Globalisation and the Christian Tradition

Richard M. Price

What would the Church Fathers have made of globalisation? The question may sound a preposterous one, since the economic developments central to the modern phenomenon of globalisation had no parallel in the ancient world. But one aspect of globalisation is the homogenisation of culture, and this relates to a key issue in the study of the spread of Christianity in the early centuries – the tension between the acceptance of Christian belief and practice as a single God-given set of universal norms and the adaptation of these norms to local conditions, a process to which we give the name 'inculturation'. Since the notion of inculturation is so popular as to need no special defence, the aim of this paper is bring out the other side of the equation – the appeal to Christians in the early and medieval periods of the notion of Christianity as a uniform and universal system. It will also explore the notion of 'ecumenicity' in relation to the early general councils and the dependence of this notion on the idea of a single God-given political authority. The latter was always an ideal rather than a real possibility, but the notion is not without interest in relation to our modern problem of how some degree of overall political control can be developed to ensure that globalisation serves the common good.

I

The most inspiriting speaker I have ever heard on the Church Fathers was Jean Daniélou, over thirty years ago. He wrote as he spoke, rather too rapidly, and often relying for his references on a memory that was impressive but not always reliable. Some of his books remain classics, such as his early study of Origen and, to mention my own particular favourite, his scriptural meditation, *Le Signe du Temple*.[1] He attempted in his later years to produce a *magnum opus* – a history of Christian theology before Nicaea. The first volume was devoted to the first post-biblical stage of Christian thought – the

[1] Jean Daniélou, *Origen* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), and *Le Signe du Temple* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), translated as *The Presence of God* (London: Mowbray, 1958).

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expression of an understanding of Christ and the Church according to the categories of apocalyptic Judaism; the second discussed the restatement of the gospel message in terms of Greek thought, while the third treated the Christian message as it was developed in the earliest Latin Christian texts.[2] Our knowledge of the pre-Nicene Church is hopelessly fragmentary, and Daniélou's gift was exploratory rather than systematic, but he hoped to give the material coherence by linking it to a clear picture of the overall development. Christianity, according to this scheme, began as a movement within Judaism, appealing to Jews and using the language and images familiar to them; it then spread to the Greek world, where the Gospel was re-expressed in terms of Hellenic education, Greek philosophy, and to some extent Greek myth; finally, it found a home in the west, where the Roman mentality put its own stamp on the Gospel.

The trouble with this scheme is that it is based on a misconception of ancient Mediterranean culture, particularly in the period of the Roman Empire. Opposing Hebrew, or biblical, thought to Greek remains popular among theologians concerned to maintain the distinctiveness of Christianity and to define theology over against philosophy, but it cannot appeal to the historian.[3] A striking feature of the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean in the first millennium BC was the wealth of common elements. In religion the patterns of cult, sacrifice and temple worship were widely shared. The Greeks looked on Egypt and Babylon as the source of much of their wisdom, in philosophy, mathematics and astronomy; and ancient Israel was equally indebted to the surrounding cultures. Later, in the Hellenistic period, after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek philosophy, with its ethical and cosmological emphases, penetrated deeply into Jewish thought, as we find in Josephus and Philo. When early Christian teachers, such as St Paul and Justin Martyr, took up the task of presenting the Gospel to the Gentile world, they did not face the task of translating an Hebraic message into the terms of Greek thought, because they did not encounter Jewish and Greek culture as two separate and contrasting entities.[4] Paul's schematization that the Jews demanded signs and the Greeks sought wisdom (1 Cor 1:22) is a typical piece of Pauline rhetoric, vivid but unreal: the wisdom tradition within Judaism had much in

[2] Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London: DLT, 1973), *The Origins of Latin Christianity* (London: DLT, 1977).

[3] See James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM Press, 1966), ch. 2, 'Athens or Jerusalem? – The Question of Distinctiveness'.

[4] See R.M. Price, '"Hellenization" and the Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 42 (1988), 18–23.

