

- Just finished true conspiracy resurrection, now in this section look at uncovering Christendom
- George Kalantzis, loved book Caesar and the Lamb, summarize
- Longer intro b/c quality, sometimes lazy
- Direct propaganda, discuss impact of sacralism
- What is sacralism?
- Blind to sacralism and the narrow form we are funneled into.
- Dr. Kalantzis notes this in regard to the media news we consume, and in regard to the mall funneling us to the same societal look.
- James K.A. Smith desiring the Kingdom:

“I would like to invite you for a tour of one of the most important religious sites in our metropolitan area. It is the kind of place that may be quite familiar to many of you, but my task here is to invite you to see it with new eyes.

As we're still off at a distance, I want you to notice the sheer popularity of the site as indicated by the colorful sea of parking that surrounds the building. The site is throbbing with pilgrims every day of the week as thousands and thousands make the pilgrimage. In order to provide a hospitable environment and absorb the daily influx of the faithful, the site provides an ocean of parking. But the monotony of black tarmac is covered by dots of color from cars and SUVs lined up, row by row, patiently waiting as the pilgrims devote themselves to the rituals inside. Indeed, the parking lot constitutes a kind of moat around the building since there are no sidewalks that lead to the site.

We begin to wend our way toward the building that sprawls in both directions and seems to be rising from the horizon—a dazzling array of glass and concrete with recognizable ornamentation. The architecture of the building has a recognizable code that makes us feel at home in any city. The large glass atriums at the entrances are framed by banners and flags; familiar texts and symbols on the exterior walls help foreign faithful to

quickly and easily identify what's inside; and the sprawling layout of the building is anchored by larger pavilions or sanctuaries akin to the vestibules of medieval cathedrals.

We come to one of several grandiose entrees to the building, channeling us through a colonnade of chromed arches to the towering glass face, with doors lining its base. As we enter the space, we are ushered into a narthex of sorts intended for receiving, orienting, and channeling new seekers. There is a large map—a kind of worship aid—to give the novice an orientation to the location of various spiritual offerings and provide direction into the labyrinth that organizes and channels the ritual observance of the pilgrims.

The design of the interior is inviting to an almost excessive degree, sucking us into the enclosed interior spaces, with windows on the ceiling open to the sky but none on the walls open to the surrounding automotive moat. This conveys a sense of vertical and transcendent openness that at the same time shuts off the clamor and distractions of the horizontal, mundane world. This architectural mode of enclosure and enfolding offers a feeling of sanctuary, retreat, and escape.

The worship space is very much governed by a kind of liturgical, festival calendar, variously draped in the colors, symbols, and images of an unending litany of holidays and festivals—to which new ones are regularly added, since the establishment of each new festival translates into greater numbers of pilgrims joining the processions into the sanctuary and engaging in worship.

The layout of this temple has architectural echoes that hark back to the medieval cathedrals—mammoth religious spaces that can absorb all kinds of different religious activities all at one time. And so one might say that this religious building has a winding labyrinth for contemplations, alongside of which are innumerable chapels devoted to various saints. As we wander we'll be struck by the rich iconography that lines the walls and interior spaces. Here is an array of three-dimensional icons adorned in garb that

inspires us to be imitators of these exemplars. These statues and icons embody for us concrete images of “the good life.” Here is a religious proclamation that does not traffic in abstracted ideals or rules or doctrines, but rather offers to the imagination pictures and statues and moving images, offering embodied pictures of the “redeemed” that invite us imagine ourselves in their shoes.

These same icons of the good life are found in such temples across the country and around the world. The symbols and colors and images associated with their religious life are readily recognized the world over. The wide circulation of these icons through various mediums even outside the sanctuary invites us to make the pilgrimage in the first place. This temple—like countless others now emerging around the world—offers a rich, embodied visual mode of evangelism that attracts us. This is a gospel whose power is *beauty*, which speaks to our deepest desires and compels us to come not with dire moralisms but rather with a winsome invitation to share in this envisioned good life.

As we pause to reflect on some of the icons on the outside of one of the chapels, we are thereby invited to consider what’s happening within the chapel—invited to enter into the act of worship more properly, invited to taste and see. We are greeted by a welcoming acolyte who offers to shepherd us through the experience, but also has the wisdom to allow us to explore on our own terms. Sometimes we will enter cautiously, curiously, tentatively making our way through this labyrinth within the labyrinth, having a vague sense of need but unsure of how it will be fulfilled. Having our sense of need, we come looking, not sure what for, but expectant, knowing that what we need must be here.

