THE MONKS AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE EAST ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE FIFTH CENTURY *

FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIAN THE CONTRASTING DESTINIES OF the eastern and western provinces of the Roman empire during the fifth century are of absorbing interest. In the east all roads lead to Chalcedon where in October and November 451, "five hundred and twenty or more"[1] bishops drawn from the whole area from Mesopotamia to the Balkans met in turbulent but constructive sessions to discuss the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and discipline under the presidency of the Emperor Marcian or his officials. The only westerners were the three papal legates, whose defective knowledge of Greek, however, prevented them from exercising effectively the honorary precedence over the debates that was theirs. Their colleagues in the west were concerned meantime with events of a different order. Only four months previously, on 20 June 451, Attila and his Huns had been checked in a titanic struggle with the Roman and Gothic forces under Aetius on the Catallaunian plains near Troyes.[2] Attila's army, however, was still in being, and next year Pope Leo was himself to take part in the embassy that persuaded him to spare Rome from siege and probable sack. In the east, the Huns had done their worst in the previous decade, but one way or another the boundaries of the empire had been restored and were not to be threatened seriously again for another century. In the west, the Visigoth and Vandal settlements in Gaul and Africa respectively had taken root. Within a quarter of a century there were to be no more western provinces for an emperor at Ravenna to govern.

In these great events, the attitude of the provincials towards the Roman empire was almost as important as the skill of the military commanders. From a military point of view the east was not much

* A revised version of a paper read at a Conference organized in the University of Birmingham on the theme of "Asceticism in the Early Byzantine World", 19-20 March 1971.

[1] This figure is given by the bishops themselves in a letter to Pope Leo informing him of the Council's decisions. Among Leo's correspondence, *Ep.* 98.1 (second version), Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (hereinafter cited as *P.L.*), liv, col. 959c.

[2] Dating and description, see E. A. Thompson, *Attila and the Huns* (Oxford, 1948), p. 141.

better placed than the west to withstand a sustained onslaught. Despite the defensive strength of Constantinople the eastern provinces were vulnerable from two directions. From the south-east the Persian monarchs never gave up entirely their dream of re-establishing the empire of Darius and Xerxes and extending their rule to the Bosphorus which they were so nearly to achieve in the reign of Heraclius. Across the Danube were the barbarians, the Goths, and the still more formidable Huns. For both of these the Balkan provinces presented a tempting prey comparatively near at hand, and not at the end of long and wearisome marches as Gaul and Italy lay. At Adrianople in 378 the Roman forces had been defeated utterly and the Emperor Valens had been killed. In 399-400 there had been a further threat in the heart of the empire itself through the revolt of the Gothic leaders Gainas and Tribigild. A generation later, successive imperial armies had been overthrown and the emperor's authority mocked at openly by Attila's Huns. Through the last twenty years of Theodosius II's reign, the east Roman provinces lay under the constant double threat from Attila on the Danube and Gaiseric's control of the seaways across the Mediterranean from Africa.[3]

Yet the empire had survived, and amidst all these disasters few if anyone in Constantinople believed that it would fall. John Chrysostom writing his *Homily on Isaiah* around A.D. 400 expressed his own hopes for its continuing prosperity, "Now those vast spaces the sun shines upon, from the Tigris to the Isles of Britain, the whole of Africa, Egypt and Palestine, and whatever is subject to the Roman Empire lives in peace. You know the whole world is untroubled, and of wars we hear only rumours".[4] Had he been in Italy or Britain, or indeed almost anywhere else in the west, he would have experienced more than rumours. But his attitude is typical of the times. Bishops like Synesius of Cyrene and the historians Sozomen and Socrates and even the pagan Zosimus, had confidence in the future and they wrote with a sense of detachment and ease unmatched by their western contemporaries. Socrates indeed ends his *Ecclesiastical History* with the comment that so far as the Church was concerned, the situation was so good that there was nothing more to write about, and this, he indicates, applied to cities and nations governed by

[3] See E. A. Thompson, "The Foreign Policies of Theodosius II and Marcian", *Hermathena*, lxxvi (1950), pp. 56-75.

[4] John Chrysostom, *Homil. in Isaiah*, 2, *Patrologia Graeca* (hereinafter cited as *P.G.*), lvi, col. 33. Compare Zosimus, *Historia Nova* (ed. L. Mendelssohn), ii. 36, 1-2 writing *circa* 460 and congratulating himself on living in Constantinople, in a city that was prospering as none other.

Theodosius II also.[5] It was the year 439, the year of the fall of Carthage and the definitive success of the Vandal venture in Africa.

This confidence and resolve were reflected in many aspects of east Roman provincial society.[6] In particular, contemporary authorities often suggest the existence of an active and articulate public opinion that atoned for the military incompetence of the generals. Acts of treachery indeed, there were, especially among the population of the Danube provinces even in favour of the Huns,[7] but these were counterbalanced by the loyalty and vigour of others. The inhabitants of Constantinople had clamoured for arms to defend the city against the advancing Goths just before the Adrianople disaster in 378,[8] and had turned on the supporters of Gainas in the city a quarter of a century later.[9] In the crisis of the Hunnish inroads in 447-448 the Thracian provincials harassed Attila's war-bands.[10] In the frontier province of Osrhoene, the Bishop of Edessa described as "confessor and monk" pointed out with pride to his visitor Etheria, *circa* 390, where fountains had appeared miraculously in the city when "the Persian enemy" had cut the water-supplies during a siege.[11]

One cause of this astonishing resilience may be found in the close interconnection of state and religion that prevailed in the east, which counteracted forces of separatism and revolt arising from social and regional discontents which contributed to the downfall of the western empire. Since the middle of the fourth century Christianity had been the predominant religion. The well-directed and not unintelligent effort by the Emperor Julian to restore paganism had proved a fiasco. Julian himself paints a vivid and depressing picture of the collapse of paganism in town and countryside alike, deserted temples, a decaying and indifferent priesthood, a goose instead of a hetacomb to be offered at the shrine of Daphne at Antioch.[12] In this great religious revolution the eastern monks had played a vital part. They were the people whom

[5] Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.*, vii.48.

[6] For an interesting general discussion of the differing attitudes of the eastern and western provincials towards the Germanic barbarian invaders, see F. Millar, "Dexippus", *Jl. Rom. Stud.*, lix (1969), pp. 12 ff.