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common with popular Greek thought (as opposed to the more complex systems of the philosophers), while Christian apologists in the second and third centuries repeatedly appealed to the power of Christian exorcism as a proof of the truth of the faith that impressed pagans.[5] Finally, Daniélou's attempt to suggest distinctively Roman elements in Latin Christianity encountered difficulties he himself honestly admitted, and is generally considered a failure. Modern spokesmen for Eastern Orthodoxy, such as John Zizoulas, like to describe Catholic Christianity in terms of traditions, derived from imperial Rome, of firm government and an emphasis on laws. The Catholic Church has indeed developed a more centralized mode of government and a fuller code of canon law than the eastern churches, but this is an accident of high medieval and nineteenth-century developments and has nothing to do with differing mentalities: it was, after all, the ancient Near East that developed an ideology of sacral kingship linked to law-giving as a divine activity in which kings represent God.

Our understanding of patristic Christianity has been distorted by a concentration on the development of doctrine. We forget that by far the greater part of early Christian writing consisted of biblical exegesis, whether in commentaries or sermons – exegesis which by and large went beyond the letter not in order to translate the scriptural message into other terms but simply to find coherence in the bewildering variety of the biblical books.[6] One of the main appeals of Christianity was the Bible – as a sacred book that united revelation, history and ethics in a way that no secular text claimed to do. Intellectual Christians had no desire to turn their backs on Hebraic myth. Likewise, Christian religious practice took over many of the characteristics of synagogue Judaism, in such matters as daily prayer and fasting, while insisting that it would be quite improper to adopt anything from the indigenous religious traditions of Greece and Rome.

In all, it is a mistake to try as Daniélou did to map the development of early Christianity in terms of inculturation – of an originally Semitic Gospel that was then translated into the terms of Greek thought and Roman practice. What instead attracted early converts was a faith that had many points of contact with the common stock of Mediterranean ideas and yet presented itself as absolute truth and normative practice, transcending variations in time and place.

[5] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400* (Yale University Press, 1984), 25–42.

[6] The most intelligent introduction to patristic biblical exegesis is Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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II

This was not a mentality that made variations, when they arose, any easier to cope with. The church in the city of Rome itself consisted at first of a number of independent immigrant communities from different provinces of the eastern Mediterranean. Each community had its own customs and looked for leadership to its home church rather than to the holders of episcopal office in Rome itself. There were basic norms of doctrine and practice that were universally accepted, but matters of detail could be extremely divisive. In the middle of the second century there was bitter dispute over the celebration of Easter, in particular over the pre-paschal fast: it was divisive that some Christians were fasting while others were feasting. Pope Anicetus tried to impose a common line, but was defeated by the Christians from the province of Asia, who got the great Polycarp of Smyrna to come along and bully the pope into accepting a continuing toleration of widely varying practice. The subsequent concern of the Roman see to impose a degree of unity of practice throughout the Christian world, even on small points of liturgy and discipline, arose from the presence in Rome of Christians from all over the Christian world: this made worldwide uniformity a condition for unity at Rome itself.[7] This is surely an intriguing parallel to problems that arise today through the intermingling in many cities of western Europe and North America of Christian communities whose differences become glaring when they are living in the same environment.

III

The history of the Christianization of northern Europe is another case where universality is in tension with inculturation. Christianity, in the process of being adopted by the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons or Norsemen, underwent some intriguing permutations which specialists delight to detect; and the mingling of cultures is appealing to our post-modern mentality. But what we do not find is a conscious policy of inculturation by bishops or monarchs, keen to develop a distinctive form of Christianity in their own territories.

An example of sensitive pastoral adaptation that historians love to cite is the instructions that Pope Gregory the Great sent to the priest Mellitus when he joined St Augustine of Canterbury in 601. He urged him not to destroy pagan temples or abolish pagan feasts, but to preserve them, re-dedicated to Christ, with the festivals of martyrs replacing those of the pagan gods. He concluded, 'The purpose of

[7] Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale University Press, 1997), 6–12. The major study has now appeared in English: Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the first two centuries* (London: Continuum, 2003).

