ensure greater rewards. But Augustine argued that the concord of the citizens rested on a degree of justice if not love - qualities which it had learnt from its contact with the Celestial City. The Church-state alliance was therefore one of mutual dependence and advantageous to both parties. It was permissible because the state could serve the Church and in return could be obeyed until its demands became incompatible with the Christian faith.

The partnership was therefore not one between equals. In both practice and theory Augustinian theology demanded the subordination of the state to Church interests. The earthly must necessarily be subject to the heavenly. 'O blessed Church, once thou hast heard, now thou hast seen. For what the Church heard in promises she now sees manifested. For all things that were formerly prophesied are now fulfilled. Lift up thine eyes and look abroad over the world. Behold now thine inheritance even to the ends of the earth. See now fulfilled what was spoken: all the kings of the earth shall worship Him, all nations shall do Him service.' (50) It is noticeable that at one point Augustine speaks of the Church in similar terms to those which Eusebius of Caesarea used in his praise of Constantine I: the grain of mustard seed had outgrown all plants and now provided refuge for even the most powerful and greatest men; Christ's yoke lay across the shoulders of kings and the greatest of all empires had lain aside the symbols of its rule and humbled itself before the tomb of the Fisherman. (51)

Augustine did not ask if the state had the right to intervene in Church concerns, but rather demanded that the state must live up to its responsibilities towards the Church. The state had no right not to further ecclesiastical interests. No fault could be found, therefore, with the Church if she requested the aid of a Christian emperor in dealing with dissidents, or indeed with any other problem. Scripture declared that the kings of the earth would adore and the nations serve 'and, therefore, we

are making use of this power which the Lord both promised and gave to the Church.' (52) It would be mistaken to inquire whether Augustine thought in terms of the Church being served by statesmen who were Christians, or in terms of the Church being served by the state itself. The alternatives did not present themselves. The state with which Augustine was concerned was a Christian state.

In Augustine's theology of Church and state there could be no doubt that the state was very much the subordinate partner. On the one hand the state was the God-given safeguard against the consequences of sin; on the other hand it could become the embodiment of the injustice and the manifestation of the love of self which led to the contempt of God - but this was when it surpassed the neutrality which was its role within the divine plan and demanded that which the Christian faith could not give. In this way the seeming incompatibility of the two strains of thought were reconciled. Though the state had a necessary part to play within the divine ordering of human affairs, its rights were strictly qualified.

One aspect of Augustine's attitude to the state which has met with much attention and condemnation has been his support of the use of force against the Donatists. On this score Montgomery placed him 'in the line of development which leads to the tortures and burnings of the Inquisition.' (53) Augustine's position was certainly consistent with his understanding of the subordination of state to Church, but to understand it fully one must be aware of the developing circumstances, for his attitude to the use of force was moulded by contemporary circumstances. Willis comments that 'his belief on these questions was at any rate in part forged on the anvil of the Donatist controversy.' (54) Certainly a hardening in his attitude may be detected.

At the start of Augustine's dealings with the Donatists he was convinced that an act of will alone would lead to true belief. (55) He was uneasy about the question of coercion. (56) He frequently adopted a

conciliatory attitude towards the Donatists. (57) He put his faith in the power of reason and debate - as he had done in his encounter with the Manichees: 'It was our part to choose the better course, that we might find a way to your correction, not by contention, strife and persecution, but by mild consolation, friendly exhortation and quiet discussion.' (58) But this trust in argument was misplaced: it was an idealism far removed from the harsh realities of the situation. 'Falsehood was found guilty and truth revealed. Why then is unity still shunned and charity scorned?' (59) The answer was that at first Augustine did not adequately account for those factors which have led to Donatism being described as 'a movement of protest in Roman North Africa,' (60) for there were underlying social, economic and political forces which nourished the religious conflict. An appeal to reason could not meet these factors on equal terms. It was therefore the Donatists' continual refusal to be persuaded by reasonable argument which led Augustine to accept the use of force. He found support from Old and New Testaments - in particular his interpretation of compelle intrare in the banquet parable of Luke 14:16ff - to justify his conclusion that the sermons of Catholic Prelates were to be supported by the laws of Catholic Princes.

Augustine never rejected his belief that in the last resort individual conversion and the restoring of unity to the African Church were matters of the will. But he realised that coercion might facilitate this by ensuring that external circumstances favoured such a return to Catholicism. He confessed to Vincentius, the Rogatist bishop: 'I have therefore yielded to the evidence afforded by these instances which my colleagues have laid before me.' Foremost was the case of his own town, Hippo, 'which although it was once wholly on the side of Donatus, was brought over to Catholic unity by fear of the imperial edicts.' (61) The evidence compelled him to see that there could be no doubt about the success of coercion. (See NOTE appended to the end of the Chapter)

Moreover, when Augustine appealed for state assistance he was doing nothing more than the Donatists themselves had already done. The Donatists had brought Constantine I into the conflict through their appeals; their exiled bishops had appealed to Julian for pardon; more significantly they had used force against their own schismatics; Donatists had supported the anti-pagan policy of the emperors. It is hard to sympathise with members of a sect who were victims of state action when they themselves had been prepared to make use of the state whenever it had been in their interests to do so. From one point of view, Augustine played the game in accordance with the rules which the Donatists themselves had accepted and used. But ultimately force was used against the Donatists because the leaders of both state and Church came to see the movement as lying beyond the Church's powers of correction. It was the assault on Maximinian of Baggai, not the appeal of the Carthaginian Council of 404, which finally precipitated state intervention. For many years the activities of the Circumcellions had taken on alarming overtones of class, economic and social warfare, and the assault on Maximinian had been one more indication that public order and Roman rule were seriously challenged. Moreover, the alliance between Donatism and the unsuccessful rebellions of Firminius and Gildo had suggested that the movement had political and military aspirations. If Roman rule, let alone Roman religion, was to survive in Africa the empire had to regain much lost ground. It was expedient that the secular arm should be brought to bear against the Donatists.

These considerations suggest that it is unreasonable to pass unqualified condemnation on Augustine because of the stand he took against the Donatists. It is true that his subordination of the state to the Church meant that all the state's machinery - including what served as a police force - was at the Church's disposal, but his own reluctance to sanction coercion, coupled with his anxiety to mitigate the harshness of the law (62) does not fit in with the picture of the great persecutor and the champion

of persecution which some of Augustine's enemies would have us see. Sparrow-Simpson reached the more balanced conclusion that 'it would be difficult to be more unhistoric and more unjust than to represent Augustine as a Torquemada before his time. That his unhappy misinterpretation of the Scripture words formed a deadly precedent, and led to appalling consequences, is only too painfully true. But Augustine is not the only great thinker who failed to anticipate the consequences of his teaching: consequences from which, it may be safely said, no man would have recoiled more completely.' (63)

However Augustine's acceptance of the use of force is viewed, it must still be acknowledged that his teaching on the state provides an answer to one of the Church's major dilemmas - that of her relationship to the secular world. The root of this problem, it has been noted, lies in relating to the contemporary scene two superficially incompatible strains of New Testament thought. Augustine's achievement was to interpret the present consistently with the realised eschatological outlook of the New Testament. On the one hand this kept him free from the errors of Eusebius of Caesarea and rejecting traditional eschatology. On the other hand it compelled him to part company with earlier Nicene dualists who had been unable to account for both state and Church within the divine ordering of history.

