'Saviour of the Nation': the Judeo-Christian messianic ideal in

modern political nationalism.

Mark Baczoni

Nationalism Studies Department,

Central European University

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor: Prof. Michael L. Miller

Budapest, 29th May 2008

Quotations are given in the language in which they were written. Translations [in square brackets] are given after each quote. All, except two, are the author's own, and therefore errors in translation are (almost all) the responsibility of the author alone.

Table of Contents:

3

'Saviour of the Nation': the Judeo-Christian messianic ideal in modern political nationalism.

'The Saviour of the Nation' is a familiar phrase to us all. It immediately conjures up grand associations in our minds, of great leaders, perhaps of great warriors, at any rate of great men (and they have been mostly men) who have, at critical junctures, served their country so well that they have been accorded this individual accolade, raising them above their fellow compatriots and establishing their importance in the national narrative. With only a minimum of effort, we can probably all think of someone who has been lauded as, or is popularly thought of, as 'the Saviour of the Nation', whatever nation we happen to belong to. We are thus dealing with a term familiar across the usual national lines of division – I would like to suggest that this term is, in fact, part of the historical arsenal of the nation-based writing of history. After all, every nation needs heroes.

But there is more to this phrase than that. Although it may have become a stock in trade of the national historian or the nationalist propagandist in some cases, and especially because it has become so widespread and popular in the mass consciousness, I would like to suggest that this phrase has a hidden usefulness in the legitimation of 'revolutionary' nationalist leaders in the modern era. This paper sets out to examine *why* this phrase is a useful phrase in nationalist rhetoric. It will hypothesise that this phrase acts as a 'verbal bridge' linking two different, but related, sets of associations about leadership and the national future in the minds of the mass audience that nationalist propaganda in the modern era has been able to enjoy, thanks in large part to the means of the mass-distribution of words in newspapers and on the radio and in public speeches made with the

4

aid of a microphone (or, if you prefer, 'print capitalism'). It will then go on to add to this hypothesis the thought that the two banks, let us say, of the river that this 'verbal bridge' is linking are, on the one side 'saviour of the nation' and on the other, 'Saviour' *tout court*, that is to say the 'Messiah'. Further, I will then suggest that because of the historical development of the Messiah concept in the theological development of Judaism and Catholicism within Christianity there are certain things associated with the figure of the 'Messiah', such as kingship, national redemption, and the right to judge, and that these things are extremely useful in subtly giving a newly-emerged nationalist leader, who is aware of breaking some sort of historical continuity, a historical legitimacy in the minds of the mass audience that is otherwise extremely hard to cultivate. The (Concise) Oxford English Dictionary tells us that 'saviour' is a noun, with the following two meanings: "1. a person who saves someone or something from danger or harm. 2. (the/our Saviour) (in Christianity) God or Jesus Christ". I aim to suggest that by using this phrase, 'the saviour of the nation', it is possible to associate a strong nationalist leader with the 'Messiah'-figure and thereby to appropriate the positive associations people have of one, to the other.

Julius Yourman of New York University, in a 1939 article on Nazi propaganda techniques[1], examines precisely this sort of 'bridging' phenomenon, and sets up a technical framework to analyse its functioning. He outlines a seven-step technical process by which this psychological bridge-building may be said to function, and by which people are subtly led from one word to another, and a lasting association between the two: "Something approaching deification of Chancellor Hitler is an outstanding example of this device ['transfer']. Nazi propagandists

---

[1] Yourman , Julius. Propaganda Techniques Within Nazi Germany. In: *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, 1939.

seek to establish him as a quasi divinity and to transfer to him the religious feelings of the German people; then to transfer from him the "divine" sanction to the policies, practices, beliefs, and hatreds which he espouses. Some party spokesmen and supporters refer to Hitler in terms like those applied to Christ"[2]. Yourman has encapsulated neatly the process this paper is concerned with, although his primary concern was the social-psychological functioning semantic-technical functioning of this process; which this paper does not have the luxury of being able to examine at length.

Instead, this paper intends to leave the *how* of this process (although that, in itself, is a fascinating question) to Mr. Yourman, and instead concentrate on the *why*: why should this process be a desirable one? This paper will examine, therefore, the Near-Eastern origins of the 'Messiah' idea and then consider how it found its way into Western tradition. It will look at messianic thought in (Second Temple Period) Jewish and Roman Catholic thought and then set out why this idea has political capital for 'charismatic' leaders of the Weberian kind, rather than perhaps being a sort of *lese-majesté*. It will then go on to examine the use of this rhetoric in practice in the looking at representative selections of the propaganda of two such strongly nationalistic 20th-century 'charismatic leaders': Benito Mussolini in Italy and Philippe Pétain in unoccupied France (Vichy). Although very different in many ways, both as leaders and as men, the two figures nonetheless are comparable in those attributes that matter most to this paper. Firstly, the timeframe in which they operated was broadly similar, and so were the political conditions in the Europe of their time. They were both strongly charismatic figures with an important cult of personality, and much propaganda

---

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

6

arising out of it. They were both strongly nationalist. They both led governments that represented a break with the historical leadership structure of their countries (Mussolini's overtly so, styling itself a 'revolution'), and therefore needed to make their own legitimacy. Although personally not strictly religious, they were both the leaders of Catholic countries. In January 1941, the newly arrived American Ambassador to Vichy, Admiral William D. Leahy noted that: "Pétain and his cabinet seemed to be moulding the Vichy regime along the lines of Fascist Italy, without Italy's expansionist policy"[3]. They were both former soldiers, although Pétain more explicitly so, and both offered a steady hand at a time of extreme political crisis and wounded national pride in their respective countries.

There were, of course, other figures of whom we might say similar things; Adolf Hitler in Germany and Josef Stalin in the USSR, Atatürk in Turkey, but Mussolini and Pétain make for better comparisons, since the mixture of religious views among these leaders and their cultures makes direct comparison difficult. Further, Stalin's USSR and Atatürk's Turkey were both pointedly anti-religious. This is a significant point, since this paper aims to examine the working of the messianic idea solely within Judaism (from which it emerged) and Roman Catholicism. Due to the limitations of space and time, and since both the case studies considered here are from Catholic countries, this paper will not deal with the place of messianism in Protestant theology. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the central role attributed to 'justification by faith alone' (*sola fide*) in Lutheran theological thinking means that there is a heavy emphasis on trusting completely in the works of Christ, which may make a further case study

---

[3] Quoted in: Lottman, Herbert R. *Pétain: Hero or Traitor?* New York: William Morrow, 1985, p. 240.

– of a nationalist leader from a predominantly Protestant country – a worthwhile extension of this paper. Due to limitations of space, however, it will not be discussed here.

The literature for the topic of this paper is limited. Important works within both history and nationalism studies have dealt with the intersection of religion and nationalism, though without usually considering this process on an individual, rather than a corporate level. Such works have included George Mosse's seminal work *The Nationalisation of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars to the Third Reich*, and Anthony D. Smith's *Chosen Peoples*. Further, Michael Billig's contribution to Henri Tajfel's important work *Political Ideology: Social Psychological Aspects,* and Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School's work on the 'authoritarian personality' have been important contributions to understanding the reception and functioning of mass propaganda in the popular mind.

Although there is a great deal of material dealing with the issues this paper hopes to consider, there is apparently no survey or monograph on this topic itself. It is therefore up to this paper to construct the beginnings of one. However, all constructions, even the meanest, are made of building blocks, and this paper is no exception. I therefore intend to provide a brief survey of the literature that this paper will be relying on in outlining the theory with which it intends to deal, and some other works which could provide a useful development of some of the ideas presented in this paper. The key works on which this paper relies are three: Max Weber's *Economy and Society*, Ernst H. Kantorowitz's *The King's Two Bodies* and Mircea Eliade's *A History of Religious Ideas*. I will therefore start by taking these in turn. Weber's posthumously published masterpiece, an overarching

8

sociological examination of the interplay of economic drives in forms of social organisation and development, includes two important sections in the context of the present work. The first is the section on the nature of 'Charismatic leadership', a key concept as far as this paper is concerned. The second is 'The Sociology of Religions', which explicitly discusses both Judaism and Catholicism. In defining the 'charismatic leader' and the nature of a society where charismatic leadership is effective, Weber provides a fitting theoretical background in which this paper is partly positioned. Another extremely important work is Kantorowitz's, which discusses the Mediaeval English legal fiction of the 'King's two bodies'. This concept will be briefly explained later. Nonetheless, Kantorowitz traces the significance in the European (Catholic) mind in the middle ages in defining the idea of kingship, and the possibility of the separation of the formal and the actual incarnations of power. Kantorowitz also discusses the Christological aspects of kingship in this period, and this paper will suggest that the thinking developed in the 16th century and later in Europe about the nature of kingship remained an important part not only of the theory of kingship in Europe *per se*, but of the idea of kingship in the popular mind well beyond the popular demise of the actual institution itself. Eliade's three-volume work, which traces the development of both Second Temple-era Judaism and Judeo-Christianity as well as Catholicism. As well as providing a narrative overview of the development of these theologies, it gives a great deal of precise detail concerning the birth and development of the Messianic idea, allowing us to make the connections that point to the significance of this idea for our purposes. It also allows the reader to get an idea of the interlinking of the religious concepts of the Near East and Roman Empire that go into making up Judaism and

9

Christianity as we understand them today. Gershom Scholem's work *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* will contribute two important points: the *incarnation* of the Christian Messiah, Jesus Christ, who has tangible human form in both the written scripture and in popular representations, and the distinction between the Jewish collective idea of redemption (by acts of God alone) and the Catholic idea of individual salvation (through the agency of the Church). Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* gives a useful, if perhaps somewhat outdated explanation of the nature of religious 'crowds'. An interesting corollary of some ideas discussed in this paper is Canetti's theory that the 'religions of lament' (including both Judaism and Christianity) act to delay as long as possible the moment of release when the crowd reaches its apotheosis, helps to explain the strength of messianic fervour and the willingness of people to abandon their everyday goals and moral codes in favour of a new, messianistic order.