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this is that, through allowing them some outward pleasures, they may the more readily consent to the inward consolations of the grace of God. For there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface everything at once from obdurate minds; he who endeavours to go up to the highest place ascends by degrees or steps, not by leaps' (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I. 30). This was certainly broad-minded of Gregory, particular if we bear in mind that the feasts of martyrs had a rather dubious reputation: Theodoret of Cyrrhus tells us of one north Syrian holy man who boasted that he had managed to keep his virginity intact, despite the fact that in his youth he had attended many festivals of martyrs (*Religious History*, XX. 2). Nevertheless, such pastoral accommodation, intended to be merely temporary, weighs little in the balance compared to the responses that Gregory had sent Augustine a short time before in response to a number of concrete questions about the rules to be followed in the nascent English Church (Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, I. 27). He insisted that spouses who make love with any motive other than procreation need to be cleansed before they can enter a church, and wrote at length on the problems arising from nocturnal pollution. The scrupulosity of the Mediterranean cloister was a norm to be imposed on new converts from barbarian tribes.

The authority of Gregory the Great became itself a general norm when Charlemagne, sometimes held up as a forebear of the European Union, took it upon himself to reform the Frankish Church. He fostered uniformity by insisting that Christianity in his domains was to be specifically Roman. Liturgy and church music were to be reformed along Roman lines; repeated requests went to Rome for Roman liturgical books. If the result was not wholly satisfactory, it was because the Roman books were inconsistent and had themselves been contaminated by Gallican influence. The calendar was revised to exclude all the Gallic saints save St Martin, who was also in the Roman books; they were replaced with Roman martyrs, most of them totally unknown in France. The writings of Gregory the Great were elevated to a new status simply because Gregory, unlike Augustine or Jerome, had been a pope: it was because the Dialogues of Gregory celebrated St Benedict that Charlemagne enacted that all monasteries in his dominions were to adopt the Benedictine Rule, while copies of Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* were to be presented to all bishops. This went together with a style of kingship and artistic patronage that attempted to make Charlemagne's upstart regime a continuation of the Roman empire of Augustus and Constantine.[8]

Charlemagne took advantage of the fact that the Roman Empire had disappeared in the west with the result that he could claim to revive it. The situation was clearly different in Eastern Europe. When

[8] See Rosamond McKitterick, ed, *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

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the Russian princes adopted Christianity at the end of the first millennium, they made no grand claims for themselves. Still, a major motive in accepting the faith was the desire to be welcomed into the comity of nations, a status not open to pagans. The price for the Russians was the adoption of Byzantium as well as of Christianity. A Slavic Christian culture had already developed in Bulgaria, and so there was no question of adopting the Greek language. But the metropolitan bishop for Russia was almost always a Byzantine appointee and normally a Greek national; the Greek Bible and Greek service books in Slavic translation become the great stable of Russian Christianity. What of popular religious culture? Christianity was the religion of the ruling class, but the means for effective evangelization were lacking: Christian cult was gradually imposed, but it was not accompanied by Christian preaching. When in the mid-seventeenth century Patriarch Nikon of Moscow told his priests to use the liturgy as an occasion for catechization, his Old Believer opponents insisted that the very notion of such preaching was heretical. What developed in practice was what was referred to as *dvoverie* – the double faith of those who mixed Christianity with paganism.[9] The term is surely unhelpful for the historian: how are we to define a 'pagan' custom? Many Russian customs of pagan origin, associated with such things as holy springs and divination, were surely detachable from specifically pagan content, just like the feasts Pope Gregory chose to tolerate in England; what for one observer is evidence of paganism is for another observer a case of inculturation. But the point I wish to make here is that inculturation where it occurred was accidental and not the product of a policy to adapt Christianity to local traditions.

Indisputably the formal culture of Christian Russia was firmly patristic: Old Russian religious literature attempted to take over the Greek Fathers, lock, stock and barrel – the one limitation being that the whole stock of patristic literature available in Russia was on a level no higher than that of the library of a second-grade monastery in the Byzantine empire, as Francis Thomson has pointed out, to the indignation of native Russian scholars.[10] But this only made the promotion of a standardized pattern of belief and practice all the easier. Anyone who has explored the religious literature of medieval Russia will be impressed by the fact that again and again the element of novelty lies not in the texts or ideas themselves but in the new bearing they inevitably took on when adopted into the social and political context of medieval Russia.

