

CHAUCER AND THE MYSTICAL MARRIAGE IN MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

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FOR many years the political significance of Chaucer's works has been the subject of fierce controversy. Quite apart from the perennial debate over the problem of whether Chaucer favoured the anti-clericalism of Wyclif and his followers,¹ or was merely recording the common complaints of contemporary agitation,² no firm conclusion has yet been reached on the wider question: did Chaucer use his *Canterbury Tales* and other writings as vehicles for social and political propaganda? Innumerable attempts have been made, with varying degrees of success, to demonstrate that this was in fact the case. The most likely work is naturally enough the *Parlement of Foules*, and considerable industry and ingenuity has been expended upon its interpretation as a political analogy: although the value of this pursuit had been sharply rejected by the poem's most recent commentator as a wearisome and wasteful misdirection of energy.³ On the other hand, it has been generally recognized

¹ For an extreme statement of this position see H. Simon, "Chaucer a Wicliffite", *Chaucer Society Publications, Second Series*, ii (London, 1876), 227-92; and for the ensuing dispute H. Spies, "Chaucers religiose Grundstimmung," *Studien zur englischen Philologie*, I (1913), 626-47. More recently it has been suggested that Chaucer participated in the fourteenth-century attack on the friars from the standpoint of the traditional opposition of the secular clergy and monks to the mendicant orders: A. Williams, "Chaucer and the Friars", *Speculum*, xxviii (1953), 499-513. Special emphasis has been placed on the *Nun Priest's Tale* in this respect: C. Dahlberg, "Chaucer's Cock and Fox", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, liii (1954), 277-90; cf. M. J. Donovan, "The Moralité of the Nun Priest's Sermon", *ibid.* lii (1953), 498-509. The somewhat ambiguous conclusion that Chaucer was not attacking the mendicant orders but "a state of institutional decay" has been reached by A. L. Kellog and L. A. Haselmayer, "Chaucer's Satire of the Pardoner", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, lxvi (1951), 251-77.

² E.g. M. E. Thomas, *Medieval Skepticism and Chaucer* (New York, 1950).

³ J. A. W. Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules* (Oxford, 1957), p. 3.

that Chaucer's own Canterbury tale, the *Tale of Melibeus*, has political implications, and is little more than a device for the denunciation of the use of force and a plea for law and order.¹ Chaucer, so the argument runs, was clearly conscious of the troubled state of England under Richard II whilst writing the tale,² and in general the idea that he preferred to stand aloof from the great political, social and religious issues of his day has been vigorously contested.³ Weight is lent to this view by the fact that Chaucer himself occupied an official position which cannot have failed to make him aware of the principles at stake between King Richard and the opposition. As Clerk of the Works and a member of the royal household he was well situated to appreciate both the form which the disputes took, and the manner in which contemporary political writers viewed the nature of kingship. He was summoned to the Parliament of 1386, during the course of which the magnates threatened to depose the king "with the common consent of the whole realm"⁴; and no great stretch of imagination is required to see the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* as a thinly veiled admonition to the young king to govern with better counsel. He is not to rule by will and tyranny, but with the agreement of his lords in fulfilment of the coronation oath and the obligations of his

¹ W. W. Lawrence, "The Tale of Melibeus", *Essays and Studies in honor of Carleton Brown* (New York, 1940), pp. 100-10; G. Stillwell, "The Political Meaning of Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*", *Speculum*, xix (1944), 433-44.

² J. B. Severs, "The Source of Chaucer's *Melibeus*", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, l (1935), 92-99. It may be remarked that Chaucer's is the only version of the story of Melibeus which does not include a reference to "the sorry state of a nation burdened with a boy-sovereign", but Severs (p. 99, n. 14) supports the suggestion of J. S. P. Tatlock that the omission was deliberate in that to have included it would have made the political intent of the story too obvious for safety.

³ Notably by R. S. Loomis, "Was Chaucer a Laodicean?", *Essays and Studies in honor of Carleton Brown*, pp. 129-48.

⁴ M. Galway, "Geoffrey Chaucer, J.P. and M.P.", *Modern Language Review*, xxxvi (1941), 1-36; F. R. Scott, "Chaucer and the Parliament of 1386", *Speculum*, xviii (1943), 80-86. Cf. Henry Knighton, *Chronicon* (ed. J. R. Lumby, London, 1889-95), ii. 219: Gloucester and Thomas Arundel referred to the example of Edward II and warned the king that the nobility could "cum communi assensu et consensu populi regni ipsum de regali solio abrogare et propinquiorem sublimare" if he did not agree to dismiss the chancellor, Michael de la Pole, and the treasurer, Simon Burley.

office.¹ Although on the whole Chaucer appears to have kept the friendship of both parties, he seems to have assumed that the limitation of royal power was a basic requisite for good government. Specific evidence that he deliberately used some of his works for the purpose of political propaganda can only be sought from within the works themselves. But the circumstances in which he lived cannot have left him ignorant of the mounting opposition to the traditional ideal of absolute authority, which is so potent a factor in the political thought of the fourteenth century.

At first sight it is not surprising that no attempt has yet been made to add the *Wife of Bath's Tale* to the number of works with a supposedly political implication and purpose. The Wife of Bath herself does not look like a political thinker.² For all her piety and theological learning, she is a richly comic figure with her scarlet hose, her broad hips and her ruddy countenance —“ gat-tothed ” and surmounted by an enormous hat. Her main concern is apparently the art of making love, of which she has acquired no little experience : “ housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve ”, and she broadcasts her views on marriage in a most expressive and forthright manner. The Prologue to her Tale presents her with an opportunity to discuss the merits and demerits of her five husbands, and the qualities desirable in a sixth. And it is no surprise when the central theme of the Tale itself turns out to be a matrimonial problem :

In the days of the great King Arthur, one of his knights seizes a maiden “ by verray force ” and rapes her, subsequently being condemned to death by the king for this “ act of violence ” and “ oppressioun ”. He is however saved by the intervention of the queen and the ladies of the court on condition that he finds an

¹ See M. Schlauch, “ Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants ”, *Speculum*, xx (1945), 133-56 at p. 151. The earlier version (F) of the Prologue was probably written c. 1386, although the longer version (G) is usually ascribed to 1394 or later : H. S. Bennett, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1947), p. 63.

² It is probable, however, that the *Wife of Bath's Tale* was given to the Wife of Bath at a later stage in the composition of the Canterbury Tales. It replaced what is now the *Shipman's Tale*, and for this reason may well have been written fairly late in the reign of Richard II : see J. S. P. Tatlock, “ The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works ”, *Chaucer Society Publications, Second Series*, xxxvii (London, 1907), 205 f. ; W. W. Lawrence, “ Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale* ”, *Speculum*, xxxiii (1958), 56-68.

answer to the question of what it is that women most desire. Unless he produces the correct answer within a year and a day, his life will remain forfeit.

After much fruitless searching the knight, on the very last day, sees a dance of fairies in a wood. They vanish at his approach, but in their place he finds a dreadful hag, who gives him the answer to the problem: above all a woman wants sovereignty and mastery over her husband, so that he does not stand superior to her. The knight returns to the court, and is acquitted when he gives this answer.

But in return for this information the knight has contracted to marry the old woman, which he now does most unwillingly. In bed on the marriage night he cannot bring himself to embrace her—"his wyf looked so foule". And she, seeing his distress, begins to lecture him on the nature of true knighthood. He is told that this quality does not depend upon birthright and lineal descent from father to son, but is implanted by imitation of Christ's gentility. It is acquired by the grace of God, not by the simple act of gaining one's possessions.

The hag-wife then offers the knight two courses of conduct for their future life together. He may accept her as she is, and be certain of her fidelity; or he may have her young and fair, but run the risk of losing her to another. Which will he chose? The knight, in desperation, begs her to decide the matter herself, and agrees to submit to her decision. It is a recognition on his part that the sovereignty is now hers.

Finally, in return for this submission by her husband, the old woman promises to be an excellent, true and faithful wife. Next morning he is further rewarded by finding her transformed into a young and beautiful maiden, with whom he lives happily until death parts them.

It is one of the most successful and entertaining of Chaucer's stories, and has inevitably been seen as forming part of the whole group of tales concerned with the relationship between husband and wife. Partly for this reason most commentators have argued that Chaucer's prime purpose here was to expound the theme of courtly love. A good deal of attention has been concentrated upon the character of the queen who briefly intervenes in the story to save the hero from death. It has been suggested that she is Guenevre, bringing justice upon the knight who has broken the rules of her court of love.¹ Alternatively it has been maintained that Chaucer's object was simply to prolong the self-revelation of the Wife of Bath herself in the Prologue: she uses the Tale to describe the sort of husband she would

¹ G. R. Coffman, "Chaucer and Courtly Love Once More—*The Wife of Bath's Tale*", *Speculum*, xx (1945), 43-50; B. F. Huppé, "Rape and Woman's Sovereignty in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*", *Modern Language Notes*, lxxiii (1948), 378-81.

consider perfect.¹ Even Professor Margaret Schlauch, who has argued so convincingly that throughout his works Chaucer was concerned with the problem of tyranny, has dismissed the suggestion that the *Wife of Bath's Tale* is connected with the problem of political sovereignty, and has asserted that Chaucer was dealing with marriage simply in its ordinary sense.²

The later analogues would appear to bear out this non-political interpretation.³ Two of the main English analogues, the Arthurian ballad entitled *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* of c. 1450,⁴ and its fragmentary version *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*,⁵ are far too incoherent to have had a specifically political motive. Much the same may be said of the numerous French Grail romances which reflect one of the main elements of the story, the transformation of the hag.⁶ The closest parallel, however, the Tale of Florent in the *Confessio Amantis* of Chaucer's contemporary and friend, John Gower,⁷ does not suggest that a political aim is altogether implausible. As has recently been shown,⁸ Gower was devoted to the theme that a king is responsible for the good government of his realm. Both in the *Vox Clamantis* and the *Carmen super principum regimine* he urged that it was the sworn duty of a ruler, with the best available counsel, to lead his people towards harmony and a life of virtue. Unquestionably this advice was intended for the benefit of Richard II. If, as will be suggested, the *Wife of*

¹ F. G. Townshend, "Chaucer's Nameless Knight", *Modern Language Review*, xlix (1954), 1-4.

² M. Schlauch, "The Marital Dilemma in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, lxi (1946), 416-30.

³ For the sources and analogues of the *Wife of Bath's Tale* in general see further G. H. Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale: Its Sources and Analogues* (London, 1901); B. J. Whiting, "The *Wife of Bath's Tale*", *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (ed. W. F. Bryan and G. Dempster, Chicago, 1941), pp. 223-68; R. W. Ackerman, "English Rimed and Prose Romances", *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (ed. R. S. Loomis, Oxford, 1959), pp. 480-519 at pp. 501-5.

⁴ Ed. L. Sumner (Northampton, Mass., 1924).

⁵ Ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript* (London, 1867), i. 103-18.

⁶ For details see Maynadier, *op. cit.* pp. 65-79.

⁷ *Confessio Amantis*, i. 1396-1861 (ed. G. C. Macaulay, *The Complete Works of John Gower*, Oxford, 1901 f.), ii. 74-86.

⁸ G. R. Coffman, "John Gower, Mentor for Royalty: Richard II", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, lxi (1954), 953-64.

Bath's Tale was written for a similar purpose, it is understandable why both poets should have employed what is basically the same story. Further support for this political intention may be found by reference to the earlier versions of the story, whose ramifications are buried deep in the folk literature of the early medieval period. Although there may be no direct link with Chaucer, it is well known that the idea of the hero who marries or embraces a hag and sees her transformed into a beautiful maiden is a common feature of several Irish folk tales. These are preserved in various historical, mythological and genealogical compilations intended to depict the early history of Ireland, notably the early eleventh-century *Dindsenchas* included in the mid-twelfth-century Book of Leinster, and the late fourteenth-century Book of Ballymote.¹ In these tales the hag is in reality a *fée* or goddess who represents the sovereignty of Ireland and is a personification of the kingdom. The embrace or marriage of the hero (usually a prince) with the hag secures for him and his heirs the right to govern Ireland.² As a personification of the kingdom and its sovereignty the hag-goddess often bears the name of the kingdom itself. In Ireland she is therefore Ériu, Scota, or Macha, although she may be found as Banba, Fodla, Medb, Ana, or Finnabair, and later becomes King Arthur's Guenevre. Similarly in Wales she appears as Lôgroys, since Lloegr was the Welsh name for Britain. In due course she is found as Gawain's bride Orgelûse de Logres in Wolfram's *Parzival*, who brings Gawain the sovereignty of Galloway; and as Queen Orguelleuse in Chretien's *Perceval*, who appears to Gawain first as a hag and

¹ For details Maynadier, *op. cit.* pp. 25-42; A. C. L. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, Mass., 1943), pp. 210-23.

