

## The Special Position of Europe\*

Reinhard Bendix, University of California, Berkeley

For this lecture in honor of Stein Rokkan, I have chosen a part of my work which is directly related to one of Stein's preoccupations. Many years ago we collaborated on a comparative analysis of the development of legal, political and social rights which had been pioneered by T.H. Marshall. Subsequently, Stein collaborated with my colleague Marty Lipset on "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments". In both cases, but more explicitly in the Rokkan-Lipset article, a type of argument was used which Sidney Verba has called "the branching tree model of sequential development". This model is based on the assumption of critical turning points in the development of social structures. Whenever an old social order is in crisis and a new one is in the making, a rather wide range of possible resolutions exists. But once a way out of the crisis has been taken, whether inadvertently or not, it tends to canalize future developments; certain options become foreclosed even as others come into view. In human affairs it is never easy and it may be impossible to start *de novo*. In this way, Stein Rokkan and Marty Lipset argued that the European party system had been shaped by three crucial historical conjunctions: the Reformation, the French revolution, and the industrial revolution. In this lecture on the special position of Europe I propose to use the same argument, but by going further back in time take in the whole development of representative institutions.

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A qualification and a motto will assist me in this effort. The qualification refers to the title, which should actually be "The Special Path of Western Europe", or perhaps even the special path of Holland, England and France, and – with some further qualifications – of Central Europe as well. This point was worked out in two of Otto Brunner's essays dealing with differences in agrarian

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conditions and in the bourgeoisie of Western Europe and Russia. Max Weber and other researchers of his generation has already pointed out the structural difference between West German and East Elbian peasant and farm laborers. In addition, the social structures of Spain and Italy should be distinguished from those of northwestern Europe, a distinction which, however, has not been given the same attention by social historians as the East-West comparison.<sup>1</sup> Our topic, in any event, is the special position, or special path, of Western Europe – with certain provisos concerning intra-European differences that will have to be omitted here in the interest of simplicity.

Now my motto. At the end of his essay on objectivity, Weber noted that the theories and ideas that guide research are subject to change. In making this observation, Weber's intent was not to advocate either a "chase after ever new perspectives and conceptual constructs", or "the insatiable appetite of 'fact grubbers' for ever more file material, statistical tomes, and surveys". But at certain times the leading ideas and theories do change, even if one avoids such largely unproductive fads of intellectual life. To quote Weber:

But at some points the atmosphere changes. The significance of viewpoints that had been utilized without reflection, becomes uncertain – the path is lost in the twilight. The light of the great cultural problems has moved on. Then science also prepares to change its standpoint and conceptual apparatus, and to look at the stream of events from the heights of thought.<sup>2</sup>

One can attribute the slight pathos of these sentences to the style of the time, and substitute for them Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm change. The question remains whether such a change in guiding ideas is beginning to take shape in our current view of the special position of Europe.

I think the answer is yes. The discussion about the Western-European origins of capitalism is over two hundred years old, if one goes back to Adam Smith. By now it is sufficiently clear that capitalism can develop in a number of quite different ways, albeit on the assumption of its prior development in Western Europe. It has become common knowledge that the ways and means of capitalist development in Japan and Russia were different from those in Western Europe. Since the Second World War we have also observed rapid capitalist developments in Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong – not to mention the development of the Arabic peninsula that was fueled by the demand for oil. The diversity of capitalist developments has been analyzed in a number of ways which are not under discussion here. I do doubt, however, that a comprehensive analysis of that diversity can be obtained by always referring back to the unique West European origins of capitalism. Indeed, the *consequences* of those origins of capitalism are far more important by now than the fact that this breakthrough occurred in Western Europe.

The capitalist development of Western Europe certainly remains intellectually significant because many of the so-called developing countries have not achieved

a comparable breakthrough in economic rationality, but would prefer to attain comparable economic results. However, a breakthrough that occurred centuries ago in Western Europe helps these countries very little. One can grasp the practical irrelevance of the West European experience for the problems of economic development of the present day when one reads of a new agricultural fundamentalism in Africa and elsewhere or the “white elephants” of development programs which can be found from Bangladesh to Zambia.<sup>3</sup> A Protestant ethic *without* the spirit of capitalism may well have something to do with such failures, but this aspect of the problem will not be addressed here.