Augustine's eschatologically orientated theology of history enabled him to stress the transience of human institutions and kingdoms. At the same time he declared that government is good and God-given - though a Christian remains inwardly detached from its demands, for the state and its machinery is the servant and not the master of the Celestial City. Augustine thus combines separatism and subordinationism, the two New Testament traditions on the state, within his theology of Church and state. The merits and failings of the various schools of political thought which have been considered in this study await final evaluation in the last

chapter, but it may be said at this point that Augustine's synthesis forms a fitting conclusion to the debate and experiments of the previous one hundred years. Eusebius, the mid-century Nicenes and Ambrose had all searched for answers to the problems created by the empire's acceptance of Christianity, but invariably their answers distorted or negated vital aspects of the New Testament teaching. St. Augustine stands above this criticism. His teaching may have had its regrettable implications and side issues, but fundamentally his rationale of Church and state remains true to the demands of the New Testament. Herein lies but one small part of the genius of St. Augustine.

Appended Note on Epistle XCIII, 18

In chapter 5, page 131, reference was made to 'Hippo, "which although it was once wholly on the side of Donatus, was brought over to Catholic unity by fear of the imperial edicts." Superficially it may seem obvious to take civitas noster as a reference to Hippo. This interpretation, however, is open to dispute.

Frend holds that the city here referred to was Thagaste, and dates the conversion to the period 348-61. (1) Such a dating certainly is consistent with what Alypius said at the Conference of Carthage in 411: Utinam quemodmodum Tagastis antiqua unitate gaudet, ita etiam de caeteris locis gaudeamus! (2) On the other hand, it is difficult - though not impossible - to suppose that Augustine, as Bishop of Hippo, would mean anywhere but Hippo when using the phrase civitas noster.

The letter to Vincent of Cartenna (3), from which Augustine's words are taken, was written in 408. Stilicho was executed in this year on 22 August, and after his death there was a temporary revival of Donatism. (4) If the letter to Vincent were written before August, then Augustine's words might apply to Hippo, where he had ejected his Donatist rival Proculeianus and taken over the basilica. If, however, the letter was written after August, when Proculeianus' successor Macrobius had reasserted himself, then the claims of Thagaste become correspondingly stronger.

In the last resort, the issue remains insoluble. Nevertheless the present writer feels that for the purposes of this study he is justified in taking civitas noster to refer to Hippo. But whether the claims of Thagaste or Hippo are accepted, the relevance of Ep. xciii, 18 to Augustine's attitude to coercion remains unchallenged.

- (1) Frend, The Donatist Church, 184 note 2.
- (2) Gest. Coll. Carth., i. 136.
- (3) Ep. xciii,
- (4) Bonner, St. Augustine, 266,267.

Notes on Chapter 5

1. Ep. CXXX, 15
2. Ibid.
3. De Civitate Dei, IV, 11
4. Psalm 99, 1.
5. C. Dawson, Monument to St. Augustine, London 1930, 43
6. Bryce, The Holy Roman Empire, London ed. of 1915, 93
7. Vernon J. Bourke, The Essential Augustine, New York, 1964, 197
8. H. von Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Latin Church, London 1964, 241
9. J.N. Figgis, Political Aspects of St. Augustine's D.C.D., London 1921, 6
10. Tertullian, De Praescriptione, vii
11. Chapter 1, 18
12. Commodian, Carmen Apologeticum, 889-90, 921-3
13. D.C.D. XIX, 6
14. Quoted Dawson, Op. cit. 49
15. Confessions, XIII, 35
16. D.C.D. XIV, 1
17. Ibid, XIV, 28
18. Ibid, II, 29
19. Jerome, Ep. cxxiii, 16, 4
20. Jerome, Ep. cxxvii, 12
21. Ps- Prosper, Ad Uxoram, P.L. 51, 611
22. D.C.D., V, 31
23. Salvian, De Gubernatione Dei, III, 1
24. cf 14 above
25. D.C.D. I, 10
26. Ibid, V, 21
27. Ibid, III
28. Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 5, 10
29. D.C.D., I, 8

30. Orosius, Clementissimae Admonitiones, I, 6, 5
31. G.G. Willis, St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy, London 1950,  
142
32. D.C.D., XI, 15
33. Ibid. XIX, 17
34. Ibid, XI, 15
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid, XIX, 5
37. Ep. CXXX, 5, 18
38. C. Dawson, op. cit., 76
39. Ibid, 76
40. Ibid, 77
41. D.C.D., XIX, 17
42. Ibid, XIV, 1, 28; XV, 1, 2
43. cf. 14 above
44. D.C.D., III, 10; IV, 3
45. St. John, XVIII, 36
46. See page 5
47. D.C.D., XIX, 24
48. Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Medieval Thinkers,  
ed. F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 51
49. D.C.D., XIX, 26
50. Enarrationes in Psalmos, LXVII, 7
51. Ep. CXXXII, 3
52. Ep. CV, 5, 6; cf Ep. XXXV, 3
53. W. Montgomery, St. Augustine, Aspects of his Life and Thought,  
London, 1914, 242
54. G.G. Willis, op. cit., 127
55. Ep. XXXIV
56. Ep. XXIII and CLXXV
57. Ep. XXIII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XLIV

58. C. Epis. Fund., I, 1
59. Ad. Don. post Coll., XXXV, 58
60. W.H.C. Frend; this is the sub-title of The Donatist Church, Oxford,  
1952
61. Ep. XCIII, 18
62. Ep. CXXXIII; CLII; CLIII
63. W.J. Sparrow-Simpson, The Letters of St. Augustine, London 1919, 113-4

## Chapter 6 Summary and Conclusion

It was admitted in the Introduction that this study has not been motivated by any purely antiquarian interest. Elisabeth Isichei's verdict that the Church's attitude to secular society is 'an inconclusive conversation between an ideology and history which is still going on' (1) was accepted as fundamental. The period from the time of Eusebius of Caesarea to St. Augustine of Hippo was selected in the belief that from such a consideration this continuing debate might be seen in clearer perspective. A basic premise had been that through a deeper awareness of the Church's past an understanding might be gained which could be profitable in present and future dilemmas. It is not suggested that the experiences of a previous age will necessarily provide a ready-made answer to every problem. On the contrary, the Church's attitude to the state is an issue always requiring reappraisal since it is in part based on the Church's interpretation of inherited precepts in the light of her contemporary social environment. It is therefore a changing relationship: a point abundantly evident from the preceding chapters. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that at the very least the repetition of past errors might be avoided by realising why and how mistakes have been made, and when false turnings taken. General principles of far reaching consequence may legitimately be sought from the study of history.

It may be suggested with trepidation that the subject of the Church's relation to the state is supremely important, if only for the reason that one's understanding of the nature of the Church and the task confronting her is determined to a considerable extent by one's estimate of the secular world. Attention was drawn in chapter 1 (2) to Stephen Neill's pronouncements on the divergence between Christian ethics and the generally accepted moral code of the Western world. The Church's hold over society now is little more than a shell covering. The gulf between the Church and the world increases, and eventually there must be tension between the Church

and the secular governments which sanction such developments. The contemporary problem, when reduced to its barest essentials, is about what relationship the Church can have with the leaders and forms of government in a de-Christianised society. The fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries cannot answer this directly: not least because they witnessed the acceptance rather than the rejection of the Christian Gospel. Nevertheless in this epoch the Church strove to work out her relationship with the governors of the secular world. One is justified to ask what the Church saw to be the central issues and the fundamental points at stake in confronting the world while remaining true to her Master's teaching.

Such a line of reasoning has motivated this study. In this last chapter a summary of the ground covered is called for. A conclusion must be offered.

