

A Metric for the Religious Life

This is the second volume of essays produced by the American Cusanus Society in recent years, the first of which, *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Wisdom*, was published by Brill in 1991. While, as the book's Introduction states, "readers and reviewers of this volume will find a number of issues to dispute," the volume contains several enduring contributions and, even in articles with which one might disagree, many invaluable historical details about, and insights into, Cusanus' life and work.

The book is divided into three parts: "Cusanus in Context"; "The Church and Reform"; and "Christology and Mystical Theology." Of greatest interest in this volume are the articles on "The Church and Reform," which include the first English translation of Cusanus' *Reformatio Generalis*, which he wrote in 1459 at the request of Pope Pius II.

The context for a discussion of this work, translated by Morimichi Watanabe and Thomas M. Izbicki, is developed in other essays which consider Cusanus' *On Catholic Concordance* (1433); *On Presidential Authority in a General Council* (1434); his role at the Council of Ferrara-Florence; his mission to the Imperial Diets in Germany in defense of the Papacy; and his efforts as a Cardinal-legate to reform popular religion in the Germanys in 1451-1452.

Cusanus arrived in Rome from his Tyrolean See of Brixon in 1458, after his efforts at reform there had been thwarted by Duke Sigismund. The newly elected Pope Pius II appointed a commission to reform the Curia, and nominated Cusanus to serve as papal Vicar General for Rome in his absence. Cusanus drafted the *Reformatio Generalis* in the first part of July of 1459, in the form of a papal Bull.

To give an insight into Cusanus' character and the resistance which confronted his proposals, Watanabe and Izbicki quote Vespasiano de Bisticci's (1421-1498) description of him: "He

cared nothing for state or for possessions, and was one of the most needy of the Cardinals, thus giving an excellent example in all his doings."

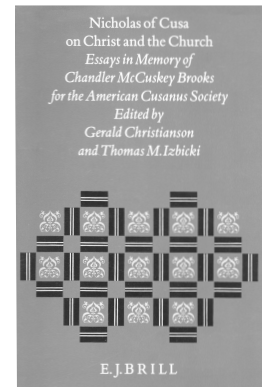
They also cite Cusanus' own comments to Pius II, recorded by the Pope in his *Commentaries*: "I do not know how to flatter. I hate adulation. If you can bear the truth, I like nothing which goes on in this Curia. Everything is corrupt. No one does his duty. Neither you nor the Cardinals have any care for the Church. What observance of the canons is there? What reverence for laws? What assiduity in divine worship? All are bent on ambition and avarice. If I ever speak in a consistory about reform, I am laughed at. I do no good here. Allow me to withdraw. I cannot endure these ways. . . ."

Cusanus' proposal for a general reform of the Church, if implemented, would have changed all subsequent world history. There would have been neither a Protestant Reformation, nor a Catholic Counter-Reformation. Both of these "reformations" must be judged, based upon the standard set by Cusanus' proposal. Moreover, even today that standard remains a valid metric.

The proposal Cusanus made was not dogmatic, formal, or structural in nature. The *Reformatio Generalis* contains a theological introduction; fourteen general rules about a visitation or formal inspection to be conducted beginning with the Pope himself, the Roman Church and the Curia, and then extending to individual provinces; and, finally, practical suggestions for the reform of the Curia.

The 'Imitation of Christ'

The fundamental premise of Cusanus' reform proposal is, that each individual must "take on the form of the Lord Christ. This form is acquired by imitation. Wherefore, the Apostle, who had taken on the form of Christ, says, *Be imitators of me, beloved children, as I am of Christ.*" Cusanus continues: "The Teacher, therefore, calls out to all of us



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his disciples, who wish to change into his form, saying, *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls.* And, elsewhere, when he wished to demonstrate humility with the work of washing the feet [of the apostles], he said, *I gave you an example, that you should do what I did.*" He then concludes: "We, therefore, who wish to reform all Christians, at least, can put forth to them no other form on it than that which we imitate, that of Christ, from whom they receive [their] name."

The fourth of the fourteen rules designed to guide the visitors, builds on this concept of being true to one's name. "Anyone's life is defined in the definition of his name. Whoever acts differently from what his name designates certainly is named thus falsely and is unworthy of that name, whose meaning his life contradicts. How can someone be called a Christian whose life is contrary to Christ? How can [a man be called] a religious who [is] an apostate; . . . a ruler, if absent; a bishop, if he does not supervise the flock committed [to him]; a leader, if a betrayer; a king, if a tyrant?"