[9] John Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (Longman, 1995), 77–90.
[10] Francis J. Thomson, *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Mediaeval Russia* (Ashgate, 1999).

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A favourite example of mine is a text written by a layman, indeed by the leading Russian prince of around 1100, Vladimir Monomakh.[11] He wrote an *Instruction* for the benefit of his relatives and heirs, consisting of an apparently homely and rather shapeless miscellany of biblical and patristic excerpts, moral exhortation, and pieces of worldly wisdom, starting off with the self-deprecatory remark, 'If anyone does not like this writing, let them at least not mock it, but say simply, "On a far journey, resting on a sleigh [i.e., with one foot in the grave], he mouthed twaddle".' As specific guidance to the younger members of the Russian princely family, he offers the following:

> As St Basil taught, when he had gathered the young, keep a pure soul, undefiled, a lean body, gentle speech, the word of the Lord as your measure. Eat and drink without making a great noise, keep silence in the presence of the old, listen to the wise, be submissive to your elders, preserve love with those of your own age or younger than you. Do not talk deceitfully, but ponder much; do not speak either savagely or abusively. Do not laugh a lot, be modest in the company of your elders, do not talk foolishly to women. Keep your eyes down but your soul erect . . .[12]

The younger members of the Russian aristocracy were firmly addicted to the comparatively harmless pursuits of hunting, pillage, lechery, and drunkenness.[13] Yet Vladimir quotes to them St Basil's advice to novices in fourth-century Cappadocian monasteries. Yet this is not mouthing twaddle, but reflects a lively and intelligent political concern. Russia in the eleventh century was divided into around eleven principalities, ruled by members of the same princely family; these principalities varied in importance and fell into a recognized hierarchy. The country was much weakened by rivalry and even warfare between rival princes; you may remember that in Tarkovsky's great film *Andrei Rublev* it is a disgruntled prince who calls in the Tartars to sack a Russian city. Vladimir's policy was to restore peace and unity to Russia by, among other things, clarifying hierarchy in the princely house, with the senior princes accepting responsibility for the welfare of junior ones, and the junior ones respecting the authority of their seniors. In this context St Basil's words on the need for novices to be modest and submissive towards their seniors took on political resonance; the old words had a new

[11] See G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity, The Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries* (Harvard University Press, 1946), 244–60, and Dimitri Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford University Press, 1988), ch. 3, 'Vladimir Monomakh'.

[12] *Pamyatniki Literatury Drevnei Rusi, XI-nachalo XII veka* (Moscow, 1978), 394–96. The whole passage is a loose translation of the opening lines of St Basil the Great, *Discourse on Asceticism* (PG 31, 648C-649A). The reference to women is an addition to Basil's text.

[13] It was because Islam prohibits wine that the earlier Prince Vladimir had in 988 rejected it in favour of Christianity, as the Primary Chronicle tells us. *Etiam peccata* . . .

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meaning in the new context. What remains striking is that the answers to Russia's problems at the turn of the twelfth century were found by the ablest of its princes in the pious citation of the fathers, not in the promotion of what ideologues in post-Soviet Russia have referred to as 'the Russian idea'.

IV

What would the Church of the Fathers have said about globalisation? It would be possible to balance my examples of the promotion within Christianity of universal norms with examples of adaptation to particular circumstances, but there remains a difference between pastoral flexibility to save souls and a positive evaluation of difference as a good in itself. Christianity down the ages has attracted people who want to escape from the limitations of particular cultures. I remember an Indian Christian telling me with derision of attempts to make the eucharist native by using rice and grape juice and the clergy wearing saffron robes: his reaction was as scornful as mine would be, were it suggested that, to inculturate the new liturgy in England, we should add Morris dancing to the offertory procession. In the context of rapid social change, which tends to be the context of a successful Christian mission, it is not sensible to make a fetish of traditional customs. Surely no religion equals Christianity in its transcendence of cultural boundaries.