The practical part of this paper, that is the two case studies, are based on the analysis of around 15 to 20 diverse pieces of contemporary propaganda literature, and some songs and poetry in each case, as well as on speeches made by Mussolini and Pétain. This approach was selected in order to examine the official discourse of the day, aimed at a mass audience, which would allow us at least to examine the *intent* in including messianic rhetoric if it did, if not measure the *impact* of this rhetoric on the audience (which, methodologically, would have been far outside the scope of this paper). In order to test my hypothesis, it would have been enough in this case to begin by trying to prove or disprove whether official propaganda rhetoric attempted to establish a 'verbal bridge' functioning in the way hypothesised, without necessarily examining its effectiveness. In order to see whether the leader himself used messianic rhetoric, collections of

10

speeches of both figures were selected for analysis. The other material, about but not *by* the leader, was selected to provide a more or less indiscriminate (and therefore representative of the overall tone, rather than preselected for the convenience of the author's argument) sampling of the contemporary propaganda literature on the basis of a small number of criteria. Firstly, in selecting the material, I aimed for a range of dates of publication that would cover the entire period of the rule of each leader (excepting after '43 for Mussolini), to give an idea of the tone of the propaganda at different periods and to see if it changed significantly. Secondly, the propaganda material had to be centered as much as possible on the leader, to exclude the vast amount of propaganda from the period dealing with social and other issues. The material was selected to be as hagiographic as possible, in order to ensure that it would go as far as possible in its aggrandisement of the leader. I was limited in my research by two principal factors; time (which was perhaps the principal limit) and the extent of the propaganda collections I had access to, in the Bibliotheca Nazionale Centrale di Roma and the British Library. Time limited the choice of material to reasonably 'significant' pieces of propaganda, i.e. books, and not merely pamphlets or posters or indeed even newspapers, since the volume of material would have been impossible to analyse in any scholarly way in such a short space of time.

An overview of this literature would be of little use to the reader, and in any case a survey of its nature and rhetoric will be provided in the case studies themselves. Let it suffice to say that the propaganda material was chosen on the basis of its being as in favour of the leader figure as possible. Thus, a great deal of hagiographical literature and purple prose, some of it more and some less fawning, was analysed. None was of great literary value; nonetheless, this

11

literature is significant testimony of the political culture of the day, and a complete list of the works consulted for each of the case studies is provided at the end of the main body of this paper. It is, however, worth mentioning one work in this context, which is of great use for both the Fascist and Vichy regimes. This is Brian Murdoch's *Fighting Songs and Warring Words*, a comprehensive and scholarly overview of the themes and impact of popular songs and poems of the Fascist, Vichy and Nazi regimes, as well as of the Allies during the Second World War.

"I am the Jesus Christ of Politics[4]"

In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber examines a number of different ways society can be led. One of these ways, so he says, is paternalism, another bureaucracy; a third, and the one which concerns us, is charismatic leadership. Although Weber does not offer a single, fixed definition of the term 'charisma', we can build up a precise idea of what he means by it through the various attributes he ascribes to it. The term will be used here in its Weberian sense. Charismatic leadership, Weber tells us, is the opposite of everything that bureaucracy is in terms of the need-satisfaction of a given society. Bureaucracy is based on continuity and rationality – for everything there is an established procedure, which is always followed, with predictable results. The result, in its workings, is both rational, organised and transparent. It is predictable and stable. Charismatic leadership is the antithesis of these things. It is wild, and mystical

---

[4] Silvio Berlusconi on the election trail in Italy, 10th February 2006; reported in: Fisher, Ian. *Berlusconi tries on many faces for voters*. New York Times International article, 14 February 2006.

and unpredictable. It derives legitimacy only from itself – the leader leads because he is charismatic enough to persuade people of his right to lead. Once he loses that power to persuade, he also loses his legitimacy, and his rule. "The bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission believed to be embodied in him…in its most charismatic forms it has inverted all hierarchies and overthrown custom, law and tradition[5]". Weber therefore tells us that charismatic leadership is effective only in times when *extraordinary* needs must be satisfied; for the normal need-satisfaction of society, a bureaucracy will do much better. It is precisely, as we shall see later, in considering the 'Messiah' as satisfying such extraordinary needs that we may say that the Messiah figure is a figure of charismatic leadership. Further, we may also generalise and say that nationalist leaders who are cast into the mould of 'Saviours of the Nation' also emerge – by definition – in times of extraordinary popular needs, when the nation needs urgently to be *saved* from something. "[T]he power of charisma rests upon the belief in revelation and heroes…it rests upon "heroism" of an ascetic, military, judicial, magical or whichever kind[6]". It is my intention to suggest that the Messiah in Jewish and especially in Catholic thought is a charismatic leader figure, embodied in Catholic thought as Jesus Christ the man; and that this charismatic leader figure is sought by other, national rather than religious, charismatic leaders in order to increase their charismatic legitimacy. We may in fact posit that the extraordinary historical circumstances Weber discusses and the antinomianism of messianic thought fit hand in glove: "Both charisma and tradition rest on a sense of loyalty and obligation which always has

---

[5] Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978; vol. II, p. 1117.
[6] Ibid., p. 1116.

a religious aura"[7]. Weber is saying that charismatic leadership breaks overtly with the previous, bureaucratically organised system of need-satisfaction and institutes its own, less rational, much more 'mystical' system, based on the central figure of the charismatic leader and deriving its legitimacy ultimately from the leader's charisma. A good example of this is the Italian Fascist movement's self-definition as a 'revolution', a break with the former, bureaucratically-based liberal political tradition in Italy. Fascism derived its legitimacy ultimately from the charismatic legitimacy of its 'Duce', Mussolini. Mussolini's rise to power in the politically turbulent period after 1919 and Italy's sense of its honour left unsatisfied was clearly a case of a charismatic leader stepping in to satisfy extraordinary popular needs for which the bureaucratic system could simply not provide. However, as the Fascist movement not only attained but retained power, and started to become institutionalised, it too – however much it presented itself and may actually have been a break with what went before – had to develop some sort of bureaucratic system for everyday need-satisfaction, while trying to maintain nonetheless the basic charismatic nature of the system, centred around the Duce. "As soon as charismatic domination loses its personal foundation and the acutely emotional faith which distinguishes it from the traditional mold [sic.] of everyday life, its alliance with tradition is the most obvious and often the only alternative[8]". However, Fascism could by no means associate itself with the 19th-century liberal tradition of Italian rule, and had difficulties in going back earlier, since Italy had not existed as a unified country before 1870. We shall see later that they solved this problem by reaching back much farther. But at this stage, I would like to suggest that an

---

[7] Ibid., p. 1122.
[8] Ibid.

14

appeal to 'messianic legitimacy', that is to say, a comparison of the national leader figure with the Messiah figure, is in fact a synthesis and compromise between (in Weberian terms) the revolutionary charismatic legitimacy of the new system with the tradition-based bureaucratic legitimacy of the old. This is because messianic leadership, or at least the idea of it, is in fact a 'traditional extra-ordinary legitimacy', since it is clearly based on charisma, and nonetheless has endured and, in historical circumstances too numerous to mention here, served as the satisfier of extraordinary needs. In other words, it is institutionalised charisma. It is easier for a charismatic leadership to seek this sort of legitimacy for everyday need-satisfaction than to concede defeat to the bureaucratic system.

Messianism is based on *expectation*, on a total revolution of the order of things as we know them. "One solution is to assure a just equalization by pointing, through messianic eschatologies, to a future revolution in this world. In this way the eschatological process becomes a political and social transformation of this world…sooner or later there would arise some tremendous hero or god who would place his followers in the positions they truly deserved in the world"[9]. However, Messianism has its own rules and structures. The Messiah, in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, must fulfil certain criteria. These will be discussed at length later, but what is significant here is that there are nonetheless rules even in messianic expectation – a system of extraordinary need-fulfilment that has been systematically prolonged long after the original need that generated the belief has faded into the annals of history. "A merely passive waiting for a new epiphany, will endanger the cohesion of the charismatic community, which

---

[9] Weber, op. cit., vol. I, p. 519.

yearns for the physical presence of the lord and master"[10]. By constructing the psychological association between the national, charismatic, leader and the messiah figure using the 'verbal bridge' of 'the Saviour of the Nation', the leader is presented to the community as the physical incarnation of the messiah-figure, of the messianic ideal of charismatic leadership (this will be further elucidated in the discussion of the double nature of kingship). And, in fact, it is here that Scholem's point about the incarnation, the physical reality of Jesus Christ as the Messiah for Catholics becomes important. It is easier to make the psychological jump from one man-messiah (Jesus Christ) to another man as messiah (the charismatic leader), than the much greater psychological jump between a man as national leader and the very nebulous Messiah figure in traditional Jewish religious thought (although popular beliefs may be more concrete). There is a linking of the individual's experience of 'divine grace' in Church with their experience of the 'divine grace' of the charismatic leader: "[Charisma's] "objective" law flows from the highly personal experience of divine grace and god-like heroic strength and rejects all external order solely for the sake of glorifying genuine prophetic and heroic ethos"[11].

If the charismatic leader tries to associate himself with the messiah figure, why does he do so? There are, this paper hypothesises, certain positive associations with the messiah figure that prove useful to charismatic nationalist leaders also. One of these is *saviour* or redemption. Weber defines salvation in the following terms: "The distinctive content of otherworldly salvation may eventually mean freedom from the physical, psychological, and social sufferings of terrestrial life…[or] it may be concerned with a liberation from the senseless treadmill and

---

[10] ibid., p. 1124.
[11] ibid., p. 1115.

16

transitoriness of life…[or] it may be founded primarily on the inevitable imperfection of the individual"[12]. These are all *extraordinary individual needs*, that the bureaucratic system, and even the individual himself have no way of satisfying – and that the charismatic system must satisfy *as well as* taking care of everyday needs. Weber comments, and this may be applied to the position of the Catholic Church on salvation[13], that "[a]nother view regarding the attainment of salvation rejects the individual's own labours as completely inadequate for the purpose of salvation…salvation is accessible only as a consequence of the achievement of some greatly endowed hero, or even the achievement of a god who has become incarnate for this very purpose"[14].

If salvation is only possible through the efforts of a charismatically-endowed 'hero' in the Catholic tradition, those seeking 'national salvation' can also be induced, by subtly drawing this comparison, to look to a single, charismatically endowed 'hero'. Weber points out that "[i]n all these cases [Gnosticism, Jesus and Augustine] the savior led man upward toward a secure haven in the grace and love of a good god"[15]. Weber here emphasises that the 'Messiah' figure is associated with *good*. In fact, if we break the sentence down, it contains several crucial elements of the popular associations with messiaship. The 'Messiah' leads man 'up', i.e. towards heaven – which is a 'secure haven' from the sufferings of this world, in the grace (i.e. a state free of original sin, and therefore of the imperfectability of man) and love – a universally positive attribute, even if not universally practiced, of a 'good god'; god is clearly identified as '*good*'. The

---

[12] Weber, op. cit., vol I, p. 528.
[13] On this point, cf. point 29 of the Athanasian Creed.
[14] Ibid., p. 557.
[15] Ibid., p. 558.