² Brown, *op. cit.* pp. 325-38. The direct reliance of the *Wife of Bath's Tale* on the Irish stories has been accepted by Maynadier and Brown; also by J. L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Gawain* (London, 1897) and J. R. Reinhard, *The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance* (Halle, 1933), pp. 346 f. Arguments against this have been put forward by Schlauch, "The Marital Dilemma", pp. 425-7, largely on the basis of points made by J. W. Beach, *The Loathly Lady: A Study in the Popular Elements of the Wife of Bath's Tale* (Harvard dissertation, 1907). But see now S. Eisner, *A Tale of Wonder: A Source Study of the Wife of Bath's Tale* (Wexford, 1957), who suggests that Chaucer's tale derives from the Irish stories by way of France. Eisner thinks, however (p. 49), that the allegorical character of the hag-wife was lost in the process of transition.

then as a great beauty.¹ The theme may be traced back to the remote antiquity of Celtic folklore. Many of the princes mentioned in the Irish tales are named Lughaid, and are merely faded versions of the great god Lug (Lug mac Eithne).² Thus one of the oldest of the stories, the Prophetic Ecstasy of the Phantom (*Baile in Scáil*), composed prior to 1056, is a barely Christianized pagan myth, in which the sovereignty of Ireland is presented as a crowned woman married to the sun-god Lug, the king of the other-world.³ The recurrent notion that the goddess is a grey-white witch, who becomes a beautiful maiden after the kiss or marriage of the god-king, relates to a distant legend in which she personifies Ireland transformed by the embrace of the sun from the barrenness of winter to the green fertility of spring. In origin it is variant of the idea of the marriage of heaven and earth which is so common in primitive mythology.⁴ As such there is nothing essentially Celtic about it, and the myth is comparable to the Greek idea of the marriage of Zeus to the earth-goddess Europa. It is part of a universal mythological pattern, and it is not surprising that stories similar to the Irish tales appear all over Europe as, for example, in the Norse sagas,⁵ and in Germanic poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁶ Further afield a parallel may be found in the Indian myth of the

¹ Brown, *op. cit.* pp. 164-5, 198. See further L. A. Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (Boston, Mass., 1903); R. S. Loomis, "Morgain La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses", *Speculum*, xx (1945), 183-203.

² E. MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin, 1921), p. 61.

³ For details and further literature see R. S. Loomis, "The Fier Baiser in Mandeville's Travels, Arthurian Romance, and Irish Saga", *Studi Medievali*, xvii (1951), 104-13 at pp. 109-10; "The Origin of the Grail Legends", *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, pp. 274-94 at p. 282; P. MacCana, "Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess", *Études Celtiques*, vii (1955-6), 76-114, 356-413; viii (1958-9), 58-65.

⁴ R. S. Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York, 1927), pp. 221 f. It has also been suggested that the hag represents night, which is transformed into the fairness of day by the kiss of the sun: H. Kern, "De Bronnen van *The Wife of Bath's Tale* en daarmee verwante Vertellingen", *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 4de Reeks, ix (Amsterdam, 1909), 346-66.

⁵ See Maynadier, *op. cit.* pp. 49-54.

⁶ See Maynadier, *op. cit.* pp. 162-91, for the Middle High German poem *Wolfdietrich* (c. 1225) of Bavarian or Austrian provenance in which a hideous female offers the hero a kingdom in return for marrying her, and subsequently

goddess Sri, who had both fair and foul aspects, personified the spirit of sovereignty or the right to rule, and married the king-hero.¹ In China during the thirteenth century a story was current of the king who slept every night with a serpent, which took the form of a woman and personified the lordship of the land—until the night that she failed to unite with him and he died.² Whilst other analogies may be found in Turkish, Sanskrit and South African tales.³

As the early myths developed into what may, in modern terminology, be described as recognizably political thought, the idea that a ruler gains possession of his sovereignty by a mystical marriage to his state, and thereby acquires an aura of divinity, comes to form part of a permanent tradition. In the Graeco-Roman world the marriage metaphor was in constant use. Thus in the late fifth century B.C. the playwright Aristophanes had described the sovereignty of Athens as a young woman who was the bride of Alcibiades.⁴ In the following century Aristotle had compared the government of a politic or free state to the relationship between man and wife.⁵ In the first century of the

becomes beautiful. This bears some resemblance to the Swiss poem *Lanzelet* (1194-1203) of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven (ed. K. A. Hahn, Frankfurt, 1845), 7837-8025, in which the hero gains a kingdom by kissing a maiden who has been transformed into a dragon. This story was later circulated in Mandeville.

¹ J. C. De, "On the Hindu Conception of Sovereignty", *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta, 1937), iii. 258; A. K. Coomaraswamy, "The Loathly Bride", *Speculum*, xx (1945), 391-404. The Indo-Germanic basis of the Irish tales has been discussed by A. H. Krappe, "The Sovereignty of Erin", *American Journal of Philology*, lxxiii (1942), 444-54.

² P. Pelliot "Mémoires sur les coûtures du Cambodge", *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, ii (1902), 145.

³ W. A. Clouston, "Originals and Analogues", *Chaucer Society Publications* (London, 1887), pp. 483 f.; and in general see S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Helsinki, 1932-6).

⁴ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, 1706-65 (ed. B. J. Rogers, London, 1937), ii. 285-9. See further the historical survey of the use of this metaphor in E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 212-23.

⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, i. 12, 1259a-b. Note also his comparison of the rule of an aristocracy to that of a husband, *Ethics*, viii. 10, 1160b-1161a. The comparison passed direct to the later Middle Ages through Aquinas' commentary: *Comm. in Pol.*, 1 lect. 10 para. 152, "Vir principatur mulieri politico principatu, id est, sicut aliquis qui eligitur in rectorem civitati praeest".

Christian era the Roman poet Lucan styled Cato the *maritus urbi*, and the title was copied by several Roman writers before being handed on to the medieval period.¹ But much more influential for medieval writers was the Biblical tradition. Throughout the Old Testament the chosen people of Israel appears in the guise of the bride of God, as for example in the Song of Songs, where it may be noticed that Israel, the bride of Solomon, has both fair and foul aspects.² Through his marriage to Israel the ruler of the chosen people becomes the earthly mouthpiece and instrument of God, the community's divine husband. This is particularly marked with the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea, the latter referring to Israel as Jacob's wife³; and at a later date Philo was to explain that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was a symbol of sovereignty and imperishable virtue, to whose will Abraham was bound to submit.⁴ In the New Testament this is then developed into the familiar theological doctrine that the whole Church is the *sponsa Christi*, the earthly community being united to the divine power of God through the agency of the head.⁵ The kingship of Christ is matched by the regal nature of the *Ecclesia universalis*: as his queen, *regina mundi dignissima*,⁶ she is the immediate source of the divine justice and righteousness inherent in the heavenly king, and has therefore an

¹ Lucan, *De bello civili*, ii. 388 (ed. J. D. Duff, London, 1928), p. 84, "urbi pater urbique maritus"; cf. Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* p. 214.

² *Cant. cantic.* i. 4-5: "Nigra sum sed formosa . . . quia decoloravit me sol."

³ Hos. xii. 12: "Fugit Iacob . . . et servivit Israel in uxorem, et in uxorem servavit." Cf. ii. 2f.; Isa. lxi. 10; liv. 5; Jer. iii. 14.

⁴ Gen. xxi. 12: "Omnia quae dixerit tibi Sara, audi vocem eius." See Philo, *De cherubim*, 7 (*Opera Omnia*, ed. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker, London, 1929 f., ii. 12); also 6 and 41 (ii. 10 and 32); *Legum allegoria*, ii. 82 (i. 276); iii. 244 (i. 466); *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, 59 (iii. 242). Note the distinction which Philo emphasizes in these passages between Sarah as Sarai, who expresses her own will, and as Sarah, under which name she expresses the generic sovereignty and virtue of God. The change of name here corresponds to the change in Abraham from his personal capacity as Abram to his role as Abraham, the divinely appointed *pater gentium*. Cf. Gen. xvii. 6-7.

⁵ E.g. 2 Cor. xi. 2; Ephes. v. 23-33; Rev. xix. 7.

⁶ Bonaventure, *Sermo in Epiphania*, I (ed. Quaracchi), x. 147; also x. 243, 245; and Aquinas, *In Ps. xlv. 1, xlv. 7* (ed. Parma), xiv. 319, 324. Cf. Innocent III, *De quadripartita specie nuptiarum* (P.L., ccxvii. 962), "Regina ergo, id est Ecclesia, quia sub te [scil. Christo.] regit et regnat." For further examples see J. Leclercq, *L'idée de la royauté du Christ au moyen âge* (Paris, 1959),

absolute right to wield sovereignty over the faithful members of the Christian body. Here again the fair and foul nature of the society is preserved: medieval theologians stressed the Pauline theory that Christ as *caput Ecclesiae* would take the Church, his bride, in all her foulness and transform her in glory so that she might become without blemish.¹

The idea of Christ's marriage to the *Ecclesia universalis* as a symbol of his headship passed to the bishops as governors of the early Church, and patristic sources give many examples of the bishop's marriage to the Universal Church in general and to his own diocese in particular. Thus Cyprian speaks of the bishop as one who is married to his see, or condemns schismatic bishops for adultery—for stealing the see from the true husband to whom it had been united.² Here, it may be noticed, the analogy is part and parcel of the theory that the bishops were the vicars of Christ, his human representatives on earth.³ The wearing of a ring to symbolize the bishop's marriage to his church is recorded by Isidore of Seville in the early seventh century, and by the ninth and tenth centuries this practice had become general in the Frankish West.⁴ The episcopal consecration takes on all

¹ Ephes. v. 27. See, for example, the elaboration of this by St. Bernard, *Sermo XXV in Cantica*, 8 (P.L. clxxxiii. 902); and St. Bonaventure, *Dominica infra octavum Epiphaniae: Sermo i* (ed. Quaracchi, 1882-1902), ix. 172.

² As in his denunciation of Novatian's ordination as bishop of Rome in opposition to Cornelius (251-3): *Ep. LII ad Antonianum*, 24 (P.L. iii. 790): "Nisi si episcopus tibi videtur, qui episcopo in ecclesia a sedecim co-episcopi facto, adulter atque extraneus, episcopus fieri a desertoribus per ambitum nititur"; *Ep. LXVII ad Stephanum*, 2 (P.L. iii. 994): "qui . . . profanum altare erigere, adulteram cathedram collocare, et sacrilega contra verum sacerdotum sacrificia offerre tentaverit". Cf. 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 6.

³ Cyprian, *Ep. LV ad Cornelium*, 5 (P.L. iii. 803): ". . . unus in ecclesia ad tempus sacerdos, et ad tempus iudex vice Christi"; *Ep. LXIII ad Caecilium*, 14 (P.L. iv. 386): "Ille sacerdos vice Christi vere fungitur, qui id quod Christus fecit imitatur." See also Basil, *Constitutiones monasticae*, 22 (ed. J. Garnier Paris, 1839), i. 818; Ambrose, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad I Corinthios*, xi. 8-10 (P.L. xvii. 240); Augustine, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, 127 (P.L. xxxv. 2386).