It is notable how Christians have found that the particular can be turned into a symbol of the universal. Gothic churches with high gables reflect in northern Europe the character of our climate, but when transported into central Africa proclaim the normative and classical character of Catholic culture. The same could be said for the plan of Cistercian monasteries in high medieval Europe, where the open cloister natural to Italy became the living space for monks in exposed parts of Yorkshire. Baptism in cold river-water is recommended in the *Didache* (ch. 7), a Syrian text of the early second century; it took on a new expressiveness when practised at Epiphany in pre-revolutionary Saint Petersburg, where babies would be dipped into holes in the ice of the frozen River Neva. Examples of this kind are constantly and gleefully adduced by the champions of inculturation, as if they prove the absurdity of uniform Christian observance, but it is their very impracticality that makes them significant. That motor-cars and fax machines may be found all over the world reveals little about cultural preferences; it is when practices are universalized without practical justification that the yen of the human spirit to escape from parochialism through a joyous adoption of universal norms is fully and most gloriously manifested. Why should the Church fear the globalisation of culture when she has been promoting it for two thousand years?

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V

The instinctive desire within traditional Catholicism for the universal and normative was linked to a horror of division and to a spirituality that aimed at experiences that could be universally shared. The local and particular was by definition the limited and imperfect. The vision of the communion of saints is of a shared experience, unbounded by cultural and historical differences. The message of the monastic movement is that this ideal can be approached even in this age. Back in North Africa in the early fifth century, St Augustine wrote to a monk who was tempted to leave his monastery to look after his mother in the following terms:

> The rule that everyone is to renounce all his possessions involves hating one's father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even one's own life too. For all these things are personal possessions, which get in the way of our attaining not indeed those personal possessions that will pass away with time but those lasting and eternal goods that we shall possess in common. Having a particular woman as your mother is something you cannot share with me; and accordingly it is temporary and will pass away... But having a sister in Christ is something that can be shared by both of us, and by all who are promised in the same union of love the one heavenly inheritance with God as our Father and Christ as our brother. This is eternal and will never be eroded by the passing of time; this we may hope to retain all the more firmly, the more we declare it is to be possessed not privately but in common... Each person is to think the same about his own soul. Let each man hate to have a feeling he cannot share with others, for such a feeling must belong to what passes away; let each man love in his soul that communion and sharing of which it is written, 'They had towards God one soul and one heart' [cp. Acts 4:32]. So your soul is not your own, but belongs to all the brethren; and their souls are yours. Or rather, your souls and theirs make up not many souls but one soul – the single mind of Christ. (*Letter* 243)

Augustine pushed this communism so far as to deny his monks their own clothes: all garments were to be kept in a common store. His spiritual ideal was of a life of prayer in which all share the single mind of Christ through contemplating the same spiritual universe with a common love and without particular loyalties.[14] In this life local accidents, such as place and language, cannot be eradicated, but they are without value. The way in which the Church can mirror, through a glass darkly, the perfect knowledge and charity of the age to come is expressed in the universality of its life, shared by all without variation, and secured by universal norms of belief and custom.

[14] See Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life* (Fordham University Press, 1986), and, on his attempt to combine the rejection of particular loyalties with some degree of realism, R.M. Price, *Augustine* (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph, 1996), 75–91.

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VI

The universality of the faith of the Fathers, of the spiritual values discovered in the Bible by the great theologians and spiritual writers of the late antique world, found particular expression in the work of the ecumenical councils of the undivided church. The term 'ecumenical council' had a secular origin: its first appearance was in the second century as a title adopted by guilds of actors and athletes in the Roman world as a piece of shameless self-advertisement, intended to support claims for fiscal concessions. It was first used in a Christian context by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Life of Constantine* (III. 6) with reference to the Council of Nicaea: he uses the phrase 'ecumenical council' to mean no more than a 'general' council, without any particular resonance or weight. But by the time of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the phrase 'holy and ecumenical council' had become standard: 'ecumenical' is now a loaded term, with implications of authority and universality.