What, then, is the guiding idea that should direct our contemporary interest in the special position of Western Europe? My answer to this question makes use of an old idea, but our interest in it has probably been revived by contemporary experience. I am concerned with the close connection among kinship relations, politics and religion. A personal experience may clarify the point of issue. During a stay in India over twenty years ago, an experienced Indian anthropologist explained to me that the strength of familial bonds in her country could only be broken if individual Indians got a chance – through economic development or public welfare measures – to make their way without the support of their families. To make sure this observation is not misinterpreted in a romantic-communal sense, I remind readers of the cases (reported also in the West) in which young Indian brides were doused with kerosene and burned by their mothers-in-law, because the bride’s family refused to grant an increase in her dowry. The context which lies at the base of these family situations can also be applied to politics more broadly conceived, for example to the prevalence of military dictatorships in many of the so-called developing countries. In my opinion this phenomenon cannot be understood in terms of Weber’s category of patrimonialism, nor can it be interpreted simply as the personal hunger for power on the part of reactionary military officers. Instead, it is more likely that the armies (and frequently also the governments) of very poor countries offer one of the few avenues for individuals to move up in society. These opportunities for social advancement are so thoroughly exploited through family patronage and corruption that one has to view them as a special form of political-economic enterprise. For in many cases these are armies whose function consists not in defending borders and waging war but rather in controlling the domestic population. And these are governments in which individuals use public office for their own private gain. It should be noted that these distinctions themselves – between waging war and police action, between the “public” and “private” use of office, and the like – are among the foundations of the special position of Europe.

I have mentioned a shift in emphasis concerning the special position of Europe, using materials already generally familiar to us. The analysis will be presented in three steps. In the limited space available here, I can only lay the

groundwork for a discussion that would have to be pursued in detail with reference to the extensive literature.

1. First I will move Weber's main thesis on the Protestant Ethic from its religious-sociological to a religious-political context. I will refer to a path-breaking but little-known work by Herbert Schöffler from 1932.

2. Using the religious-political perspective I will then search for the special position of Western Europe not in the Reformation, but rather in the early Christian tensions between kinship relations and a community of faith, between state and church.

3. Finally, on this basis I will follow Otto Hintze in his interpretation of the roots of a representative constitution in Western Europe, and try to show why the West European path faces great obstacles in many parts of the world.

## English Puritanism in Its Political Setting

Max Weber linked economic activities calculated in terms of expenditures and profits with the notion of predestination in English Calvinism. The promise of salvation held a significance for people of the 16th century that is unimaginable for us today. At the same time, however, a person's uncertainty of whether or not he was one of God's "chosen" people evoked in him a state of fear about his fate after death that is equally unimaginable for us.

Out of this context emerged the cultural foundations of the spirit of capitalism: the rationalization of daily life and the denial of sensual pleasure. One must use each moment of life given by God, so that on the day of judgment one can account for one's self-denying use of God's gifts. This explains, for example, the pastoral advice in this period that people should keep a diary, and maintain it meticulously, in order to record their use of every waking hour as well as note their sleeping hours, so that the latter should not exceed the minimum necessary for health.

The details of this context, and the entire "Protestant Ethic" literature, have been critically examined by Gordon Marshall.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of this comprehensive study, I am convinced that Weber laid out in exemplary fashion the ideal-typical consequences of the doctrine of predestination. My emphasis here is on "ideal-typical". Even in a deeply religious culture one cannot assume homogeneity in religious motivation for an entire population. In my view, Weber's analysis leaves open the question of how the causal link between a religious doctrine and the economic activity of believers is to be understood in detail. Weber himself must have sensed this gap, for in his essay on the protestant sects he partially addressed it in his reference to the social pressure exerted by the community of believers on the individual. Credit worthiness and recommendations to neighboring communities depended on the irreproachable conduct of a puritan life. In this respect Herbert Schöffler provided what I consider a more

persuasive and more general answer by linking Weber's hypothesized religious fear closely with the political history of England in the sixteenth century.

I will briefly review Schöffler's main theses:

1. There was no religious reformer comparable to Luther or Calvin in the English Reformation.

2. Various anti-Catholic predecessors notwithstanding, the Reformation was initiated by Henry VIII with the Act of Supremacy of 1534 and the subsequent dissolution of the Catholic monasteries.

3. The non-religious, political-economic motives for this state act were probably apparent to contemporaries, although printed comments on this issue are not to be expected, because they would have amounted to treason and would have been severely punished.

4. Schöffler emphasizes the vacillating religious policies of the Anglican church which, despite Luther's influence, continued to follow the old English-Catholic church order in its liturgical rules of 1549. The primary characteristics of the English Reformation were, on the one hand, the King as sovereign, a secular jurisdiction rather than a clerical one, as well as a Bible translation in the vernacular, and, on the other hand, sporadic changes in the church's position on theological questions.