⁴ Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ii. 5 (P.L. lxxxiii. 784): "Datur et anulus propter signum pontificalis honoris vel signaculum secretorum". The ring is generally described as a *signum fidei* which, according to the pontificals of Aurillac and Sens, unites the bishop to his bride, the church: C. A. Bouman, *Sacring and Crowning* (Groningen, 1957), pp. 129-31, and here further literature. Note

the characteristics of a marriage ceremony : and in the twelfth century this similarity is elaborated at great length by the canonists commenting on the texts of Gratian's *Decretum*. Huguccio of Pisa, perhaps the most famous and influential of the Decretists, and the master of Innocent III, writes that the election of a bishop, and his consent to the election, creates a *matrimonium spirituale* by which the bishop is said to be the husband of his church and its members, and the church his wife. This is repeated in the *glossa ordinaria* on the *Decretum* by Johannes Teutonicus¹; it is found in a statement of Innocent III embodied in the *Decretales*; and again the *glossa ordinaria* to this, by Bernardus Parmensis, accepts the idea.² The canonists' emphasis on the mutual consent of the bishop and his electors as the binding act, rather than the election or consecration themselves, reflects the principle in Roman law that consent rather than intercourse makes a valid marriage contract.³

This notion is also applied to the Pope in the normal course of things as bishop of Rome. But here it acquires a special significance. From at least the fifth century the papacy had more and more occasion to emphasize its nature as a universal monarchy. The growth of this conception need not detain us here. Suffice to say that by the time of the great resurgence of Gen. xxxviii. 18, 25 ; and also xxiv. 22 f., in which Rebecca is given a golden ear-ring as a sign of her divine election as Isaac's wife. Cf. *Cant. cantic.* viii. 6, where Israel as a bride wishes to be the signet ring on the hand of her spouse.

¹ Huguccio, *ad D.* 63 c. 10 : " Item electio dicitur vinculum quod ex mutuo consensu, scilicet eligentium et electi, contrahitur inter eos matrimonium spirituale, ut ille iam dicatur sponsus istius ecclesiae vel istorum clericorum et haec ecclesia sponsa ipsius " ; Johannes Teutonicus, *ad D.* 63 c. 10, sv. *relatio*: for this, and other examples, see Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* p. 212, n. 55. In England in the late fourteenth century this union was represented by impaling the personal arms of a bishop with those of his see, the practice later adopted for husband and wife. The arms of the see occupy the dexter (male) side, which is heraldically correct in that the continuity lies in the husband's rather than the wife's line. Prior to this the same thing was represented by dimidiation.

² Innocent III, *Decretales*, 1. vii. 2 ; Bernardus Parmensis, *ad* 1. vii. 2, sv. *Inter corporalia* and *fortius* (Paris, 1519), fols. 61^{vb}-62^{ra}. The required consent is here stated to be that of papal confirmation.

³ *Dig.* L. xvii. 30 : " Nuptias non concubitus sed consensus facit." For the application of this principle in patristic and medieval theology see J. M. Aubert, *Le droit romain dans l'oeuvre de Saint Thomas* (Paris, 1955), p. 44 ; and in general J. Dauvillier, *Le mariage dans le droit classique de l'Église* (Paris, 1933).

papal power in the eleventh century the position of the Pope as the universal head of all Christians is expressed by the view that he is the *sponsus Ecclesiae*, that is, husband not only of the Roman church but of the universal body itself.¹ Hence his position as the universal husband is in every way analogous to that of Christ, and it was no coincidence that this period saw the development of the papacy towards a vicariate of Christ in the fullest sense of the term. By the twelfth century the Pope, *vice Christi*, commonly figures as the universal husband. In 1198, for instance, Innocent III devotes the whole of his third consecration sermon to this theme. There is, he says, amongst other sorts of marriage, a spiritual union between Christ and his Church. Since the power of Christ now devolves upon the Pope by virtue of the Petrine commission, the same may be said of the Roman pontiff: "Ergo, qui habet sponsam, sponsus est. An non ego sponsus sum?"—a husband of the Roman church which is mother and mistress of all the other faithful, the *cuncti fideles*, and thus of the whole universal community of believers.² It was partly in conscious imitation of this idea that from the beginning of the fourteenth century the Roman lawyers began to make frequent references to the emperor as the *maritus reipublicae*, whose election features as a marriage ceremony in which he is united to the empire as if to a wife. Soon the same idea was becoming commonplace in the national

¹ In c. 1053 Cardinal Humbert had maintained that the primacy of the Roman church followed from the marriage of Christ to Rome, his virgin spouse: see his *De sancta Romana ecclesia*, ed. P. Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1929), ii. 131. Cf. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore*, xvi (P.L. ccxvii. 385), ". . . Ecclesiae, quae uxor est Simonis [scil. Petri], sacramentalite sibi coniugio copulata". The same idea is applied to the emperor by Dante: he is the husband of Rome, and without an emperor the city is widowed, *Purgatorio*, vi. 112-14. Similarly Petrarch urged Charles IV in 1351 to occupy Italy "pro consolatione urbis Romae, desolatissimae sponsae tuae", *Petrarchas Briefwechsel mit deutschen Zeitgenossen* (ed. K. Burdach and P. Piur, Berlin, 1933), pp. 4, 17.

² *Sermo in consecratione pontificis maximi*, iii (P.L. ccxvii. 662). Then follows a list of wives from the Old Testament who prefigured the Roman church in this respect. He continues: "Cum hac mihi sacramentale coniugium, cum hac mihi commercium nuptiale. Mira res, qui coelibatum promisi, contraxi coniugium, sed istud coniugium non impedit coelibatum, nec fecunditas huius coniugis tollit virginitatis castitatem." Cf. John iii. 29.

kingdoms : the king, by his coronation, appears as the *sponsus regni*, whilst the kingdom itself is personified as his bride. Eventually the French coronation order of the mid-sixteenth century came to contain a specific statement that the ring in the royal regalia denoted that the king solemnly married his kingdom ; and as late as 1603 King James I of England told his first Parliament that he was the husband and the whole island his lawful wife, adding, significantly, that no man should separate what God had joined together.¹

It may, however, be as well to emphasize at this point that the development of the analogy in lay thought after 1300 does not, as is sometimes suggested, represent the sudden transformation of a purely theological concept into a specifically political idea. In the first place traces of the same idea can be found with lay writers long before the fourteenth century.² In fact it is an essential feature of John of Salisbury's conception of kingship as a public office : and since Chaucer is known to have been familiar with the *Policraticus*,³ it may be worthwhile to consider this more closely. John's famous comparison of the political community to the natural body of a man was designed to underline his point that the community must of its very nature possess a mystical, or legal, personality of its own. The subjects of a *respublica* were to be regarded collectively as a *corpus quoddam*⁴ precisely because they could be considered to form *una persona* in law. Accordingly, John argued, it is possible for the ruler to represent the community only by identifying himself with this corporate personality. Before all else

¹ For details see Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, loc. cit.

² For example, the Anglo-Norman Anonymous maintained that the universal community was properly termed *regina* rather than *sacerdotissa*, since the king, not the Pope, was her husband in place of Christ : *Tractatus*, iv (*M.G.H., Lib. de Lit.*, iii. 662). A still older use of the idea is reflected in the seventh-century story, related by Aldhelm, that Constantine saw a vision of an old woman who changed into a fair maiden and personified Byzantium : see his *De virginitate* c. 25, and *Carmen de virginitate* in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. R. Ehwald, *M.G.H., Auctores Antiquissimi*, xv (Berlin, 1919), 258-9, 378-9.

³ R. A. Pratt, "A Note on Chaucer and the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury", *Modern Language Notes*, lxx (1950), 234-6, and here further literature.

⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, v. 2 (ed. C. C. J. Webb, Oxford, 1909), i. 282-3.

the duties of kingship oblige him to act as the physical embodiment of the realm: "universitatis subiectorum se *personam gerere*".¹ So complete must this identification be, that it may be termed a marriage, in which two personalities, the public personality of the kingdom and the private personality of the man, assume the nature of one. As husband of the kingdom² he ceases to be himself at all,³ and becomes instead the *persona publica* in every respect. Unless this is done the potential capacity of the community to provide its members with the right way of life cannot be realized—or, to use John's phraseology, the *respublica* is a *corpus iustitiae* which cannot be animated without a prince acting as its image.⁴ Correspondingly the prince himself cannot fulfil this office unless his every act is permeated through and through with the *amor iustitiae*, and his private wishes subordinated entirely to the requirements of his public function.⁵ But although John of Salisbury's description of the "spirit" of the *respublica* as inanimate justice contains the germ of the later theory which sees the State as no more than a juridical abstraction, John remained firmly in the medieval ecclesiastical tradition when he equated this *persona publica* with God himself. Justice was an expression of God and, as *minister iustitiae*, the king became the image of the divine majesty on earth.⁶ And whilst it seems probable that John was writing

¹ *Policraticus*, iv. 3 (i. 241); iv. 2 (i. 238); "et in eo personam publicam gerit". Cf. Cicero, *De officiis*, i. 34; "Est igitur proprium munus magistratus intelligere se gerere personam civitatis."

² *Policraticus*, iv. 3 (i. 241): "subiectis itaque pater sit et maritus". According to E. H. Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second, 1194-1250* (London, 1957), p. 220, Frederick would converse with his kingdom of Apulia as with a living person, a beloved woman with whom he felt at home—which he compares with the statement of Napoleon: "I have only one passion and one love: France. I sleep with her, never has she foresaken me."

³ *Policraticus*, iv. 5 (i. 250): "cum nec ipse suus sit sed subditorum".

⁴ *Policraticus*, iii. 15 (i. 233); iv. 2 (i. 238); "Iudex etenim incorruptus est cuius sententia ex contemplatione assidua imago est aequitatis. Publicae ergo utilitatis minister et aequitatis servus est princeps."

⁵ *Policraticus*, iv. 2 (i. 238): "qui non timore penae sed amore iustitiae aequitatem colat, reipublicae procuret utilitatem, et in omnibus aliorum commoda privatae praeferat voluntati."

⁶ *Policraticus*, iv. 1 (i. 235-6): ". . . quippe cum nec voluntas eius iustitiae inventatur adversa. Est ergo, ut eum plerique definiunt, princeps

with the provincial *universitas* of England specifically in mind, he made it abundantly clear that the same principles were to apply in the greater *respublica* of the *orbis latinus*, in other words, in the *Ecclesia* which comprised the universal body of the faithful.¹ In this connection there was no particular novelty attached to John of Salisbury's use of the marriage concept to illustrate a theory of government. As employed by the medieval papacy this notion was already a thoroughly political one, and for the very reason that the medieval Church was itself a State, and possessed all the appurtenances of a civil society. That medieval theologians referred to it as the kingdom of God should not obscure the fact that it was understood to be a political institution. It was simply the empire of the Romans in Christian form (*societas christiana, Ecclesia universalis or imperium Romanorum*). Moreover it was, according to contemporary theory, the only institution fully worthy of the title. As James of Viterbo declared at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, no community is a true State (*respublica*) except the ecclesiastical one,² and this was further apparent in that it was legally held to embrace all other kingdoms and principalities.³ Its membership was not limited to the priesthood alone, nor to the laity merely in their capacity as believers: it contained all Christians, even

potestas publica et in terris quaedam divinae maiestatis imago"; vi. 26 (ii. 80), "Quis ergo in imaginem Dei, qui est princeps, malitia praesumentem impune offendit?" The influence of the *Policraticus* on the Roman lawyers of the fourteenth century is well known: see W. Ullmann, "The Influence of John of Salisbury on the Medieval Italian Jurists", *English Historical Review*, lix (1944), 384-93.

¹ The point is well made by W. Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages* (London, 1955), pp. 420-6.

² James of Viterbo (d. 1308), *De regimine christiano*, i. 4, ed. H.-X. Arquillière, *Le plus ancien traité de l'église* (Paris, 1926), p. 127: "Nulla communitas dicitur vera respublica nisi ecclesiastica, quia in ea sola est vera iustitia et vera utilitas et vera communio"; cf. the *Somnium viridarii* (c. 1376-7), i. 53, ed. M. Goldast, *Monarchia Sancti Romani Imperii* (Hanover, 1612), i. 75, "summus principatus et solus in universo terrestri . . . est principatus Ecclesiae".

³ E.g. Augustinus Triumphus (d. 1328), *Summa de potestate ecclesiastica* (Rome, 1584), i. 6 ad 1, p. 10; "Quinta est communitas totius orbis, quae constituitur ex omnibus regnis. . . . Sed in quinta communitate praeest summus pontifex quia . . . omnes qui sunt in toto orbe sint sub potestate papae"; cf. xxii. 3, p. 131, "principatus mundi".

theoretically all men,¹ without distinction, and its monarch claimed jurisdiction over every aspect of life. It was in every sense what fourteenth-century writers termed a *politia christiana*, a Christian body politic.² Although the marriage of the pope to this universal community was described as a *coniugium spirituale*, a mystical union, there is no reason to suggest that the marriage metaphor had lost any of its political character for having been Christianized.