After time spent focused and searching in what the faithful call “the racks,” with our newfound holy object in hand, we proceed to the altar, which is the consummation of worship. Behind the altar is the priest who presides over the consummating transaction. This is a religion of transaction, of exchange and communion. And so we make our sacrifice, leave our donation, but in return receive something with solidity that is wrapped in the colors and

symbols of the saints and the season. Released by the priest with a benediction, we make our way out of the chapel in a kind of denouement—not necessarily to leave the temple, but rather to continue contemplation and be invited into another chapel. For who could resist the tangible realities of the good life so abundantly and invitingly offered?”

- Also discuss importance of origin stories
- Glimpsed origin stories back in false prophet of government, but we think we're immune to them today
- This episode we discuss some of the American origin stories, and how we curate our origins by expelling the bad as a part of who we are, while clinging to the good.
- Collective identity without a collective responsibility
- Control over our future while exonerating us from our past
- Hannah Arendt in her work, *On Revolution*, also recognized the connection between ancient myths of origin and binding with the American binding of origin.
- QUOTE: The word religion must be understood in its original roman sense and [the piety of the founders] would then consist in binding themselves back to a beginning as roman pietas consisted in being bound back to the beginning of roman history the foundation of the eternal city..... And since it was in this respect that the American revolution was most conspicuously different from all other revolutions which were to follow, one was tempted to conclude that it was the authority that the act of foundation carried in itself rather than the belief in an eternal legislator, or the promises of reward and the threats of punishment in a future state, or even the doubtful self-evidence of the truths enumerated in the preamble to the declaration of

independence that assured stability for the New Republic.
END QUOTE

- With the shaping of our identity and ethic, we are given a sacrament to remind us of, and help us maintain our holiness.
- An act altar where we are all expected to attend and kiss the bust of Caesar
- The attending of the voting booth
- Maybe that's a little strong and judgmental, but I'm fired up after this interview and refreshing up on Adin Ballou's work.
- Plus we're getting into election season.
- Voting as a sacrament
- Voting as an act of control of destiny/preservation of identity
- Voting as act of dissipation of guilt
- Voting as act of moral indebtedness
 - Like the bloods and the crips, go and kill someone to bind you to the gang.
 - Ballou argues very well that we are responsible with our vote. It is a moral act

As constituent supporters of human government, (whether civil or military, or a compound of both -) in its state or national sovereignty, men are morally responsible for all constitutions, institutions, laws, processes, and usages, which they have pledged themselves to support, or which they avowedly approve, or which they depend upon as instrumentalities for securing and promoting their personal welfare, or in which they acquiesce without positive remonstrance and disfellowship. Thus if a political compact, a civil or military league, covenant, or constitution, requires, authorizes, provides for, or tolerates war, bloodshed, capital punishment, slavery, or any kind of absolute injury - offensive or defensive, the man who swears, affirms, or otherwise pledges himself to support such a compact, league,

covenant, or constitution, is just as responsible for every act of injury done in strict conformity thereto, as if he himself personally committed it. He is not responsible for abuses and violations of the constitution.

But for all that is constitutionally done he is responsible. The army is his army, the navy his navy, the militia his militia, the gallows his gallows, the pillory his pillory, the whipping-post his whipping-post, the branding-iron his branding-iron, the prison to prison, the dungeon his dungeon, and the slaveholding his slaveholding. When the constitutional majority declare war, it is his war. All the slaughter, rapine, ravages, robbery, destruction, and mischief committed under that declaration, in accordance with the laws of war, are his. Nor can he exculpate himself by pleading that he was one of a strenuous anti-war minority in the government. He was in the government. He had sworn, affirmed, or otherwise pledged himself, that the majority should have discretionary power to declare war. He tied up his hands with that anti-Christian obligation, to stand by the majority in all the crimes and abominations inseparable from war. It is therefore his war, its murders are his murders, its horrible injuries on humanity are his injuries. " They are all committed with his solemn sanction. There is no escape from this terrible moral responsibility but by a conscientious withdrawal from such government, and an uncompromising protest against so much of its fundamental creed and constitutional law, as is decidedly anti-Christian. He must cease to be its pledged supporter and approving dependent.