[7] Sozomen (ed. Bidez/Hansen), *Hist. Eccl.*, ix. 5. 2. The treachery of the Bishop of Margus in 442 threatened the entire Danubian defence system. Compare also Priscus, frag. 1 (Bonn edn., p. 140).

[8] Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 38.

[9] Zosimus, *Hist. Nova*, v. 19.3.

[10] Priscus, frag. 2, pp. 143-4. For the defeat of the Byzantine generals by the Huns, see Theophanes, *Chron.* A.M. 5942 (Bonn edn., pp. 158-9).

[11] Peregrinatio Silvae, 19.10 (*Corp. Script. Eccl. Latin.*, xxxix, pp. 62-3).

[12] For instance in *Letters* (ed. Bidez), 22 and 89, and *Misopogon* (ed. W. C. Wright), 362c.

Libanius describes as clothed in black and with the appetites of elephants who destroyed the shrines of rural paganism.[13] They came down in Alexandria in their crowds to witness the destruction of the Serapeum by the Patriarch Theophilus in 391. "Their doctrines", we are told by Sozomen, "were invariably received and followed by the people on account of the virtue they exhibited in their actions".[14] They represented popular Christianity and indeed, popular opinion in the east.

The interpretation of Christianity, however, that triumphed there favoured the consolidation of Church and State round the person of the emperor. If Eusebius of Caesarea himself had no direct heir, his ideas of the Christian monarchy and the place of the emperor in the divine order of things won almost complete acceptance. The fifth century east Roman emperor like Constantine was "friend of God", and elected "by divine providence".[15] His monarchy had its due place of authority in the divine order together with that of the Church and its clergy. His duties involved the "common oversight" of his subjects, and the duty of leading them spiritually as well as materially towards salvation both on earth and in the Beyond. The "stability of the state depends upon the religion by which we honour God".[16] In writing thus to the First Council of Ephesus in 431 Theodosius II merely echoed the ideas of Constantine a century before, and represented fully those of educated provincials in the east. In contrast to the situation in the west there was no divergence of outlook between emperor and Church, and for the bishops who accepted the current Platonic and Stoic philosophic values as an essential background to their Christian belief, the idea of a universal Church ruled by the emperor was natural. The Christian society on earth was a reflection of the polity of heaven.[17] There were no "Two Swords" theories in Byzantine statecraft, no tradition of the jealous separation of powers between the secular and ecclesiastical, no belief that the state as the product of Original Sin was intrinsically inferior to the Church. The examples of Pope Liberius

[13] Libanius, *Pro Templis* (ed. R. van Loy, *Byzantion*, viii, 1933, pp. 7-39), ch. 8.

[14] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* (ed. Bidez/Hansen), vi. 27. 10.

[15] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, x. 9. 2; compare Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, Prologue, 9, Theodosius II as "imitator of the Heavenly Emperor". For Marcian elected "by divine providence" see Marcian to Pope Leo, Leo, *Ep.* 73.

[16] Mansi, *Conciliorum Collectio* (Paris/Leipzig edn., 1902), iv. 1112. For Socrates's view that Theodosius II's goodness merited his military successes, see *Hist. Eccl.*, vii. 18.

[17] On this theme, see N. H. Baynes, "Eusebius and the Christian empire", *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), pp. 168-72.

and Ambrose of Milan defying the Emperors Constantius II and Theodosius I were admired by historians as heroic deeds,[18] but were not preached as examples to be followed.

Belief in a divinely appointed society dominated by emperor and Church had slowly percolated to all levels of the population in the east. Here too, Eusebius had spoken for his age. Confronted by the pagan and barbarian Persians and Huns the east Roman provincial regarded himself as belonging to "the race of Christians", whether he was an Armenian, Syrian, Egyptian or Illyrian. The aim of all human society was to become "Christian and holy", an image of heaven.[19] The barbarians, like the "envious demons", might cause damage and destruction but the Christian *oecumené* was inviolable. This sense of a common Christianity proved a powerful factor in consolidating morale in the face of external threats and nerving the ordinary citizens to self-defence; and it also enabled the individual emperors to be judged by qualities other than those of a successful general. Arcadius even was remembered as a "good emperor" who founded monasteries and orphanages,[20] and Theodosius II as a humane and just ruler, qualities that assured him the loyalty of his subjects whatever the adversity.[21] In the sixth century John Malalas, himself a man of the people, spoke of Theodosius II as one who was "held in high respect being loved by all the people and the senate".[22] This was true. For three days 12-14 April 449, Edessa, once a pro-Parthian centre, provided an astonishing manifestation of enthusiasm for Roman authority when in April 449 a commission headed by the governor of Osrhoene, *Comes* Thomas Chareas, visited the town to investigate complaints of a part of the citizens, clergy and monks regarding the orthodoxy and conduct of their bishop, Ibas.[23] The commission was met with shouts of "One God, victory to the Romans". "Multiply the victories of Theodosius". "Long live the Roman Empire". "Long live the Patrician Anatolius.

[18] For instance, by Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 15-16 and v. 18.

[19] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1.4, 4 ff., and x. 9, 8-9.

[20] Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, vi. 23; compare Michael the Syrian, *Chron.* (ed. J. B. Chabot, Paris, 1899-1911), viii. 1. Arcadius practising justice and "loving the monastic life".

[21] Note Sozomen's stress on Theodosius II's *philanthropia* (love for mankind) and "greatness of soul", that ensured that his reign was "less tainted with blood or murder than all the reigns of your predecessors": *Hist. Eccl.*, Prologue 21. Similarly, John of Antioch, frag. 193 (ed. Müller). See W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 202-4, and C. D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila* (Ann Arbor, 1966), pp. 26-8.

[22] John Malalas, *Chron.* (Bonn edn.), xiv. 58, p. 358.

[23] The text of Chareas's reports, see J. Flemming, "Akten der ephesinischen Synode von 449", in *Abh. der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, new ser., xv (1917), pp. 15-55.

May he be preserved to Romania".[24] Edessa was to be strongly Monophysite a few years later, but the monks and clergy who demonstrated so volubly and shouted "One God" as a Monophysitizing slogan, also had in mind one Roman empire whose "God-loving" sovereign commanded the complete obedience of his subjects.