Nevertheless the specifically political character of the medieval Church does not in any way detract from its nature as a divine institution. It was the recognition of its fundamentally divine quality which led to the further assumption that its government must itself bear the hallmarks of divine guidance, that, in short, its ruler must be credited with the possession not only of a *plenitudo potestatis* but also of a *plenitudo deitatis*.³ Hence the repeated assertion of thirteenth- and fourteenth-

¹ E.g. Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xxiii. 1 ad 3, p. 137: "Esse de Ecclesia potest intelli tripliciter: primo iudicaria potestate, et sic omnes sunt de Ecclesia, boni et mali, fideles et infideles. Quia sicut omnes habent unum Deum, sic omnes de iure debent habere unum pastorem qui vicem eius gerat . . . et sic omnes pagani infideles possunt dici de Ecclesia"; cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III. viii. 3 ad 1: "Dicendum quod illi qui sunt infideles, etsi actu non sint de Ecclesia, sunt tamen de Ecclesia in potentia." For Innocent IV's claim to jurisdiction over non-Christian kingdoms see W. Ullmann, *Medieval Papalism* (London, 1949), pp. 121-36. This recalls St. Bernard's teaching that Christ had given Peter the government (*gubernandum*) of the whole earth (*totum saeculum*), which was adopted by Innocent III: Bernard, *De consideratione* II. ii. 8 (*P.L.* clxxxii. 752); Innocent III, *Reg.* II. ccix (*P.L.* ccxiv. 759).

² E.g. Alvarus Pelagius (d. 1353), *De planctu Ecclesiae*, c. 40, ed. J. T. Rocaberti, *Bibliotheca Maxima Pontifica* (Rome, 1698), iii. 60; Hermannus de Schildiz (d. 1357), *Contra haereticos*, c. 3, ed. R. Scholz, *Unbekannte Kirchenpolitische Streitschriften aus der Zeit Ludwigs des Bayern, 1327-1354* (Rome, 1911-14), ii. 133. See further my remarks in *Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (Louvain, 1961), 33-49.

³ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xix. 2, p. 118. For *plenitudo divinitatis* see Tholemy of Lucca (d. 1326-7), *Determinatio compendiosa de iurisdictione imperii*, c. 6, ed. M. Krammer (Hanover and Leipzig, 1909), p. 17. Cf. *Coloss.* ii. 9. Note also Innocent III's description of the papal ring: *De sacro altaris mysterio*, i. 46 (*P.L.* ccxvii. 790-1): "Annulus aureus et rotundus perfectionem donorum eius significat, quae sine mensura Christus accepit, quoniam in eo plenitudo divinitatis habitat corporaliter. . . . Quod et *visibilis* pontifex imitatur"; cf. i. 34 (787); "Unionem ergo ineffabilem, copulamque indissolubilem, quibus Verbi divinitas se carni nostrae coniunxit . . . ita divinitas mundum gubernat."

century writers that the Pope was a truly divine being. Logical as this process might be, it did, however, raise the question of the exact manner in which the ruler, who was after all a mere man, acquired his divine status. And it was here that the marriage metaphor was called into service. As Innocent III had implied in his consecration sermon, the Pope was united both to the apostolic see, the *ecclesia Romana*, and to the whole community of believers. There is a single marriage, but one in which he is joined in the closest possible relationship to both his own see and the universal society itself. In this connection the Roman church can be taken to mean an office, more precisely, the office of the head of the community. Innocent himself uses the term *officium* to describe it, and relates that its possession gives him the *facultates regendi*, the rightfully held powers of rulership. It is the office of supreme governor, and only by the assumption of this office, by his marriage to the apostolic see, does the individual Pope gain possession of the governmental power which is embodied in the office, and which qualifies him to act as *vicarius Christi*.¹ As might be expected, Innocent describes the power contained in this office as being that conferred by Christ upon St. Peter : it is the power to bind and loose anyone and anything, to create kingdoms and destroy them.² In fact it is nothing less than the power of God himself : to quote Augustinus Triumphus of Ancona, one of the most outstanding defenders of papal sovereignty in the early fourteenth century, " Idem est dominium Dei et papae ".³ The

¹ *P.L.* ccxvii. 663. The use of the Roman *sedes* to signify the papal office corresponds to the very ancient device of using the throne as an emblem of the royal office : on this and for further references see T. Silverstein, " The Throne of the Emperor Henry in Dante's Paradise and the Medieval Conception of Christian Kingship ", *Harvard Theological Review*, xxxii (1939), 115-29 at pp. 115-16.

² Matt. xvi. 19 ; Jer. i. 10. For Innocent's emphasis upon the unrestricted nature of papal jurisdiction see his comment on the first of these texts : " Dominus inquit ad Petrum et in Petro dixit ad successores ipsius, ' Quodcunque ligaveris super terram etc. ', Matt. xvi., nihil excipiens qui dixit ' Quodcunque ' ", *Prima Collectio Decretalium Innocentii III*, ii. 2 (*P.L.* ccxvi. 1185 = *Decretales*, I. xxxiii. 6).

³ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xlv. 2, p. 247 ; cf. ix. 1 *prop.* 1, p. 71 : " una est potestas Christi secundum quod Deus et papae ". As much had been claimed by Innocent III in his repeated statements that only the Pope could

Pope, he explains, is the agent of Christ, and it is therefore appropriate that he should wield the power of Christ himself. By marrying the Petrine see, the Pope virtually marries Christ : he becomes a man united to a divine power. Since the effect of a marriage is to make two persons one being, there is henceforth to be no distinction between Christ and his vicar. They are, through the office of headship, one and the same person.¹

So much is a commonplace of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century political theology. What is, however, of particular interest here is that union with the papal office is seen to involve a personal submission on the part of the newly elected Pope. The *electus* must subdue his human nature, his personal identity and his own desires to the sovereign power of the office. He must, so to speak, lose himself in his function. He must efface his human capacity as an individual in order to achieve identity with Christ himself. To marry Christ, to bring about a true *imitatio Christi*, means a denial of the ruler's natural self in order to gain, through his office, a divine self. It is at once a submission to, and an acquisition of, the sovereignty of Christ. Reflecting upon this in 1206 Innocent III had described it as a virtual rebirth. The Pope becomes a new being, and this change in his nature is signified by the change from his personal to his

depose a bishop, since God alone could dissolve a spiritual marriage : e.g. *Reg.* I. cccxxvi ; I. cccxxxv (*P.L.* ccxiv. 292 ; 306-7) ; cf. *Decretales*, I. vii. 2. See further J. Rivière, "Le Pape est-il 'un Dieu' pour Innocent III ?", *Revue des sciences religieuses*, II (1922), 447-51 ; "Sur l'expression 'Papa-Deus' au moyen âge", *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, II (Rome, 1924), 278-89 ; M. Maccarrone *Vicarius Christi* (Rome, 1952), especially pp. 109-14. For a more detailed discussion of the whole subject see my forthcoming study *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1962).

¹ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, III. 7, p. 35 : "omnes papae qui fuerunt a principio et erunt usque in finem mundi non sunt nisi unus papa, quia habent omnes illud idem officium" ; III. 8 ad 2, p. 36, "omnes papae non sunt nisi unus papa, puta Christus". For details of Augustinus see B. Ministeri, *De Vita et Operibus Augustini de Ancona*, O.E.S.A. (* 1328), (Rome, 1953) ; and for his conception of papal power, J. Rivière, "Une première 'Somme' du pouvoir pontifical : le pape chez Augustin d'Ancone", *Revue des sciences religieuses*, XVIII (1938), pp. 149-83 ; R. van Gerven, *De wereldlijke macht van den paus volgens Augustinus Triumphus* (Antwerp and Nijmegen, 1947) ; and M. J. Wilks, "Papa est nomen iurisdictionis: Augustinus Triumphus and the Papal Vicariate of Christ", *Journal of Theological Studies*, VIII (1957), 71-92, 256-71.

papal name.¹ From now on, as Gregory VII had put it, *indubitanter efficitur sanctus*: he becomes a holy person,² and receives a *character angelicus*.³ He is, to use Innocent IV's phraseology, the *successor Christi*, a new Christ,⁴ and in the following century the theologians vied with one another to find suitable means of expounding this doctrine. Amongst many others, Augustinus Triumphus declares that to enter the presence of the Pope is to enter the court of God, where the Pope, sitting on the throne of God, speaks with the voice of God.⁵ Alternatively

¹ *Reg.* ix. cxxxvi (*P.L.* ccxv. 955): "quasi mutatum in virum alterum . . . sicut et nos illud indubitanter vocabulam retinemus quod nobis fuit in suscepto apostolicae servitutis officio Domino disponente mutatum". In 1361 Petrarch declared that Charles IV had been reborn into the celestial *patria* by his imperial coronation: "iam non patria tua est ex quo primum ad imperium pervenisti: aliamque nascendo atque aliam renascendo patriam es adeptus", Burdach-Piur, *op. cit.* n. 22, p. 105. For the origins of the idea of the *renovatio in imaginem Dei* in Christian thought see now G. B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

² See the *Dictatus papae*, c. 23: "Quod Romanus pontifex, si canonice fuerit ordinatus, meritis beati Petri indubitanter efficitur sanctus": ed. E. Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII* (Berlin, 1955), i. 207; and the discussion of this by W. Ullmann, *Studi Gregoriani*, vi (1959), 229-64. By the fourteenth century this had developed into the maxim that the office either receives a saint or creates one: e.g. Aegidius Romanus (d. 1316), *De ecclesiastica potestate*, i. 2, ed. R. Scholz (Weimar, 1929), p. 9, "Ideo dicimus de illa sede quod vel sanctum recipit vel sanctum facit".

³ Augustinus Triumphus even puts him above the status of an angel: *Summa*, xix. 2, p. 118: "Tenet enim supremum gradum non solum super homines sed etiam super angelos"; xviii. 1, p. 113: "Maior est iurisdictio papae quam cuiuslibet angeli . . . quia super coelum et terram iurisdictionem accepit." For the development of the same idea in lay thought see references given by Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* p. 8, n. 4; p. 56, n. 30.

⁴ E. Winkelmann, *Acta Imperii Inedita Saeculi XIII et XIV* (Innsbruck, 1885), ii. 697, "a Christi vicario, successore videlicet Christi". The term was subsequently used by Hostiensis and most of the fourteenth-century papalists. The idea that the pope becomes a substitute for the heavenly head of the *Ecclesia* had already been used by Innocent III: e.g. *Reg.* vii. i (*P.L.* ccxv, 279): "id est in veri pastoris officio et potestatis ecclesiasticae plenitudine imitare, quia eum in officio vicarium sibi substituit Dominus et in magisterio successorem, sic haereditatem . . . transferens in eundem."

⁵ Augustinus Triumphus, vi. 1, p. 57: "Sententia igitur papae et sententia Dei una sententia est . . . unum consistorium est ipsius papae et Dei . . . una sententia et una curia Dei et papae." This followed Hostiensis, *Lectura ad Decretales*, i. vii. 3, "Consistorium Dei et papae unum et idem censendum". Hostiensis (Henricus de Segusio) had been in service to Henry III of England

he endeavours to bring home this identity between Christ and his vicar by describing the latter as himself the founder of the Christian religion : it is termed the Christian religion in honour of the Pope.¹ And if he wishes, he might ascend into heaven and govern the world from a celestial throne.² In short the theologians followed the canonists in acclaiming " Dominus noster Deus papa ",³ and it is hardly necessary to add that the power of the head now appeared as infallible and omnipotent. Even the Popes acknowledged that they could do anything : " papa omnia potest ".⁴ Following Roman law precedents it is asserted that his mere will is enough to create a legal obligation

before becoming chaplain to Innocent IV, and it is perhaps significant that it was his contemporary Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, who told Innocent IV at the Council of Lyons that " This most holy see is the throne of God " : E. Brown, *Fasciculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum* (London, 1690), ii. 254. At the same time Bracton said that the prince sat " in sede ipsius regis quasi throno Dei ", *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. G. E. Woodbine (New Haven, 1915-42), ii. 20, 21 ; which followed the eleventh-century conception of the English monarchy : e.g. the Anglo-Norman Anonymous, *Tractatus* iv, p. 667, " potestas enim regis potestas Dei est ". Cf. Henry II of England, " Omnipotentis Dei malevolentia, ira et indignatio, et mea " : L. Delisle, *Recueil des Actes de Henri II* (Paris, 1909-27), ii. 244.