- Of course this gets into the idea of consequentialism, a topic so important I spent our whole second season addressing it, and bring up the issue nearly every episode.
- The idea of lesser of two evils or ends justifying the means is NOT a Christian ethic, yet it has become THE Christian ethic.

- That's because the good as defined by faithfulness to Jesus has been replaced, in part through sacralism, with the good of the State.
- In an attempt to preserve both loyalties - to God and State - we make the State and its power into a Christian entity and a Christian goal, then sacrifice our fidelity on its altar and define this as good.
- Kalantzis: "Nowhere in scripture are we called to change society. We're called to let the Holy Spirit change us."

- Great movie, a Hidden Life

- Finally, I was so excited that Dr. Kalantzis talked about discipleship and how the church functions in the world.
- If you've listened to the season, you know I've been hinting at discipleship as the propaganda killer since the beginning, and I think Dr. Kalantzis explained how this worked very well.
- Propaganda seeks to get us to become something we are not - it tries to replace our identity
- Discipleship, on the other hand, reminds us who we are, and tells us to seek action in line with reality.
- But what most churches have done is we've turned discipleship into propaganda.
- Dr. Kalantzis identified this when he said that "We need to take discipleship back from a methodology to a way of life"
- What is discipleship as a methodology but an attempt to propagandize individuals?
- It treats them as objects to change rather than beings in which to uncover true identity.
- There is really so, so much here.
- I mean, this helps to explain Greg Johnson's interview and his book, Still Time to Care, and why conversion therapy and that

whole movement destroyed any reputation Evangelicals had in the gay community - because it objectified them, it didn't disciple them.

- Likewise, this uncovering of being is going to be good to tuck away for an episode I'll be releasing a month from now on a moral framework I've been working on.
 - In fact, I think that's maybe the most important concepts I've ever worked on, so I'll put a link to the unreleased episode in the show notes so you can grab it early and evaluate in relation to this interview.
 - But this idea that the church, through discipleship, reveals who we are rather than seeks to transform us into who we aren't is a vital distinction between propaganda and discipleship.
-
- Whew! That introduction is a whole episode in itself!
 - But hopefully you found it informative and helpful
 - Without further adieu, here is the interview with Dr. George Kalantzis.



I recently read your book, *Caesar and the Lamb*, and heard you give an interview touching on a topic that I've been wrestling with for a number of years now - sacralism. I thought now would be a perfect time to chat with you because I'm finishing up a season on propaganda and truth, and sacralism strikes me as an extremely subtle form of propagandizing which Christians seem especially vulnerable to. So I want to dig into how sacralism forms us, our societies, and our notions of truth. But before getting into some of the questions I have for you, I'd love for you to give a brief introduction of yourself and your work/passions.

- I first came across the term "sacralism" when reading Leonard Verduin's work, and he convinced me that this is a significant topic I need to know about in order to understand religion, politics, power, and oppression. Yet I don't see this term discussed all that much among most Christians, and when I do, it's often just a passing reference. Your book only uses the word "sacral" twice - towards the very beginning - yet I feel like the whole book is about sacralism. Verduin defines a sacral society as "a society held together by the

sacred, the sacred encapsulated in sacrament and expressed in sacrifice.” Could you explain what sacralism is and why it isn't just some vestige of a barbaric past, but is rather still such a powerful force today?

- Why do you think we're blind to the power of sacralism? Do we think we're too smart to be fooled by things like traditions and practices [see James K.A. Smith & Dru Johnson].
- You mentioned that *“Roman religion was not concerned with distinguishing true from false beliefs: it was simply the proper behavior that characterized the life of the Roman citizen. (p. 16).”* That reminds me of what Jacques Ellul said about propaganda, which is that it concerns itself not so much with beliefs, but with actions. It doesn't matter if you know a commercial is propaganda if you still buy the product. You bring up a great example of this desire for action in spite of belief. You tell the story of Julius the Veteran and Maximus the judge. You write, “Maximus, the judge, was willing to bribe Julius and even make it appear as though the veteran soldier had been forced to sacrifice, so that his fellow Christians

(and Julius's own conscience) would not judge him as lapsed, just so long as he performed the rites." (pp. 163-164)." Can you explain the roles of action and belief in a sacral society?