For a century before, however, the monks in the east had been in the forefront of the defence of the empire against Persia. Thus the successive defences of the frontier fortress of Nisibis between 349 and 360 were inspired largely by the monastic bishop Jacobus and the civilian population who urged on the Roman troops. Jacobus's prayers resulted in the Persian army being stung by swarms of gnats and forced to retreat in disorder.[25] When, after the Emperor Julian's fiasco in 363, the city was handed over to the Persians, the population begged to be allowed to carry on the struggle themselves.[26] Nisibis was not the only instance of active defence. Monks manned the defences of Amida in Anastasius's war against Persia in 502 — though not successfully, as the Persians caught a section drunk at their posts and were able to storm the town.[27]

The significance of the loyal demonstrations in favour of the eastern emperors can best be realized when compared with the spirit of the population in the west. Not many provincials shared the "groans of the Britons" at the departure of the Roman legions. Indeed, authors as different as the Gallic senator Rutilius Namatianus, the Constantinopolitan civil servant Zosimus and the South Gallic presbyter Salvian, leave the impression that the provincials by the early years of the fifth century in large parts of Gaul, Spain and Britain were in a state of exasperation and revolt even before the serious onset of the barbarians.[28] In Gaul in particular once the barbarians had established themselves many of the provincials were only too glad to join them.[29]

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 25 ff. [25] Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 30.

[26] See R. Turcan, "L'Abandon de Nisibe et l'Opinion publique", *Mélanges André Piganiol* (Paris, 1966), pp. 875-90.

[27] *Chron. Edessenum* (ed. Guidi), ch. lxxx; compare Michael the Syrian, *Chron.*, ix. 7 (ed. Chabot, p. 156).

[28] Aim of Gallic Bagaudae as one of "a Romana societate discessit", i.e. "to secede from the Roman community": see *Chron. Gallica, ad ann.* 435, *Chron. Min.*, i. 660. Separatism in Armorica, see Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu suo*, i, pp. 213-16, Zosimus, vi. 5, and in Britain, Zosimus, *Hist. nova*, vi. 5. 3. See J. N. L. Myres, "Pelagius and the end of Roman Britain", *Jl. Rom. Stud.*, l (1960), pp. 21-36 (especially pp. 32-6).

[29] Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, v. 5. 22 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, i, p. 59): "So you find men moving over everywhere, now to the Goths, now to the Bacaudae, or whatever other barbarians have established themselves anywhere, and they do not repent their move". Salvian has said, *ibid.* 5. 21, "They [the provincials] seek among the barbarians the Roman mercy, since they cannot endure the barbarous mercilessness they find among the Romans" (trans. Sanford, p. 141).

The reasons for the spirit of defection and separatism were largely economic. While the material remains of farms and villages in the western provinces of this period suggest a fair measure of prosperity in many parts, livelihoods were seldom secure. Few farmers were sure of making enough to pay their taxes and guard against the hazards of storm, drought or barbarian inroad. They were often at the mercy of the bailiffs of absentee landowners whose vast holdings extended over provinces rather than individual city territories. The picture Salvian paints for Gaul, of crushing taxation and extortionate collectors, could be applied elsewhere.[30] So, too, could the dilemma confronting the city councils whose members were responsible for a fixed quota of revenue from their estates on pain of making good the deficit themselves.[31] They must either squeeze the cultivators or go to the wall themselves. Intrinsically the eastern provinces were little better off. Urban patrons in Syria seem to have been no more kindly disposed to the villages dependent on them than were their Gallic counterparts. From the pagan side Libanius[32] and from the Christian John Chrysostom[33] and Theodoret of Cyrrhus[34] speak of the plight of the rural population of Syria and the tyranny of chronic debt and excessive rates of interest, of peasants being treated no better than beasts of burden, of oppression by officials, especially in respect of matters that affected their ordinary daily lives such as billeting and requisitions. The picture is very similar to that which can be gleaned about Numidia during the mid-fourth century.[35] The reaction, however, of the populations in the two halves of the empire differed considerably. The west produced the protest movements of the Circumcellions and Bagaudae, both of which aimed at the destruction of the existing social order, and there were movements in Armorica and perhaps Britain for separation from the Empire. All these inevitably weakened the ability and resolve of the western populations to resist the barbarians.

[30] Salvian, *ibid.* iv. 6. 30 and v. 7. 28: "The enemy is more merciful to these than are the tax-collectors" (*Leniores his hostes quam exactores sunt*). For a similar situation in the Danube frontier provinces, see Priscus, frag. 3 (Bonn edn. pp. 190-5). The merchant of Viminacium who had deserted to the Huns complained how in the Roman Empire "more painful conditions existed in peacetime than the evils of war, namely the most burdensome exaction of taxes and the insults of worthless individuals".

[31] Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, v. 7. 28.

[32] Libanius, *Or.* 50. 36 (ed. Forster, iii, p. 487).

[33] John Chrysostom, *Homil. in Matth.*, 61. 3, *P.G.*, lviii, col. 591: Landowners "were more cruel than the barbarians because they imposed intolerable and unending taxes and *corvées* on the working population on their lands".

[34] Theodoret, *Epp.* 42 and 43.

[35] From Optatus of Milevis, *De Schismate Donatistarum* (ed. C. Ziwsa, *Corp. Script. Eccl. Latin*, xxvi), iii, 4.

In the east, however, the monks, drawn largely from non-Greek speaking rural populations, identified themselves with the religious and economic needs of the people. They were the "men of God", enjoying the privilege of divine revelation and even converse with the prophets and the Lord himself, whose powers enabled disease of body and soul to be cured, even death itself to be overcome, natural disasters mitigated and the victims to be housed and helped.[36] They protected the people against the worst abuses by officials and patrons and, claiming like the western bishops the right of free speech to every grade of authority, they acted as channels of communication by which grievances could reach even the emperor himself; coming from this source, the latter paid heed. They also provided a safety valve for urban turbulence and enabled otherwise revolutionary disturbances to be attributed safely to the agency of demons whose evil the monk could exorcize.[37] They formed thus an essential buffer between the state and the vast majority of its subjects, and so long as they continued to do so, the eastern provincials had neither the incentive nor the desire to desert to Persian or Hun.

At first sight it is not easy to see how the monks came to play this important rôle in the crisis of the empire during the fifth century. The ideals that fired Antony and his companions were solely those of the New Testament. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Mathew xix.21), or the injunction found in the *Gospel of Thomas* which circulated both in Syria and in the Nile valley, "Blessed are the solitary and the elect" (*Logion* 4).[38] Antony (251-356) began as a solitary on the edge of his village in 270, aiming at achieving a spiritual life through contemplation and progress towards victory over the demons. The vast popularity of the movement he initiated was partly the outcome, however, of current economic conditions. From the middle of the third century onwards the situation had been worsening in the Nile valley. Examples are numerous and well-known.[39] Questions addressed to an oracle at Oxyrhynchus included such pleas as, "Shall I be sold up?" "Am I to become a beggar?" "Am I to become a member of a municipal council?" "Shall I take

[36] See H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche*, iv (Berlin, 1944), ch. vi, as the best account of these aspects of monasticism, and for a letter from a certain Ammonius asking for a cure for sickness from ascetics, see H. I. Bell, *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Oxford, 1948), p. 110.