5. Most importantly, from 1534 until Edward VI's death in 1553 the Anglican system was in effect. This made all remaining *Catholics* papists and therefore also traitors of their King and country. Edward's rule was followed by the five-year reign of Mary Tudor (1553–1558), a strict Catholic ruler. This suddenly made all *Anglicans* – previously loyal to the King – not only heretics but traitors as well. After that came the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), subjecting all remaining Catholics to the suspicion of treason once again. One can characterize the psychological state on which Weber focussed as one of "salvation panic", if one views, as Schöffler does, the religious state of the individual as tenuous and imperiled in the context of the variety of theological positions and sect formation of that period. In this way I think one has a religious-political basis for making a causal connection between theological doctrine and the everyday behavior of people, including their economic ethos.<sup>5</sup>

With these few observations I want to suggest that the economic ethos of the world religions – one of the critical factors in the special position of Europe – should be seen in its religious-political context. The point here, as I said, is a shift in emphasis. Weber discussed this connection in his typologies, but he did not make it the center of his analysis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

And now I ask readers to make a great leap from the Reformation of the sixteenth century to the period of early Christianity. For the special position of Western Europe is closely related to the development of the church, especially to

the religious-political separation of faith from people's familial and ancestral bonds, that is, from their kinship relations.

## Political Aspects of Early Christianity

The Bible as a whole is pervaded by a tension between a particularistic morality and a universal ethic based on a shared belief. On one side is the idea that those who believe in God are his chosen people; on the other, the idea that the God of this one people of believers will benefit all other people through his judgment and grace.

The clearest expression of the particularistic ethic is found in the Deuteronomic distinction between the brother and the stranger. "Unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury" it says there (5 Moses 23:20-21), but unto the stranger you can do so with a clear conscience. One can attribute this double standard to a social order which drew a sharp moral distinction between an individual's kinship affiliations and his impersonal relations with resident aliens or kin-groups of enemies. The motto is generosity toward kin, but usury and war – that is, all otherwise disallowed means – toward aliens and enemies.

The clearest expression of the contradiction between this morality among brothers and the universal ethic of believers comes from the post-apostolic period during the closing decades of the first century. The written text of the new testament is commonly dated at this time. In this period, the Christian movement constituted a very controversial minority, which presented its universalistic in-group morality not only to the Jews but to all non-Christians. In a letter to the Galatians Paul writes (3:25): "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" of the law, which of course refers to the Jewish observance of the law. Mention is made of "the children of God by faith" (Gal 3:26). Where this faith prevails, there is "neither Jew nor Greek, ... neither bond or free, ... neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28). Elsewhere, in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes of this brotherhood of man between those who "were afar off, and to them that were nigh".

18. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
21. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;
22. In whom ye also are building together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Equality in Jesus Christ takes the place of ethnic-cultural, social and even sexual distinctions, that is, precisely those distinctions that were generally dominant in the Roman population.

The distinction in Deuteronomy between the brother and the stranger thus

contrasts with the early Christian distinction between believers and the pagan enemy, that is the non-believers of the ancient popular cults. In his commentary against usury *De Tobia* (ca. 377) Ambrosius, Bishop of Milan (340–379) justified war against non-believers who do not belong to the community. According to Ambrosius, Deuteronomy can only be understood in connection with the just war of the chosen people against the clans of the promised land. You should exact usury from the stranger, writes Ambrosius, but not from your brother. All men are your brothers, *insofar as they are brothers in the faith* and comply with the law of Rome. Ambrosius was a militant church father who knew how to exploit the Deuteronomic standard of opposing kingroups for the Christian cause:

Who is the stranger but the Amalekite, the Amorite, the enemy. 'From him' it says 'demand usury'. It is lawful to impose usury on him, whom you rightly desire to harm, against whom weapons are lawfully carried. On him whom you cannot easily conquer in war, you can quickly take vengeance with the hundredth. From him exact usury whom it would not be a crime to kill. He fights without a weapon who demands usury, he who revenges himself upon an enemy without a sword, who is an interest collector from his foe. Where there is the right of war, there also is the right of usury.<sup>6</sup>

Here the resident alien is put on an equal footing with the non-believer. Ambrosius' goal was to overcome the distinction in Deuteronomy between brother and stranger by having all men become brothers in faith.