¹ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, lxxiii. 3 ad 3, p. 373 : " tota religio christiana a papa nominatur quia nominatur a Christo, cuius vicarius ipse existit."

² Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xxi. 1, p. 126 : " papa non necessitatur residere in aliquo determinato loco, quia vicarius est illius cuius sedes coelum est et terra scabellum eius pedem, ut scribitur *Isaiae*, lxvi [6]. Implet enim coelum et terram sua potestate et iurisdictione, ut scribitur *Hiere.*, xxiii [24]."

³ E.g. Zenzellinus de Cassanis, *ad Extrav. Ioh. XXII*, xiv ante c. 5 (Lyons, 1517), fol. 34. On this see F. Gillmann, *Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht*, xcv (1915), 266 f. ; and for its origin in the Roman expression " Dominus noster Deus Caesar ", see F. S. Lear, " The Idea of Majesty in Roman Political Thought ", *Essays in History and Political Theory in honor of C. H. McIlwain* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 168-98 at pp. 187-94.

⁴ For a late fourteenth-century example of this very common expression see the statement attributed to Urban VI in 1378 : " Omnia possum et ita volo ", S. Baluzius, *Vitae Papparum Avenionensium* (ed. G. Mollat, Paris, 1916-28), ii. 660. According to Justice Hankford in 1410 this was a well known maxim in English law courts : he refers to the case of *Rex v. Bishop of St. David's*, which the Year Book dates as 1322. See S. B. Chrimes, *English Constitutional Ideas in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1936), p. 355 ; and the brief discussion by P. Vinogradoff, " Constitutional History of the Year Books ", *Law Quarterly Review*, xxix (1913), 282.

on the part of his subjects to obey him.¹ Nor is it simply a legal obligation. Disobedience is literally a denial of God, equivalent to heresy and punishable by eternal damnation,² whilst the Pope alone of all men, as both *verus homo et verus Deus*, is predestined to salvation.³ It is a theory of sovereignty in its fullest sense, and we may perhaps fairly comment that some such belief in the divinity of the ruler is the only basis upon which a theory of omniscient sovereignty can be reasonably asserted.

Equally important is the significance which this theory has for the whole community. In the first place the marriage of the ruler to his office becomes in a sense a symbolic rebirth of the community itself: by his assumption of office all the community is revived. This is understandable when we appreciate that it is the essential function of the head to stand for the whole society, and that this can only come about where the community is held to form a single collective unit, a single "personality", which the ruler may represent. According to fourteenth-century theory it was precisely this which had been the purpose of the Petrine commission. The Petrine commission had been an act of foundation, establishing the ecclesiastical society as a permanent entity with an enduring essence or personality

¹ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, lx. 4, p. 315: "Quod principi placet vigorem legis habet [*Dig.* i. iv. 1; *Inst.* i. ii. 6] . . . Sed supremus princeps vice Dei in toto orbe est ipse papa. Omnes ergo humanae leges ab eius voluntate emanant." Again this closely parallels the English royal tradition according to which the king's government proceeds from his mere will: e.g. Magna Carta, c.1, "et ita volumus observari . . . mera et spontanea voluntate . . . volumus observari". The phrase was expunged in the reissue of 1216.

² Disobedience was also generally equated with idolatry: Gregory VII, *Ep.* iv. 2 (ed. Caspar), p. 296: "Cum enim obedire apostolicae sedi superbe contemnunt, scelus idolatriae, teste Samuele, incurrunt." Both terms were used by Clement VI in 1343: see H. S. Offler, "A Political *Collatio* of Pope Clement VI, O.S.B.", *Revue Bénédictine*, lxxv (1955), 126-44 at p. 136. The same idea is expressed in Boniface VIII's famous declaration that obedience to the Pope was "omnino de necessitate salutis", *Extrav. Comm.* i. viii. 1; cf. Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xlix. 2, p. 264, "sic omnes volentes consequi vitam aeternam tenentur eius mandato parere".

³ Augustinus Triumphus, *Tractatus contra articulos inventos ad diffamandum . . . Bonifacium papam*, i. 2, ed. H. Finke, *Aus den Tagen Bonifaz VIII* (Munster, 1902), p. lxxiii, "solus ipse quodam speciale modo potest dici a Deo praedestinatus et aeterna dampnatione privatus".

transcending its human members. Hence the current formula that the *Ecclesia numquam moritur*¹; and in agreement with Pauline doctrine this personality was identified as Christ himself. In addition the Petrine commission had bestowed upon St. Peter the duty of representing this abstract personality of the whole *Ecclesia* by granting him the powers of headship. In this way the Petrine Commission as recorded by St. Matthew was regarded as a double event: first the institution of the *Ecclesia* as a society with a single, undying essence or personality (Matt. xvi. 18); and secondly the divine election of St. Peter as the head of the society and the physical form of its mystical personality, later defined as Christ himself (Matt. xvi. 19). In this respect the fourteenth-century theory closely resembles the classic notion of the social contract developed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers.² Here the Pope, by his marital contract to his office, revives the powers and personality of the society which have lain dormant since the death of his predecessor, and thereby reaffirms the original "social contract" between God and man of the Petrine commission.³ Thus the ring which

¹ Cf. Clement VI, *M.G.H., Const.* viii, n. 100, p. 158: "Unde est regnum Ecclesiae quod in aeternum non dissipabitur, quod comminuet et *consumet* *universa regna*, et ipsum stabit in aeternum, *Daniel*, ii [44]." This was developed from the Roman notion that the *populus* or *imperium* could not die, reflected in Augustine's description of the *civitas Dei*: "illa civitas sempiterna est", *De civitate Dei*, v. 16 (*P.L.* xli. 160). Cf. Gratian, C. 24, q. 1, c. 33. This could also be adduced from the promise that "portae inferi (i.e. death) non praevalent adversus eam". See further, P. Gillet, *La personnalité juridique en droit ecclésiastique* (Malines, 1927), pp. 79-99, 108-15; Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* pp. 291-305.

² For Hobbes, Locke and later Rousseau, the social contract results in, first, the creation of a single artificial body or person to replace the individual members; and secondly the appointment of a ruling authority to act as the executive, minister and representative of this sovereignty: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ii. 21, ed. M. Oakeshott (Oxford, 1946), p. 138; Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, pp. 96-97, 151, ed. J. Gough (Oxford, 1946), pp. 48-49, 75; Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, i. 6, iii. 1, ed. C. E. Vaughan (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 33-34, 65. Here of course the will of the members has replaced the will of God as the direct source of power, although it is interesting to notice that Rousseau would allow a single great legislator to make the compact on behalf of all.

³ This followed Biblical precedents: in Jer. xxxi. 32 God becomes the sovereign husband of Israel by a *pactum*. Similarly Abraham's change of name as he becomes *pater gentium* is described as a *pactum* with God, Gen. xvii. 4-10.

the Pope wears as a symbol of his office is described by Innocent III as a sign that Christ is united to his Church,¹ whilst the Pope himself becomes a living expression of the principle that in essence the community forms a single person—or, to use the appropriate terminology, that all Christians comprise one mystical body in Christ.² Although the society is composed of innumerable human members, all become in a mystical or heavenly sense one person or body, who is Christ, the *una persona Ecclesiae*.³ It is the prime purpose of the head “qui vice Christi gerit in terris” to demonstrate that the Universal Church, consisting of all its human individuals, is the earthly or human form of the heavenly Christ.

This view of a political society is not peculiar to the Middle Ages alone. Plato had referred to his ideal *polis* as situated in

Note Innocent III's repeated use of the term contract in his consecration sermon : e.g. “*Illud autem coniugium, quod ego sponsus cum hac mea sponsa contraxi . . . Ego igitur coniugium contraxi, consecratione nuptias celebravi*” (*P.L.* ccxvii. 663). It is perhaps of some interest to remark that Hegel defined marriage as a complete surrender of individual personality to a union which he described as one of the aspects of the divine foundation of a state : *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 167, ed. and trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1953), p. 115.

¹ *De sacro altaris mysterio*, i. 61 (*P.L.* ccxvii. 796) : “*Annulus est fidei sacramentum in quo Christus sponsam suam sanctam Ecclesiam subarrhavit, ut ipsa de se dicere valeat : Annulo suo subarrhavit me Dominus meus, id est Christus.*”

² E.g. Boniface VIII, *Extrav. Comm.* i. viii. 1 : “*unum corpus mysticum cuius caput Christus.*” On the development of this see further H. de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum : l'eucharistie et l'eglise au moyen âge* (Paris, 1944) ; M. Roberti, “*Il corpus mysticum di S. Paolo nella storia della persona giuridica*”, *Studi in onore di Enrico Besta* (Milan, 1939), iv. 37–82 ; A. Ehrhardt, “*Das Corpus Christi und die Korporation im spät-röm. Recht*”, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Rom. Abt.*, lxx (1953), 299–347 ; Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* especially pp. 193 f.

³ For the general principle of the *unum corpus—una persona* idea see Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II. i. lxxxii. 1, “*Omnes homines qui sunt unius communitatis reputantur quasi unum corpus, et tota communitas unus homo*”. The theory had, however, been fully developed by Augustine : e.g. *De doctrina Christi*, iii. 31 (*P.L.* xxxiv. 82), “*Christi et Ecclesiae una persona nobis intimari*” ; *In Ps. LXI* (*P.L.* xxxvi. 730), “*Sed debemus intelligere personam nostram, personam Ecclesiae nostrae, personam corporis Christi*” ; cf. Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio*, iv. 44 (*P.L.* ccxvii. 886), “*Et sicut unum corpus, una persona, Christus cum suis membris*”. Israel is personified as the child of God in Exod. iv. 22, and Hos. xi. 1, who is then identified with Christ, Matt. ii. 14–15.

heaven and having the characteristics of a single man.¹ Cicero, whose thought was dominated by the ideal of a *renovatio reipublicae Romanae*, had suggested that a true political society had the nature of a spiritual being.² In the seventeenth century Hobbes would graphically portray the civil state as Leviathan, a mortal god, made up of all the members of the state and standing in the sky.³ Today we still regard a group of individuals forming a corporation as a single, invisible and fictitious—although for legal purposes very real—person in a court of law. Here the community of Christians is represented as a heavenly person, namely Christ, whose will is given actual expression on earth through the office of the vicar of Christ. When the ruler assumes this office, he not only “marries” Christ, but in that Christ is the mystical personality of the society, he also unites himself to the whole community. By his acquisition of the Roman see the Pope becomes the *sponsus Ecclesiae*, the universal husband in place of Christ.⁴ He not only gains the sovereignty which resides in that office and the right to exercise it over the members of the *corpus Christi*, but now has full power to act as if he himself were the whole society in one man. Just as a wife in the marriage service endows her husband with all her goods, loses her own name and adopts his, so here too husband and wife become legally one person. There is a complete identification: the bridegroom, as Aquinas put it, comes to be the bride in that he takes on her personality.⁵ The Pope, by his marriage to the

¹ *Republic*, ix. 592; *Laws*, 964E–5A. Plato also uses the idea of the spiritual rebirth of the community through the royal rule of a divinely qualified monarch, *Statesman*, 309–10.

² Sir Ernest Barker, *From Alexander to Constantine* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 189–90.

³ See *Leviathan*, ii. 17, p. 112, and the representation of Leviathan on the frontispiece (p. 1). He is also described as the abstract seat of power, and an artificial man (pp. 2, 5).

⁴ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xix, 1, p. 117, “ipse solus est universaliter sponsus Ecclesiae”; xxix. 5 ad 1, p. 178, “papa, qui in tota Ecclesia obtinet universalis sponsi auctoritatem”. For a further discussion of the relationship of this to the legal concept of a corporation see Gillet, *op. cit.* pp. 102–3.