[37] As at Antioch in 387, see Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, vii. 23. 4.

[38] See my "The Gospel of Thomas. Is Rehabilitation possible?", *Jl. Theol. Stud.*, new ser., xviii (1967), pp. 25-6.

[39] See M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2nd edn., revised by P. M. Fraser (Oxford, 1963), pp. 479-86.

flight?"[40] Land was in a poor state, and in abandoning his family's 300 *arourae* when he chose the solitary life Antony was more likely to have been abandoning burdens rather than wealth. It is interesting that his biographer, Athanasius, notes one of the benefits of his settlements was that the grumbles of the tax-collector were not heard there.[41] This was even more to the point in the vast agricultural settlements that Pachomius (*c.* 290-346) had called into existence. These were self-supporting social and economic units where every type of trade and work was organized among the monks.[42] The inmates now performed in security exactly the same tasks as they had previously as villagers at the mercy of tax-collectors and soldiers. Whatever their relations with officials or the bishops might be, the monks were accepted by society from the emperor downwards as essential for the well-being of the whole community. In return, so long as Christianity prevailed they accepted that society while attempting to end its abuses.

Despite their ideas of poverty, self-abnegation and disregard for the needs of the moment, feats of asceticism and self-inflicted hardship were only one aspect of the monks' struggle against the demons. Antony himself had accepted the need of manual work through his understanding of 2 Thess. iii.10 ("if any will not work, let him not eat"). He was never idle, Sozomen claims, and defence of the oppressed and representation of their cases to the authorities were among his main activities.[43] In all this, his example was universally followed by his disciples, not least by Shenute and the monks of the White Monastery. Elsewhere it was the same story. "All my life I have spent in sowing, reaping and making baskets", said the monk Serenus.[44] The Syrian, Eusebius, when asked why he worked so hard and lived so wretchedly, replied with the text "Love thy neighbour as thyself", and went on to explain how the heavy iron collar he always wore was to keep his eyes on the ground to remind him of the virtue of manual toil.[45] In both Egypt and Syria the

[40] *Pap. Oxyrhynchus*, 1477.

[41] *Vita Antonii*, 44, *P.G.*, xxvi, col. 908.

[42] *Vita Pachomii*, 7; compare 25 (mat weaving), Palladius, *Hist. Lausiaca*, 32, 12 (trades carried out in the monasteries and surplus sold for charity).

[43] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. 13.

[44] *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*P.G.*, lxv, col. 417). Another monk visiting Apa Silvanus on Mount Sinai, claimed that Mary was better than Martha and was told he could go without his lunch on the grounds that he did not need any (*ibid.*, col. 409). For monks working in the harvest, see Rufinus, *Historia Monachorum*, 18, and for Syrian monks working for their living and looking after the sick, see John Chrysostom, *Homil. in Matth.*, lxiii. 4, *P.G.*, lviii, col. 672.

[45] Theodoret, *Hist. Religiosa*, iv, = *P.G.*, lxxxii, cols. 1341-5.

combination of the rôles of Old Testament prophet and "truly philosophic life" aspired to by the monk produced an active concern for the current needs of the population to an extent neither appreciated nor practised in the west at this period. In addition to Scripture, the works of Clement of Alexandria and Origen were to be found among the Egyptian monk's library, both emphasizing that knowledge of God and true piety were the result of human activity as well as the renunciation of all those things that fed the passions.[46]

Besa's *Life of Shenute* and Shenute's sermons (*circa* 430-450) give instances of the monks using these supernatural powers with which they were credited to improve the lot of the rural population. The picture is often that of a fervently Christian Egyptian population suffering various forms of extortion and oppression from a still pagan aristocracy of Greek-speaking landowners.[47] A prophetic word from Shenute and vineyards belonging to the latter whence high rents were being extorted, would sink below the waters of the Nile.[48] The monasteries too, served as refuges for the surrounding population in the event of Blemmyes and Beduin raids. Where the "Greek generals" as Shenute calls them, had failed to defeat the enemy, the monasteries were there to run a food and hospital service for some twenty thousand refugees.[49] The tendency of *Life* and sermons alike is to portray Shenute as a great prophetic figure and the leader of his people critical of the secular authorities but loyal to his patriarch who in his turn was loyal to the Byzantine monarch.

For Syria the similar activities of the more anarchic and individualistic monks are recounted by Theodoret in his *Historia Religiosa,* written *circa* 435. Much of what he says relates to northern Syria within reach of his diocese of Cyrrhus, north of Antioch. He shows how there also monks were accepted as leaders of the communities in which they settled down and acted as benefactors in a great variety of ways. Thus, the monk Abraames settled in a pagan village called Libanus somewhere near Emesa.[50] Hiding his identity, he managed to establish himself as a seller of walnuts. Then one day

[46] Palladius, *Hist. Lausiaca,* ch. 60. Also, *ibid.,* 11 and 47, and Cassian, *Collationes,* x. 2-3.

[47] For the relations between the two communites, see J. Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atripe, Texte und Untersuchungen,* xxv (Leipzig, 1904), p. 26.

[48] Besa, *Life of Shenute,* ch. 85 (ed. H. Wiesman, Louvain, 1951).

[49] Shenute, *Sermo* (ed. H. Wiesman, *Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.*, Scriptores Coptici, ii. 4, Paris, 1931), 21 and 22, pp. 37-41.