'Messiah' is identified as good. And anyone who successfully identifies themselves with the 'Messiah' will, by extension, be 'good'.

Further, Weber identifies a real power struggle between the institutional, that is to say 'bureaucratic distribution of grace' and the charismatic distribution of grace. "Wherever institutional grace operates consistently, three basic principles are involved. The first is *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: salvation cannot be attained apart from membership in a particular institution vested with the control of grace"[16]. This should help explain why, though both Mussolini and Pétain were, at best, equivocal about religion in their private lives, they nonetheless both publicly participated in the religious life of the Catholic Church, to which the vast majority of their subjects belonged. Further, it raises two interesting points. The first is the parallel, if we consider here the Catholic Church as the 'institution vested with the control of grace', with the monopoly on violence on which the State insists – the State monopoly on the legitimate use of violence is one of the basic underpinning tenets of our social organisation, and one may even look further back than this. Elias Canetti, in *Crowds and Power*, says that the basis of all power derives ultimately from the power to administer death. This simple statement will explain that the state monopoly on violence is really a state monopoly on *power*, and this may also be a factor in explaining why violent crimes are punished more heavily than non-violent ones: they are, in fact, a form of *lese-majesté*. If we take this thought back a little further, if the reader will excuse the digression, we may also see the same process in the Ten Commandments. The prohibition on murder may be interpreted as God's reservation of power over men to himself – in fact, we may consider man's

---

[16] Ibid., p. 560.

ability to kill his fellow man (the act of Cain), and therefore to have power over them, as just as big a Fall as his knowledge of good and evil (the act of Adam and Eve).

Secondly, we may look at appeals to messiaship by a charismatic leader in this context as an attempt to bypass the 'institutional monopoly on grace', and to set himself up with some power to distribute grace, without coming into open conflict with the institution to which it is still important he belong, since most of his followers do. By remoulding some 'everyday needs for grace' into 'extraordinary needs for grace', the charismatic leader can ask people to look to the 'incarnated messiah' as the saviour and fountainhead of grace, and no longer (only) the institution of the Church. There is a further useful element to this whole process. "Institutional grace, by its very nature, ultimately and notably tends to make obedience a cardinal virtue and a decisive precondition of salvation. This of course entails subjection to authority, either of the institution or of the charismatic personality who distributes grace"[17]. By attributing some of the power to distribute grace to himself, and away from the Church, the charismatic leader can also attract some of the loyalty inculcated by the Church and traditionally expressed towards it, *to himself*. This powerful, religious loyalty, may prove extremely strong, and therefore desirable.

Weber discusses an aspect of the 'ancient Jewish ethic' that it is especially useful to bear in mind when thinking about Pétain's leadership style in the second case study below. "The assumption that suffering, particularly voluntary suffering, would mollify god and improve one's chances in the world to come is

---

[17] Ibid., p. 562.

found…in many types of expectation regarding continued existence after death"[18].

It is in the interest of the charismatic leader to link himself with a tradition. This is difficult, however, precisely because *by definition* he is breaking with the traditional structure of authority. However, he is able to usefully appropriate (or rather, attempt to) the 'Messiah' tradition, which is in fact a tradition of extraordinary need-satisfaction, and therefore ideally suited to the charismatic leader's project. Further, we have seen, that it helps to bring some of the power of the institutional Church, especially in terms of attitudes of obedience to the charismatic leader, without openly challenging the Church. Mussolini was able to 'make peace with' (let us say) the Vatican on behalf of the Italian state at the Lateran Accords in 1929. Further, we have also seen that attitudes to the figure of the 'saviour' include the belief that the 'Messiah' is a charismatically endowed 'hero', and even more importantly, is 'good'. The 'saviour' is also believed to be leading (the) people 'up', towards a *better future*. Therefore, if a charismatic leader succeeds in drawing a parallel between himself and the 'Messiah', he is in fact already annexing to himself these attributes: of 'goodness', of 'heroism', and of leading people to a 'secure haven'. All these are useful attributes indeed for a charismatic leader seeking legitimacy to try and arrogate to himself.

Paradise Regained?

If we examine the theological and philosophical roots of the Messianic idea with Mircea Eliade, we can see that the messianic idea is a shift in Jewish thinking

---

[18] Ibid., p. 521.

concerning the resolution of the problem of 'original sin' (it should be noted that this is not a term used in the Jewish tradition; Eliade was not aware of the content of rabbinic thought. However, the term will be preserved here in the sense that he used it, to simplify things). Prior to the Babylonian Exile, ideas of redemption had been focussed on a spiritual and moral renewal of the Israelites, leading to a 'restoration [of man] to his original integrity', or a pre-Fall state, with all that that implies for man's relationship to God. After the Exile, and Eliade dates 'Deutero-Isaiah' to the final years of the Exile, the idea changes and focuses on a *new world*, essentially an(other) renewal of creation and the covenantal relationship with God, which would be brought about by God himself through his agent, or king ('messiah'), and not through the actions of his people. For some, the messianic – still a physical – kingdom would be only temporary. This is the idea of the 'Millenium', which would last 400, 500 or 1,000 years and be succeeded by the Final Judgement and the end of the world, and finally by a new and perfect creation. In other words, the coming of the 'Messiah' would annul the consequences of 'original sin' (in the Jewish tradition, the sin referred to was the lapse of the Jewish people during the monarchy) .

Eliade, however, also makes clear that "the expectation of the ideal king, the *Messiah*, is bound up with the ideology of kingship". And it is in looking at the early development of expectations of both kingship and the 'Messiah' in Jewish thought that we enter the next part of our adventure, in looking more fully at the traditionally held attributes of a 'Messiah'. If, as we have seen, a charismatic national leader may try and arrogate to himself the attributes of a 'Messiah', because they are *good*, let us now examine precisely what these attributes are, and why they are so useful for a charismatic nationalist leader. We can see that

21

the early roots of the messiah concept arise in the (Jewish thinking about) sanctification of kingship in the ancient Near East: "After being anointed by Samuel, Saul received the "spirit of Yahweh" (1Sam. 10:6). For the king was the "anointed" (masiah) of God (1Sam. 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 16, 23 etc.); he was adopted by Yahweh, became in a sense his son: "I will be a father to him and he a son to me" (2Sam. 7:14). But the king is not engendered by Yahweh; he is only recognised, "legitimated", by a special declaration. Yahweh grants him universal domination (Psalm 72:8), and the king sits on his own beside God (Ps 110:1)"[19]. There is clearly a great deal of interweaving here of two concepts that we usually separate (more or less): kingship and messiaship. Evidently, the king, in this understanding of kingship, is 'son of God', or at any rate, a charismatic warrior or hero endowed with the charismatic legitimacy of the godhead. It is perhaps unnecessary to draw the attentive reader's attention to the similarities between Eliade's discussion of the origins of Israelite institution of kingship and the special attributes of the Catholic Messiah. It is also clear, in examining the origins of messiaship, that the 'Messiah' is indissolubly associated with kingship. The 'Messiah' is, at once, a man, and the embodiment of the divine right to rule. More on this later, but let me merely remark at this stage, that the figure of the 'Messiah' is really the figure of the 'messiah-king'. The iconography of kingship features heavily in messianic thought in both the Jewish and the Catholic traditions. Two examples will suffice here. The 'Messiah', in Jewish thought (actually, there are two – but let us concentrate on the main one) is the 'Messiah ben David' – the 'Messiah, son of David'. In other words, the 'Messiah' will be (an anointed king) from the house of King David. In Catholic thought, we may

---

[19] Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Vol. I, p. 334.

take the example of the Nativity. Although Christ is not *overtly* born a king, i.e. the son of a king and a queen, the fact that the Three Kings come to *pay homage to him*, tells us that he is, in fact, a much greater king than they. We can therefore see that the link between messiaship and kingship remains important in Catholic thought also. It is also worth mentioning, incidentally, that Christ's ancestry was frequently traced back to David in the New Testament (for a lovely example of this, see the 14th-century lantern mosaic in the former Church of the Monastery of Chora in Istanbul).

But if the origins of the 'messiah-king' lie in the early Jewish institution of kingship, messianic thought rapidly develops beyond it. It, in fact, becomes the locus of extremely focused eschatological hopes and thinking, and therefore becomes part of a whole *weltanschauung*, centered on the 'eschaton', the end of time. In this way of thinking, the progress of history is no longer cyclical, but leads up to a cataclysmic and revolutionary event in which the wrongs of the current earthly state of things will be righted, either in a 'heavenly kingdom' or in a kingdom on earth presided over by God or an appointed deputy, the 'Messiah'. This 'righting of current wrongs' includes the national renewal of Israel and Judah, split into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon, and much more to the point, the reinstatement of Israel after its fall in 722 B.C.E. (and subsequently Judah, after its fall in 586 B.C.E.). The 'Messiah' concept therefore comes to acquire attributes of *national renewal*, as well as kingship. Also associated with the eschaton is the 'end of days', that is the end of history, and some sort of universal judgement connected with the 'Millenium'. The concept of the Final Judgement is described in Daniel (7:9-14), by Enoch, in 4Esdras, and is in fact still a central one in Catholicism (see for example to the altar wall

23

fresco of the Sistine Chapel, the *papal* chapel). The fact that this judgement is associated with the 'Messiah' and the messianic age, allows us also to say that the 'Messiah' has the *right to judge*. Thus far, we have seen that the expectations associated traditionally with the 'Messiah' figure in Judaism and thence Catholicism, are *kingship, national renewal, and judgement*. "According to the eschatological prophecies, the renewed world will be ruled over by Yahweh or by a king whom God will designate and who will govern in his name. This king, usually called the "Anointed" (masiah), was supposed to descend from David…It is important to make clear that the formula the "Anointed of Yahweh" was originally applied to the reigning king. Hence the eschatological personage was compared to a king…"[20]. Further, as for national renewal, we may say that: "The Messiah is a mortal, an offspring of the line of David, who will sit on the throne of David and reign with justice"[21]. Here again, if we analyse this sentence, we may see that there are several thoughts combined in it. The 'Messiah' in this (Jewish) understanding of the concept, is mortal. He is descended from a royal line, and therefore has legitimacy to rule. He will 'sit on the throne of David', that is to say, he will rule the kingdom that David ruled, which is of course to say 'over all Israel' – thus including the concept that the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah will be reunited and will enjoy the kind of national 'glory' they did under King David. Further, he will 'reign with justice', which is to say that he will be just, or *good*, but also that he will have the right to dispense justice – the right to judge, as he sees fit (although he will do it fairly). "The worse the situation of the Jewish people became, the more the certainty increased that the present eon was nearing its end. In short, the worsening of the terror [of history] announced the

---

[20] Mircea, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 252-3.
[21] Ibid., p. 253.

imminence of salvation"[22]. Eliade goes on to note that "Jesus predicted the imminent transfiguration of the world: this is the essence of his preaching"[23].