- This also reminds me of the movie, "A Hidden Life."
- Do you think the modern Evangelical emphasis on belief apart from orthopraxy is a way of trying to straddle two worlds? We can believe in God in the spiritual realm, yet embrace empire, nationalism, and all the evils of Babylon which bring comforts in the physical realm?
- It seems to me that this is what sacralism does - it enjoins us to a cause through action. It produces a moment which makes us actors and accomplices in a particular storyline. That's why things like origin stories are so important [see Donation of Constantine or The Marvels of Rome]. We think we're above that level of mythologization today, yet look at how much Americans fight for our founding origin story. In your book you say, "*Through stories we make sense of the world and gain a better understanding of who we are. As such, narratives*

are character formative: they help us define ourselves. (p.1)” Explain how sacralism attaches us to a narrative and how narratives dictate our stories. Why are origins so important?

- You mention in your book that there were three main reasons for sacrificing to the gods. 1) honor them, (2) express gratitude, and/or (3) obtain some benefit. You quote Theophrastus who said, “We honor the gods either because we try to avert evil things and vouchsafe good things or we have been treated well, or just to honor their good disposition.” You then say that, “this relationship [is] a perpetual cycle of reciprocal exchanges in the form of sacrifices and blessings.” (p. 19). **Evangelicals don’t buy the Catholic distinction between veneration and worship when it comes to the Saints, but we do seem to make the distinction when it comes to national monuments and colored fabric we pledge our allegiance to.** I’d love for you to expound on how we see these three rationales for sacrifice and worship in the empire: honoring [Christian nation, greatest country],

expressing gratitude [veteran's day, if you don't like it, move], and obtaining a benefit [freedom].

- You mentioned that “the piety of the Romans was civic, communal, and public, which is why Roman society grew increasingly suspicious of religious practices that advocated the role of personal belief, private piety, and secret rituals.” (p. 21). You clearly see the backlash for those who refuse to participate in civic worship - like choosing to kneel during the national anthem. But that's kind of low hanging fruit, and I want to dig into something a bit more contentious - voting. I'm not sure where you stand, but I've come to the conclusion that my endorsement of any candidate makes me complicit with the evils I know they will do. I make that argument at length elsewhere and I'm not necessarily concerned with discussing whether or not we should vote here - though I would be interested in your take if you want to share. But I really want you to discuss is how - even if voting can sometimes be a good - how this process is used as a sacral act in our society.

- How does voting draw us into the story/narrative and push us into false dichotomies, like two parties and lesser of two evils (consequentialist morality)?
 - “I voted” stickers as sacral
-
- There’s a section early on in your book that helps me understand the sacralism of voting. You said, “Proper religion, properly done was necessary in [the Roman] vision so that the gods would be placated... Rituals fail when not performed correctly, and the consequences are dire for the one who engages the gods in an unfitting manner. (pp. 20-21)... Participation in the public rituals of civic religion preserved order and gave meaning. (p. 36).” If any of my supporters found out I voted for a Democrat, they’d flip their lids. But I think it might actually be worse if they found out I abstained from voting. You hear all the time, “just get out and vote!” Participation - action - is what everyone is pushing. To abstain from choice is anathema. It’s blasphemous. It dishonors all the soldiers who died for my freedom to vote - though not for my freedom to abstain, I suppose. A lot of people think that an abstention from voting is a

waste of moral capital because I'm refusing to choose the greater good - if such a thing even exists in most elections. Could you expound on the idea of why there is so much judgment centered around sacral acts, and how upholding those seemingly simple acts is really about so much more - about the "preservation of order and meaning?"

[Donation of Constantine, Marvels of Rome, Hannah Arendt on origins] [If i don't vote or uphold the war machine and our narratives of empire, I'll lose my freedom]

- Sacralism primarily functions to bind us together, but you also identify two other reasons sacralism is important. You said, "For Romans, as for soldiers of all times alike, such rituals are also a great distraction and help control the natural fear of death as well as dissipate guilt." (p. 47). **Sacralism distracts from the negative and dissipates guilt. It can give us a sense of control and a sense of absolution. We have security and control as part of a unified group, and we have absolution in that guilt can be diffused among the whole society rather than being borne by an**

individual. So when the U.S. came together around the flag after 9/11 - I felt invigorated and a part of a strong group that wasn't going to be kept down. However, after the unjust invasion of Iraq, I didn't feel very guilty because I didn't order the invasion, I didn't elect Bush to do unjust things, and the majority of my countrymen and women were duped too. Would you talk a little more about these other functions of sacralism - control, distraction, dissipating guilt, etc?