The idea of forming a community, founded solely on a common faith was a tremendous innovation. This is reflected especially in the first epistle of Peter (1 Pet 2:1–10). There, believers are symbolized in changing images as “newborn babes” and as a “living stone” with which to build a “spiritual house”, but who are a “stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” to the non-believers. Then the new believers are characterized as a chosen generation, like the Jews before them, but naturally with emphasis on their fundamental uniqueness:

9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;
10. *Which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

A people created solely by a shared faith and the grace of God implied the complete devaluation of all traditional social distinctions. Small wonder that the people of the Roman empire protested against this innovation and played a major role in the early persecutions of Christians. It made some sense, therefore, when Tacitus accused the Christians not only of superstition, but also tagged them with “opinions inimical to the community” (*odio humanis generis*). Pagans thought of themselves as godfearing people who were even familiar with the idea of the one God, albeit in a non-Christian version. The Christian rejec-



tion of the traditional popular pieties, which among others sanctified kinship relations, appeared to pagans as atheism and hateful blasphemy.<sup>7</sup>

Early Christianity thus substituted a community based on shared beliefs for the kinship ties of the individual, at any rate in principle. In fact this idea was realized only in the course of protracted struggles within the Christian movement and against the resistance of a majority of the pagan population.<sup>8</sup> Traditional historiography understandably emphasized the persecution of Christians. However, what matters in this context is to stress that the spread of Christianity was very limited until the second half of the third century. From a total population of between 40 and 50 million people, the percentage of Christians in the West Roman empire barely exceeded five percent, and these were primarily in the cities. (In the East Roman empire the proportion was probably higher.) The mostly rural population remained in spatial and religious isolation, which makes it probable that the proportion of Christians in the cities was above five percent. One must of course be cautious in using such estimates, for they reflect at best the dimensions of the movement. However, experts agree that the spread of Christianity even at the time of massive persecution of Christians – in the West, with long interruptions between 249 and 306 – was still limited. The number of Christians rose rapidly only after the Toleration Edict of Galerius (311) and the Edict of Milan (313). After that the Christianization of the world empire cannot be separated from the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state.

As early as the fourth century the problem of church and state had become an issue which later developed into one of the most important foundations of the special position of Europe. As mentioned above, the church at the beginning of the fourth century already looked back on a history of internal controversy dating back to apostolic times. Now these controversies assumed a public character. The Toleration Edict of 313 provided for the return of confiscated church property. This led to conflicts between different Christian factions in North Africa. I need not go into the details of the Donatist controversy here, except to note that a series of appeals to provincial authorities and finally several petitions to Emperor Constantine occurred in the course of it. The emperor attempted time and again – through the appointment of various councils of bishops – to settle the conflict and to restore unity to the church, whose protector he was. All attempts on the part of Constantine and his successors failed and the controversy dragged on till the early fifth century. In the meantime, however, a precedent had been established which had significance for the future. For these boards, councils and synods developed inadvertently into quasi-representative institutions, regardless of whether they were called by the emperor, or later by the pope. Moreover, they created the possibility of using synodal authority not only in the arbitration of internal conflicts, but also against the throne, although the ruler too was able to make the church subject to them. Both possibilities were tried out as early as the fourth century. Although Emperor Constantine could

not prevail in the Donatist conflict, he did play a leading role, even in questions of church doctrine, at the council of Nicea (325), which he had convened. On the other hand, Bishop Ambrosius of Milan, who was mentioned earlier, was able to force Emperor Theodosius I to revoke one of his own edicts of restitution by denying him the eucharist (388). That edict had commanded a bishop to use church funds to pay for a synogogue destroyed by the people.<sup>9</sup>

This special character of the development of the church in Western Europe has to my knowledge no analogue in other civilizations. Two examples illustrate this point. In Russia, Christianity did not spread through a popular movement which then became the state religion after more than 250 years as it did in Western Europe. Rather, Russian Christianity was introduced through the conversion of Princess Olga of Kiev (945–964) and through the dissemination of information about religious practices in other countries. In later phases it developed further through state actions, campaigns in the name of Orthodox belief, and by a Greek clergy which built churches and proselytized despite its limited command of Russian. The sovereignty of the Russian princes over the Orthodox church was ensured not only through Greek Orthodox doctrine and the decline of the Byzantine patriarchy. Secular dominance was also reinforced through the growing power of the Muscovite Empire and the subordination of the leader of the Russian church to the Muscovite Dynasty. This contrasts with a country outside Europe such as Japan, in which one can observe an unbroken continuity in the indigenous popular religion. The Japanese empire arose out of struggles among great clans whose leaders also conducted the ceremonies of ancestor-worship and of Shinto. The emperors lost their political authority early on, but not their representative religious function. This is consistent with the national legend of the divine ancestry of the imperial house, which became an enduring element of Japanese culture. This is also consistent with the unbroken, formal subjection of the military governors (Shogunate) to the Emperor, in spite of his powerlessness, even though the governors ruled the country. Finally, this corresponds to the complete dominance of a patriarchal-hierarchic social order, in which every political or military conflict could be translated into a rearrangement of family or pseudo-familial relationships. Neither Russia nor Japan were characterized by a rivalry between political and religious authority.<sup>10</sup>