The birth of Christianity as a millenarian sect within Judaism means that the centrality of the 'Messiah' figure, and of Jesus Christ *being* that 'Messiah', is key. The early Christians lived in daily expectation of the Second Coming (i.e. of the eschaton), but this got delayed and delayed. Elias Canetti describes how the institutional Church eventually delayed the expectation of the eschaton to beyond the grave.

We see not only the attributes of the 'Messiah' here, but also the *need* for one, to satisfy the 'extraordinary need' for a healing of the wound in the relationship of God and man caused by Adam's transgression, and all the subsequent imperfections of man and the world in which he lives. In other words, we see the development of a need for a *rapprochement* with God and with perfect creation, and we see the development of a charismatically legitimated (by God) figure, the 'messiah-king', who has the attributes (kingship, national renewal, judgement) to be able to carry out, as a proxy of God, the redemption so longed for. The creation of a 'messiah-king' figure entails the creation of a universal symbol of redemption, with which certain attributes are associated. The idea of somehow being able to heal people's most deeply felt spiritual or national wounds and lead them to a more perfect 'creation' – or society - is again attractive to a charismatic nationalist leader who is able to associate himself with the 'saviour'. Further, although the ultimate destination is vouchsafed as a 'perfect society' (or creation), teething difficulties (or 'birth pangs') are predicted in the very nature

---

[22] Ibid., p. 272.
[23] Ibid., p.332.

25

of this prophecy, and can be dismissed as merely natural parts of the transition process.

"In officio figura et imago Christi et Dei est"[24].

Kantorowitz outlines the story of, and theory behind, a fascinating piece of Tudor (English) legal fiction, which was to have an effect on the European concept of kingship as a whole from the early Renaissance onwards. To summarise his argument, we can say that there was a legal fiction created in English law by which the King had *two* bodies: a 'body natural' (i.e. the mortal and physical body of the king) and a 'body corporate' or 'body politic', which represented the immortal and perfect attributes of kingship, which were nonetheless fused with, or incarnated in, the body natural of the reigning king. The King, however, could act in various legal situations both in the name of the body politic and the body natural, or in the name of one or the other, making a qualitative difference to the legal status of the action. However, it is not the legal status of the Tudor kings that interests us here. The theory behind this dual corporeality (drawing on the neo-Platonic philosophy of the time), however, does, because it has a broader effect on European ideas of kingship. The body politic represents the continuity and perpetuity of the royal *office*, and is incarnated in the reigning king, although that king himself is mortal and therefore subject to death in his body natural. The concept functions a little bit like the concept of the Trinity, and indeed, Kantorowitz terms this a "Royal christology", and notes that it is derived from

---

[24] Kantorowitz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. p. 48.

theology[25]. Kantorowitz further notes that the "theology of kingship" was common throughout Europe by the late 12th-13th century.

Kantorowitz provides a detailed analysis of a fascinating theological source discussing the legal and theological status of the king, written around 1100 by the 'Norman Anonymous' (however, it is important to note that the following is not merely the opinion of a lone voice. Kantorowitz says that the Norman Anonymus "reproduces theologically familiar concepts"[26]). His *De consecratione pontificum et regum* says of the *persona mixta* (i.e. his 'dual nature') of the (Old Testament) king(s): "We thus have to recognise [in the king] a *twin person*, one descending from nature, the other from grace…Concerning one personality, he was, by nature, an individual man: concerning his other personality, he was, by grace, a *Christus*, that is, a God-man"[27]. Here, the comparison between the anointed king and the 'Messiah' that we saw above in the Jewish religious tradition is clearly recognised and reinforced by a Catholic theologian writing in Europe during the high Middle Ages. This continuity and survival in the Catholic tradition is important and essential to note, given the centrality of Jesus Christ as Messiah to the Catholic faith.

The Catholic idea of kingship developed , so Kantorowitz notes, so that the "Christian ruler became the *christomimetes* – literally the "actor" or "impersonator" of Christ – who on the terrestrial stage presented the living image of the two-natured God"[28]. In fact, by this thinking, the "King *becomes* "deified" for a brief span by virtue of grace, whereas the celestial King *is* God by nature

---

[25] Ibid., p. 16.
[26] Ibid., p. 47.
[27] Ibid., p. 46.
[28] Ibid., p. 47.

eternally"[29]. Here, we have a clear exposition of the idea that it is possible, and indeed necessary, for the Christian monarch to 'put on' the mantle of the 'Messiah', and become his 'living image', thereby enjoying a charismatic legitimation on the basis of his consequent access to grace. There exists a charismatic tradition in the 'body politic' of the figure of the 'messiah-king' that allows a king, or for argument's sake, any other charismatic leader to claim to incorporate the 'body natural' of this office, and thereby to arrogate the body politic to himself, with all its (positive – and they are exclusively positive) associations that we have seen above. By divorcing the physical and essential natures of both the king, or ruler, and of Christ (or the messiah-figure) himself, it is possible to achieve a union, at least in theory, of the two. "Christ was King and *Christus* by his very nature, whereas his deputy on earth was king and *christus* by grace only"[30]. We may take grace, in this context to be roughly equivalent with Weber's 'charisma', or 'charismatic legitimation'. And, indeed, if we consider the formula of the English monarch to this day (present on the coinage of the realm), 'Elizabeth II Dei Gratia Regina'[31] (Elizabeth II, Queen *By the Grace of God*), we can see that this is not merely a dead letter of mediaeval thought – but an important part of the European concept of kingship as a whole, as carried through from the Middle Ages; as indeed, the concept of the divine right of the monarch to rule lasted right up to the point where Louis XVI lost his head.

And it is my suggestion that it is precisely *this* relationship that the charismatic leader is tapping into when he is labelled (or self-labelled) 'The Saviour of the Nation'. It is, in fact, the very early Jewish idea of the kingship in the anointed

---

[29] Ibid.
[30] ibid., p. 47.
[31] Cf. £2 coin, private collection of the author.

king (masiah), as rethought by millenarian Jewish thinkers, adopted by Christianity and centralised by them, and then re-applied to the European concept of kingship from the Middle Ages on, which is coterminous with the kingship concept itself in Europe. Therefore, the nationalist charismatic leader who is trying to employ the 'verbal bridging device' of 'The Saviour of the Nation' is in fact trying to connect to a complicated and profound European tradition of the figure of the 'messiah-king', with all its attributes. These are important to any regime seeking traditional sources of legitimacy outside its own, purely charismatic one. The concept of *kingship* confers the right to rule – and subtly portrays the leader as the 'anointed of God', that is to say, the 'messiah-king', who is *good*, *just,* and will *redeem his nation* to a better, perfect, future. Further, by claiming the 'body politic' role of 'messiah-kingship' for himself, the charismatic leader is also claiming or himself the immortality of the office, and thereby trying to extend the charismatic legitimacy of his leadership beyond the lifespan of his own 'body natural'. In other words, not only is an appeal to 'messiah-kingship' a useful source of legitimacy for the otherwise limited charismatic ruler, in allowing him to situate his 'revolutionary' rule in a convenient historical and ideological framework, but it also provides a sense of continuity of the office, without resorting to the bureaucratisation, and therefore demise of, his charismatic system of rule.

"The power of the king is the power of God. This power, namely, is God's by nature, and the king's by grace. Hence, the king, too, is God and Christ, but by grace; and whatsoever he does, he does not simply as a man, but as one who has become God and Christ by grace"[32]. (We can see that the 'King's Two Bodies'

---

[32] Kantorowitz, op. cit., p.48.

was not merely an English legal fiction, but an inherent part of the European kingship concept). "Thus, the king appears the perfect *christomimites* also with regard to power, since his power is the same as that of Christ. The author may add, therefore, that the One who is God and Anointed by nature, acts through his royal vicar who is "God and Christ by grace"; and who *in officio figura et imago Christi et Dei est*. That is to say, the king, otherwise an individual man, is *in officio* the type and image of the Anointed in heaven and therewith of God"[33].

Thus, the king, or charismatic leader, is a *symbol* of the heavenly king, of Christ enthroned, of the 'messiah-king' of the Davidic line, exercising power by right, justly and wisely and judging by authority. The charismatic leader, by drawing this parallel, transforms himself into a *symbol* of 'messiah-kingship', and claims to embody *as a man* all the abstract virtues of the 'messiah-king' as a 'body politic' or charismatic institution. It is precisely this mediaeval idea of "Christ-centered kingship" that 'The Saviour of the Nation' is trying to tap into. In fact, the Carolingian idea of Empire was the 'regnum Davidicum', and the Emperor Louis the Pious was hailed:

> "Divo Hludovico vita!
>
> Novo David perennitas"

As Kantorowitz goes on to explain, "Louis was "hailed" not as an effluence of the epithet *divus*, but through the *perennitas* of the pious King of Israel"[34].

A corollary of this process is that the individual may be wrong, but the office is infallible: "Render to the power (potestas), not to the person. The person is worth nothing, but the power is just. Iniquitous is Tiberius, but good is the Caesar"[35].

---

[33] ibid.
[34] ibid., p. 81. Also the two lines immediately preceding.
[35] ibid., p. 54.

This allows the specific bearer of the office (i.e. the charismatic leader) to lose the imperfections of the character of his 'body natural' in the perfection of his office as 'messiah-king'. The judgement may be wrong, but the office of judge is just (which may, in fact, help us to understand Lászlo Rajk's comment on his death sentence following his show-trial: 'the Party is always right').