- Besides not taking killing seriously today, we also don't take oath taking seriously. You said, "The ritual life of the soldier began with the oath of allegiance to the emperor. Taken in front of the regimental colors, the military oath, the sacramentum, was binding by religious law." (p. 48). U.S. soldiers today take oaths to the constitution, and they have to re-make those oaths every time they rank up, as far as I'm aware. Can you explain the Bible and the early church's aversion to oath taking, and do you think it makes

a difference that American oaths are to a flag or a constitution rather than to a person?

- Reading Salvian's "On the Government of God" has been helpful for me to see how a decaying Rome under Christendom is much like a decaying U.S. under Christendom. We espouse the ideas of Jesus without embodying them. Salvian uses his book to bemoan not the hordes invading Rome, but the Christians who are even worse than the hordes. One part of his book reminds me of our conversation here. Salvian says, "Who would deign to follow God's commands in respect to his enemies, I do not say in wishes, but even in words? Even if a man compels himself to do so, still it is his lips alone that act, and not his mind; he lends the service of his voice to the action without changing the feeling of his heart. Therefore, even if he forces himself to say a prayer for his adversary, his lips move, but he does not really pray." He's saying that Christians don't pray for their enemies - but even if they did - their prayers wouldn't really be prayers. They'd just be the moving of lips and the movement of air, because a true prayer is one

that involves the body and soul behind the words.
**It seems like there is a big task ahead of
Western Christianity to reclaim the ethics of
Jesus and move beyond mere belief and mere
words. Where do we even begin to start in
getting our actions in line with what we say we
believe?**

Voting age changed to 18

In the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, 16- and 17-year-olds seized the opportunity to vote; 75% of their cohort turned out to vote.

<https://theconversation.com/how-lowering-the-voting-age-to-16-could-save-democracy-93567>

Voting is a sacral act to test compliance. Why important that everyone vote?

We perform actions either because they work, or they bind (relationships)

Consequentialist. Important to vote even though small portion and won't impact things.

Doing history well means that we pay particular attention to differences between what Justo González calls the “innocent readings” of history and “responsible remembrance.”⁶ Innocent readings of history are a selective forgetfulness, a heuristic device for our own agendas and power struggles. Responsible remembrance, on the other hand, sets us free from “the crippling imprisonment of what we can grasp and take for granted, the ultimate trivialising of our identity.”⁷ Responsible remembrance leads to responsible action. (p. 3).

This link between heaven and earth, private and public, was at the core of Romanitas, Roman identity, and religion was intimately connected to the idea of “sacred

space.” (p. 10). [Marvels of Rome and the Donation of Constantine as narratives of power]

that the conflict between Rome and the Church was ultimately a collision of sacrificial discourses. The Scriptures, especially the New Testament, abound with these competing discourses and the very sacraments by which one is united with the Church and is identified with it (expressed even in the earliest forms of baptism and the Eucharist) were from the beginning imbued with a rhetoric of sacrifice that competed with that of Rome.⁵ The Christian idea of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (basileia tou theou), the “kingdom of God,” inaugurated in Luke 4:19 and given structure in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 4:23—7:20; especially 6:9–13) could not but be seen as a threat to the “kingdom of Caesar,” and the peace which Christ bequeathed the disciples (John 14:27) threatened the pax deorum that guaranteed Rome’s eternal place. It is for this reason that the weight early Christian writers such as Tertullian and Origen placed on the prohibitions against idolatry cannot be reduced to the anachronistic category of private piety, or to personal acts of worship, or even to the periphery of proper religious behavior and be dismissed simply under the heading of “warnings

against idolatry.”⁶ On the contrary, all these prescriptions against idolatry carry within them the full force of the “public transcript” of sacrifice as formative of both communal and personal identity. (pp. 11-12).

[Hauerwas’s sacrifice of war and of Christ]

- Christian refusal to participate in the sacrificial system was not simply a rejection of Roman religion: it was a fundamental challenge to Roman identity and that carefully crafted balance between the Roman state and the gods. (p. 21).
- It is also an incontestable fact that war, at the end, is “merely another form of sacrificial violence” (p. 52).

Ferguson concludes: “Perhaps few exercises of non-violent resistance for the sake of higher law have accomplished as much . . . The fruition of the implications of [the martyrs’] testimony was long time in coming, but the early Christian witness was an important step in desacralizing the State.” (p. 38).