Here two religious-political points are decisive. The special position of Europe as a whole was a consequence of the origin of Christianity, which broke through the age-old connection between religious cults and the familial and ethnic-linguistic membership of the individual, and established by contrast communities based on shared Christian faith. It should be noted that we are talking only about a break with tradition, not its destruction. Throughout its history the church battled against non-Christian belief systems and loyalties based on kinship. It still does that today, if one considers the pope's recent trip to Africa from this perspective. On the other hand, the tension between church and state is a

special characteristic of the West European development, though in this regard one must then also count Poland and Hungary as a part of Western Europe.

## Representation in Medieval Europe

I now turn to the development of representative institutions, using as my point of departure the problem of church-state relations, and in particular the tension-filled history of synodal authority. In doing this I am of course defining the concept of "representation" very broadly. One should keep in mind that the power relations between church and state were problematic from the beginning. After the Toleration Edict of Milan (313) it was difficult for the Emperor to support the church without being drawn into its internal conflicts, or allowing the authority of the church, which was never clearly defined, to get the upper hand. At the same time, the church, which soon was growing larger and richer, confronted the continuous problem of using the state for the promotion of spiritual interests without allowing that use to degenerate into a secularization of church interests. Seen from this perspective, priestly celibacy was of decisive importance, especially if one follows Henry Charles Lea in dating the inception of this institution to the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>11</sup> The separation of the entire clergy (and not only the monks) from all hereditary ties (aside from their solicitation of contributions to the church) reinforced both the separation of the church from kinship relations as well as the spiritual-imperial authority of the church itself.

In this interdependent but contentious relationship between state and church one can see a model of the interdependent but contentious relationship between king and aristocracy that developed later, provided one includes church dignitaries and the city patriciate on the side of the aristocracy, which I take from the excellent comparative study of medieval parliaments by Antonio Marongiu. The king, writes Marongiu,

stood out because of his sacerdotal attributes; because he was the first of the great vassals; because he was recognized as head of the state by the pope, the emperor and other foreign powers; because he continued to administer directly large areas within the boundaries of the state, and was in possession of his own force of armed men; because he was the supreme representative of judicial authority, as guarantor of justice and peace, and because fiefs without heirs reverted to him.

But that is one side. The other is – at any rate in Western Europe – that the great church leaders, the nobility and the cities

were no longer ordinary subjects, but possessed economic and legal privileges, granted or accepted by the sovereign ... They were considered outside the 'general subordination' or subjects by custom and by the very terms of their investiture. They owed fealty, counsel and aid, but in return were exempt from all other obligations and impositions. They represented and personified both the population of their territories in their relations with the sovereign, and public authority within their territories.<sup>12</sup>

This distinction between royal supremacy and the privileged upper strata can be stripped of its ideal-typical simplification in a similar way as the opposition between state and church was before. Kings and the privileged elites found themselves in an ongoing struggle for political power. Though each was dependent on the other, each tried to gain independence from the other, and where possible dominance over it. Marongius' conclusions obviously refer to the result of many centuries of development. These developments have been dealt with in the writings of Otto Hintze and also in my book *Kings or People*.

But what were the conditions under which the special development of Western Europe was prevented elsewhere? Russia and Japan can again serve as examples, even if they cannot provide conclusive evidence. They document conditions leading to developments differing from those Western Europe, affecting a large number of peoples and their civilizations.

The Greek-orthodox Christianization of the ten principalities of Kievan Russia began with an act of state. Vladimir the Holy (978–1026) converted on the occasion of a Byzantine petition for military support. His condition was that the sister of the Byzantine Emperor become his wife. This occurred at a time when the great ecumenical councils of the early church (from Nicea 325 to Constantinople 869–70) were already over and fundamental issues of Christian dogma had been settled. Through his marriage to the Byzantine princess the path was cleared for the Greek orthodox idea of the ruler as representative of Christ on earth, appointed by God. This was a theologico-political enlargement of royal authority, which contrasts with the subordination of the King to divine law characteristic of the West European development. Archbishop Hincmar's statement of 860 to the Frankish King is quoted here by way of example: "You have not created me archbishop of Rheims, but I, together with my colleagues, have elected you to the government of the Kingdom, on condition that you observe the laws".<sup>13</sup> Such a statement is unthinkable in the Russian context. The religio-political development of Russia began with the subordination of the church, and this was followed later on by an analogous subordination to the Tsar of the nobility and the city patriciate.