The usefulness of these concepts associated with the figure of the 'messiah-king', which are deeply engrained in the religious foundations of European culture, Jewish and Christian (Catholic) thought, to the charismatic leader seeking non-traditional forms of legitimation for his rule, should now be obvious. The charismatic leader can, by trying to construct a mental bridge using the 'verbal bridging technique' of 'The Saviour of the Nation' between himself as Saviour of the Nation and Christ, the 'messiah-king' arrogate to himself the important attributes that are associated with the figure of the 'messiah king'; can in fact pretend to be the incarnated symbol of the 'body politic' or 'office' of the 'messiah-king'. We have seen that these attributes as important ones to a leader searching for legitimacy, since they are closely interwoven in Europe with the concept of kingship, and therefore the right to rule; with the concept of the coming of a better, perfect, society (or creation) and the 'birth pangs' preceding it; with the right to *judge* and most of all, with the incarnated, human, figure of the 'messiah-king' as *good*. The figure of the incarnated Christ is present in every Catholic Church, and many homes, through the symbol of the crucifix, and plays an important role in the iconography or Western art; it is a central and familiar figure to all who have even the most basic religious education, since the 'Messiah' concept is so central to Catholicism, and we must not forget that until

31

relatively very recently, education in Europe was by no means secular. This is to say that the underlying 'Messiah' concept is present in the mass consciousness in Europe – there is certainly something to bridge *to*. And, because of the way the 'Messiah' concept developed, various other concepts are subtly, perhaps even subconsciously, associated with it, which are useful for the charismatic leader seeking legitimacy and access to the 'monopoly of grace'. It is the hypothesis of this paper that *this* is why the phrase 'The Saviour of the Nation' is a useful and a common one.

Dux: the case of Benito Mussolini.

Mussolini was the founder of the *Fasci di Combattimento* in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, and – having been a successful Socialist journalist and editor of the Socialist newspaper *Avanti* (Forward!) – became head of state in 1922, following his 'March on Rome', leading a Fascist government. Post-War Italy was in a turbulent state of political breakdown, the pre-War established Liberal order of government by a relatively limited circle of elites having been plunged into crisis and popularly discredited. The post-War sense in Italy was that Italy's war effort had not been satisfactorily rewarded – Italy had had ambitions, in joining the Allied Powers, of being given dominion over Istria and Dalmatia, 'traditionally' 'Italian' territories of influence. It was popularly felt that Italy had been sidelined in the Peace, and there was a sense that Italy had not got what it deserved. Italy, in other words, was left hungry for territorial advancement and with a sense of wounded national pride. It was also left with a crisis of leadership, since the Liberal political establishment was seen as being to

blame for the unsatisfactory results of the war; and was tainted as inefficient, indecisive and incapable of representing Italy's 'rightful' national 'needs' on the international stage. Mussolini offered a clear alternative in the political turmoil of the post-War situation. Presenting himself as a determined man of action, who could move government, and the nation, forward efficiently, directly, and without the 'corruption' and chaos of the parliamentary system, his message of a simplified political life, more open to mass participation, and an ethical renewal, found favour with many. At this juncture of general rupture with the pre-1914 order throughout Europe, Mussolini's 'Fascist Revolution', promising a new start and a strong guiding hand, leading Italy to renewed national pride, proved a powerful message indeed.

Fascism as a social movement had a rich propaganda aspect in Italy between 1922 and 1942, the war years following changing everything (we will not be concerned with the period 1943-45 here[36]). Mussolini cultivated a strong cult of the personality, and propaganda photos of the 'Duce' or leader in many guises, as soldier, as politician, as civilian, in a racing car, with his lion, etc. abound in the propaganda literature of this time. There was also a strong hagiographic element to this literature, which sought to build up the charismatic elements and qualifications of the 'Duce', of Mussolini the man. I have surveyed a broad range of this hagiographic propaganda literature, particularly centered on Mussolini himself, ranging in date throughout the twenty year period defined above. Although this literature has not stood the test of time in its contributions to Italian world literature, it is certainly of value to the historian. There are certain themes

---

[36] Except perhaps to record how much the mood had changed by then. Alexander Lenard, a Hungarian author in exile in Rome in 1943, records an anti-Mussolini joke, along the lines of: "Why does Mussolini's daughter wear black underwear?" "Because there's a compulsory blackout in all places of public entertainment".

running through this literature that define the axes of Fascist propaganda concerning Mussolini, and it is to an overview of these that I would now like to turn. The central themes of Mussolinian propaganda, then, are three – 'New Rome' and the 'New Caesar', the 'Condottiere' (a mediaeval military hero-leader) and the world contribution of the 'Civiltá Italiana' (Italian culture). Fascist propaganda in this period is primarily concerned with 'restoring' to Italy a sense of pride in its place in the world – or occupying its 'rightful place in the sun' based on its cultural and military achievements in the past. The resort to Rome was indeed a wise one. The process of Italian unification in the late 19th-century was not entirely a success, from the point of view of making one country from strongly region-based societies. In order to try and complete this unification process, Mussolinian propaganda needed to create a sense of common, unified identity. This, they identified correctly, was last achieved under the Romans; besides which, under the Romans, Rome was indeed *caput mundi* (the center of the world). Rome, as a military power, was unrivalled at the time of its heyday, and as a cultural factor has contributed to shaping the world we see around us every day. Mussolini is thus hailed as "*Fondatore dell'Impero*"[37] [founder of the Empire]: "*Benito Mussolini riannoda l'antico splendore di Roma alla risorta grandezza d'Italia*"[38] [Benito Mussolini has given back the ancient splendour of Rome to Italy's re-emerging greatness]. And if Fascist Italy was to be the New Rome, the Duce was to be the New Caesar: "*V'é chi scopre in lui [Mussolini] delle profonde analogie con Cesare*"[39] [One can see in him profound analogies with Caesar]. Here again, however, there is more to the analogy than the

---

[37] Consiglio, Alberto. *Mussolini*. Rome: Tummirelli, n.d., p. 103.

[38] Curatulo, Giacomo Emilio. *Soliloqui Colloqui*. Rome: Giovanni Bardi, 1942., p. 139.

[39] Ibdi., p. 11.

exultation of a purely warrior-type of charismatic hero. "*Io amo* Cesare. *Egli solo riuniva in sé la volontá del guerriero con l'ingeno del saggio*"[40] [I admire *Caesar*. He alone combined in his own person the will of a warrior with the wisdom of the sage]. And while there is no overriding sense of the country being in such deep crisis that it needs a 'Saviour', there are nonetheless elements of 'national renewal' evident in the propaganda: "*lo sentiamo noi...attraverso la sua lingua, di avere nell'anima il seme e insieme la forza di tutta la rigenerazione nazionale*"[41] [we feel…through his [Mussolini's] language, that we have in our souls the seed and at the same time the the full force of national renewal]. Mussolini himself says: "*noi vogliamo forgiare la grande...Italia del nostro sogno*"[42] [we want to forge the greater Italy of our dreams]. Mussolini is called "*[l']Uomo del nostro destino*"[43] [the man of our destiny], and labelled "*Questo Condottiero*"[44]. Mussolini is hailed as "*Mussolini trionfatore*"[45] [Mussolini the Victor], but this is clearly an Imperial reference. The same collection of laudatory world press clippings about Mussolini quotes 'Il Nemzeti Ujsag' as saying that "*[Mussolini] ha salvato lo Stato e la societá italiana...É un grande eroe nazionale e ció é la piú grande gloria*"[46] [he has saved the State and Italian society…He is a great national hero, and that is the greatest honour], but there is nothing Christological about this – it is merely (placed in context) a reference to Mussolini having saved, in the opinion of 'Il Nemzeti Ujsag', the

---

[40] Mussolini quoted in: Adami, Eugenio. *La lingua di Mussolini*. Modena: Societá Tipografica Modense, 1939., p. 92.
[41] Ibid., p. 61.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Beltramelli, Antonio. *L'Uomo Nuovo*. Verona?: Mondadori, 1923., preface, no p. no.
[44] ibid., p. 351.
[45] Gallian, Marcello. *Mussolini nei commenti della stampa del mondo*. Busto Arsizio: federazione Provinciale dei Fasci di Combattimento di Varese, 1933., p. 34.
[46] Ibid., p.30.

unity of Italian state and society through his 'Fascist Revolution'. There is in fact also this strain in the propaganda also within Italy: "*Mussolini…é…l'apostolo di questo universale rinnovamento civile*"[47] [Mussolini…is…the Apostle of this universal renewal of society]. There is a great concern throughout this literature with history, much more than with *destiny*, because Mussolini was looking for a way to unify Italian society based on a 'shared myth of common origin', which was not firmly established, before leading the united country forward to a 'great Fascist destiny'; the historical, Imperial and cultural rhetoric is played up much more than the religious, messianic, mission-based one. "*Nessun grande uomo, nella storia, ha compendiato la potenza e l'equilibrio dei massimi valori dello spirito, come si riscontra in Mussolini*"[48] [No great man in history has combined force and the balance of the greatest virtues the way we find them in Mussolini], which tacit separation of *history* and religion, leaves Christ neatly out of it (Christ is clearly not envisaged here as a historical figure). Even the Lateran Accords were considered as the settling of a Church-State conflict. There is a great deal of tacit pragmatism and an attitude of 'let's not go there' in the Fascist propaganda, concerning Mussolini Christological comparisons. This is not to say, however, that his charismatic legitimacy is not reinforced in other ways; primarily, as we have seen, through his comparison with the Roman Emperors ("*A voi, erede di Romolo, de' Gracchi, di Scipione, d'Augusto, di Costantino*"[49] [To you, heir of Romulus, of the Gracchi, of Scipio, of Augustus, of Constantine]), with the great warrior-heroes of the Renaissance (the Condottieri) and with the incarnation of the virtues of Italian culture and spirit as 'the new

---

[47] Chignoni, Almo. *Universalitá do Mussolini*. Milan: Ambrosiana, 1941., p. 24.
[48] Ibid., p. 30.
[49] Caroli, Vito. *Al Duce*. Caserta, 1938. From the dedication to Mussolini, no p. number.

man'. There are some religious legitimations, however: "*IL DUCE É L'UOMO MANDATO DA DIO…Che Mussolini rappresenta la volontá di Dio, nella rettitudine, nella giustizia e nella forza, non é soltanto intuizione…Ma é anche logica deduzione di ogni spirito ben nato*"[50] [THE DUCE IS THE MAN SENT BY GOD…That Mussolini represents the will of god, in his rectitude, in justice and in his forcefulness, is not only a feeling…But is also the logical conclusion of every well born soul], but even these tend to be put into the context of Dante and Rome, the "*sublimitá storica di Mussolini*"[51] [the sublime historical nature of Mussolini]. Mussolini here is hailed as the "*autentica espressione del popolo Italiano*"[52] [the true expression of the Italian people], and hailed as the "*rigeneratore dell'umanita*"[53] [the renewer of humankind], but this is again envisaged more in the context of what Italian culture and spirit can give to the world than in a religious sense.