Nor should we neglect the positive argument for proper worship of God through the sacraments of the Church in favor of the negative one against idolatry. For it is in the worship and the sacraments of the Church where the early Christians professed Christ as Dominus et Deus and interpreted his story as the “Gospel of Peace” (p. 51).

Tertullian: So what will you accomplish, if you use this attire (viz. of purple of the magistracy) but do not perform the function connected with it? Nobody can give an impression of cleanness in unclean clothes (i.e. the office is already polluted by long standing practice and tradition). If you put on a tunic soiled of itself, it

may perhaps not be soiled through you, but certainly you will not be able to be clean because of it. (p. 64).

The same holds true with Tertullian's view of the incompatibility of military service and Christian confession. Even though the philosophical presuppositions of political theory and state pragmatics may present the preservation of the state, its defense, and even flourishing, as a necessary condition to which Christian reasoning (theology) ought to conform, Tertullian turned to the fact of the Gospel of Peace articulated by Jesus, and sought to conform Christian reasoning (theology) to the revealed kingdom of God, namely, to the fact that: "In disarming Peter, the Lord disarmed every soldier" (Idol. 19.3). In this, Tertullian was consistent throughout his life.¹⁹ (p. 102). [Realism vs. Idealism]

The broad categories of "barbarian" and "heretic" had become the new threats replacing the earlier binaries of "Christian" and "pagan," allowing for a linguistic shift where "we" now enjoy the undeniable protection of the State and are, thus, responsible for the protection of the State. (p. 198). [Use of language propaganda]

Caesar and the Sacraments:

My students, of course, are concerned that salvation is not seen as a by-product of works. But those listening to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost would not have asked these kinds of questions. The reason is simple. Peter was not speaking about salvation in the same way as my students. He was not teaching about regeneration of the individual, but regeneration of a nation. He was not talking about going to heaven when we die, but about calling his audience to pledge their loyalty to God's kingdom. Repentance was turning their backs on former alliances. It was the first step of resistance. One writer likens it to saying, "I cancel my subscription." Myers likened it to the act of burning one's draft card during the Vietnam War.²²¹ It was an act of nonviolence that declared, "I am not participating in this war. I no longer subscribe to the values of this society, and plan to live by an alternative set of values." Baptism was a call to pledge by oath (sacramentum) one's loyalty to another king than Caesar and another

empire than Rome. When seen in this light, my students' questions become irrelevant. They have nothing to do with what was happening on the ground in the first century. Rather, these theological questions developed during the post-apostolic era when the church fathers began to view salvation 1) as deliverance of the soul and not as deliverance of a people out of exile, and 2) as individual regeneration not as kingdom restoration. Baptism entailed switching allegiance from Caesar to Christ and was the ritual of initiation into the kingdom community (p. 94).

Augary

On the Government of God:

For instance, who would deign even to listen to our Savior's bidding not to take thought for the morrow? Who obeys his order to be content with a single tunic? Who thinks the command to walk unshod possible or even tolerable to follow? These precepts then I pass over. For here our faith, in which we trust, falls short, so that we judge superfluous the precepts the Lord

intended for our benefit. "Love your enemies," said the Savior, "do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Who could keep all these commandments? Who would deign to follow God's commands in respect to his enemies, I do not say in wishes, but even in words? Even if a man compels himself to do so, still it is his lips alone that act, and not his mind; he lends the service of his voice to the action without changing the feeling of his heart. Therefore, even if he forces himself to say a prayer for his adversary, his lips move, but he does not really pray.

Salvian. *On The Government of God (Illustrated)* (pp. 53-54). Aeterna Press. Kindle Edition.

Anatomy of a Hybrid:

A sacral society has a single religiosity at its heart, an ultimate loyalty of soul, which, it is assumed, is common to each member of that society. In a sacral society one's religion is a matter of course, determined by one's inclusion in the societal unit. A sacral society is held together by sacrament. It has a shrine to which each member of that society is oriented, and it has a

specified deoprtment before that shrine, deoprtment that is essentially sacramental in character. In fact, it may be said that the basic function of sacrament in such a sacral society is the tying together of the societal unit. Sacrament properly understood is a device whereby an already existing togetherness allegedly becomes a religious togetherness. As a mere glance at the words indicates, sacrament, sacred, sacral, and sacrifice are related words. It may thus be said that a sacral society is a society held together by the sacred, the sacred encapsulated in sacrament and expressed in sacrifice. (Kindle Locations 45-51).