Incipient developments of representative institutions occurred on a local level (boyar du'ma, ve'che) at the time of the Kievan principalities, but these institutions grew weak with the decline of those principalities. The chances for autonomous attempts were foiled by the Mongolian invasion in the early thirteenth century and the consequent tribute owed to the Golden Horde. In addition to that tribute and the sporadic interventions of Mongolian troops, there were also military conflicts in the West. One can think of the changing political situation of the Russian principalities as rivaling forces, whose rise and fall between the sack of Kiev in 1240 and the end of the fifteenth century depended on two factors: the fate of Russian petitions at the court of the Great Khan in Sarai and his fickle patronage in the East, and the equally changeable outcomes of the

struggles in the West against Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, and the Teutonic Order.

The limited chances of representative institutions and the basic causes of autocracy are certainly related to this tenuous position of the Russian principalities between East and West. The internal battles of the Russian territories were exploited time and again by the Mongols and their western opponents, each for their own purposes. One calculation reveals that northern Russia experienced 133 invasions and 90 feuds among rivaling principalities in 234 years (1228–1462). Another shows that the northwestern city-state of Novgorod had to defend itself against external attacks on the average every 5 1/2 years during some three centuries between 1142 and 1466. The beginning of the Muscovite Dynasty was the result of rivalries among the Russian princes in Sarai, the taking of office by Ivan Kalita (1325–1341) as principal collector of tribute for the Mongols in all of Russia, and the support by Mongolian troops of Kalita's battles with his Russian rivals. Finally Kalita was granted the title of "Grand Prince" by the Mongolian court, which can be seen as the ceremonial foundation of the rise of the Muscovite Dynasty. This ascendancy of Moscow depended on successful strategies vis-à-vis the Mongolian overlord in the struggle against assaults from the West and – equally important – against Russian rivals.

The Muscovite rulers could neither rule nor build up their military power without outside help. But with this assistance they succeeded in subjecting the descendants of the great princely and boyar lineages to the condition of personal service. Hence these previously independent lineages were transformed into a service nobility. Wealth and social position came to depend on military or administrative status in the service of the Tsar. Hence members of this nobility ruled at the bidding and on behalf of the Tsar, not on the basis of a right to rule that had been granted to them. Because the citizenry and the clergy were also subordinate to the Tsar, the ascendance of the Muscovite Dynasty was coterminous with the decline of representative institutions of the Kievan period. Accordingly, the provincial assemblies (*zémenskii sobór*) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries consisted of coopted delegations that were convened to rally opinion in favor of military decisions already taken, to formally enact tax levies, and occasionally to endorse a succession to the throne by acclamation. Petitions to the Tsars did not require an assembly of delegates. This is consistent with the patriarchal conception of the ruler as the father of his people, to whose tutelage one could appeal at any time.

There was no equivalent in Tsarist Russia for the interdependent but contentious relationship between Kings and estates in Western Europe. The details of the Christianization of Russia make it clear that the spread of the new faith did not lead to a direct weakening of kinship relations. This occurred only under circumstances in which the church developed an independent power base. In the Russian case, on the other hand, it may be that the Greek orthodox mission –

through its connection with the old Slavonic language and the idol worship of the saints (icons) – contributed to the popular national union of the Russian Empire, and this despite hierarchic subordination and the continuing influence of Greek clerics.

In conclusion, I want to apply this perspective to Japan. I have mentioned that the Japanese emperor's loss of power vis-à-vis the military governors (the Shogunate) contributed to the strengthening of nature- and ancestor worship. A descendant of the goddess of creation remained the symbolic center of Japanese culture for over a thousand years. The Emperor's purely ceremonial representation had not only cultural significance because it consecrated patriarchal kinship relations. That representation also had material consequences. One result of the Emperor's religious functions as representative of the country was to strengthen the landowning families as the source of wealth and the basis of military power. This led again and again to wars over land and succession at provincial and country-wide levels. Under favorable circumstances Western European conflicts between ruling families could also be worked out through negotiations in various councils, though one naturally has to take into account the pressure of circumstances and the massive use of force as well as the intrusion of foreign relations. Even in isolated Japan there were certainly negotiations in various forms, but they were never institutionalized; even under favorable circumstances conflicts had to be resolved militarily. The very different development of regional interest representation can be seen in the symbolic beginning of the Meiji Restoration. In the so-called Bakumatsu Period (1853–1868) a group of Samurai reformers circumvented their regional territorial governors (daimyo) by using the name of these leaders to place their regional territories (han) including the inhabitants at the personal disposal of the Emperor.