There are some instances that are clearly inspired by religious, and even messianic ideas, although this is often not the point emphasized: "*[L]a grande anima destinata a redimere , con l'amore, con la forza, con l'esempio, il popolo italiano e l'umanitá*"[54] [The great spirit desitned to redeem, with love, and force, and by his example, the Italian people and humankind]. One significant propagandist and biographer of the 'Duce', Margherita Sarfatti (who was also his mistress from their meeting in 1911, until the racial laws of 1938 forced her to emigrate to Argentina), comments: "*La guerra, e poi i disordini del dopoguerra, ridiedero agli uomini il religioso senso della vita, che si compendia nella*

---

[50] Chignoni, op. cit., p. 84.
[51] Ibid., p. 86.
[52] Ibid., pp. 138-9.
[53] Ibid.
[54] ibid., p. 99.

religiosa venerazione del Capo"[55] [The War, and the post-war troubles gave back to people a religious sense of life, which is compounded in the religious veneration of the Leader]. Here, we can clearly see Weber's point about institutionalised control of grace tending to lead to obedience, and also the charismatic leader capitalising on this religious sense of obedience for his own purpose, once his own access to grace is established. Sarfatti also gives a clear illustration of the charismatic nature of the organisation of Fascist (Mussolinian) Italy: "*Per i teologi, le autoritá terrene van rispettate, come emanazioni di Dio; su piccola scala, l'Italia fascista rispetta le proprie gerarchie, come discendenti da uno, il cui titolo indiscusso rende valide le investiture dei successivi gradi*"[56] [For theologians, the terrestrial authorities must be respected, as coming from God; on a smaller scale, Fascist Italy has its own hierarchies, descended from one, whose unquestioned right gives validity to the appointments of the successive levels]. Even when explicit references to Christ are made, they tend to be within the context of the basic themes of the propaganda as already described – the nation, Italian civilisation, Empire. "*La forza dell'Impero di Roma cattolica e universale, di cui é cittadino il Cristo, come cittadino se ne proclamó Paolo, é una forza di unitá nazionale e di espansione universale, che non puó venir trascurata*"[57] [The power of the Catholic and universal Empire of Rome, of which Christ is a citizen, as he was proclaimed such by St Paul, is a force for national unity and universal expansion, which cannot be obscured].

Mussolini himself was not a religious man, although he professed the Catholic faith. In fact, he had quite open religious views: "[asked in an interview if he's a

---

[55] Sarfatti, Margherita. *Dux*. Verona: Mondadori, 1932 (13th edition)., p. 295.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Forchielli, Giuseppe. *Mussolini e la religione*. Tolentino: extracted from the Annalid ella R. Universitá di Macerata, Volume IX (c. 1933), but quoting Sarfatti's Dux, p. 43.

beliver] *Qui bisogna distinguere fra credenti e praticanti. Certo se l'uomo di Stato vive intimamente nella religione della maggioranze del suoi compatriotti, ció diventa un elemento speciale di forza e di consenso. Ma la partecipazione al culto é un affare personale*"[58] [Here, we must make a distinction between believers and practicants. Certainly, if the head of state lives intimately in the religion of the majority of his compatriots, this becomes a special element of force and consensus. But participation in the ritual is a private affair], and "*Gli uomini possono pregare Dio in molto modi. Si deve lasciare assolutamente a ciascuno il proprio modo*"[59] [People can worship God in many ways. Everyone must absolutely be allowed to practise their own way], and most interestingly: "*se il Cristianesimo non fosse giunto alla Roma imperiale sarebbe rimasto una setta ebraica. Questa é la mia profonda convinzione*"[60] [if Christianity had not been joined to Imperial Rome, it would have remained a Jewish sect. That is my profound conviction]. Here, the Duce himself recontextualises religion into the Imperial inheritance. The legacy of Imperial Rome includes Christianity. On the whole, there is a tacit separation between Fascist political life and religious life, in the propaganda examined here. As the Lateran Accords were a *modus vivendi* between the State and the Church, so it seems that Fascist propaganda also reached a 'live and let live' attitude and does not generally mix religion with politics. Forchielli makes a very observant summary of this literature, which is worth quoting here at length: "*Il Fascismo – si dice [the propaganda literature of Fascism] non é un movimento di pura azione politica; ma anche un moivmento etico; si presenta come un movimento religioso; rivela un idea universale la*

---

[58] Forchielli, op. cit., p. 173; but quoting Ludwig, E. *Colloquii con Mussolini*. Verona, 1932.,
[59] ibid., p. 224.
[60] Ibid., p. 176.

quale succede all'idea romana e cattolica…Contiene in sé una promessa e suscita un'attesa messianica. Esiste uno stato di fede fascista. Questa fede ha avuto i suoi martiri: e v'é un culto dei martiri; come una religione per l'individuo superiore, il Duce che comanda…Mussolini rappresenta il mistero religioso della nostra nuova rinascita; l'uomo inviato dalla Provvidenza che rivela a noi stessi I nuovi destini; il gran padre, il pontefice della Patria alfine retrovata; un novello Costantino; un emulo di S. Francesco; condottiero ed apostolo…"[61] [Fascism – so says this literature – is not purely a movement of political action; but also an ethical movement; it presents Fascism as a religious movement; it reveals a universal idea which is a successor of the Roman and the Catholic ideas…It contains within itself a promise and sustains a messianic hope. There exists a state of Fascist faith. This faith has its martyrs: it is really a cult of martyrs; like a religion for the superior individual, the Duce who leads…Mussolini represents the religious mysteru of our new rebirth; the man sent by Providence who reveals to us our new destiny; the great father, the priest of the fatherland reborn at last; a new Constantine; an emulator of St. Franics; war leader and Apostle…] and Mussolini was, indeed compared to Saint Francis. Most notably, this comparison was drawn by Paolo Ardali, a priest, who says of Mussolini: "*tutte le sue qualitá in una intima atmosfera superiore, calme, serena e luminosa, lo accostano piú di quanto non si creda al Santo di Assisi*"[62] [all his qualities in an intimate atmosphere that is superior, calm, peaceful and luminous, bring him closer than many would believe to the Saint of Assisi].

---

[61] Forchielli, op.cit., pp. 21-22.
[62] Ardali, Paolo. *San Francesco e Mussolini*. Mantova: Paladino, c. 1926., from preface, no page number.

There are a few explicit comparisons of Mussolini with a 'Saviour'. Mussolini and Hitler are both labelled "*Capi ordinatori e salvatori dei popoli in pericolo*"[63] by one writer. Another, a Veronese lady called Aida Pimazzoni, writes: "*Duce, Duce, Taumaturgo,| Redentor del mondo intiero*"[64] [Duce, Duce, great healer, saviour of the entire world]. A poem by Bachisio Asili sees Mussolini as "*il redentore della Patria, il Salvatore della casa Savoia per la saluta di Roma Eterna e di tutta l'Umanitá*"[65] [redeemer of the fatherland, saviour of the House of Savoy for the sake of Eternal Rome and all mankind].

Although religious comparisons, and very rarely even perhaps messianic ones are present in the propaganda of Fascism where Mussolini is concerned, they are marginal, rare, and tend to be tied to a different, National, Roman or cultural context. Mussolini is more often compared to Augustus, or Caesar; his movement to the New Rome, and not in a religious sense, but an Imperial one. The religious, messianic theme is simply not emphasized in Fascist propaganda relating to Mussolini, and the term 'Saviour of the Nation' is never (in the examples I have seen) used. This 'verbal bridging' mechanism is clearly not used in this context, although one would have expected that in a Catholic country like Italy, it would have some utility. Clearly, the fact that the Duce himself held liberal religious views and presumably the massive opposition of the Church, which tried to retain its 'monopoly on grace' had the Fascists tried to use this kind of imagery extensively, meant that it was not widely used and was not a salient part of Fascist propaganda concerning Mussolini (indeed, before the

---

[63] Alicino, Michele. *Il loro genio. Capisaldi.* Rome: 1942., pp. 37-38.
[64] Fichera, Filippo. *Il Duce e il Fascismo nei canti dialettali d'Italia*. Milan: Convivio Letterario, 1937., p. 63.
[65] Ibid., p. 80.

Lateran Accords, the Pope had "*messo in guardia i cattolici italiani contro questo culta, questa specie, di statolatria pagana*"[66] [put Italian Catholics on their guard against this cult, this kind of pagan worship of the state]. Although we have clearly seen that the process of charismatic legitimation is at work in Fascist Italy and although we have also seen that Mussolini was indeed seeking new forms of legitimacy for his 'Revolution' from 19th-century Italian Liberalism, we cannot say that the mechanism hypothesised in the previous section of this paper is at work here.

Maréchal, nous voilá: the case of Philippe Pétain.

Philippe Pétain came to power in somewhat different circumstances than Mussolini. The 'Victor of Verdun', a hero of the First World War, became head of what remained of the French government after the German invasion at the beginning of World War Two. France felt its defeat by Germany very keenly. This was in part due to the traditional hostility and military rivalry between Germany and France, after Germany's emergence in the 1860s as a significant military (and, thanks to the Prussian military tradition, efficiently militaristic) power in Central Europe. France and Germany had bitterly contested the ownership of Alsace-Lorraine, and in fact, the German defeat of France in 1870 had been responsible for the toppling of the *Second Empire*, and the chaos of the Paris *Communes*, not to mention the establishment thereafter of the divisive Third Republic. The Republic was seen by many French people as corrupt and venal, ineffective and weak – and it was popularly perceived that it was the

---

[66] In the Allocuzioni concistoriali del 14 dicembre 1925 and 20 dicembre 1926, in: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1925, p. 633; 1926, p. 513.