The New Testament, it was noted, contains what are at first sight two incompatible traditions on secular authority. In their clearest expression there is, on the one hand, St. Paul's injunction: 'Let every man be subject to the powers that be' (3) and, on the other hand, the pronouncement in I John: 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.' (4) This seeming contradiction is to be found even in Jesus' teaching. At times Our Lord denegated political authority, such as in His statement 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship ... but ye shall not be so' (5), while He told Pilate 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (6) But at other times earthly dominion is seen in a more positive light. The 'Render to Caesar' (7) command attributes to the secular power an authority which is God-given and therefore compatible with His higher sovereignty. Pilate is told: 'Thou couldest have no powers at all against me, except it were given thee from above.' (8)

It was suggested that this seeming contradiction can be reconciled when the New Testament teaching on the state is seen in its true context: namely, in relation to the primitive Christian eschatology. Secular

government belongs to the present dispensation. It is therefore temporary. The Last Things have been inaugurated, but their consummation lies in the future. The state, although not to be equated with the kingdom of God, plays an integral part within the divine ordering of history. While it keeps within its God-given limits it is good and must be obeyed. By implication, when the state exceeds these limits the Christian can neither meet its demands nor silently acquiesce in them. The New Testament demands obedience to the state while it serves its ordained purpose, but condemns the state when it oversteps itself. But there is always a danger that the Church might lose sight of this delicate balance and express one attitude at the expense of the other.

For the first three hundred years of her existence the Church produced no systematic interpretation of the Roman empire. Attitudes to the state must be gleaned indirectly and are invariably found within a wider apologetic context. Church leaders were anxious to demonstrate that the frequent hostility to their religion was unjustified. Aristides, Justin and Athenagoras in a similar way all insisted that Christians were responsible and upright citizens: the charges of immorality and atheism were absurd. The general picture during the era of the persecutions was that the Church recognised the positive value of the Roman empire and wished to be accepted by it. This attitude was exemplified by Melito of Sardis, whose equation of the Pax Augusta with the birth of the Christian Church was a remarkable anticipation of the view later adopted by Eusebius of Caesarea. Against this quiescent tradition, the separatist strain in New Testament teaching on the state was taken up by Tertullian. Despite the qualifications and inconsistencies which a full analysis of his writings reveal, he staunchly championed the tradition of apocalyptic dualism: 'The Caesars too would have believed in Christ, if either the Caesars had been necessary for this world or if Christians could have been Caesars.' (9) Neither Clement nor Origen formulated a concept of kingship in the terms of their

Christian Platonism. On the contrary, Origen's desire for martyrdom, his reluctance to become involved in political debate and his negation of secular affairs places him closer to Tertullian than other aspects of his theology might suggest.

Thus in the pre-Constantinian epoch both aspects of the New Testament teaching on the state were represented. Differing schools of thought tried to resolve the tension by expressing one particular tradition at the expense of the other. In their defence, however, it must be admitted that the second and third century Fathers did not claim to present any coherent rationale of Church and state. Nevertheless, what they said constitutes an important link in the chain of developing attitudes to the secular world from Apostolic times to the fourth century.

It fell upon Eusebius of Caesarea to draw up the first systematic Christian theology of the Roman empire. To a great extent the task confronting him was to reconcile contemporary attitudes with the Church's faith. The fourth century had inherited the traditional Hellenistic conception of kingship, with its great emphasis on the divine aspects of the kingly role and on the monolithic structure of society. The king was appointed by the Supernatural and occupied a position mid-way between God and man. On the one hand, he was God's representative before his subjects, demanding their total obedience because of this. To disobey him was to disobey the Power which he represented. On the other hand he was responsible to God for the entire life of his people. There was no rigid distinction between the religious and the secular; only one corporate existence, stemming from the divine and wholly dedicated to it. The king expressed in his person the ultimate political and sacerdotal authority.

These ideas were currently expressed in the terminology of neo-Platonism, the dominant philosophical school of the day. The image relationship between heavenly and earthly rule was stressed. The emperor was the saviour of society and the mediator between God and man. It was

this attitude which Eusebius 'Christianised'. The ground had been prepared for him by the Alexandrian Christian Platonists, but especially by the Alexandrian Jew, Philo. Philo had differentiated between divine function and divine nature, reconciling Platonist theories of kingship with monotheism by crediting the emperor with exercising the function rather than sharing the nature of God. Eusebius followed suit.

Central to Eusebius' thought on this subject was his emphasis on Constantine's divine appointment. There was a close relationship between Church and empire. It was no mere coincidence that the Pax Augusta and the Christian Church had both seen the light of day at the same time. The Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Constantine's empire, not in the eschatological kingdom of Jesus. Eusebius preserved the lack of distinction between the religious and the secular which had characterised earlier Hellenistic thought. The emperor was God's vicegerent and the ultimate goal of his rule was to promote true religion. Eusebius acknowledged unequivocally the God-given basis of Constantine's rule and the religious considerations which governed it.

Constantine himself shared much of Eusebius' theology of the Christian empire. First and foremost he was aware that God had commissioned him to rule. The Battle of Milvian Bridge had convinced him that the Christian God was the Giver of All Victories. This God could well fight for him and protect him in the future. There was nothing novel in his conviction that God was on his side: Constantine was merely relating to the Christian faith some generally accepted ideas of his time. The same is true of his firm belief that God, whose wrath had to be avoided at all cost, could be placated by correct religious practice. The commonwealth depended on continued divine favour. These thoughts consciously motivated Constantine's actions towards the Church. Christianity was tolerated, the clergy were given privileges, the Donatists had to be crushed and the quarrels in the East had to be settled so that 'the Supreme Divinity, whose worship we

follow with free conscience, may vouchsafe to us in all things His wonted favour and benevolence.' (10) As the years, and successive ecclesiastical crises, unravelled themselves, the emperor became increasingly involved in the Church and her affairs.

Eusebius' theology of the empire could not, ultimately, stand the test of time. Herein, perhaps, lies its final condemnation. Constantine was succeeded by an Arian, and then by a pagan. Were men of these persuasions also God's vicegerents? A hundred years later the empire in the West collapsed before barbarians. Could this empire be the image of the eternal kingdom of God? But for the time being these objections were not apparent. While Eusebius lived, the emperor was lord and master of the Church and the Roman empire was seen in close relationship to the kingdom of God.

The period from the death of Constantine I to the accession of Theodosius witnessed a reaction against the theology and practice of political absolutism. A marked feature of the reaction was that few of its leaders took their stand on any heartfelt principle. Separatist thinking was forced upon certain factions within the Church because it was the most immediate way to express opposition to a hostile state-Church. The concept of the Two Swords was certainly formulated during this time - notably by Ossius and Athanasius - but the Nicenes were driven to this position by the excesses of the Arian party. Opportunism was the feature of the day. Imperial power was the new factor in ecclesiastical politics: he who won imperial favour welcomed the alliance between Church and state; he who lost, rejected it. For the most part of this forty years, especially in the East, the Arians were triumphant and the Nicenes were the champions of separatism. The position which had prevailed during the days of Constantine's homousios state-Church was reversed, but the Nicenes would revert to their former attitude when happier times returned.

The reactionary nature of the Nicenes' separatist outlook is fully

evident from the change in attitude of Ossius and Athanasius during Constantius' rule. The Bishops of Cordova and Alexandria had both formerly given their allegiance to the state-Church. Ossius, once the faithful servant and emissary of the imperial Church, became its avowed enemy when Arianism emerged as its accepted creed. Athanasius, who initially had regarded the imperial Church as an acceptable institution, denounced it as evil when it unfurled its heretical colours. The Synods of Arles and Milan drew the sharpest separatist utterances from Ossius. God had given the kingdom to Constantius, but entrusted the affairs of the Church to the bishops. (11) Athanasius condemned that 'patron of godlessness and emperor of heresy.' (12) 'If a judgement has been passed by bishops, what concern has the emperor with it?' (13)

Ossius and Athanasius did not stand alone in their struggle against the Arian imperial Church. Hilary of Poitiers was one of the most prominent Western leaders in this encounter. Hilary's attacks on Constantius increased in bitterness as time passed, until he finally denounced him in unqualified terms as a pagan persecutor. But Hilary did not condemn the principle of a state-Church, only Constantius' Arian policy. He demanded ecclesiastical freedom because the emperor of the day was a heretic, who was forcing the Church to accept his heretical beliefs.