This constituted a concerted reorganization of Japanese society, using the Emperor as the symbolic representative of the country, who as such was superior even to the regional lords of these rebellious samurai. For the initiators of this step were a group of Samurai subordinates of the daimyo. At the end of the sixteenth century the ancestors of these Samurai had been deprived of their property and military independence by Hideyoshi Toyotomi; henceforth they became rentiers of modest income but high rank in the fortified cities of their daimyo rulers. But the daimyo themselves, that is the highest nobility in Japan, were made so personally dependent on the Shogunate in Edo under Tokugawa rule (from about 1640) through an ingenious system of alternate residence (sankotai), that they lacked the independence for the development of representative institutions – despite their high rank and great wealth. As in Russia, here again the lack of an independent religious institution (the word “church” does not fit Japanese conditions) in the form found in Western Europe, due in part to the religious ideas and institutions of Shinto and of Buddhism.

In the religio-political analysis presented here I come to the already familiar

conclusion that the special position of Europe depended as much on the development of representative institutions as on the breakthrough of capitalism. We should keep in mind that these two developments – much as they may appear to converge – came about through quite different causal sequences, each of which has a long historical background. The most recent development of Islamic fundamentalism – with its indivisibility between state and religion – should also remind us how significant such long pre-histories can be for our own time.

Now I wish to close my comments with another perspective, to which I can only allude, but without which the shift of emphasis I have proposed would remain incomplete. There is another side to the representative constitution that is as well-known as the negative effects of capitalism, but not often enough linked causally with the special path of Western Europe. Otto Brunner emphasized that the princely authority over a territory and its people was based on a readiness to protect the ruler's personal *rights* by force of arms. This, naturally, was often hardly distinguishable from raids and other warlike enterprises. Brunner's analysis in *Land und Herrschaft* is especially important because it deals with the peculiar causal connection between the legal system and the private exercise of force. If one emphasizes the independence of the church as a constitutive element in the representative order as I have done, one should not neglect to emphasize the war-like side of this element as well. This point calls for an explanation of "desperate brevity", as Schumpeter once put it.

The history of the old church encompassed many controversies between an established orthodoxy and attempts at reform, which appealed to the ideal of early Christianity as the only valid source of the true faith. Examples of this range from the Gnostics and the Montanists through the Donatists of North Africa to the conflict with Pelagianism and beyond. Again and again the church – as an institution legitimized by the apostles – had to build bridges between this early Christian "puritanism" and the moral imperfections of man and society. In its mediating role between heaven and earth the church not only monopolized by proxy the absolution of sins for all Christians, but at the same time made a claim to absolute truth vis-à-vis non-believers or non-Christians. According to the Augustinian interpretation, man's hereditary sinfulness derived from original sin and the consequent expulsion from paradise. In this way, the idea of a community based on a shared faith was transformed into the idea of an inherently sinful mankind. Hence, the church is the only human institution that can transmit to all men the ethical foundation of the Divine order between the Fall of Man and his salvation in the hereafter. In the end, the idea of original sin became the cornerstone of the church's claim to absolute truth.

The sinfulness of all men and the church's claim to a monopoly on absolute truth finally contributed to the justification of Europe's colonial expansion. An example of this leads us back again to the introduction. The claim to absolute truth, together with missionary duty, led to the idea of the just war against non-

believers and non-Christians as enemies. The Portuguese discoveries reaching as far as India were justified through decrees sent by Pope Nicholas V in 1454 to Henry the Navigator (1394–1460). It reads:

Our joy is immense to know that our dear son, Henry, Prince of Portugal ... inspired with a zeal for souls like an intrepid soldier of Christ, has carried into the most distant and unknown countries the name of God and has brought into the Catholic fold the perfidious enemies of God and Christ, such as the Saracens and the Infidels ...

We, after careful deliberation, and having considered that we have by our apostolic letters conceded to King Alfonso, the right, total and absolute, to invade, conquer, and subject all the countries which are under the rule of the enemies of Christ, Saracen or Pagan, by our apostolic letter we wish the same King Alfonso, the Prince, and all their successors, to occupy and possess in exclusive rights the said islands, ports, and seas undermentioned, and all faithful Christians are prohibited without the permission of the said Alfonso and his successors to encroach on their sovereignty.

One has to keep in mind that this document was written one year after the Turks seized Constantinople. It was also promoted by Henry the Navigator's petition requesting that the pope sanction Henry's claim to the annexed lands as well as grant the complete remission of sins to all participants in the African discoveries.<sup>14</sup> None of which changes the fact that the pope justified the conquest and subjugation of the enemies of Christ in the name of his apostolic mission.