politicians and not the generals whose incompetence had led to this latest, humiliating German defeat. Again, the appeal of a 'strong hand' to guide France back to some sense of the restoration of national pride was manifest. Pétain, as the national hero of the First World War, and therefore as a living symbol of France's military victory over Germany, was an excellent figure to incorporate this ideal. This defeat was, of course, all the more poignant because of its reversal of France's emphatic victory at Versailles, and subsequently its interventions in the Ruhr. It was, as much as anything else, a symbolic defeat in the ongoing battle between France and Germany. Its speed and totality were especially distressing to the French, giving rise to a sense of crisis and gloom, and a sense of being unsure what to do. The Pétain government, whose legitimacy was always – to some degree – in question, partly thanks to Charles de Gaulle's Free French government in exile, and partly thanks to its situation not in Paris but in the provincial bathing town of Vichy, tried to rally some sense of national unity around the symbolic figurehead of 'the Maréchal', who was at this time in his mid-80s. Pétain was an interesting choice for a head of state; his role was probably imagined as largely symbolic – a standard around which the disenchanted French populace and especially army, could rally, while also being to some extent pliable to the influence of other, younger men, and of course being agreeable (at least to an acceptable degree) to the German victors. The government headed by Pétain was explicitly collaborationist, and hoped, by this policy of (limited) collaboration with the Germans, to get as beneficial peace terms as possible, while 'maintaining French honour' (a supreme concern of Pétain's – although the concept itself is left somewhat vague). Pétain, thanks to his age, was painted as a father figure to France (indeed, he addressed

unoccupied France as "*mes enfants*" [my children] in his Christmas broadcast in 1940), and as an upstanding example of soldierly, honourable and simple conduct in the face of humiliating defeat. He was, in fact, painted as the charismatic warrior-ascetic hero, who at a fateful hour stepped in to serve his country, sacrificing himself for the greater good. Perhaps Pétain, with his soldierly and patriotic credentials, could 'sell' collaboration to unoccupied France. Pétain was keen to emphasise that he would never compromise 'French honour', and that collaboration was in fact the best means of maintaining it. He used the language of the 'Suffering Servant' (Isaiah 40-55) in his speeches and radio broadcasts to unoccupied France. Although he himself was no Fascist, there were certainly strongly Fascist elements within his government, principally Pierre Laval. The central themes of Pétainist propaganda revolve around the Maréchal's standing as a soldier – his record as a war hero and former victor over the Germans, his simplicity and fatherly kindness and concern and his alertness and capacity for action despite his advanced age (contemporary reports from those who met Pétain personally during this period, however, make clear that he was not always totally 'with it'). The cornerstones of the Vichy ethos as represented in its propaganda are summed up in the slogan, 'Work, Family, Fatherland' (which replaced the similar triple formula of the Revolutionary 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity).

There are similarities with the propaganda of Fascist Italy in the propaganda of Vichy France, at least where their leaders were concerned. "Marshall Pétain came to power later, but the poetry associated with him is precisely similar to that associated with Mussolini or Hitler…the presentation of Pétain as the saviour of France as well as its symbol and incorporation are also found…Pétain

is associated with Joan of Arc and Roland"[67]. It should be noted that, in the way that St. Francis of Assisi was perhaps the most prominent Italian saint, Joan of Arc was the national saint of France. Comparisons of Mussolini to St. Francis may be likened to comparisons of Pétain with Joan of Arc, and indeed both figures directly referred to these saints in their discourse, at one point or another[68]. However, there are perhaps more direct references to Pétain as the 'Saviour of the Nation' than to Mussolini, although this phrase itself is rarely used *per se*. The Vichy Anthem (which replaced La Marseillaise in unoccupied France) is a good place for us to start our examination of Pétainist propaganda.

"*Maréchal, nous voilá*

devant toi le savuer de la France,

Nous jurons, nous tes gars

De servir et de suivre tes pas…

Tu nous a redonné l'espérance

La patrie renaîtra"[69].

[Marshall, here we stand | before you, the Saviour of France | We swear, us your lads | To serve and follow in your footsteps… | You've given us back our hope | The Fatherland will be reborn"]. There is here an explicit identification of Pétain as the 'Saviour of the Nation', in one of the most visible pieces of Vichy propaganda. Another song, this one for the Vichy youth movement, included the lyrics:

"*vous qui venez*

Ainsi qu'un envoyé de Dieu

---

[67] Murdoch, Brian, op.cit., p. 109.
[68] Pétain in a speech to mark Joan of Arc's saint's day; Mussolini quoted in Ardali, op. cit., p. 30.
[69] Lyrics by André Montagnard. Quoted in Murdoch, op. cit., p. 109.

Sauver la France bien-aimée"[70]

[You who come | sent by God | to save beloved France]. Here, both the religious and 'Saviour of the Nation' themes are present, and more clear. Murdoch comments on this same song, that "the liturgical tone (benedictus qui venit…), the idea of 'one sent by God' and also that of a saviour are all patent"[71]. "*J'accepterai tout ce qui sera nécessaire et utile pour sauver mon pays…*"[72] [I will accept everything that is necessary and useful to save my country].

There is nonetheless a heavier emphasis laid on Pétain as a simple father of his people. Robert Vaucher, in recounting Pétain's visits to the French countryside, recalls a touching story of Pétain comforting an exhausted-looking dog[73]. "*Morte ou vive, il est le pére de sa troupe*"[74] [Alive or dead, he is the father of his band]. He was the "*Chef paternel*"[75] [paternal chief].

Pétain was pessimistic concerning France's chances in the war, and was against the pre-War political atmosphere he blamed for the defeat. Pétain himself played up the role of penitence in France's eventual national recovery, and he emphasised that France would have to suffer on the road to national renewal, but that he was ready to suffer alongside his *Patrie*. This theme is a major one in

---

[70] Halls, W.D. *The Youth of Vichy France*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981., p. 295f, quoted in Murdoch, op. cit., p.110.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Pétain, 26th March 1918, quoted in Germain, José. *Note Chef Pétain.* Paris: La Technique du Livre, 1942. p. 173.

[73] Clearly, this story was not intended for a very discriminating audience. In: Vaucher, Robert. *Quand le Maréchal Pétain prend son baton de pelerin*. Paris, Marseilles, 1941.

[74] Benjamin, René. *Le Maréchal et son Peuple*. Paris: Plon, 1942., p. 21.

[75] D'O'rnans, Noel. *Les Jeudis du Maréchal.* Paris: Bureau de Documentation du Maréchal, n.d., preface – no page number.

Pétainist propaganda. "*Vous avez souffert. Vous souffrirez encore*"[76] [You have suffered. You will suffer yet]. "*C'est qu'en ma personne vous saluez la Patrie cruellement blessée, mais qui, déjá, manifeste les signes du retour á la vie*"[77] [In my person, you greet the Fatherland, which is gravely wounded, but is already showing the signs of a return to life]. "*Vous souffrez dans le present, vous êtes inquiets pour l'avenir. Le present est sombre, en effet, mais l'avenir sera clair, si vous savez vous montrer digne de votre destin*"[78] [You are suffering, you are worried about the future. The present is dark, indeed, but the future will be clear, if you know how to show yourselves worthy of your destiny]. "*L'esprit de jouissance détruit ce que l'esprit de sacrifice a édifié*"[79] [The spirit of dissipation destroys that which the spirit of sacrifice has built]. Pétain's message here is close to the ancient Jewish belief that we examined above, that the moral perfection of the people, that penitence in other words, could close the gap between the people and God, or in this case, between the 'Nation' and its 'Destiny'.

There is in Vichy France a much greater sense of the nation in crisis than there was in Fascist Italy, and another major theme is Pétain's self-sacrifice for the good of, or for the *saviour* of the Nation. Pétain is presented, frequently by himself, as the 'Suffering Servant' – and there is no doubt a strong Christological element in this aspect of Pétain's propaganda. The 'Suffering Servant' is perhaps more relevant to Jewish theology, but it nonetheless plays an interesting role in

---

[76] Pétain's speech of the 25th June 1940, quoted in: Suarez, Georges. *Le Maréchal Pétain.* Paris: Plon, 1940.

[77] Pétain's speech at Chambéry, 22 September 1941, quoted in: *Les Paroles et les écrits de Maréchal Pétain 16 Juin 1940 – 1er Janvier 1942.* N.p.: Éditions de la Légion, n.d.

[78] Pétain's speech to French Youth, 29th December 1940, quoted in: Pétain, Philippe. *La France Nouvelle. Appels et Messages 17 Juin 1940 – 17 Juin 1941.* Montrouge: 1941., p. 93.

[79] Pétain, quoted in: Chevalier, Jacques. *France…Pétain m'a dit…Les precepts du Maréchal…Appel aux jeunes.* Paris: La Chronique des Lettres Françaises, 1941., p. 44.

Catholic doctrine. "Jesus represents the Gospel's embodiment of the concept of the suffering servant. Seeing Jesus not only as the suffering servant, but also as the Messiah, the Gospel writers fuse these two roles into a synthesis that does not, however, occur in the Hebrew scriptures, where the two remain distinct"[80]. The 'Suffering Servant' therefore, in the Catholic tradition, is equated with the Messiah, and an appeal to one is therefore an appeal to the other. The use of this sort of rhetoric is perhaps clearest in Pétain's speech announcing his takeover of power on the 16 June 1940: "*je fais á la France le don de ma personne pour atener son malheur*"[81] [I give to France the gift of myself to attenuate its suffering]. One writer says: "*Il s'est presenté seul pour secourir la France*"[82] [he came forth alone to save France]. In an 'Ode to the Marshall', we find the same sentiment:

"*Car rien n'est plus touchant dans toute notre histoire*

Rien ne peut nous render plus fier

Que cet instant oú, seul dans votre juste gloire,

Vous vous êtes vous-même offert"[83] [For nothing is more touching in all our history | Nothing could make us more proud | Than that moment when, alone in your righteous glory, | you offered yourself].

And, further on we find Pétain depicted clearly as the 'Saviour of the Nation':

"*C'est lui [Pétain] qui me [la France] sauva toujours de la détresse:*

J'ai son passé pour avenir!"[84] [It is he that always saved me from distress: | I have for my future, his past!].

---

[80] Eliade, Mircea (ed.). *The Encyclopedia of Religion.* Macmillan. Vol. 14, p. 102.

[81] Quoted in *Les Paroles et les écrits de Maréchal Pétain 16 Juin 1940 – 1er Janvier 1942.* N.p.: Éditions de la Légion, n.d., p. 9.

[82] Benjamin, René. *Le Grand Homme Seul*. Paris: Plon, 1943., p. 11.

[83] Germain, op. cit., p. 176.

"Puisque sa mission magnifique et profonde,

Son privilege inattendu,

C'est de toujours sauver son pays quand le monde

S'imagine qu'il est perdu!"[85] [Since his magnificent and profound mission, | His unexpected privilege | Is always to save his country when the world | believes that it is lost!]. Another writer takes up this theme of Pétain as recurrent national saviour: *"Il l'a [France] sauvé deux fois avant: après, va-t-il pouvoir le sauver encore?"*[86] [He had saved it twice *before*: but will he be able to save it *after* (i.e. the German defeat)]. The same theme is emphasised further: *"En juin 40, vous rappelez-vous sa voix frémissante et calme pourtant, en paroles de tendresse et de sagesse, avec lesquelles, un jour, il a relevé et sauvé les Français?"*[87] [In June '40, do you remember his voice faltering and yet calm that, in gentle and wise words with which, one day, he relieved and saved the French?].