Lucifer of Cagliari was in most respects a lesser figure than Hilary - but he was more voluble. Uncouth, eccentric and loud-mouthed, he denounced Constantius with characteristic vulgarity. With insulting language as if he imagined himself to be re-enacting some Old Testament confrontation between prophet and king, he summoned Constantius to repent of his evil ways. He denied all imperial authority over God's priests and urged a rigid separation of ecclesiastical concerns from state interference. However little one may think of him, Lucifer deserves his place in this consideration of the Nicene reaction against imperially-dictated Arianism.

Two Roman bishops during this period - Julius and Liberius -

emerged as staunch advocates of ecclesiastical freedom. The former became the friend and ally of Athanasius during his struggle with the Arians in the East, in particular after civil power had established Gregory of Cappadocia in the see of Alexandria. Julius donned the garb of the champion of the Church's freedom; a position which was ratified to a certain extent by the third and sixth canons of the Council of Sardica in 343. Liberius inherited this role and did his utmost to withstand the Arianising emperor and court party. Unhappily he was unequal to the task. At first he proudly and eloquently held his ground, resolute against all opposition. But eventually his resolution failed. Athanasius recalled how 'Liberius, after he had been in banishment for two years, gave way; and from fear of threatened death was induced to subscribe.' (14) Liberius' lapse and the scandal surrounding Damasus' accession undermined for a generation the moral lead which Rome had given to the Christian world. Nevertheless, although for the time being it had failed, the see of Rome had striven for the cause of ecclesiastical independence.

Constantius' programme of state-imposed Arianism reached its climax with the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia: episodes which were a flagrant denial of ecclesiastical freedom. Paradoxically, they hastened the eclipse of Arianism, for at these councils the heresy revealed itself in its true colours. The Origenist East had always been anti-Nicene rather than positively Arian. Now the heresy had disgraced itself. Unwittingly, Julian's "disestablishment" of the Church dealt a further blow at Arianism, for it destroyed the court party. These events - coupled with the neutrality in religious policy of Jovian and Valentinian I - seriously weakened the standing of Arianism. With the Cappadocian Fathers a new Nicene party emerged and when Valens attempted to take up the Arian reins where Constantius had laid them down he found that the odds were heavily against him. The ecclesiastical climate - even in the East - no longer favoured an imperially-dictated creed. Basil of Caesarea exemplified this opposition

and Valens eventually left him alone. Separatist thought prevailed. The scene had been set for the work of Ambrose of Milan.

Ambrose was bishop of Milan for nearly twenty-five years and during this time he strove to bring into being his understanding of the Church-state partnership. The Nicene faith - not for the first time closely connected with ecclesiastical independence - was to be the basis of Catholic orthodoxy. He demanded the creation of a Church built on Nicea, free from imperial intervention: nothing less than a total reordering of the existing Church. He sought to fulfil this ideal through the political events and crises of his episcopate. Ambrose was the champion par excellence of the Church's freedom and independence. But paradoxically his dualism became confused; the border between ecclesiastical freedom and ecclesiastical supremacy is in practice hard to work out. In the struggle between the Church and the imperial court there had to be a victor and a vanquished party.

Ambrose's early attempts to bring the court religious policy to favour Nicene interests met with little success. Valentinian I remained true to his declared policy of neutrality - even though he personally confessed the Nicene creed. He remained adamant on this point up to his death. For the first years of Gratian's rule the same attitude prevailed in imperial circles. During this stage Gratian was influenced greatly by his tutor Ausonius - a liberal, by contemporary standards. In the winter of 378-9 the situation began to change. Gratian met Ambrose for the first time and had his initial encounter with Arianism. Later in 379 Gratian, falling under Ambrose's spell, withdrew his Edict of Toleration. With the court now at Milan, the bishop instructed the young emperor in the Christian faith through his work De Fide. The climax in Ambrose's influence over Gratian came in 380, when he prevailed over the emperor to limit the Council at Aquileia to Western delegates and secured the condemnation of leading Arian opponents.

Within three years Church-state relations had changed radically.

Imperial non-participation and non-involvement had been replaced by an intolerant Nicene outlook. Ambrose had struggled successfully to win imperial support in his crusade against Arianism. The separatism which had characterised Western Nicene thought for thirty years had been cast aside. But the situation changed radically again with Gratian's assassination and the reappearance of Arian influence at court in the person of the empress Justina.

Despite this unfavourable turn of fortune, Ambrose did not slacken in his endeavours. During the next few years there were three major clashes between the Bishop of Milan and the imperial court. The circumstances varied but each time the central issue concerned the role of the emperor within the state-Church partnership. The incident of the Altar of Victory in the Senate was taken by Ambrose as a test case: would Valentinian live up to his responsibilities as a Christian emperor? His duty was to further the Church's cause. To restore the Altar would be to promote the worship of idols. This could not be permitted. In the controversy over the Milan basilicas and the subsequent reversal of Gratian's anti-heretical edict the danger came from the opposite direction: Valentinian might exceed the proper limits of his responsibilities. With the Milan basilicas, Catholic truth could make no concessions to Arian heresy. A Catholic bishop could not hand over a church to heretics. Church buildings were certainly not the emperor's to dispose of as he wished. The emperor had no right to dictate to a bishop on a religious topic - in this case about the possession of a Church building. Ambrose's victory here provoked a hostile Arian reaction and Justina persuaded Valentinian to reverse Gratian's edict. The court proposed a debate between Ambrose and the Arians, but once again Ambrose would not sanction an interference by the state into ecclesiastical affairs. Only bishops could adjudicate matters of faith.

Ambrose had taken his stand on dualistic ground, demanding that the emperor fulfilled his appointed task within the ordering of the state-

Church. It was dualism, but a dualism in which the Church decided on the boundaries between secular and ecclesiastical matters. When Theodosius became emperor in the West as well as the East, Ambrose found much in common with the new lord of the Roman world. But although both were ardent Nicenes and both agreed that Nicene orthodoxy should be the basis of citizenship in the empire, there were differences in interpretation and application. The Callinicum riots were taken by Ambrose to support his argument that imperator intra ecclesiam, non supra ecclesiam est. The emperor could not dictate to the Church, and a bishop certainly could not build a Jewish synagogue. The duty of both emperor and bishop was to further Catholic worship and belief; this alone was pleasing to God. Less controversial to posterity has been Ambrose's reaction to the Thessalonican massacre. Earlier separatism broke down before such a crisis. Here was an incident which could not be dismissed as of purely secular concern. Ambrose personified the moral powers of the episcopate in asserting that a Christian emperor could no more disobey the Church's ethical code than he could dictate creeds to her. The emperor was the son of the Church and a soldier of Christ, not the lord and master of the Church. The Eucharistic celebration which followed Eugenius' defeat was a fitting conclusion to Ambrose's dealings with Theodosius. With the emperor's letter placed upon the Altar to perform the priestly function, the Offering - thus combining the efforts of bishop and emperor - symbolised the partnership between Church and state for which Ambrose had striven so long.

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of Ambrose's episcopate had been the Christianisation of imperial rule. The principle imperator filius ecclesiae had triumphed. Theodosius - at times reluctantly - had acknowledged the authority of the Church's ethical teaching. Ambrose had battled successfully for the Church's independence from secular interference. She was to determine her own faith. She alone was the guardian of Christian faith and morals. In both spheres the emperor

submitted to the Church's authoritative leadership. The freedom which Ambrose won for the Church meant that the faith delivered to her was hers to interpret and define; her moral laws were to be proclaimed from court and pulpit and were binding on all. Such was the Church which Ambrose sought to create and to safeguard.