But what was it that made Chalcedon itself an 'ecumenical council'? It was convened by the emperor Marcian, who ruled over the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and was not yet recognized by his western colleague (who had taken umbrage at the way he had not been consulted over Marcian's elevation). The only bishops Marcian invited to the council, apart from Pope Leo of Rome, were the bishops of his own eastern provinces; his first letter to Leo revealing his plans for a council in the east was explicit that the bishops invited would be those of 'the east, Thrace and Illyricum' (Leo, *ep*. 76). How could such an eastern council claim to be 'ecumenical' or universal? Apart from the repeated use of the word 'ecumenical' in the council's self-description, note how Marcian referred in his letter to Pope Leo of 18 December 451 to 'the agreement of priests throughout the world' (Leo, *ep*. 100) and in his Fourth Edict confirming the council to 'bishops from almost the whole world'. The answer does not lie in the presence of the delegates sent by Pope Leo as if they were seen to represent the churches of the west, complementing the impressive attendance by bishops from the eastern provinces: for even the Greeks at this date viewed the pope as the first of all the bishops and *not* as the patriarch of the western churches – a later Byzantine notion. Nor was papal participation and confirmation viewed as crucial, since Marcian and the eastern bishops had no doubt of the authority of the council's various canons on the privileges of the see of Constantinople despite the Roman refusal to approve them. What in the eastern view made the council ecumenical, and its decrees of universal validity, was the fact that it was an imperial council, with representatives from all the churches under Marcian's authority, and whose decrees were confirmed by imperial edict. Even if Marcian controlled only half the empire, according to

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Roman political theory the empire was indivisible, and any emperor represented Roman power in its totality. It was because it was summoned and guided by the emperor that a council of bishops from one part of the Roman world could represent the whole Church.

It is apparent that the term 'ecumenical' had taken on a new depth of meaning through association with the Greek word *oikoumenê* – meaning the inhabited world and in particular the Roman empire. That the barbarians of central and eastern Europe were considered to dwell outside the *oikoumenê* was a natural consequence of their lack of civilization, but the Romans of the eastern provinces were enormously conscious of the might and sophistication of the Sassanian kingdom of Persia, which claimed to revive the empire of Cyrus and Darius; in addition it contained a flourishing Christian Church, which functioned quite independently of the churches within the Roman empire. How then could the Roman world claim to be, in an exclusive sense, the *oikoumenê*? It was because of the claim of the emperor at Constantinople to be God's viceroy on earth, whose limited authority in practice was the result of human disobedience and not the divine will. It was the cosmic status of the Roman emperor that bestowed on the great councils of late antiquity their ecumenical status, and compensated for the fact that the bishops who attended them were manifestly not representative of the whole Christian world.[15]

One effect of the link between ecumenicity and imperial power was that the churches outside the Roman Empire did not recognize the authority of the ecumenical councils, save in so far as they chose of their own volition to adopt their decrees. The Church of Persia accepted the Nicene Creed only in 410, at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and then in a freely paraphrased form – introducing, interestingly enough, the *Filioque*, which here made its first formal appearance, in early fifth-century Persia, not, as has usually been asserted, in late sixth-century Spain.[16]

The link between Nicene Christianity and Byzantine imperial authority had the curious effect of inhibiting Christian mission. The emperors could not themselves initiate missionary activity, because to convert people was to place them, in Byzantine eyes, under Byzantine authority, and that was politically too provocative. The nations of eastern Europe adopted Byzantine Christianity on their own initiative, and this had the effect of making their rulers, temporarily at least, into clients of Constantinople, politically as well as ecclesiastically. The

[15] For the role of emperors in summoning and ratifying the early ecumenical councils, as rulers of the *oikoumene*, see Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 73–75.

[16] The wording is: 'We acknowledge the living and holy Spirit, the living Paraclete, who [is] from the Father and the Son.' See Peter Bruns, 'Bemerkungen zur Rezeption des Nicaenums in der ostsyrischen Kirche', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 32 (2000), 1–22.

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claim of Orthodox Christianity to universal validity remained linked to the claim of Byzantine statehood to worldwide authority.