We have seen that there was a lot more direct and popular use of the concept of Pétain as the 'Saviour of the Nation'. However, this again does not represent the major thrust of Pétainist propaganda, which revolved around Pétain as the father figure, Pétain the soldier, and the new, chastened Frenchman of Vichy, suffering at present but hopeful for the future. The language of sacrifice, and indeed self-sacrifice, was important for Pétain, but he himself was not a devout Catholic either, as Lottman notes ("Pétain was just barely a practising Catholic; went to mass only on important holidays or when dragged there by his entourage"[88]).

---

[84] Ibid., p. 177
[85] ibid., p. 178.
[86] Pourrat, Henri. *Le Chef Français.* Marseille: Robert Laffont, 1942., p. 15.
[87] Benjamin, René. *Le Maréchal et son Peuple.* Paris: Plon, 1942., p. 2.
[88] Lottman, op.cit., p. 237.

This language is nonetheless clearly Christological, and indeed may relate to Old Testament ideas of moral chastisement of the people as a way of rapprochement to God. Pétain's offering to sacrifice himself on the altar of the Fatherland is subtly analogous to Christ's suffering for everybody's sins, to attenuate their suffering. The parallel cannot have been entirely lost on the French, overwhelmingly Catholic, audience. We may say, then, that Pétain *does* use this kind of language, although perhaps not in the same way as hypothesised by this paper. The message is neither clear enough, nor central enough to the overall body and rhetoric of the propaganda to allow us to say unhesitatingly that Pétain used the 'Saviour of the Nation' concept in the way that this paper had hypothesised.

He's not the Messiah, he's a very naughty boy!

This paper hypothesised that the term 'Saviour of the Nation' had a propaganda function in its relationship with the religious concept of a 'Saviour' as it had developed in Jewish and Christian (Catholic) thought. It further hypothesised that this propaganda function was thanks to a number of useful and powerful positive associations that had, over time, come to be associated with the 'Messiah' concept, including the concepts of kingship and national renewal, as well as rightful judgement. The paper's thesis held that the association between a charismatic leader hailed as 'The Saviour of the Nation' and the 'Saviour' or 'messiah-king' figure would be a useful one for the charismatic leader to make, since he sought sources of non-traditional legitimacy to shore up the legitimacy of the charismatic regime he had introduced that contrasted with the previous,

50

stable bureaucratic regime, and to take some part of the 'monopoly of grace' away from the Church and into his own, charismatically endowed, hands.

The paper then provided an overview of the theoretical background to these ideas, which included Max Weber's concepts of the charismatic leader and the charismatically legitimated organisation of society in a world-view based on the fulfilment of needs, both predictable, rational, and everyday, and extraordinary, mystical and 'charismatic'. It further used Weber's sociology of religions to look at the concept of grace and its potential importance. The paper then went on to survey the history of the messianic idea in Jewish and Christian religious thought, based on the work of Mircea Eliade. Here, we saw that messianic thought developed out of a Jewish theological rethinking of the problem of original sin, and was centralised by Christianity, which started as a messianic cult within Judaism and which centralised Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Finally, the paper looked at late mediaeval concepts of kingship and the relationship of the king in his 'body natural' to the office of the King, or its 'body politic', and how this was related to Christology – in other words, how Messianism and Kingship became intertwined concepts in mediaeval Europe and produced the figure of what I have called the 'messiah-king', which because of its nature was accessible to all kings, and became incorporated into the European idea of kingship as a whole. I then suggested that this is an added source of traditional legitimacy for charismatic leaders who tap into the 'messiah-king' figure in using the 'verbal bridge' of 'The Saviour of the Nation'. The paper then set out to present two case studies based on a broad-ranging survey of printed propaganda sources for Benito Mussolini and Philippe Pétain, to examine if, and how, this mechanism

51

functioned in practice with two charismatic nationalist leaders playing to a mass audience in Catholic countries following times of national crisis.

How do the results of the two case studies relate to the original hypothesis? We have seen that in neither case was the term or the concept of 'The Saviour of the Nation' used in the way hypothesised at the beginning of this paper. Its use was not central enough, not clear enough and not widespread enough for us to be able to say that the suggested mechanism outlined to explain the significance of this term was in operation in either of the cases studies here. The suggested 'verbal bridging mechanism' was not used either in Mussolinian nor Pétainist propaganda to the effect hypothesised. Certainly, it was not repeated, re-emphasised and diffused sufficiently to act in the way that this paper had imagined. Although we have seen that there were heavily Christological overtones in Pétainist propaganda, they refer more to the 'Suffering Servant' typology of Christ than to the more millennial aspects of messianic thought. We have also seen that Christological overtones, were almost entirely absent from Fascist propaganda about Mussolini. Although both men sought extra-traditional legitimation for their charismatic rule, they apparently did not seek it in identifying themselves with the 'Messiah' or the 'messiah-king' figures. Mussolini sought it in ancient Rome, while Pétain sought it in his glorious past as the 'Victor of Verdun', in his simple, trustworthy, paternalism and, to some extent, in his capacity to mourn and to suffer for, and together with, the French at the hour of their 'gravest national humiliation'.

Where does this leave our original hypothesis? It would, in my opinion, be hasty to discard it, even despite the fact that it has not been confirmed by the two case studies present here. Clearly, if the two case studies here present broadly negative

results, it lacks the universal charm and mechanism this paper hypothesised in the beginning. However, that is not to say that it does not function at all; and it may be worthwhile undertaking analyses of further cases to examine whether it is valid at all. I have two suggestions for such cases to make here, but only in brief. One is Adolf Hitler, who perhaps used Christological associations more boldly and with fewer reservations. Indeed, there is a prayer for Nazi youth written by Baldur von Schirach that begins: "Adolf Hitler, we believe in Thee"[89], and clearly the 'Thousand-Year Reich' has strong millennial overtones. Another example I would suggest, although perhaps a little more complicated, would be Napoleon Bonaparte, who used the imagery of kingship far more heavily, and of whom there exists a very broad range of propaganda material in every sort of medium, as well as a strong cult of personality. Bonaparte was crowned (even if he did it himself), and to pick merely two examples from the world of painting, we have David's representation of this event, and Antoine-Jean Gros' representation of 'Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Stricken in Jaffa', painted in 1804, that clearly relates to the concept of the 'King's Touch' for Scrofula, a tradition that had carried on until Queen Anne in Britain (and one discussed by the French historian Marc Bloch). However, these are merely suggestions. Nonetheless, the findings of this paper are not negative enough in my view, to abandon the hypothesis altogether just yet.

---

[89] Quoted in Yourman, op. cit., p. 152.

Bibliography of Primary Sources Consulted:

For Mussolini:

Adami, Eugenio. *La lingua di Mussolini.* Modena: Societá Tipografica Modense, 1939.

Alicino, Michele. *Il Loro Genio; Capisaldi.* Rome, 1942.

Ardali, Paolo. *San Francesco e Mussolini.* Mantua: Paladno, n.d. [c. 1926].

Ardali, Paolo. *Mussolini e Pio XI.* Mantua: Paladno, 1926.

Ardemagni, Mirko. *Supremazia di Mussolini.* Milan: Treves, 1936.

Beltramelli, Antonio. *L'Uomo Nuovo.* ?Verona: Mondadori, 1923.

Caroli, Vito. *Al Duce.* Caserta, 1938.

Ciavarro, Nino. *Il Duce. Legenda dell'era Fascista. Poema.* Rome: Pinciana, 1937.

Coli, Waldo. *L'Eroe*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1940.

Consiglio, Alberto. *Mussolini.* Rome: Tummiretti, n.d.

Curatulo, Giacomo Emilio. *Soliloqui Colloqui.* Rome: Giovanni Bardi, 1942.

Forchielli, Giuseppe. *Mussolini e la Religione*. Tolentino: extract from the Annali della R. Univeristá di Macerata, Volume IX (c. 1933).

Gallian, Marcello. *Mussolini nei commenti della stampa del modno.* Busto Arsizio: federazione Provinciale dei Fasci di Combattimento di Varese, 1933.

Ghignoni, Almo. *Universalitá di Mussolini*. Milan: Ambrosiana, 1941.

Gravelli, Asvero. *Uno e Molti. Interpretazioni Spirituali di Mussolini.* Rome: Nuova Europa, 1938.

Missiroli, Mario. *Date a Cesare. La Politica Religiosa di Mussolini con documenti inediti.* Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1929.

Rauti, Pino. *1915-1945: Storia d'Italia nei Discorsi di Mussolini*. Rome: CEN, 1960.

Sarfatti, Margherita G. *Dux*. Verona: Mondadori, 1932.

For Pétain:

[Anonymous]. *Français: Apprenez ce que le Maréchal a fait pour vous depuis l'Armistice.* Vichy: L'Espoir Français, June 1941.

Benjamin, René. *Le Grand Homme Seul.* Paris: Plon, 1943.

Benjamin, René. *Le Marechal et son Peuple.* Paris: Plon, 1942.

Chevalier, Jacques. *France...Pétain m'a dit...Les Préceptes du Maréchal...Appel aux Jeunes.* Paris: La Chronique des Lettres Françaises, 1941.

Doriot, Jacques. *Je suis un homme du Maréchal.* Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1941.

D'Ornans, Noel. *Les Jeudis du Maréchal.* Paris: Bureau de Documentation du Maréchal, n.d.

Germain, José. *Notre Chef Pétain.* Paris: :a Technique du Livre, 1942.

Pétain, Philippe. *La France Nouvelle. Appels et Messages 17 Juin 1940 – 17 Juin 1941.* Montrouge, 1941.

[Pétain, Philippe]. *Les Paroles et les écrits de Maréchal Pétain 16 Juin 1940 – 1er Janvier 1942.* N.p.: Éditions de la Légion, n.d. [but presumably 1942].

Picavet, J. *La Révolutionn Nationale est un fait.* Amiens: Yvert et Cie, 1941.

Pourrat, Henri. *Le Chef Français.* Marseille: Robert Laffont, 1942.

Praviel, Armand. *Le Maréchal Pétain raconté á la Jeunesse de France.* Tolouse: Éditions du Clocher, 1941.

Suarez, Georges. *Le Maréchal Pétain.* Paris: Plon, 1940.

Vaucher, Robert. *Quand le Maréchal Pétain prend son baton de pelerin.* Paris, Marseille, 1941.

Bibliography of Secondary Sources:

Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. New York: the Seabury Press, 1978.

Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Kantorowtiz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies.* Princeton: PUP, 1997.

Lottman, Herbert R. Pétain: *Traitor or Hero?* New York: Morrow, 1985.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Yourman, Julius. *Propaganda Techniques Within Nazi Germany*. In: The Journal of Educational Sociology, 1939.