In a sacral society there is no pressing for decision: there are no alternatives and hence no need, or even possibility, for decision-making. The spectacle in Athens which we described above repeats itself every time the Christian kerygma is heard, namely, that some "believe" and some "disbelieve," some begin to glory in the cross and some begin to stumble over it. Such alternatives simply do not present themselves in a sacral situation. In it there is consensus, unanimity, agreement: what is done for one is done for all. (Kindle Locations 177-180). [Pair w/Julius the Veteran quote]

There can be, and usually is, such a thing as a recital in troubadour style of a series of heroic deeds performed by the gods or god-like men (called gesta de i), the Paul Bunyan feats of the tribe's past. But these recitals, or recountings, are things in which the whole society is involved, every member of it in the same way. The heroic deeds that are sung are the deeds of representatives of the total society. Such recitals do not call for decision on the part of the listeners; there is no for and against. Such recitals of heroic deeds are wholly sacral in character and quite unlike the Christian kerygma. (Kindle Locations 187-189). [Pair w/Arendt, Marvels, and Donation]

The new religion showed no desire or intention to replace the old sacralism with a new sacralism. It did not knock down the shrines on the city square and then pressure the city authorities to replace those with Christian icons or crucifixes. Early Christianity gave evidence that it thought of itself as something other than the religions which it was replacing, other in that it was geared to grace in two senses, and therefore to a composite society, rather than a monolithic one. (Kindle Locations 1266-1270).

With the theology of the imperialized Christ came an inordinate emphasis on salvation as pardon and a slighting of salvation as renewal. This imbalance is inherent in the imperialization of Christ because emperors can pardon and, if they are in the mood for it, do pardon; but emperors cannot renew. When we recall that Christianity from its inception was definitively a religion of renewal (think of John the Baptist and his emphasis on "fruits worthy of repentance") quite as much as a religion of pardon, we see that with the birth of the hybrid, theology began to put all its weight on one of its two feet, began to stress pardon and to slight renewal. One can scarcely overstate the amount of evil inherent in this imbalance. One of the features of this imbalance is the failure of the Christian faith to be the agency of betterment and renewal that its founder wanted it to be, on the individual as well as the social level. If men are merely pardoned, the world is not changed: merely justified people are no better neighbors for that. Seen in this light, Luther's idea of "justified and sinner at one and the same time" is rank error -- as some of his contemporaries were quick to

point out. For, if an allegedly justified man is the same sinner he was before the transaction, then his alleged justification is a fiction and a farce. He who has been justified has also been made just and hence is no longer the unjust creature he was before. From this imbalance has come, by way of reaction, the current one-sided emphasis on social amelioration known as "the social gospel," a correction -- albeit an over-correction -- of the imbalance. Likewise, from it have come a flock of so-called holiness churches, churches in which the forensic aspect of salvation is crowded aside by a one-sided emphasis on the moral aspect. These too are history's way of balancing its ledger. At present, cries go up that the church is "irrelevant"; a church that talks only (or even predominantly) of pardon is irrelevant, although it must be added that a church that speaks only of renewal will probably in the end turn out to be just as irrelevant.

Verduin. Anatomy of a Hybrid -- By Leonard Verduin (Kindle Locations 2024-2028). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

It should also be pointed out that in a sacral situation there is no diversity of lifestyle: the life-style is the same for all. The virtues and vices that come to expression in a sacral society are spread evenly over that entire society. Sacral society has a latitudinarian posture with regard to behavior patterns: it tends to discourage any polarization in the matter of conduct. This posture was for good reason: such polarization would tend to divide society and make it composite, create two camps within it, the camp of the "sinners" and the camp of the "saints." Should such differentiation in life-style begin to develop in a sacral society (which is quite unlikely), it would be slapped down immediately because of its allegedly harmful implications -- the erosion of the oneness.

Saul's disgrace (as recorded in I Samuel 13) began when he as king, irked by the tardiness of the priest (whose job it was), "offered the burnt offering" -- thus invading the domain of the priest. The moment the priest (Samuel) arrived on the scene, he asked the king, with rebuke in his voice, "What have you done?"

To this incriminating question, King Saul replied defensively: "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed ... I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." It should be noted that Saul needed religion because "scattering" was taking place; and it should also be recalled that in a sacral situation the prime function of religion is to counteract scattering by means of a sacrament. A more sacral mental climate and an act more strongly dictated by sacralism than that of Saul can scarcely be imagined.