⁵ *Summa theologiae*, III. *suppl.* xcvi. 3 ad 3: “aliquando dicitur Christus sponsa, non est quia vere sit sponsa sed in quantum sibi assumit personam sponsae suae, scilicet Ecclesiae, quae est ei spiritualiter coniuncta”. Similarly Innocent III, *Sermones de sanctis*, II (P.L. ccxvii. 458), “In una persona sponsum repraesentans et sponsam, dicente propheta, Sicut sponso imposuit mihi *mitram* et

Ecclesia universalis, becomes the possessor of all things, and the effective owner of all his subjects' goods and property.¹ Similarly he is the sole source of all rights and powers in the community.² In fact for practical purposes the Pope is the society, and the term *Ecclesia* was often used on papal documents where the Pope alone was intended.³ He is now the universal man, or, as Gregory VII rendered it, his is the only name in the world.⁴

The aim of the marriage analogy as used in this context was to assert that possession of the papal office grants the ruler virtual identification both with Christ himself and with his corporeal or terrestrial expression, the *congregatio fidelium*. Christ, Pope and Church become tautologous terms.⁵ For present purposes the most significant feature of this idea is that Christ, as the

tamquam sponsam decoravit me *corona* [cf. Isa. lxi. 10]". This follows Augustine, *De doctrina Christi*, iii. 31 (P.L. xxxiv. 82): "Non haesitemus quando a capite ad corpus, vel a corpore transitur ad caput, et tamen non receditur ab una eademque persona. Una enim persona loquitur dicens, sicut sponso imposuit mihi *mitram*, et sicut sponsam ornavit me ornamento, et tamen quid horum duorum capiti, quid corpori, id est, quid Christo, quid Ecclesiae conveniat, utique intelligendum est." By the twelfth century the papal mitre was often taken to represent the office of headship and the Pope's universal capacity: this parallels the development of the crown as a symbol of the *regnum* in lay thought. Cf. Prov. xii. 4, "Mulier diligens corona est viro suo".

¹ Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, ci. 7, p. 499: "Planum est papam vice Christi dominium et usum rerum habere non solum clericorum immo omnium laicorum. Est enim ipse Christus dominus Ecclesiae et omnium illorum quibus Ecclesia plena est, sicut dicit glossa super Psal. xxiii [1], Domini est terra et plenitudo eius"; Aegidius Romanus, *De ecclesiastica potestate*, ii. 4, p. 51, "quis ergo diceret quod quilibet fidelis secundum se totum et secundum omnia quae habet non sit sub regimine Petri?"; cf. *Cod.* vii. xxvii. 3, "cum omnis esse principis intelligantur".

² Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, i. 1, p. 3, "[a papa] cognoscit esse omne quod habet: sed omnis potestas saecularium principum, imperatorum et aliorum est talis".

³ Cf. Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, vii. 3 ad 1, p. 66, "per Ecclesiam potest intelligi praelatus vel ipsa congregatio fidelium"; *Somnium viridarii*, i. 147, p. 115, "papa qui est Ecclesia vel caput Ecclesiae".

⁴ *Dictatus papae*, c. 11 (ed. Caspar), p. 204: "Quod hoc unicum est nomen in mundo."

⁵ E.g. Alvarus Pelagius, *De planctu Ecclesiae*, c. 55, pp. 141, 143: "Petra erat Christus . . . Petrus autem a petra; petra vero Ecclesia; ergo in Petri nomine figurata est Ecclesia." For canonistic discussions on this see B. Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 25-29.

persona Ecclesiae, has a dual nature. On the one hand he stands for the sovereign power, the divine right of royal rule, which is contained in the papal office: the elected Pope submits himself to this mystical, divine entity—he marries or becomes one with Christ—and so emerges as the legitimate governor of the Christian society. On the other hand Christ has also an earthly form in that his personality is embodied on earth in the shape of the congregation of human individuals who together make up the society. Through his marriage to the divine aspect of Christ the Pope gains the right to identify himself with and act for the “human” aspect of Christ, the faithful members of the *corpus Christi*. His submission to the divine power of Christ is rewarded by the submission of Christ in his earthly form of the Christian society itself, and from now on he is inviolably established as ruler of the universal community. The importance of this is that we have here, expressed in unfamiliar language and esoteric form, something that a modern student of politics would immediately recognize as a theory of State-sovereignty. Reduced to simple terms, it tells us that sovereignty in a body politic resides in the office of the prince. By his assumption of office the ruler gains total power over his state and does, in fact, become qualified to act as the state. He is himself simply a state symbol: *l'état, c'est moi*—and in this office he is to be obeyed like God himself. Since the State of the Middle Ages was a Universal Church, the theory was presented in an ecclesiastical form, but the principle remains the same. We may even perhaps be justified in asking whether there is any real difference in principle here from the modern totalitarian theory in which the government acts as the state, whilst the state itself becomes the quasi-divine norm of what is to be considered right and good. In many ways modern trends in political thought come to look like a hideous caricature of the political theory of medieval Christianity.

In many ways the *Wife of Bath's Tale* bears a striking similarity to the theory of the political marriage developed by the papacy, and widely borrowed by lay writers in favour of the national monarchies during the course of the fourteenth century. Indeed, of all the versions of the story current in medieval

literature, Chaucer's tale adheres most closely to the form in which the marriage metaphor was being used by contemporary political thinkers, more closely even than the Irish analogues, whose quasi-political nature is apparent. To emphasize this, four elements of the story are worthy of special mention, and first of all that the hero is guilty of rape. This is the most obvious difference between the *Wife of Bath's Tale* and other versions of the story. With many of these versions the marriage of the hero with the hag-beauty follows upon an attempt by the hero to kill a deer whilst hunting.¹ This is probably not an entirely unconnected incident, since the deer may be a symbol of the hag-wife herself.² If so, the hunt may represent an attempt by the prince to secure her by force and kill her: as we shall see, a symbolic presentation of the idea that a tyrant tries to gain the sovereignty of his kingdom by violence, and obliterates it by his acts of will. But Chaucer omits the hunt altogether, and replaces it with the incident of the rape. This is not, as has been suggested, an irrelevant detail brought in to give the story an earthy tone.³ On the contrary it is part and parcel of the marriage analogy. Although there is nothing in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* to imply that the maiden forced by Chaucer's knight was in fact the hag-wife herself under another form, this may well have been the case. In *The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter*,⁴ which is now thought to have provided a precedent

¹ As in *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*, the ballad *King Henry*, the *Temair Breg*, *Baile na Fíán*, the *Echtra mac Echdach*, the *Dinnschenchas of Carn Máil*, and *Lughaid Laighe*.

² In at least one version of the Irish story, preserved in a confused eighteenth-century form as *The Chase of Gleann an Smoil*, ed. J. O'Daly, "Fenian Poems, Second Series", *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, vi (Dublin, 1861), 75 f., the hero hunts a magical doe which presently turns into the hag herself, described as a black and white queen. Several of the Irish tales relate that the deer, usually a fawn, is a magical beast.

³ See G. H. Gerould, *Chaucerian Essays* (Princeton, 1952), chap. 4: "Some Dominant Ideas of the Wife of Bath."

⁴ Ed. Child, *Ballads*, iv. 457; and see further Maynadier, *op. cit.* pp. 112-17. The hero escapes the death penalty for his rape only by contracting a proper marriage with his victim, although disgusted at her peasant ways. She turns out, however, to be a king's daughter. This may be the solution to the disputed question of whether the maiden in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* is a peasant or of noble blood. For a similar story of rape in an account of the birth of St. Cuthbert see G. R. Coffman,

for Chaucer's use of the rape incident, it is significant that the violated maiden herself becomes the loathly bride of the knight and is eventually revealed as a beautiful royal woman in disguise. At all events the idea of a rape is highly relevant and appropriate to the central theme of marriage, and can only have been introduced into the story by Chaucer to emphasize the importance of this element.

Rape may be described as a marital act carried out illegally and by force, as a violent consummation of marriage without the legal sanctions of the marriage ceremony. With Chaucer the knight stands for the ruler who has "raped" his kingdom by a forceful or illicit union with it. He is a symbol of illegal government, of government acquired or maintained by force rather than legal process, which medieval writers had no hesitation in branding as tyranny. Chaucer himself describes the rape as an "oppressioun" carried out "by verray force" and without the consent of the woman ("maugre hir heed").¹ In this context to commit rape means to become a tyrant, to usurp the royal office which one has no right to hold and govern without reference to the function of a true king. By the late fourteenth century it was well established in political thought that a tyrant ceased to have even the right to bear the name of king. "Rex non recte regendo, non est rex sed tyrannus": the tyrant, by the very fact that he governs tyrannically, is not to be regarded as a king, as one who has subordinated himself to the duties and obligations of the royal office. He has no right to identify himself with the kingdom which he claims to represent. This might result from an unjust seizure of the throne, tyranny *ex defectu tituli*,² and it is remarkable how many versions of the story deal with a hero who has either a defective or merely indirect claim

"Another Analogue for the Violation of the Maiden in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*," *Modern Language Notes*, lix (1944), 271-4.

¹ D. 887-9. Aquinas had described tyrants as those who abolish wedding celebrations: *De regimine principum*, i. 3, "et ea quae ad foederationem hominum pertinent, ut connubia et convivia, prohibent".

² E.g. Aquinas, *Commentum in Sententias*, II. xlv. ii. 2, "aut propter defectum in ipso modo acquirendi, quia scilicet per violentiam vel per simoniam, vel aliquo illicito modo acquirit. . . . Sed secundus defectus impedit ius praelationis; qui enim per violentia dominium surripit non efficitur vere praelatus vel dominus"

to the throne.¹ More frequently however this notion of usurpation by tyranny referred to the prince who acted beyond the law, and preferred to put his own will and pleasure above the requirements of his office. Since this exaltation of his personal power, to the detriment of the sovereignty which should rightly adhere to his office, was generally considered to mean government by violence, this form of tyranny could be classified as usurpation *ex defectu exercitii*, even though the prince might originally have been in justifiable possession of his kingdom.² Having regard although he adds that this government may subsequently be legitimized "per consensum subditorum"; also *Summa theologiae*, II. II. civ. 6 ad 3. Cf. Chaucer, *The Maunciple's Tale*, H. 223-5,

"Right so, bitwixe a titleles tiraunt
And an outlawe, or a thief erraunt,
The same I seye, ther is no difference."

¹ Thus in the *Temair Breg, Baile na Fíán* by the Irish poet Cúán ua Lotheháin (d. 1024), ed. M. Joynt, *Ériu*, iv (1910), 92-111, the hero (Níall) is the king's son by his second wife, and is preceded by five sons of the first queen. In many other Irish tales the hero is the youngest of five or six sons, who therefore have priority in attempting to embrace the hag. Note also the fourteenth-century *Saga of Illugi Gríðarfástri*, ed. Rafn, *Fornaldar Sögur* (Copenhagen, 1830), iii. 648 f., where the hero is only the foster son of the king of Denmark. In *The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter* the hero is either the nephew or brother-in-law of the King. There are two interesting Biblical parallels to this. Jacob, the younger son, seizes his father's birthright by dispossessing the rightful heir, Esau. It is noticeable that Isaac stipulates that the condition of gaining his inheritance and the rule over his people is that the heir should hunt for venison, Gen. xxvii. *passim*. In the comparable parable of the prodigal son the inheritance is bestowed upon the younger son by the father, to the justifiable annoyance of the elder heir. This is symbolized by the giving of a ring, and was taken by Innocent III to represent the marriage of Christ and the Pope to the *Ecclesia*: *De sacro altaris mysterio*, i. 61 (P.L. ccxvii. 796): "Hunc annulum dedit pater filio revertenti secundum illud, Date annulum in manum eius, *Luc.* xv [22]."

² Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, i. 3, remarks that tyranny is the worst and least tolerable form of government, adding: "Idem etiam maxime apparet, si quis consideret mala quae ex tyrannis proveniunt, quia cum tyrannus, contempto communi bono, quaerit privatum, consequens est ut in subditos diversimode gravet, secundum quod diversis passionibus subiacet ad bona aliqua affectanda. Qui enim passione cupiditatis detinetur, bona subditorum rapit"; cf. *Summa theologiae*, II. II. xlii. 2 ad 3. For the definition of the tyrant as one who rules by will and not according to law see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, iv. 1, i. 235; Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, ii. 33; William of Ockham, *Octo quaestiones*, viii. 15, ed. J. G. Sikes, *Opera Politica* (Manchester, 1940 f.), i. 201-2. For comparisons of the two types of tyranny with Bartolus and Coluccio Salutati see Schlauch, "Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants", pp. 147-8.

to the character of the reign of Richard II, it is probable that Chaucer was thinking primarily of the ruler who became tyrannical by his violent acts of will,¹ and was accordingly considered to have deprived himself of official rights. And when this happened, the lawyers argued, it should be presumed that a vacancy existed in the royal office. It was as if the king had died. Some writers even urged that the community had the right to inflict the death penalty upon a tyrant.² As Aquinas had explained, the contract is ended, and what is legally impermissible becomes possible where there is no longer the rule of law.³ Therefore the legal fiction that the king dies when he becomes a tyrant may be made a reality by his execution.⁴ It

¹ The knight is described as one who has lost his reason (D. 1095, "Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit"); Aquinas had defined a tyrant as one who failed to temper his will by reason: *Summa theologiae*, II. I. xc. 1 ad 3: "Sed voluntas de his quae imperantur, ad hoc quod legis rationem habeat, oportet quod sit aliqua ratione regulata. Et hoc modo intelligitur quod voluntas principis habet vigorem legis: alioquin voluntas principis magis esset iniquitas quam lex"; II. I. xcii. 1 ad 4; "lex tyrannica, cum non sit secundum rationem, non est simpliciter lex, sed magis est quaedam perversitas legis." Note also Chaucer's demand that a true king shall not "ben lyk tyraunts of Lumbardye that usen wilfulhed and tyranny", *Legend of Good Women*, G. 353-5; and the references to the rule of a tyrant as arbitrary and violent, *Knighte's Tale*, A. 941, 960, 2015. In September 1399, Richard II was accused of being "nolens iustas leges et consuetudines regni sui servare seu protegere, sed secundum suae arbitrium voluntatis facere quicquid desiderii eius occurrerit", *Rot. Parl.* iii. 419.

² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, iii. 15, p. 232; "Porro tyrannum occidere non modo licitum est sed aequum et iustum. Qui enim gladium accipit, gladio dignus est interire"; Wyclif, *De officio regis*, c. 8, ed. Pollard and Sayles (London, 1887), p. 201: "Et quantum ad illud in fine additum patet quod non oportet legum serviendo tyranno favere sibi in moribus. Favet autem homo naturae hominis non solum resistendo sed etiam occidendo."

³ Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, i. 6: "si ad ius multitudinis alicuius pertineat sibi providere de rege, non iniuste ab eadem rex institutus potest destrui vel refrenari eius potestas, si potestate regia tyrannice abutatur. Nec putanda est talis multitudo infideliter agere tyrannum destituens, etiam si eidem *in perpetuo* se ante subiecerat; quia hoc ipse meruit, in multitudinis regimine se non fideliter gerens ut exigit regis officium, quod ei *pactum* a subditis non reservetur"; also *Summa theologiae*, II. II. xlii. 2 ad 3; "regimen tyrannicum non est iustum. . . . Et ideo perturbatio huius regiminis non habet rationem seditionis." For his argument that law ceases in cases of necessity where the common good is endangered see II. I. xcvi. 6; xcvi. 2.

⁴ E.g. Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, i. 11: "Si enim qui unum hominem spoliat, vel in servitutum redigit, vel occidit, maximam poenam meretur, quantum

is not surprising that Chaucer's knight should be condemned to death for his act of rape.¹ More important, however, is the fact that he is given a chance to redeem himself: which he eventually does on condition that he marries the hag, in spite of the fearsome aspect which she presents to him. Again it is pertinent to remark that most political writers were only willing to allow the deposition of a tyrant if he persisted in his tyranny and refused to correct himself: as John of Salisbury maintained, he was to be pardoned if he would return to the way of righteousness.² And it is perhaps significant that the period allowed for the hero to solve his problem is a year and a day, which some writers of the time had come to regard as the maximum period permitted for the duration of an interregnum.³ Chaucer, we may say, is warning his prince that the wages of tyranny is death, but that this may be avoided if the ruler will submit to the rule of law,

quidem ad iudicium hominum mortem, quantum vero ad iudicium Dei damnationem aeternam; quanto magis putandum est tyrannum deteriora mereri supplicia, qui undique ad omnibus rapit, contra omnium libertatem laborat, pro libito voluntatis suae quoscunque interficit?"; also *Commentum in Sententias*, II. xlv. ii. 2 ad 5.

¹ This was, however, the standard punishment for rape in England since the Statute of Westminster II of 1285, and was according to Bracton a traditional penalty. He points out, however, that a case of rape may be settled by marriage between the parties, and in practice this often happened: see Sir F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *History of English Law* (2nd edn. Cambridge, 1923), pp. 490-1; W. S. Holdsworth, *History of English Law* (London, 1909), iii. 261. Note also the Roman law principle of *legitimatio per subsequens matrimonium*, *Cod. v. xxvii. 10*. In his capacity as the knight's judge King Arthur may stand for the rightly acting holder of the office, i.e. the knight's true self. This would agree with the contemporary doctrine that an erring ruler was technically self-deposed, being condemned by his ideal or official self. For the English kings as *imitatores Arturi* see R. S. Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast", *Speculum*, xxviii (1953), 114-27; and now J. J. Parry and R. A. Caldwell, "Geoffrey of Monmouth", *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*. Arthur is also upheld as the ideal pattern of kingship by Augustinus Triumphus, *Summa*, xxxvii. 6, p. 223. His queen in the tale may, after the manner of the Grail romances, be another version of the hag-wife.

² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, viii. 21, "Finis enim tyrannorum confusio est, ad interitum quidem si in malitia perseverant; si revocantur, ad veniam".

³ This developed out of the feudal idea that a fief should not be left vacant for more than a year and a day. For the use of this principle in the thirteenth century see C. C. Bayley, *The Formation of the German College of Electors in the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Toronto, 1949), pp. 171-2.

and consent to undertake a true marriage with his kingdom. He may yet redeem himself by good government.¹

The conversion of the hero is therefore rightly considered as the central episode in the story.² Here the dual nature of the hag-wife is the second element of particular importance. On the one hand she is "a fouler wight ther may no man devyse": but after the wedding night she becomes so young and fair that the knight kisses her a thousand times (D. 999, 1254). In her foul form the hag is a distinctly mystical being, devised by no man, as is shown by her sudden appearance in place of the fairy dance (D. 991 f.). But as the beautiful wife she is an ordinary human, whose mortality is explicitly stated (D. 1257). This combination of mystical and human aspects marks her out as the abstract personification of the kingdom. In that the late medieval kingdom was sometimes described as a *corpus Christi*, she may even be identified with Christ himself. In her mystical form she is present in the office of the head of the community, wherein resides the mystical power of Christ, and possession of which qualifies the king to act as the *vicarius Christi*. It is for this reason that the Irish hags had described themselves as royal power or the sovereignty of Ireland.³ But in her human

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, vii. 3, 1325a-b, had maintained that the violent seizure of power by a king could not be justified by subsequent virtuous conduct, except in the case of a man of outstanding excellence, a supremely virtuous being of god-like stature, who would be superior in nature to the community as a man to a woman. In the fourteenth century several writers considered that this was possible. Thus Alexander de S. Elpidio (d. 1326) defended the legitimacy of the pagan Roman empire on the grounds of its subsequent good government and the consent of its subjects: *De ecclesiastica potestate*, ii. 10, ed. J. T. Rocaberti, *Bibliotheca Maxima Pontificia* (Rome, 1698), ii. 7, p. 28, "Quia licet regnum Romanorum a principio per violentias et latrocinia incoepit, consequenter tamen propter bonum regimen ipsius imperii communiter omnibus gentibus factum est gratum ut voluntarie Romano imperio se subicerent, et per consequens est iustum et legitimum".

² J. P. Roppolo, "The Converted Knight in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*", *College English* (1951), pp. 263-9; cf. W. P. Albrecht, "The Sermon on Gentillesse", *ibid.* p. 459.

³ In the *Echtra mac Echdach Mugmedóin*, "I am the sovereignty (*flathius*), I am royal rule"; in *Lughaid Laighe*, "I am royalty and thou shalt have Ireland's rule"; in the *Cóir Anmann*, "I am the sovereignty of Ireland (*Missi banflaith h Erenn*) and the kingship shall belong to you"; and in the *Dinnschenchas of Carn Máil*, "With me sleep the High Kings. I . . . am the kingship of Alba and Ériu": Brown, *op. cit.* pp. 212-15.

form she stands for the human element in society, the mass of individual people who make up the community, and on whose behalf the ruler acts by virtue of his marriage to the realm. This, however, can only come about when the king has made a true and legally valid contract with God or, as we may now say, with the mystical entity or personality of the kingdom. Thus the third point of special significance is the marriage compact of the hero with the hag,¹ which is legally consummated by the events of the wedding night. This involves a double submission: the knight submits to his wife, and his wife to him. Taken at its face value this is meaningless, since two people cannot submit to each other's will in *all* things. But when the dual function of the wife is borne in mind, this becomes easily understandable. The hero grants his wife the "sovereignty" and "maistrye" which women most desire, so that she may govern as she pleases.² He submits himself to the "wise governance" (D. 1231) of the hag seen as the abstract personality of the kingdom embodied in the kingship. He denies his own individuality and personal rights in order to accept and identify himself with the will and purpose of the royal office. And being now united to this divine will and purpose, he becomes *imago Dei*, entitled to govern in the name of the whole society, and with a legal right to the humble subjection and obedience of his people. Accordingly the wife submits to him, promising that she—in the human form in which she represents the human members of the kingdom—will be both fair and good, and obey him in all things (D. 1240-5, 1255-6). In short, the prince becomes the executive of Christ and the community's sovereignty by recognizing that this

¹ Chaucer describes this as a plighting of troth (D. 1009, 1013, 1051), but note the term covenant used by Gower (1590, 1696) and *The Weddyng* (362).

² D. 1038-40, 1236-7; cf. Gower, 1608-13, 1825-34; *The Weddyng*, 422-9, 467, 682-4, 696-8. Note the idea of reciprocal obedience and sanctification between husband and wife in 1 Cor. vii. 3-4, 14. It may be emphasized that although the hag-wife legally possesses the sovereignty and is therefore described as such in the Irish stories, it is necessary, as in Chaucer, for the husband-king to recognize or "grant" it to her if he is not to become a tyrant acting without reference to his official capacity. This would seem to answer the objections of Schlauch and Beach that Chaucer's hag, who desires to gain sovereignty, must be different from the Irish hags, since they claim to possess it already: see Schlauch, "The Marital Dilemma", pp. 425-7.

sovereignty belongs to his office, not to his personal will. And so by his personal submission to the duties and obligations of his office the tyrannical prince can put an end to his tyranny, and convert a forced union into a harmonious marriage of king and people.¹ Failing this subjection on the part of the ruler it was inevitable that he would lose his crown to another man. Will you have me humble, asks the hag, or try to use your will to force me to be fair, and thereby imperil your house? (D. 1219-27). In the event of course the house of Plantagenet was forced to yield place to the house of Lancaster. There can be little doubt that when the *Wife of Bath's Tale* was read before the court, Chaucer intended that his king should appreciate the moral of the story.²

There remains one further point. In her lecture to her husband the hag tells him that true gentility or lordship does not depend upon lineal descent, and is not conferred simply by the act of taking possession of an inheritance. It can derive only from the grace of God. Hereditary succession, we may say, does not in itself provide a sufficient right to kingship.³ In

¹ Note the description of Constance in the *Man of Lawe's Tale* as one in whom "Humblesse hath slayn in hir al tirannye" and who is therefore worthy to be "of al Europe the quene", B. 155-68. Aquinas had declared that harmony alone could bring beauty to a body politic, but that ugliness appeared when one member, in this instance the head, was defective: *De regimine principum*, i. 3, "Regimen igitur tyranni est iniustissimum. . . . Non enim est pulchritudo in corpore, nisi omnia membra fuerint decentur disposita; turpitudine autem contingit, quodcunque membrum indecenter se habeat." It is possible that the wife's request to be told for what guilt she must make amends (D. 1096-7) reflects the very common idea that a tyranny was imposed by God as a punishment for the sins of a kingdom: e.g. Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, i. 6; and as continued by Tholomy of Lucca, iii. 7, "tyranni sunt instrumentum divinae iustitiae ad puniendum delicta hominum"; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, v. 4, p. 295; viii. 18, pp. 358 f.