[50] Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa,* xvii (*P.G.,* lxxxii, cols. 1420-1). For the social importance of the Syrian monk, see A. Vööbus, "A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient", *Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.*, Subsidia 17 (Louvain, 1960), pp. 161 ff. and 317 ff.

the tax-collectors moved in. The villagers were in a weak position. It is specifically stated that "they had no lord", and owned their lands, often an advantage, but in this case a powerful urban *patronus* was essential. Defaulters found themselves being beaten and manacled. Abraames went to Emesa and raised a loan of 100 solidi which cleared the arrears. The village was converted, he himself was elected priest and a church was built. Abraames went on to settle disputes, not least concerning the distribution of water-supplies, a key fact in village life, and reconciling the parties in law-suits, and was eventually visited by Theodosius II in person.[51] He had had good luck and good connections, but his career illustrates how a monk could become the accepted leader of a community and use his authority to act as a channel of information and complaint to the emperor himself. He was not exceptional. Another Syrian monk, Maisumas, by means of a miracle, was able to prevent the carriage of an exploiting landlord leaving a village from which he had been extracting rents. Maisumas always kept near him a jar of grain and a jar of oil full for the use of the needy, and he also had wider horizons, prophesying correctly the defeat of a Persian invasion.[52] Another, Palladius, was successful in a piece of detective work, unveiling the murderer of a wealthy merchant who had visited a village whose livelihood depended largely on the prosperity of a periodic fair.[53] The prince of ascetics of this period, Simon Stylites, is recorded as acting as advocate and arbitrator, as well as exercising an enormous influence on otherwise predatory Arab tribes.[54] Again, from the eminence of his fifty-foot pillar, the saint maintained a lively contact with officials, forwarding petitions to them, acting as a court of appeal in cases over disputed weights and measures and unjust judicial decisions, and above all, he had direct access to the emperor. Theodosius II was persuaded by Simon to countermand the instructions of the *Praefectus praetorio per Orientem* that synagogues taken over by the Christians in Antioch should be restored to the Jews.[55]

While the bishops, fearing for their own authority, attempted to curb the secular activities of the monks,[56] east Roman society

[51] Theodoret, *ibid.*, col. 1424.

[52] *Ibid.*, xiv, cols. 1412-13.

[53] *Historia Religiosa,* vii, col. 1365. Also, Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971), ch. viii.

[54] *Historia Religiosa,* xxvi, col. 1476.

[55] Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. 13.

[56] For instance, Canon 4 of the Council of Chalcedon and Canon 15 of the Canons of Rabbula which forbade monks to hear lawsuits. (See A. Vööbus, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-6.)

recognized them for the men of power that they were, the intermediaries between the Christian people including the emperor and his officials and the unseen world. They acquired foreknowledge of future events and their opinions and decisions reflected the justice of heaven. No wonder villagers would try to kidnap a monk so as to have his authority on their doorstep.[57] Moreover, they were unique to the east. In an interesting statement, Sozomen points out that while in the west there were many good philosophers (that is ascetically minded Christians), there was an absence of monks in the European provinces of the empire.[58] To a great extent he was right. Outside incipient Celtic monasticism and the settlements at Lerins and elsewhere in southern Gaul, monasticism in the west was in an early stage of development. It was still the personal choice of a few rather than a mass movement. The monastic life, too, had a sense of alienation and positive renunciation of estates, position and responsibilities towards others foreign to the outlook of the east. Paulinus of Nola's aim to renounce "the business of the forum" and to "break the chain of whatever retained him in the present age", was inspired more by the negative consideration of avoiding Judgement to come rather than the positive aspiration of raising one's soul towards contemplation of and absorption into the divine.[59] He had no word of encouragement for those Christians still working strenuously to shore up the tottering frame of the western empire. The only counterpart to popular monasticism in the west was the "soldier of Christ", or "athletes", the African Circumcellion, whose rough-cast habit and life of pilgrimage from martyr's shrine to martyr's shrine attracted the comparison.[60] His hopes, however, for an apocalyptic reversal of fortunes between rich and poor found little echo in the east. The Syrian monks whose activities included, like those of the Circumcellions, freeing slaves and destroying debtors' bonds,[61] would hardly have accepted armed attack on the villas of the

[57] Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa*, xix (Salmanes), cols. 1428-9.

[58] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 14. 38.

[59] For instance, Paulinus, *Carmen* x, lines 166-8 and his fear of Judgement, *ibid.*, lines 316 ff. See my "Paulinus of Nola and the last century of the Roman Empire in the West", *Jl. Rom. Stud.*, lix (1969), pp. 1-11.

[60] Circumcellion as a "Miles Christi", see P. Monceaux, *Rev. de Philologie*, xxxiii (1909), pp. 116 and 132. As "athlete" (*agonisticus*) see Optatus, *De Schismate Donatistarum* (ed. C. Ziwsa, Vienna, *Corp. Script. Eccl. Latin.*, xxvi), iii. 4. As pseudo-monk, Augustine, *De Opere Monachorum*, ii. 28. 36 (*P.L.*, xl, col. 575), and my note, "Circumcellions and Monks", *Jl. Theol. Stud.*, new ser., xx. (1969), pp. 542-9.

[61] Cited from A. Vööbus, *op. cit.*, p. 376. For the Circumcellions, Optatus, *op. cit.*, iii. 4.

rich or tempting martyrdom at the hands of a magistrate as a necessary corollary of their activities.

The emperors as men of their time shared to the full their subjects' awe of the monks. Almost from the moment he arrived in the east, Constantine had grasped the importance of the monastic movement as a force for the consolidation of the Christian monarchy. At Nicaea he received ostentatiously the Egyptian confessor Paphnutius. The latter had been condemned to the mines by Maximin and had lost his right eye and the use of his left leg, but he had survived, become an ascetic and had acquired a vast reputation for effecting miraculous cures and expelling demons.[62] Constantine's action symbolized his complete rejection of the ideology of the past and emphasized the future alliance of throne and monk representing official and popular religion respectively which was to continue as long as the Byzantine empire lasted. In the same period one can detect the first indications of the power that was to be placed in the hands of the monastic leaders when Sozomen records that Constantine sought the friendship of Antony, exchanged letters with him and urged him to put forward any request he might desire.[63] Rufinus adds the detail that the emperor wrote to Antony "as to one of the prophets"[64], asking his prayers for himself and his family. Another monk, Eutychius, who had established himself in Bithynia, went to Constantinople. There he visited Constantine with whom he had also exchanged letters and successfully pleaded for the pardon of a prisoner accused of plotting against the emperor.[65] The monk was on the way towards becoming the emperor's conscience.