St. Augustine's thought on Church-state relations was more complex, forming but one part of an all-encompassing theology of human existence. At the heart of this theology lay the principle of the two loves, a principle which at the same time both governed and explained the historical process. History was the working out of a divine plan, with each successive epoch linked under the sovereignty of God. The primary - but by no means only - source for inquiring into Augustine's political thought is De Civitate Dei, a work which was essentially a justification of his conviction that God is the Lord of history. To Augustine, history was a process which evolved towards an eschatological goal, its climax lying beyond the present order. But De Civitate Dei was more than merely a political treatise. It was an all-embracing work in which Augustine applied his doctrine of Grace to the field of history. Nevertheless, De Civitate Dei was provoked by, and dealt with, contemporary problems.

Platonist thought regarding the empire as the mimesis of the kingdom of God became untenable in the West after the military and political disasters at the beginning of the fifth century. De Civitate Dei marked the return of the West to a biblical and eschatological outlook which had largely been rejected during the last one hundred years. Indeed, the key to understanding so much of Augustine's theology lies in his eschatological convictions. But the West had not totally rejected the attitude of the primitive Church: significantly, Africa had remained more faithful than many other areas. Augustine stood firmly within this African tradition. This was not the only point of divergence between Augustine and the Origenist East, for the former's conception of Christianity preserved the

historical basis of the Church's faith: the kingdom of God was far from being a spiritual reality divorced from the historical process.

Augustine's theology of history and his understanding of human existence was moulded by contemporary events and by the intellectual traditions of his environment. The combined result of this was his eschatologically-based understanding of an evolving Salvation-History. He viewed history and individual lives as an expression of the dialectic of the two loves. The two loves, and the Cities which they characterised, lay at the heart of a true comprehension of history: a dual process, with God as sovereign. De Civitate Dei, where this thesis was most fully expounded, was provoked by contemporary events. But ultimately the meaning of the present crisis - and all crises - lay beyond man's full understanding. Nevertheless, such occurrences formed part of the divine plan. The meaning of an event, moreover, lay not so much in its outward manifestation but in its inner relationship to the dichotomy of the two Cities. Augustine rejected the Piety/Success formula. Reward for good lay beyond the Day of Judgement. Whether or not the present disasters were greater than those of the past was not the important point. What mattered was the realisation that suffering was a neutral phenomenon of earthly existence: it was good if it urged man on in his search for God, but bad when it hardened the ungodly.

Augustine did not equate the City of God with the Church. But there was affinity between the two. The Church was the representative of the Heavenly City in the human arena. Nevertheless, good and bad existed in her alongside each other, and so it would remain until the Day of Judgement. Because he saw no institutional distinction in human affairs between the forces of good and evil, Augustine provided theological justification for the involvement of Christians in the secular world. There could be no contracting out of society. Indeed, Christianity leavened and enriched its secular environment. The Christian, it is true,

remained inwardly detached because ultimate principles could not be compromised, but otherwise there was no limit to participation in the affairs of this world. Augustine fully grasped the social implications and demands of the Gospel, and - whatever their respective merits may be - the Western ideals of freedom, progress and social justice owe much to his life and thought.

Nor did Augustine equate the Earthly City with the state; although once again there was close affinity. Earthly kingdoms were not intrinsically evil, for - as in the Church - there was an intermingling of good and bad. This was inevitable since Christians could become fully involved in the state. Indeed, the empire was the God-given remedy for the chaos, caused by man's sin, which would otherwise prevail. The state could become evil - but only when it voluntarily identified itself with the love of self which characterised the Earthly City. Augustine thus rejected the main stream of fourth century thought on the state by refusing to present a positive religious rationale of the empire. The kingdom of God was an eschatological kingdom not of this world. It was a common will, not the acceptance of the ideal of justice, which was the basis and definition of a state, because the fulfilment of such an ideal lay beyond the course of human history.

Augustine did not view Church and state as two institutions battling together for supremacy. Each represented the successive orders within the divine plan. But matters were complicated by the eschatological tension of the Church's predicament: Christians were obedient to, and participated in, the present order - but remained inwardly detached from it. The intermingling of good and evil until the Day of Judgement led Augustine to advocate a Church/state dualism which was advantageous to both parties. The state protected the Church, but benefitted from living alongside the ideals of love and justice which characterised the City of God. But this was not a partnership between equals. In every respect the

state was subordinate to the Church. The state had no right not to further ecclesiastical interests: 'all the kings of the earth shall worship Him, all nations shall do Him service.' (15) The state had a necessary and useful part to play within the divine ordering of history, but its rights were strictly qualified.

Augustine's dealings with the Donatists were consistent with this. His early idealism - putting trust in the power of reason - soon withered before the harsh realities of the situation. The use of force was necessary to counteract other factors and so restore the balance which enabled a free verdict to be made. Augustine never denied that faith was in the last resort a matter of individual will. He merely wished to make this possible. In the course of time he saw that he was right and justified. Ultimately force was used on the Donatists because their correction clearly lay beyond the Church's power and ability. It was far more than an heretical movement - it rapidly and increasingly became a cultural, social and even political protest. Augustine was not the great persecutor his enemies would like him to be, even though he advocated the state's subordination to Church interests.

Augustine's eschatologically-based outlook enabled him to reconcile the two strains of New Testament thought on the state. His achievement was to preserve the Church's primitive eschatology and to account fully for both Church and state within his vision of the divine governing of history. Separatism and subordinationism were combined. Augustine succeeded where others failed.

In his work on Church and state in the fourth century, Greenslade wrote: 'It is not a predominant purpose of these lectures to discuss the general theory of Church and state relations. They attempt to describe in what circumstances the Church was compelled to ponder these issues and to outline the broad types of thought which emerged.' (16) In the earlier chapters of this present study the attempt has been repeated, but the

field of inquiry extended to St. Augustine. Subordination of Church to state, separatism, and state-Church partnership with the Church in ascendancy have all been considered. But the matter cannot be left here.

Although this study has been no discussion of 'the general theory of Church and state relations', if it is accepted that there are lessons to be learnt from history then it remains to be asked what the hundred years from Eusebius of Caesarea to Augustine can teach us.

The theology of Eusebius and the reign of Constantine brought about a subordination of the Church to the empire. There is much which is attractive in the vision of society as one commonwealth, with every citizen a member of both Church and state. The Christian state in these circumstances identifies itself with the Church's cause and interests, while the Church for her part has the powers of the state at her disposal for assistance and for protection. The Church is an influence for the good within the state, enriching the moral tone of life and carrying out her pastoral role. The corporate life of the state is responsible for itself to God. But just as ultimate sovereignty lies with the emperor - a sovereignty which is God-given - so the emperor is ultimately responsible to God. No aspect of life is outside his rule and concern. Unfortunately this ideal falls down before the harsh realities of a fallen world.

Eusebius expressed his theology of political absolutism in the vocabulary of neo-Platonism. His acceptance of the image relationship between the heavenly and the earthly when applied to political rule carried with it implications which many critics would regard as ominous. Logically, unbelievers and nonconformists had no right to existence within the empire as Eusebius conceived it. Similarly, in the last resort there could be no limits either to the emperor's powers or to the boundaries of the empire. Another great weakness in Eusebius' theology was that the Church was left with no positive part to play. If the emperor was God's vicegerent and if his realms mirrored the Celestial Kingdom what was the

nature and task of the Church? She was clearly no longer the primary vehicle of God's dealings with the world, for this purpose was served by emperor and empire. Perhaps the difficulty could be partly resolved by distinguishing between Christ's teaching and ruling ministries, with the state taking over the latter. But Eusebius was not consistent on this point. His theology, and Constantine's enforcement, of the state-Church denied the Church the scope which was rightly hers.