The book also includes an Appendix prepared by Thomas M. Izbicki: "Nicholas of Cusa: The Literature in English, 1989 to 1994." A reflection of the editors' intellectual honesty is the fact that this Appendix gives unusually prominent coverage to the contributions of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., Helga Zepp LaRouche, and the writer of this review, himself a member of the American Cusanus Society. The one-paragraph introduction to the Appendix concludes with the following observa-

tion: "One notes too that, aside from the continuing interest in Cusanus shown by academics, many of them members of the American Cusanus Society, a great interest in Nicholas' works has been shown by the circle of Lyndon LaRouche."

Listed in the Appendix are Helga Zepp LaRouche's "Nicolaus of Cusa and the Council of Florence" [*Fidelio*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1992)] and Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.'s "The Ontological Superiority of Nicholas of Cusa's Solution over

Archimedes' Notion of Quadrature," [*Fidelio*, Vol. III, No. 2 (1994)]. The Appendix also lists all eighteen translations of works by Nicolaus of Cusa done by this author, which have been published by the Schiller Institute in *Toward a New Council of Florence: "On the Peace of Faith" and Other Works by Nicolaus of Cusa*, as well as this author's article "Nicolaus of Cusa's 'On the Vision of God' and the Concept of Negentropy" [*Fidelio*, Vol. II, No. 4 (1993)].

—William F. Wertz, Jr.

The Anglo-Venetian Descent into Barbarism

It is the obsession of leading geopolitical strategists in London and other Western capitals, that there exists no greater priority than to mobilize the "Western world" for conflict with the nations that are central to the development of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. This is the region for which Sir Halford Mackinder, Britain's leading geopolitical theorist at the turn of the century, coined the term "Eurasian heartland," the battle for which, he said, would determine who would control the world.

Since 1993, when it was first popularized in an article in the Council on Foreign Relations quarterly, *Foreign Affairs*, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" construct has been one of the most discussed variants of this obsession.

The "clash of civilizations" is the "geopolitical war-plan" for an influential, British-run faction in the transatlantic policy establishment. Hence, on the back dust-jacket, there are two endorsements, from (Sir) Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Kissinger has spent his entire career promoting British balance-of-power, or geopolitical, doctrines, beginning in the 1950's period, when he wrote his Harvard doctoral thesis, *A World Restored*.

Not surprisingly, in the period immediately leading up to the publication of the "clash of civilizations" article, Huntington was parroting Kissinger's ideas. In early 1991, he wrote an article for the January-February issue of *Sur-*

vival, the publication of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in which he insisted that American policy toward Eurasia should premise itself on the British geopolitical theories of Mackinder, and on the balance-of-power approach that guided Lord Castlereagh at the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

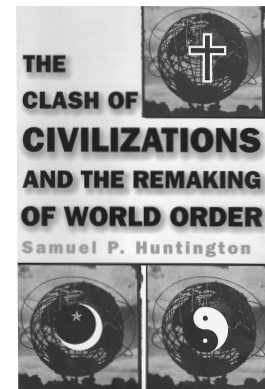
As for Brzezinski, it was he, in his capacity as national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970's, who developed the so-called "Arc of Crisis" theory, according to which the region south of the Soviet Union would constitute a vast arena of instability, the which could be used as a geostrategic weapon against the Soviets. Samuel Huntington sat on Brzezinski's National Security Council staff, as director of security planning.

Also significant, is the fact that Brzezinski drew upon the work of Prof. Bernard Lewis, the Oxford-trained British Arab Bureau operative. The term "clash of civilizations," in fact, was *invented* by Bernard Lewis, in an article in the September 1990 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*; Huntington acknowledges that he lifted the expression from Lewis.

Anglo-Venetian Psy-War

The substance of his polemic shows Huntington, methodologically, to be a devotee of Venetian-British psychological-warfare techniques.

The argument is based on a pair of simplistic contentions. He writes: "Civilizations are the ultimate human tribes,



The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order
by Samuel P. Huntington
Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996
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and the clash of civilizations is tribal conflict on a global scale. . . . Relations between groups from different civilizations . . . will be almost never close, usually cool, and often hostile."

Already on the second page of the book, the "witness" Huntington summons, to back up his argument, is a fictional "Venetian nationalist demagogue" in the novel *Dead Lagoon*, by Michael Dibdin. This lagoon creature remarks: "There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are."

It is a short jump from such absurd axiomatic premises, to the "inevitability" of future wars: "In the emerging world, the relations between states and