The fourth-century emperors continued to keep in close contact with the monks. Valens was an exception, but his death at the hands of the Goths, duly foretold by the Egyptian monk, Isaac, was remembered.[66] The story is well known how, in the reign of Theodosius I, the monk Macedonius the Barley-eater, a rustic ascetic who spoke only Syriac and was popularly known as Gubba, saved the city of Antioch from dire punishment in 387 after the affair of the Statues. Where the eloquence of John Chrysostom could only secure for the inhabitants a respite and a hope of the emperor's mercy, and Bishop Flavian pleaded for their lives to the imperial commissioners with scant hope of success, the monk spoke out in their defence without the slightest hesitation. Theodosius himself

[62] Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. 11, and Rufinus, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1.4.
[63] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. 13.
[64] *Hist. Eccl.*, 1.8.
[65] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, I. 14.
[66] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, vi. 40.

was reminded curtly that he was mortal like everyone else, that the statues had been replaced and restored but that human beings could not be, and that he had no cause to be angry.[67] The city of Antioch was spared. The monk had shown his worth as a tribune of the people. The importance of this initiative as a means of bringing the grievances and fears of the people direct to the emperor can best be judged when contrasted with the fate of the citizens of Thessalonica four years later. There were no monks to beg for their lives. Seven thousand inhabitants were massacred, and Ambrose's sole resort was to excommunicate the emperor for a deed he could not prevent.

In the fifth century monks played a decisive rôle in the Christological and ecclesiastical controversies in the east, and an important one in the day to day decision-making at the imperial court. Both Theodosius II and Leo I took them into their confidence, and received good advice and loyalty in return. Theodosius II's claim to a measure of statesmanship is that, like Constantine, he recognized the power of the monks to influence public opinion. In 434 his letters to the Syrians, Simon Stylites, James and Barodotus contributed far more than threats of exile to get the Formula of Reunion accepted by all parties in the Nestorian controversy and a schism between Alexandria and Antioch averted.[68] In 449 his invitation to James and Barsaumas to be present at the Second Council of Ephesus was a popular move and Theodosius II was never forgotten by the Monophysites: he remained their hero.[69] Leo I, though more Chalcedonian-inclined, followed his example and asked the advice of Simon Stylites and James before deciding to send Timothy the Cat into exile in 460.[70] In all this the emperor kept his finger on the pulse of public opinion through the monks. When one considers in addition his sympathies for the non-aristocratic classes in his empire, craftsmen, merchants and manufacturers,[71] it is not

[67] Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, v. 20, and *Hist. Religiosa*, xiii, col. 1404; compare Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, vii. 23 (Flavian's embassy) and see R. Browning, "The Riot of A.D. 387 in Antioch", *Jl. Rom. Stud.*, xlii (1952), pp. 13-21, for the causes of the riot, particularly the tension between rich and poor in the city and the heavy burden of taxation at this time.

[68] Texts in Mansi, *Conc. Collectio*, v. 929 ff.

[69] Thus, Michael the Syrian, *Chron.* (ed. J. B. Chabot, Paris, 1899-1911), viii. 8, p. 35, and in 583 the "Green" faction in the capital prevailed upon the emperor Maurice to name his son "Theodosius", rather than "Justinian". See P. Maas, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xxi (1912), p. 29, n. 1.

[70] Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 9.

[71] See E. A. Thompson's analysis of the evidence provided by Priscus, John Malalas and Lydus for Theodosius II's social policy, *Attila*, pp. 190-7.

altogether surprising that Theodosius II survived for a reign of forty-two years and handed over his realm intact to his successor.

Meantime in the capital the growth of monastic houses was providing the monks with even more direct means of access to the emperor. The household officers, the eunuchs of the court, who wielded immediate influence with the emperor were often of a monkish disposition. A near contemporary describes them as "living in the palace as though a monastery", and they were open to monastic pressures from without. Thus Dalmatius and Eutyches were decisive influences in turning Theodosius II against Nestorius in the months of crisis that followed Ephesus I in 431. A decade later Eutyches emerged as the *eminence grise* in the court of Constantinople. His godson was the Grand-Chamberlain Chrysaphius, in whose hands both the foreign policy of the empire, especially regarding the Huns, and its religious policy lay. This formidable partnership gradually wore down the opposition. The Augusta Pulcheria narrowly escaped being ordained deaconess and her rival, the Empress Eudocia, was worked upon, to quote the medieval historian Nicephorus Kallistos, "with a persistence of drops of water that wear away a stone".[72] Cyrus, the Pretorian prefect whose buildings and fortifications made him famous, was forced to convert to Christianity, resign his offices, and become Bishop of Cotiaeum in Phrygia.[73] Eutyches's policy was to make the religion of Cyril of Alexandria uncompromisingly stated in the Twelve Anathemas the religion of the empire regardless of the damage inflicted on the patriarchate of Constantinople, and the impossibility of securing western assent. In this he had Chrysaphius's support.[74] That the pair were foiled only by Theodosius II's sudden death (July 450) is a witness to the strength of the position which monkish influence had now attained at the imperial court.

Eutyches might be compared with some evil genius of latter-day Byzantine or Russian Tsarist history. From now on, the imperial court was seldom to be without its monastic politicians. Daniel the Stylite, Severus before he became Patriarch of Antioch, the Syrian stylite, Zooras, and Theodora's son Athanasius, play similar rôles during the next hundred years. Together they illustrate the closeness of the connections between religious and political action

[72] Nicephorus Kallistus, *Hist. Eccl.*, xiv. 47 (*P.G.*, cxlvi, col. 1424).

[73] See, *Life of Daniel the Stylite* (ed. and Eng. trans., E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, Oxford, 1948), ch. 31.

[74] For this period see, P. Goubert, "Le Rôle de Ste. Pulchérie et de l'eunuque Chrysaphios", in (ed.) A. Grillmeier/H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* (Würzburg, 1953), vol. i, pp. 303 ff.