There are other general criticisms which can be levelled against subordinationism. The ideal of state and Church pursuing mutual interests is laudible, but in practice their interests frequently clash. All too often Christians have had to say to the rulers of this world 'stand thou on that side for on this am I'. The Church must disobey rather than submit to any sinful demands which the state might make. There is also the more subtle danger that, in submitting herself and her affairs to the state, the Church may find that she is being used for political purposes. Political views may be imposed on the Church, even in matters of doctrine. Priests who are prepared to acquiesce to such a situation or even to serve political ends may suddenly find themselves bishops. On the other hand, the Church may be tempted to seek favours from the state or try to avoid incurring secular enmity by making concessions and seeking compromise. The Princes of the Church may become too concerned with worldly matters. Strife within the Church may become intensified because of this. At the worst the Church can be tempted to seek, or support, the use of secular power in attempts to enforce uniformity or change opinion. The fourth century has not been the only period in the Christian era to experience the unfortunate consequences of a mistaken theology, subordinating Church to state.

The image terminology employed by Eusebius of Caesarea is very far removed from the climate of political thought in the twentieth century. Nevertheless the subordination which he advocated remains a practical

possibility. Likewise the dangers of such a theology exist as much today as they did in the fourth century. The subordination of Church to state is to be avoided. St. Paul indeed demanded that each man should be subject to the powers that be, but not at the expense of transposing Jesus' eschatological kingdom in its fullness to the present dispensation.

A separatist theology of the relationship between Church and state, which in the fourth century was the reaction against Eusebian Subordinationism, is scarcely more acceptable. An adequate summary of such a theology is to recall the warning Ossius gave to Constantius: 'Do not intrude into ecclesiastical affairs, and do not give commands to us concerning them; but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church. ... Neither, therefore, is it permitted to us to exercise an earthly rule; nor have you, Sir, any authority to burn incense.' (17) However it may be disguised at first sight, separatist thought on Church-state relations in the last resort demands a rigid division between matters which concern the Church and matters which concern the state. These concerns are seen as mutually exclusive: the state is not to trespass into Church affairs anymore than the Church is to intervene in the concerns of government. There is little to commend this attitude.

In the first place, separatism - just as much as subordinationism - is incompatible with the teaching on the state in the New Testament. The superficially incompatible attitudes to the state which are found in the New Testament are resolved, it has been noted on more than one occasion, within the context of the Church's primitive eschatological proclamation: the last days have been inaugurated, but their consummation lies in the future. The state therefore is neither to be fully accepted or finally rejected. Separatism loses sight of the Church's inherited eschatological values, and accordingly parts company with Jesus' teaching. This is the error also with subordinationism, for here to there is a serious modification of traditional teaching. But whereas subordinationism ascribes

too positive a role to the state, separatism errs in the opposite direction. There is surely no sphere of human life which lies beyond the concern of the Church or outside her interest. The Church cannot promise the state that she will not intervene in some matters, not least because the Church's ethical demands know no limit. There is not one ethical code binding on the Christian rank-and-file and another on politicians, either pagan or Christian. Certainly if politicians are not Christians they will from time to time at the very least infringe the Church's code of behaviour, but they are not justified in so doing. Mankind corporately stands under the absolute moral commands of God. All are subject to the ethical demands of the Gospel, for these reveal the divinely ordained way for man to live. The Church and her bishops are the custodians of these laws which must never be broken. Separatist thought, in proclaiming that there is an area of life outside the Church's spectrum and also that the state must have nothing to do with the Church, comes close to dividing life into two mutually exclusive spheres: the religious and the secular. This undermines the fullness of Christianity and the demands of responsible citizenship.

This line of reasoning leads to two negative conclusions on Church-state relations: the Church should not be subordinate to the state, nor should she regard herself as rigidly separate from the state. A remaining possibility is therefore some sort of alliance between Church and state; an alliance in which the Church is at the least an equal partner. This is precisely what Ambrose and Augustine - in their different ways - propounded as the solution to the problems of Church and state.

During his long episcopate Ambrose expounded and explored his understanding of a Church-state partnership. Ambrose belonged to the dualist camp, but he corrected the grievous errors of rigid separatism, as advocated by Ossius and others. He conceived of a partnership between Church and state characterised by the 'Christianisation' of political

rule. He strove to fulfil the principle imperator filius ecclesiae and to establish the moral authority of the Church's ethical teaching in the sphere of secular administration. There can be no denying that in Ambrose's solution the Church was the senior partner. The independence of the clergy and the Church from secular interference and political exploitation had to be safeguarded. The Church was to determine her own faith, not have it dictated to her. She alone was the guardian and interpreter of Christian belief and ethical practice. In matters of doctrine and conduct the rulers of the world must submit themselves to the authoritative leaders of the Church. Herein lay a fundamental difference between Ambrose's teaching and Eusebius' theology of political absolutism. Eusebius left no room for the Church in his positive appraisal of the political order. On the other hand, Ambrose allowed the Church to be the Church - to interpret and define the faith entrusted to her; to proclaim in every walk of life the moral laws of which she was custodian - even at times to tell emperors how to behave. Ambrose's vision was of a society in which every stratum, from the highest circles downwards, was dedicated to the Christian faith and way of life.

It is over this most central issue, however, that many of Ambrose's enemies have crossed swords with him. Their criticism deserves serious attention. If the objective is a completely Christian society, what is to happen to those who are not Christians and do not wish to become Christians? Unpalatable though many find it, Ambrose goes some way to answering this. The present day belief in religious freedom and in tolerance was far removed from his thought. Divine wrath was a potential danger to the security of society and had to be placated. The best way to do this - and Ambrose was not alone in thinking this - was to worship God in the right way. There was no place for dissenters, whose existence menaced the commonwealth. Ambrose was not the champion of ecclesiastical tyranny, vetoing the acknowledged duties of the state - as

some have accused him. On the contrary, he insisted that the Church was - and is - the guardian of the divine moral law to which all human life is subject. He saw that there could be no justification for a Christian politician to further ignorance or false belief. Rather is such a man obliged to correct all error and superstition. Theodosius agreed in principle with Ambrose on this point. The clashes between bishop and emperor were to a great extent caused by the latter's failure on occasions to live up to the ideals which he had accepted and the objectives to which he had dedicated himself. Ambrose recalled Theodosius to the true fulfilment of his kingly role.

Ambrose and Theodosius agreed on one basic premise: in the Christian state the profession of orthodox Christianity is to be identified with full citizenship. Bishops and princes are both responsible for the purging and purifying of society. To an age which has witnessed the apotheosis of the doctrine of toleration, and raised it into an ideal ever to be worshipped and adored, fought for and dreamt about, the beliefs which Ambrose and Theodosius entertained must appear distasteful in the extreme. But unqualified condemnation of their views runs the risk of condemning also the presupposition that the religious life of a nation is vitally important to its well-being. Such a condemnation is also possibly to overlook a theme central to Biblical thought: the God whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain is also the Lord of history, actively involved in the affairs of men and nations. Given such a view, it follows that the responsibility of the leaders at any level of society cannot be limited to exclude religious concerns. It is hard to remain true to the Biblical view of history and at the same time reject the dominating factor of the participation of Him who, among other things, 'visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and sheweth mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.' (18) For men to tolerate the sins 'of them

that hate me' is a dangerous practice - not least because the distinction between toleration and indifference is very slight. It may not exist at all. It is hard to distinguish the alleged virtue of non-interference with so-called personal freedom from an attitude of indifference which excuses or even justifies deeds of iniquity and irresponsibility. But Ambrose and Theodosius were not blessed with the insight of the progressive thinker of the twentieth century; instead there was a real breadth and depth to their vision of the duties of the Christian statesman. Both strove to realise this vision to the best of their more than limited ability. Above all, it was seen that the Christian sovereign is responsible to God for the people entrusted to his rule and protection and that divine favour is essential to the common good. To what is often known all too flatteringly as liberal and enlightened thought, this attitude must appear repulsive. Nevertheless, it stems from a responsible acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God in human affairs.