This papal sanction of the European discoveries and conquests was not only a final consequence of the church's claim to absolute truth. It was at the same time a component of that representative order which was based in part on the autonomy of the church and which contributed markedly to the particular development of Western Europe. The mission of the church outside Europe cannot be separated from the church's century-old struggles for autonomy. Whoever reflects on the special position of Western Europe is obliged to consider both the positive and the negative aspects of that position, and the inter-relations between them. The feud as a way of asserting one's rights, which later contributed to the foundation of representative institutions, as well as the missionary imperialism which ushered in and characterized the era of discoveries: these too belong to our picture of the special position of Western Europe.

#### NOTES

1. It is not necessary to list individually Max Weber's many relevant contributions to the analyses of the special development of the Occident. Otto Hintze's contributions are contained in the first volume of his collected essays. See Hintze, Otto 1962, *Staat und Verfassung*, ed. by Oestreich, Gerhard. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, passim. Among Otto Brunner's writings I am thinking especially of chapters 5 and 9–12 in his volume of essays *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte*, 1968, second edition, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. The most recent addition to this inquiry into the special place of Western Europe is Gerhard, Dietrich 1985, *Das Abendland 800–1800, Ursprung und Gegenbild unserer Zeit*, Freiburg: Verlag Ploetz. The original English edition was published in 1981 as *Old Europe, A Study of Continuity 1000–1800*, New York: Academic Press. See also Löwenthal, Richard (ed.) 1963, *Die Demokratie im Wandel der Gesellschaft*, Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, pp. 164–91, and Hans Albert's unpublished essay, "Der Beitrag Europas, Erbe und Auftrag".



2. Weber, Max 1962, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 214.
3. Kristof, Nicholas D. 1985, "Industrial Dream Fades; Third World Revives Farms", *International Herald Tribune*, July 31, 1,13. The author cites one example of "development failure" in the capital of Togo with its closed oil refinery, a nearly empty 36-story luxury hotel, a closed brick factory, and a leased but non-operative steel mill.
4. Marshall, Gordon 1982, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism, An Essay on Max Weber's Protestant Ethic Thesis*, New York: Columbia University Press, passim.
5. Schöffler, Herbert 1960, *Wirkungen der Reformation*, Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, pp. 189–324. Originally published in 1932.
6. See Zucker, Louis Miles 1933, "S. Ambrosii De Tobia", *Patristic Studies*, Vol. XXXV, Washington: The Catholic University of America, 67. For this source and for many ideas, I am indebted to the book by Nelson, Benjamin, 1969, *The Idea of Usury, From Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood*, second edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 4.
7. See also the various essays in Ruhbach, Gerhard (ed.) 1976, *Die Kirche angesichts der Konstantinischen Wende*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, passim.
8. Elaine Pagel's *The Gnostic Gospels*, 1981, Vintage Books, New York: Random House, offers an impressive overview of these battles, especially between the growing orthodoxy and the gnostic movement based on the Nag Hammandi discoveries. Other dimensions of these intra-Christian conflicts have been analyzed by Gerd Theissen. See Theissen, Gerd 1979, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
9. Chadwick, Henry 1967, *The Early Church*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 167 and chapter 8 offers a reliable overview of these developments in the fourth century. See also the important recent study by Wilken, Robert L. 1984, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
10. Here and in what follows I use my characterization in Bendix, Reinhard 1978, *Kings or People*, Berkeley: University of California Press, chapters 3 and 4.
11. Lea, Henry C. 1932, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, London: Watts & Co., 39–60, who dates the first legislation and application of the institution of priestly celibacy between 384 and 401. The book originally appeared in 1867. This dating has not been challenged in modern characterizations, even those that are critical of Lea. See Denzler, Georg 1973, *Das Papsttum und der Amtszölibat*, Vol. 5,1 of *Päpste und Papsttum*, Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, passim.
12. Marongiu, Antonio 1968, *Medieval Parliaments*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 82–84, 85–86.
13. Quoted in Ullmann, Walter 1965, *A History of Political Thought*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 88.
14. Quoted without source in Pannikar, K.M. 1959, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London: Allen & Unwin, 26–27. A sketch of the geopolitical situation of the papacy around the middle of the fifteenth century is contained in Kleo Pleyer's work, *Die Politik Nikolaus V.*, 1927, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 13–14 and passim, which shows that Spanish and Portuguese interests were only a small part of the pope's concern. Parry, J.H. 1961, *The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415–1715*, Harper Torchbooks, New York: Harper & Row, 31 concludes that the initiative for papal approval of Portuguese expansion came from Portugal. The larger context of the relation between church and state and their politics of expansion has been analyzed by Boxer, C.R. 1978, *The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion 1440–1770*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, passim.