in the east at this period. Daniel illustrates also how eminence as a monk could open the way to a Syriac-speaking villager to the exercise of enormous political power in the capital. Daniel ultimately became the arbiter between rival emperors. He was born in the territory of Samosata *circa* 409. At an early age he was offered by his parents to the local monastery to be trained in the religious life. He became a disciple of Simon Stylites. After twenty-five years in a Syrian monastery he was persuaded to go up to Constantinople "as to a second Jerusalem", with its martyrs, shrines and "great houses of prayer"[75] — that is, the capital was regarded as a great centre of religious life and orthodoxy as well as the residence of the emperor. On arrival his Syriac speech at first made him suspect of heresy (Nestorianism?)[76] and only after nine years in what had been a pagan temple did his reputation as an expeller of demons enable him to amass sufficient reputation so that he could mount a column and establish himself as a true ascetic (*circa* 455). From that moment he prospered. Courtiers who benefited from his miraculous healing powers brought him to the notice of the Emperor Leo, and when his prayers were believed to have secured a son for the Empress Verina his position with Leo was unrivalled.[77] He was, we are told by his biographer, instrumental in settling a dispute between Leo and the client ruler of Lazica when the latter visited Constantinople in 466.[78] By this time important decisions were being remitted to him for his advice. The most important was in 468 when, in the grim aftermath of the failure of Leo's expedition against Gaiseric, Daniel was asked his opinion whether or not Gaiseric would now attack Alexandria. Daniel told him that he would not — and he was right. In the following year he showed his political finesse by supporting the Zeno faction at Leo's court against that of the ruling Germanic clan of the Alan, Aspar, and his son Ardaburius.[79] In view of Zeno's character his zeal on his behalf appears remarkable, but the Gothic Alan clique could be suspected of Arianism and this was anathema to Daniel. In view of this, it is not perhaps suprising that he warned Zeno about plots against him when the latter became emperor in 474 and used his influence decisively on his behalf in the crisis of his reign in the next year.

The episode reveals the tangled web of political, religious and even military cross-currents which characterize the history of the east

[75] *Life of Daniel the Stylite,* ch. 10.
[76] *Ibid.,* ch. 17.
[77] *Ibid.,* ch. 38.
[78] *Ibid.,* ch. 51.
[79] *Ibid.,* chaps. 56, 55, 65-8.

Roman provinces in the fifth century. Since the Council of Chalcedon the object of the Alexandrians had been to get the emperor to renounce the Two-Nature Christological Definition and the *Tome* of Pope Leo. They had found that though the Emperor Leo was rather more sympathetic to their cause than Marcian had been, its acceptance was impossible without at the same time depriving the see of Constantinople of its title deeds to precedence next to Rome accorded to it in the 28th Canon. No emperor could do this, and Zeno, despite his leanings towards Cyril's theology, was not to be an exception. A palace revolution put a nominee of the senate and kinsman of the Dowager Empress Verina on the throne in January 475, and Zeno had to flee for his life. His rival, Basiliscus, then proceeded to do exactly what the Alexandrians wanted. Timothy the Cat was recalled from exile, and given a triumphant entry into Constantinople. The usurper's Encyclical promulgated in April 475 condemned the *Tome* of Leo and Chalcedon and pronounced the One-Nature Christology of Cyril's Anathemas as the orthodoxy of the empire. It was silent about the rights of the see of Constantinople.[80] While the Patriarch Acacius protested, Daniel acted decisively. A Syrian like Simon Stylites, his leanings were towards the Two-Nature Christology of Antioch and Chalcedon was for him the touchstone of orthodoxy. He told Basiliscus's envoy who visited him that his master "had adopted Jewish ideas" and was unworthy of his blessing.[81] Public opinion in the capital began to turn against Basiliscus. The cry went up, "The holy man for the Church. Let the new Daniel save Susanna in her peril. Another Elijah shall put Jezebel and Ahab to shame".[82] Then on the petition of Acacius, Daniel came down from his column. Crowds turned out to see him. He preached against the "new enemies of Moses" (that is, the Egyptians). He compared the existing situation with that of the persecuted under Diocletian.[83] One of the emperor's Gothic guardsmen who mockingly called on the "new Consul" was struck dead.[84] This was power in action. Timothy left the capital for Alexandria. Basiliscus capitulated. The Anti-Encyclical annulling the Encyclical was despatched. In a few months Zeno was back and Basiliscus on his way to prison and death.

The career of Daniel demonstrates the extraordinary power which

[80] For the events, see Zacharias, *Chron.*, v. 1-5 (ed. Brooks, Paris/Louvain, 1919-24, pp. 145-52).
[81] Daniel Stylites, *Life*, ch. 71.
[82] *Ibid.*, ch. 71.
[83] *Ibid.*, ch. 73.
[84] *Ibid.*, ch. 75.

had fallen into the hands of the monastic leaders. Even so formidable a patriarch as Acacius might not have succeeded without his help. Certainly the Anti-Encyclical embodying Basiliscus's abject surrender would never have been sent. In the next reign, that of Anastasius, we find Severus, though a scholar with a legal training but of no higher status than a monk, coming to Constantinople on the urgent business of his monastery, and within a short time dominating completely the religious policy of the emperor. The Patriarch Macedonius, popular though he was and fifteen years in office, found himself deposed and exiled in 511. The Monophysite addition to the *Gloria* ("Holy God, Holy and almighty, holy and immortal, *who was crucified for us,* have mercy upon us") was intoned in the churches of Constantinople and Severus himself became Patriarch of Antioch (November 512).[85] With Justinian and Theodora monkish politics return to something approaching the level of activity of the reign of Theodosius II.

For an emperor to whom "the interests of the Church were no less valuable than life itself", the monks were trusted advisers.[86] In the early part of Justinian's reign St. Sabas led an important delegation of Palestinian monks to the capital to counterbalance the increasing influence of their Monophysite rivals. It was one of the latter, however, who for a few years between 533 and 536 attained a situation of almost unrivalled eminence at the emperor's court. Like Daniel the Stylite, Zooras was a Syrian peasant and a pillar-saint, but between the period of Zeno to that of Justinian, the province of Syria I had become almost entirely Monophysite in loyalty, and Zooras was if nothing else a fanatical opponent of the "Synod" (of Chalcedon). The policy, however, of Justinian and his uncle Justin had been based on the restoration of communion between Constantinople and Rome, which involved the maintenance of the canonical status of Chalcedon. Justinian's wife Theodora, for her part, was a woman of the people and shared the basic Monophysitism of the populace. The Monophysites could always count on her as an ally, and it was her favour that Zooras enjoyed while in the capital. His *Life* as recounted by John of Ephesus a generation later, is doubtless full of exaggerations and embroideries but it leaves no doubt as to the influence which the monks could exert on the Byzantine government. Justin had harassed the Monophysites and made life thoroughly uncomfortable for their monks and clergy, especially in Syria. Zooras had no hesitation in taking up their cause personally with the emperor. He

[85] For the Patriarch Macedonius's fall, see Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 32 and 44.
[86] Justinian, Novel 7.

descended from his column. "I will not rest", said he, "until I go up to him who holds royal authority and testify to him before the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the persecution of the whole Church and concerning the distresses and mockery of the saints in every place".[87] To the capital he went. Again, no protocol stood in the way of his direct access to Justinian. He preached against Chalcedon, defied the emperor's anger and struck him down with a painful sickness.[88] Like his predecessor Daniel, he became rapidly a power in the land. John of Ephesus points out that "as in his own country" he was "protector of the poor", and this guaranteed his influence among the populace.[89] He became Theodora's confessor and confidante. We are told "that many of the great affairs were resolved by him before the king and all the senators, while every day he was engaged in the same contest on behalf of the faith".[90] The height of his influence came when Anthimus became Patriarch in 535 and turned towards Monophysitism. The political reunion, however, of Africa and Italy with the eastern provinces of the empire made the formal acceptance of the Monophysite position by the Court impossible. Zooras's successes were ended by the arrival in the capital of Pope Agapetus (March 536) described by John of Ephesus as "a worse heretic than Paul of Samosata".[91] Eventually, he was exiled from Constantinople and had to accept asylum from the Empress Theodora.