In several important respects the dualism of the two Cities which St. Augustine expounded conformed to the Church-state partnership advocated by Ambrose. A major difference, however, lay in the eschatological bias to Augustine's thought: a trait which was far less prominent in Ambrose. More than being a mere modification of Ambrose's theology of Church and state, this was a vital correction which stressed an all-important aspect of the Church's true understanding of secular government. Ambrose's thought and actions have received much adverse criticism, some of it most unjustified. But there is surely one point at least on which one is entitled to find fault with him: namely, the absence in his theology of a clear grasp of the futurist, as well as realised, aspects of the eschatological kingdom of God. Ambrose stood within the Platonist tradition to a greater extent than Augustine and he was correspondingly more exposed to falling victim to the potential dangers in the Christian Platonist school of thought. Central to Ambrose's understanding of the

Church-state partnership was his identification of Nicene Christianity with Roman citizenship and, as a corollary, his hostility towards those who contracted out of this system. There was an institutionalised relationship between the kingdom of God and the state-Church which demanded a modification of Jesus' proclamation of an other-worldly kingdom. For Ambrose, as had been the case with Eusebius of Caesarea, the state mirrored the Celestial kingdom.

Augustine, standing closer to the Apocalyptic tradition of Africa and directly in the line of Tychonius, avoided this erroneous theology by his assertion that the two loves - the ultimate governing principles of history - were not expressed in the human arena by the institutions of Church and state. There was certainly affinity between the kingdom of God and the Church, and between the Earthly City and the state, but no direct equation could be drawn. There was no question of the Platonist image relationship. In practice Augustine demanded from state and Church much the same as Ambrose had earlier; within the partnership the state was very much the subordinate partner, obliged to further the Church's interests, and in return benefitting from contact with the Church. Thus the main features of Ambrose's conception of Church-state relations were preserved but with the all important modification of Augustine's insistence that good and bad would not be separated until the Last Judgement. This eschatological emphasis enabled Augustine to remain true to the New Testament teaching on the state, for with moral judgement postponed until the Last Day clearly the state could neither be completely condemned as evil nor finally accepted as good. Subordination and separatism are ruled out by adhering to the Biblical teaching on the state. Augustine thus propounded a theory of Church-state partnership which gave full scope for the Christian ruler to live up to the responsibilities of his calling and to serve the interests of his faith. His theology enabled the Church to work out her life free from unwarranted barriers and

intrusions. The freedom of the Church served by the state was the hallmark of Augustine's teaching on Church and state no less than it had been with Ambrose.

In retrospect it can be seen that the troubled hundred years which followed Constantine's conversion give clear warnings to those who would seek to understand the vexed problems of Church-state relations. The first warning is that the Church is wrong to withdraw from society or from any positive relationship with the state. The Church's existence should never depend on the charity of the state. On the contrary, 'the Church must first be conscious of itself as the Church of God, aware of what makes it the Church, tenacious of those faiths and sacraments and modes of life which are divinely entrusted to it.' (19) This does not mean that the state is inherently evil and to be avoided at all costs. Nor is it a neutral entity void of all responsibility to God.

The second warning is that there can be no complete association or alliance between Church and state. In the last resort, this warning is a reminder to the Church that her birth-right is to be found within the pages of the New Testament. It is only by remaining true to the teaching of the Apostolic writings that the Church will keep herself undefiled and pure in the midst of a fallen world. Jesus and the Apostolic Church neither finally condemned the state, nor completely accepted it. The state, belonging to the present dispensation, has its God-given role to fulfil. It must be obeyed, and its authority acknowledged, while it remains within its appointed limits. The Church can work in close partnership with the state, for both Church and state are divinely ordained institutions with divinely ordained functions to carry out: but the state is transitory. In the words of a nineteenth-century hymn writer: (20)

So be it, Lord; thy throne shall never,  
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;  
Thy kingdom stands, and grows for ever,  
Till all thy creatures own thy sway.

The same sentiments lie behind Augustine's words: 'For all this most fair order of things truly good will pass away when its measures are accomplished, and they have their morning and their evening.' (21) There is, and must be, an essential subordination of the earthly to the heavenly. Such was Augustine's conviction. This was his final word in a debate which had concerned the Church since the time of Eusebius of Caesarea: a debate which continues today.

Notes on Chapter 6

1. Elisabeth Isichei, Political Thinking and Social Experience, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 113
2. Chapter 1, 2.
3. Romans, 13, 1.
4. I John 5, 19.
5. Luke 22, 25.
6. John 18, 36.
7. Mark 12, 17.
8. John 19, 10f.
9. Tertullian, Apol. 21.
10. Lactantius, De Mort. Pers. 48, 2-12.
11. Athanasius, Hist. Arian., 44.
12. Ibid., 45.
13. Ibid., 52.
14. Ibid., 41.
15. Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, 67, 7.
16. Greenslade, Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius, London, 1954, 79.
17. cf 11 above.
18. Exodus 20, 5ff.
19. Greenslade, op. cit. 83.
20. J. Ellerton
21. Augustine, Confessions, 13. 35.

INDEX

- Alexander 40.
- Ambrose 44, 55, 63, 65, 75, 79; corrects Osius' separatism 81-82; and Valentinian I, 84; and Gratian's neutrality, 84, 148; influences Gratian, 84-85, 148; his Church-state partnership, 85, 93-94, 96, 105-106, 148-149, 150-151; and Gratian's Nicene policy, 86-88; and Valentinian II, 88, 149; altar of Victory, 88-90, 149; Milan basilicas, 90-91, 149; edict of Toleration, 91-93; 149; and Theodosius, 96, 150; Callinicum riots, 96-99, 150; massacre at Thessalonica, 99-102; 150; Eugenius, 102-105, 150; 113, 120, 134; summary, 148-149, 158-160.
- Antiochenes 85.
- Apollinarianists 85, 95.
- Arbogast 103-105.
- Arianism Constantine I's intervention, 40-41; Council of Nicea, 41; opposition from Athanasius, 42, 65-69, 145-146; and Constantius, 53-56, 145-147; opposition from Hilary of Poitiers, 56-58, 146; opposition from Lucifer, 58-60, 146; opposition from Liberius, 62-63, 146-147; opposition from Osius, 63-65, 145-146; during Julian's reign, 69-70, 147; decline, 70, 74-75, 147-148; and Valens, 72-73, 147-148; opposition from Basil of Caesarea, 73-74, 147-148; and the state-Church, 79-82; opposition from Ambrose, 84-88, 148-151; and Valentinian II and Justina, 90-94, 149; opposition from Theodosius, 94-96, 105, 150.
- Aristides 18, 21, 142.
- Arius 40, 41, 42, 53, 63.
- Athanasius and Constantine I, 42; 53-54, 56, 61, 63-66; changes attitude, 66-67; condemned Constantius, 67-68; separatist theology, 68; comparison with Osius, 68-69; 69, 72, 75;

- summary, 145-146.
- Athenagoras 18, 21, 142.
- Augustine 15, 83; breadth of thought, 110, 151; interpretation of history, 110-111, 151-152; De Civitate Dei, 111-113, 151; eschatology, 113-116, 126; two loves and two Cities, 117-120, 151-152; on suffering and disaster, 120-122; City of God in the world, 122-123; social involvement, 122-124, 126, 152-153; the state and the Church, 124-130, 133, 152-154; and Donatism, 130-133, 135, 154; reconciles Biblical traditions, 133-134, 154; summary, 151-154, 161-164.
- Ausonius 84, 87, 148.
- Auxentius 92.
- Basil of Caesarea Quarrels with Valens, 73; refuses to subscribe, 73-75; summary, 147-148.
- Boniface 123.
- Celsus 32.
- Circumcellions 132.
- Commodian 115.
- Constans Theological outlook, 54; Donatists, 55; and the Council of Sardica, 55.
- Constantine I The age of, 27-28; and Eusebius of Caesarea's theology of political absolutism, 30-34; understanding of kingship, 34-38; favours the Church, 36-38; and Donatism, 37-40; and Arianism, 40-42; and Athanasius, 42; 50-52, 54, 64, 80, 82-83, 94, 105, 129, 132; summary, 144-145.
- Constantine II Theological outlook, 54.
- Constantius 51; and Arianism, 53-56; idea of kingship, 54; and Hilary, 56-58; and Lucifer, 58-60; and Liberius, 62-63;

and Ossius, 63-65; and Athanasius, 65-69; 74-75, 80, 83, 86, 91; summary, 145-147.