VII

Globalisation has been celebrated with a mixture of exaltation and dread for abolishing the divisions of space and time. But has not the Christian liturgy always and everywhere attempted to do the same? To take a particular example, think of the Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers of the Feast of the Epiphany, which proclaims, 'Today a star led the Magi to the cradle; today wine was made from water at a wedding; today in the Jordan Christ willed to be baptized by John, in order to save us.' Three separates days are amalgamated into one, and each of them moves into the eternal present of liturgical time, where an event has only to be remembered to become present. Space too is abolished, as events in Palestine are transported into every country where the liturgy is celebrated. In around 1660 Patriarch Nikon built his monastery and basilica of the Resurrection some thirty-five miles west of Moscow as a faithful reproduction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Not only did the building remind the pious pilgrim of the greatest shrine of Christendom, but it was adorned with inscriptions that minimized the difference between prototype and copy, for example, 'At this very spot at the time of the Crucifixion stood the all-holy Mother of God.' Against critics who accused him of presumption, Nikon replied, 'One does not offend the truth if one calls the offering holy Bethany and the sanctuary the Sepulchre of Christ; nor does he err from the truth who calls every Orthodox church holy Sion or New Jerusalem.'[17] In the liturgy the events of salvation history become present again, and the age to come is anticipated, while the congregation, as they chant the Sanctus, join the angels around the heavenly throne. Back in the 1920s that great English philosopher John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart argued plausibly but abstrusely that time and matter cannot exist, since they cannot be coherently described; liturgy has been freeing us from time and matter since the age of Melchizedek.

One aspect of globalisation remains profoundly at odds, however, with the Christian tradition, and that is the exaltation of economic liberalism, of the global economy, over other aspects of human organization and activity. The champions of globalisation relish the weakening of the nation state, but do not appear to press for world government. But I have been concerned to bring

[17] R.M. Price, 'The Holy Land in Old Russian Culture', in R.N. Swanson, ed. *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, *Studies in Church History* 36 (2000), 250–62.

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out how early Christian ideas of ecumenicity was linked to the notion of world government under the emperor appointed by God. This was not a case of mere accommodation – of Christian bishops flattering an imperial self-image inherited from pagan Rome. The pagan Roman emperors lacked a firm notion of sacral universal monarchy. During the first two and half centuries of the Roman empire Augustus and his successors presented themselves as *principes*, that is, as no more than the leading citizens of the city of Rome – the greatest of all cities, but still one among many. More extravagant language, it is true, was adopted simultaneously from the kingdoms of the pre-Roman Near East, but it was essentially a rhetorical ploy, useful as fodder for pompous harangues on public holidays, but lacking political or religious seriousness. It is also true that the emperors of the late third century sought to reinforce state paganism by the notion of the emperors as 'visible gods' – manifestations of the divine on earth, who could claim to provide more immediate support for their subjects than the distant gods of the heavens; but the very notion of visible gods implies a plurality of cosmic powers. Christianity gave a new emphasis and a new coherence to the theology of monarchy by celebrating the one emperor as the representative and the symbol of the one true God.[18] This meant that the earnestness of Christian monotheism, with its demand for unconditional prostration before the Godhead, fed into a political theory which made imperial power absolute and political obedience a religious obligation. That the one God can have no truck with the division of political power, still less with democracy, was clearly perceived in the early fourth century by Eusebius of Caesarea:

> He only is the source of sovereign power, who decrees that all should be subject to the rule of one. And surely monarchy far transcends every other constitution and form of government: for that democratic equality of power, which is its opposite, should rather be described as anarchy and disorder. (*Tricennalian Oration*, 3)

By the standards of patristic Christianity globalisation is too partial and too unambitious. Just as the one unique truth of Christianity reflects the one God of revelation, so the one world-ruler is the true representative of Christ the cosmocrator. Would not a single world-ruler, a single world state, as liberated from democratic controls as, say, the European Union, provide the perfect mechanism by which the forces of global finance could be harnessed to the common good?

[18] See G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 383–402, and Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003).

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VIII

My argument needs no summing up, and I leave the reader to judge the seriousness of my conclusion. But I have been concerned to make what I believe to be a sound historical point – the importance in traditional Christianity of an understanding of the faith in terms of a single set of God-given rules of belief and practice, norms that cultures that have come to the faith have adopted not merely out of obligation but with pride. The aspirations of the advocates of globalisation, like those of scientific communism in the previous epoch, invite denunciation as the Antichrist precisely because of their similarity to the ideals of Catholicism. Let us therefore treat them with a certain reluctant respect.

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