With Zooras, as with Daniel, political influence primarily rested on an enormous reputation for sanctity, "the hidden power of grace",[92] achieved through ascetic practices. The monks were in communion with the unseen world which gave them the power to "bind and loose" even the emperor himself. They had the free speech (*parrhesia*) reserved to the bishop in the west before the emperor. There was also the monks' social concern, the championing of the peasants and poor of the cities from whose ranks they were often drawn, and their ability in some degree to make known the hardships of the people to their rulers. For Justinian the sanctity and inner power of a monk like Zooras outweighed his dislike of those who rejected Chalcedon. Later in his reign he accepted the monk John of Amida as a missionary and titular bishop of Ephesus despite his anti-Chalcedonian views.

[87] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ii (*Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. xvii), p. 21.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[91] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

It is not perhaps too much therefore to point to the monks as among the forces that enabled the eastern empire to survive the crises that overwhelmed the west in the fifth century. If one asks why no similar movement developed in the west, the answer lies as we have seen in the different character of popular religious movements there. Behind these popular attitudes lay differences of ultimate belief that had divided Latin and Greek Christianity from the early third century onwards. Whereas in the east Christianity and the concept of the powers and duties of the emperor coincided, the west had never accepted Constantine's conversion with much conviction. If one excepts on the one hand, the loyalist utterances of Prudentius,[93] almost as fervent as those of his eastern counterparts, and the outright comparison by the Donatists of any secular ruler whether Roman or Vandal with Anti-Christ, one is left with a broad conspectus of western Christian opinion which regarded the Roman empire as of temporary value only, and was prepared to regard its demise more or less with indifference. Though for some periods of history the interests of the *Civitas Terrena* and the *Civitas Dei* might run parallel, there was no inevitability about this, and if Rome fell and the imperial armies were defeated it was a matter for Providence.[94] The prosperity of Christianity did not depend on the survival of the empire. Even its Christianization, though in fulfilment of prophecy, was of little moment in the history of human salvation. The Christian's duty was to renounce the world and fix his gaze on the coming Judgement which no one could evade, and from which there was no appeal.

These attitudes, while they existed in the east, could be softened by the use of allegorical interpretations of Scripture and by the equally profound belief that man's true destiny lay in the restoration in him of the likeness of God lost at the Fall. The emperor was neither repentant Nebuchadnezzar as Augustine would have him,[95] nor representative of Anti-Christ, but the reflection of the Divine Word. Whatever his personal defects, loyalty to him was as loyalty to God.

[93] Prudentius was attempting to appropriate for triumphant Christianity the patriotic rôle which traditional paganism had hitherto played in moulding the attitude of the senatorial aristocracy. See R. Klein, *Symmachus* (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 140-60.

[94] For recent discussion of these attitudes and Augustine's rejection of Eusebius's Rome-theology, see R. A. Markus, *Saeculum* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 45 ff.

[95] Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petiliani*, ii.92.204-5. Compare N. H. Baynes, *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei* (London, Historical Association, 1949), pp. 12-13.

The different attitudes and rôles of the monks in the eastern and western provinces of the empire in the fifth and sixth centuries contribute much to their respective histories. In the west monasticism was avowedly escape. Neither Paulinus nor Melania could rid themselves of their worldly responsibilities fast enough. Where the Church exerted political influence it was through ecclesiastical statesmen such as Ambrose or Pope Leo. In the east on the other hand, monastic power was popular power, exercised in a state where the solidarity of the Christian people against Jews and barbarians was demonstrated by unswerving loyalty towards "the God-loving emperor", however deficient in those qualities he might be. Renunciation of the world entailed taking up the challenge presented by the demons and an active life in the service of causes where demons threatened. These could be the defeat of heresy or the defeat of barbarians or the defeat of various forms of oppression. In this age where the necessities of accuracy in religious belief were all-important for worldly success and an emperor would vie with the citizens of one of his provincial cities for the possession of a monk's body,[96] it was no more incongruous for a monk to be at the emperor's side at his court, than it was for a eunuch such as Narses to lead his armies, or for a rival to the throne or a fallen minister to find himself in a bishopric. One of Justinian's odder appointments towards the end of his life was that of Photion, described as a "monk of high rank" to deal with Samaritan rebels in 564, and he did his work well.[97] The monks thus provided a much needed flexibility in an otherwise increasingly hierarchical and hieratic society. Through them the Syrians and Copts, the submerged races in the Byzantine east, were enabled to exert an appreciable influence on religious and secular politics. This was the case, moreover, almost regardless of whether the monk accepted the emperor's *credo* or not. Their loyalty was thereby secured until the inability of the emperor and the authorities to renounce the hated *Tome* of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon rendered acceptance of second-class citizenship under the Moslems preferable to continued harassment by the Byzantines.

In the fifth century, however, such possibilities were not even on the horizon. The monks, whether Chalcedonian or Monophysite, were indispensable. Technically they were neither courtiers nor priests, but in the event they were more powerful than either.[98] In Eutyches,

[96] Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1. 13, concerning the efforts of the Emperor Leo I to secure the body of Simon Stylites.

[97] John of Nikiou, *Chron.* (ed. R. H. Charles), 95. 17.

[98] See Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, p. 102.

Simon and Daniel the Stylite, and Zooras and his companions, the east Roman provinces produced popular leaders who, in a curious way, were exactly adapted to their times. By perceiving how the ultimate strength of their Christian peoples, their religious identity, their secular aspirations and will to survive, were reflected in the monks, the eastern emperors of the fifth century proved more statesmanlike than they are sometimes thought to have been. They confronted the challenges that defeated their western colleagues, overcame them and survived.

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