Councils and Synods Alexandria (362), 69.

Antioch (321), 40-41.

Antioch (328/9), 51.

Antioch (341), 52-53, 55.

Ariminum (359), 54, 56-58, 70, 74, 147.

Arles (317), 39.

Arles (355), 54-56, 62-63.

Aquileia (381), 87.

Beziers (356), 56.

Lampsacus (364), 72.

Milan (355), 54, 55, 56, 62, 63, 66.

Nicea (323), 41, 50, 52, 66, 70.

Rome (379), 84.

Sardiċa (343), 55, 61-62, 82, 147.

Seleucia (359), 54, 56, 70, 147.

Sirmium (357), 54, 56, 70.

Damasus 63, 85, 147.

Decius 44, 57.

Denys of Milan 56.

Dionysius 41.

Donatism 37-40, 42, 43, 44, 52, 55, 60, 69, 74, 86, 116, 123, 128,  
130-133, 135.

Donatus 55.

Ecphantus 28.

Eleusius of Cyzicus 72.

Eudoxius 73.

Eugenius 102-104, 105.

Eupomians 84, 95.

- Eusebius of Caesarea 9, 28; compared with second century apologists, 28-29; external influences, 29-30; development of kingship theology, 30-31; Constantine I's divine appointment, 31; antiquity of Christianity, 31-32; religious objectives of imperial rule, 32-33; piety/success formula, 33-34; implications of his theology, 44-46; 46-47, 50, 52, 54, 64-65, 79, 80, 96, 105, 110, 113, 120, 126, 129, 133, 134; summary, 143-144; weaknesses in his theology, 155-157.
- Eusebius of Nicomedia 50, 51, 53, 55, 80, 88.
- Eusebius of Vercelli 56.
- Eustathius of Antioch 42, 51.
- Felix of Rome 63.
- Felix of Trier 99.
- Firminius 132.
- Flavian of Antioch 83, 99.
- Flavianus, Nichomachus 103.
- Frigidus, Battle of 104-105.
- Gildo 132.
- Gnosticism 115-116.
- Gratian 79, 81, 148; religious toleration, 84; first contact with Arianism and Ambrose, 84-85; the Synod of Rome, 85; influenced by Ambrose, 85-86; Nicene policy, 86-88; 92, 94.
- Gregory of Cappadocia 51, 61, 147.
- Gregory of Nazianzus 83, 95.
- Hadrian 18.
- Hesperius 84.
- Hilary of Poitiers 56; quarrel with Constantius and Arianism, 56; first letter to Constantius, 57; further writings, 57; denounces

- Constantius, 57-58; 68; 146.
- Hildebrand 55.
- Jerome 7, 37, 118.
- John Arcaphas 53.
- Jovian 70; religious outlook, 71; 74, 147.
- Julian unwittingly favours separatists, 69-70; 70, 73, 75, 132, 147.
- Julius of Rome concern for Athanasius, 61; Council of Sardica, 61-62; 63, 68, 146-147.
- Justin Martyr 18, 21, 142.
- Justina 87-88, 90-93, 94, 149.
- Liberius 54, 56; opposes Constantius, 62; his surrender, 62-63; 68, 89, 146-147.
- Licinius 30, 34.
- Lucifer of Cagliari 56; quarrels with Constantius, 58-59; his importance, 60; 69, 83, 89, 146.
- Macedonians 85.
- Macedonius, vicar of Africa 83.
- Macrobius 135.
- Majorinus 38.
- Manichees 84, 95, 131.
- Marcellinus, Ammianus 71, 120.
- Marcellus of Ancyra 42, 85.
- Maximin 57.
- Maximinian of Baggai 132.
- Maximus 93, 94, 102.
- Meletians 41, 42, 53.
- Meletius of Antioch 70.

- Melito of Sardis 17, 18-20, 28, 30, 142.
- Milan, 'Edict' of 34, 35.
- Miltiades 38, 51, 61.
- Milvian Bridge 35-36, 104, 144.
- Montanism 20.
- Namatianus, Rutilius 7.
- Nero 57, 126.
- New Testament, state in the 8-17, 21, 22, 23-24, 46-47, 64-65, 68-69, 80, 91, 126-127, 133-134, 141-142, 151-152, 154, 157-158, 162, 163.
- Nicene party Council of Nicea, 41; Athanasius, 42, 65-69, 145-146; Constantine I, 47, 50-51; Constans, 54-55; Constantine II, 54; Hilary, 56-58, 146; Lucifer, 58-60; Julius, 60-62; Liberius, 62-63; Ossius, 63-65, 145-146; under Julian, 69-70, 147; new Nicene party, 69-70, 72, 147; Jovian, 70-71, 147; Valentinian I, 71-72, 147; Valens, 72-75, 147-148; Basil, 73-74, 147-148; and the state-Church, 79-80, 81-82; Ambrose, 84-106, 148-151; Valentinian II and Justina, 90-94, 149; Theodosius, 94-96, 105, 150.
- Novationists 72.
- Origen 15, 22-23, 29, 37, 115-116, 142-143.
- Origenists 50-51, 70, 115, 147, 151.
- Orosius 121.
- Ossius 40, 54, 56; opposes Constantius, 63; letter to Constantius, 63-64; separatist theology, 64; contrasted with Eusebius of Caesarea, 64-65; weaknesses in his position, 65, 157-158; change in opinion, 65; and Athanasius, 68-69; 75, 79-80, 88, 89, 91, 145-146.

Paul of Constantinople	42.
Paul of Samosata	41.
Paulinus of Antioch	60.
Paulinus of Trier	56.
Philo	28, 29, 144.
Photinians	84.
Platonism	22, 27, 29, 31, 64, 110, 113-117, 121-122, 124, 143, 162;
Pneumatomachoi	95.
Porphyry	116.
Priscillianists	100.
Procopius	72.
Proculeianus	135.
Sabellianism	70, 85.
Salvian	119.
Sapor II	34.
Saturinus of Arles	56.
Secundianus	87.
Stillocho	135.
Symmachus	88, 90.
Taurus	56.
Tertullian	9, 15, 17, 20-21, 22, 28, 30, 59, 114-115, 116, 142.
Theodosius	44, 70, 79, 81, 85; religious outlook, 94-96; Callinicum riots, 96-99; massacre at Thessalonica, 99-102; Eugenius, 92-105; 126, 150.
Theognus	53.
Thucydides	117.
Tiberius	29.
Tychonius	117.

- Ursacius of Singidium 56, 63.
- Ursinus 63, 85.
- Valens 69, 70; Arianism, 72-73; and Basil of Caesarea, 73-74;  
75, 79, 82, 147-148.
- Valens of Mursa 54, 55, 56, 63, 88.
- Valentinian I tolerance, 71-72, 84, 87; 74, 79, 81.
- Valentinian II 71, 81, 86; and the altar of Victory, 88-90; and the  
Milan basilicas, 90-91; edict of toleration withdrawn,  
91-93; flees from Maximus, 93; 94, 96, 101, 103, 149.
- Vincent of Cartenna 135.
- Vincentius 131.
- Volusianus 123.