² See also his admonition to the king in the *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, 27-8, to "do lawe, love trouthe and worthinesse, and wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse"; also his account of tyrants and their downfall in the *Monke's Tale*. For a list of passages in which this is attributed to popular action see Schlauch, "Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants", p. 154. The same author, "The Marital Dilemma", pp. 416 f., has pointed out that the question of whether it was better to have a beautiful wife who might be lost or an ugly one who would be faithful was a favourite topic for discussion from Roman times.

³ The point had been made by Wyclif, *De officio regis*, c. 12, p. 272: "cum ius haereditarium per se non sufficit. . . . Debet enim credere quod officium

addition the ruler requires to gain the grace of God. As Chaucer remarks in the *Monk's Tale*, we know "by grace and by resoun that God of heven hath dominacioun over every regne and every creature", and he refers to the example of king Balthasar, from whom God "birafted the regne that he hadde" for failing to realise this (B. 3408-10, 3404). Of course no medieval writer would have contested the words of St. Paul that the powers that be are ordained of God, but this did nothing to suggest how it was to be known that the ruler did in fact enjoy God's grace and favour. It is interesting to notice Chaucer's denial of hereditary right as a sufficient sign of this divine election in view of the contemporary belief that only God could create an heir, and that therefore the son of a king should succeed *gratia Dei*.¹ Indeed Chaucer has put his finger upon one of the most important problems in medieval politics: what is the mark of divine grace which distinguishes a true king from a mere usurper of the royal office?

It seems that Chaucer himself felt that divine favour was usually bestowed on a king through the choice of his people. As his friend Gower wrote, "vox populi, vox Dei"²; and the majority of his contemporaries would have agreed with him. Like Wyclif, Chaucer believed that hereditary right must be amplified by popular election if it is to provide a valid title to the throne. After the deposition of Richard II he welcomed Henry IV as "conqueror of Brutes Albyon, which that by lyne and free eleccion been verray kyng", which agrees with the formula adopted by Henry himself.³ Popular approval, manifested through the nobility as representative of the whole community,

illud non foret licitum nisi Deus ipsum ad illud eligeret." This follows John of Salisbury. The claim that nobility was an inherited quality had been made by Frederick II, but was denied by Dante, *Convivio*, iv. 3, ed. G. Rossi (Bologna, 1925), pp. 156-8, whom Chaucer cites as his authority for this. Cf. the *Roman de la Rose*, 18561-18896, ed. E. Langlois (Paris, 1922), iv. 234-47.

¹ J. N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1914), p. 36.

² *Vox clamantis*, vii. 25, 1469-70 (ed. Macaulay), iv. 313:

"Quod scripsi plebis vox est, set et ista videbis,
Quo clamat populus, est ibi saepe Deus."

³ *Complaint to his Purse*, pp. 22-24. For Henry IV's title as based upon hereditary right, conquest, popular consent and the grace of God, see *Rot. Parl.* iii. 422-3.

and therefore as divine mediators between God and the king, confers the grace of God.¹ But from the point of view of the marriage analogy it is relevant to emphasize that there was always in the fourteenth century the alternative proposal of papal appointment, which was still regarded by some writers as the only true expression of God's will.² Naturally enough the papacy had regarded the growth of royal sovereignty with considerable disfavour, and had tended to frown upon the lay use of the marriage analogy. This disfavour is reflected perhaps in the removal of the ring from the imperial coronation order drawn up by Innocent III for Otto IV in 1209.³ The ring, which the king had received at his coronation since Carolingian times, and which had assisted the frequent comparisons drawn by medieval writers between kings and bishops was still, however, retained by the national monarchies. Firmly based upon Biblical precedents it continued to be regarded as one of the prime symbols of royal authority,⁴ and its use underlined the lawyers' descrip-

¹ Note Chaucer's description of the king's lords as "half-goddes", *Legend of Good Women*, G. 373. It may be doubted whether this has the ironical implication assigned to it by P. G. Ruggiers, "Tyrants of Lombardy in Dante and Chaucer", *Philological Quarterly*, xxix (1950), 445-8, but it is more likely to be comparable to the claim of the imperial electors to act as the voice of God, or contemporary descriptions of the cardinals as standing between heaven and earth in their role of papal electors. Both electoral bodies regarded themselves as acting *vice omnium*.

² Since there was no direct papal appointment of most European kings it was often suggested that this was the function of the primate of a kingdom, the archbishop acting in the capacity of a papal vicar: e.g. Alvarus Pelagius, *Speculum regum*, ed. R. Scholz, *Unbekannte Kirchenpolitische Streitschriften*, ii. 518-19; "Item est notandum quod rex recepit coronam et gladium ab ecclesia sicut imperator. . . . Unde quilibet rex ab episcopo aliquo regni sui *nomine ecclesiae dantis* recipit gladium, intelligendo quod in gladio recipit curam et regimen totius regni." The *Somnium viridarii* said that this method was particularly applicable to kings who came to the throne by hereditary right, and exemplified the coronation of the French king by the archbishop of Rheims, i. 166, 170, 172, pp. 126-8.

³ *Ordo D*: ed. E. Eichmann, *Die Kaiserkrönung im Abendlande* (Würzburg, 1942), i. 169 f. This order was used for the two imperial coronations of the fourteenth century, that of Henry VII by Clement V's legates in 1312, and that of Charles IV by Innocent VI's legates in 1355: ii. 99. In practice the ring had been omitted from the imperial coronation order for Frederick I in 1155: W. Ullman, "The Pontificate of Adrian IV", *Cambridge Historical Journal*, xi (1953-5), 233-52 at pp. 241-2.

⁴ Eichmann, *op. cit.* ii. 94 f.

tions of the prince as the *maritus reipublicae*.¹ Thus, amongst others, the Italian civilian Johannes Branchazolus referred to the imperial coronation as a wedding, although he was careful to add that the Pope played no more effective a part in the ceremony than did the officiating priest at any other marriage. He was present, said Johannes, merely to make a formal declaration of the choice which God had already made known in the imperial election.² And it was to counteract this attempt to exclude the

¹ The best contemporary example is the lengthy passage of the Sicilian lawyer Lucas da Penna (d. c. 1390) in his commentary on *Cod.* xi. lviii. 7, n. 8, cited Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* pp. 214–17. It may be suggested that this idea of the king's marriage to his kingdom and royal office is portrayed on the left hand panel of the Wilton Diptych, which depicts Richard II's assumption into heaven as the "twelfth angel": F. Wormald, "The Wilton Diptych", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xvii (1954), 191–203. The ring is held out to the king by St. Edward the Confessor, who, as patron saint of England, represents the *persona communitatis* and the *officium regis*—and appropriately bears a likeness of Richard's predecessor, Edward III: J. Evans, "The Wilton Diptych Reconsidered", *The Archaeological Journal*, cv (1948), 1–5. The ring is thought to be the signet, "the seal of St. Edward", which Richard handed over to Henry (IV) in Parliament on 29 September 1399, as a sign of his abdication in favour of Henry: *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 417; and see T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England* (Manchester, 1930), v. 204, 210, and plate iv, n. 6. It bore the mythical arms of St. Edward, impaled on the quartered arms of England and France: this device is also painted on the back of the diptych. These arms of St. Edward were accepted symbols of the royal office, and in this connection it is interesting to note that in 1397 Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, impaled the arms of St. Edward and was banished on a charge of treason. Against Wormald's view that the diptych was painted as part of the cult of St. Richard after the king's death, the suggestion that it is related to Richard's assumption of absolute power by the recoronation of 1389, as put forward by Evans, *art. cit.* p. 5, seems preferable: by his assumption of office Richard takes on the character of a *rex angelicus*, and it is in this sense that he becomes *sanctus*. The use of the patron saint to represent the abstract entity of the kingdom stems from the idea of St. Peter as the personification of the papal office and as the *persona Ecclesiae*—hence the appellation of the Pope as *vicarius Petri*. For the Norwegian king as vicar of St. Olaf, the *rex perpetuus Norwegiae*, see P. E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik* (Stuttgart, 1954–6), iii. 783. This corresponds to the idea of the French king as the standard-bearer of St. Denis, and the king of Castile as *vexillifer S. Iacobi*: ii. 652, 683.

² *De principio imperatoris et papae*, ii. 6, ed. E. E. Stengel, *Nova Alamanniae*, i (Berlin, 1921), n. 90, p. 50: "Et sic imperatoris potestati substantialiter papae coronatio nihil addit, sed demum ipsum a Deo recognoscere imperium declaratur, sicut est exemplum videri in benedictione matrimonii quam a sacerdote recipit desponsata, cum per ipsum nihil substantiae addatur, sed rite factum matrimonium demonstratur." Johannes probably died c. 1335.

Pope from any constitutive function in the creation of a king that the papacy of the fourteenth century reverted to the marriage analogy. On these occasions it appears as a means of asserting that to become *rex gratia Dei* was impossible without papal approval.

As early as the ninth century the papacy had begun to speak of the emperor as the "special son" of the Roman church, and of the *spiritualis coniunctio* which existed between him and the Pope as a result of the imperial coronation. According to John VIII in 877 he was brought by it *ad imitationem Christi*. By the divine grace transmitted through the Pope he became the vicar of Christ. Later Popes had continued to stress this unique and intimate relationship, and had reserved the right to depose him to themselves.¹ It was this traditional union, symbolically represented by the enfolding of the emperor under the Pope's mantle during the coronation, which was present in the mind of Clement VI when he wrote, nearly five centuries later, to give his approval to the election of Charles IV. The election, according to Clement, is a mere calling of the banns. The actual contract of marriage cannot be ratified and confirmed without the Pope's consent, since it is from the Pope that his power derives.² Although he disclaims any intention of detracting from the dignity of the emperor, Clement clearly wishes it to be understood that he is himself the *verus imperator*: he describes himself as the beginning and the end of imperial power. The emperor is merely modelling himself upon an already existing vicar of Christ.³ The only point in creating him at all is that the Pope himself requires in his turn a vicar to whom he

¹ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, pp. 152-4, 257-60.

² *M.G.H., Const.* viii, n. 100, p. 156: "Unde ex electione non videtur nisi matrimonium nuntiatum; sed per confirmationem matrimonium videtur esse ratum et ratificatum et contractum: sed papa habet electum in imperatorem approbare; ergo potestas sua originatur a potestate papali." The letter is dated 6 November 1346.

³ *Loc. cit.* p. 154: "Et videtur mihi quod ex istis tribus patet quod eminentia papalis habet in ordine ad excellentiam imperialem quasi triplex genus causalitatis, sicut Deus habet in ordine ad creaturam. Primo quidem originalem et effectivam, secundo exemplarem et directivam, tertio finalem et completivam. Potestas enim imperialis catholica et approbata a papa originatur, a papa exemplatur, ad papam terminatur."

may delegate the actual administration of universal government, and who will carry on the day to day affairs of the society on his behalf. He is the physical, human, executive of the Pope's divine authority, a second Solomon operating with delegated power in place of his father.¹ In this way the emperor becomes a vicar of God—at one remove: he is the vicar of the vicar of God. As a contemporary phrases it, the faithful emperor is a disciple of Christ only because he is the disciple of the disciple of Christ.² Therefore, just as the Pope's own vicariate of Christ is symbolized by the idea of his mystical marriage to Christ and the *Ecclesia*, so it logically follows that the emperor's vicariate of the Pope, his right to wield power in the universal community, requires a symbolic marriage to the Pope and the society in the form of the coronation ceremony. In the same way that the elected Pope submits to the sovereignty of God, so now the imperial *electus* is obliged to submit himself to the Roman church. Accordingly Augustinus Triumphus, writing some twenty years earlier, had referred to the imperial coronation as the emperor's wedding day, and maintained that the ring should once again be bestowed upon the emperor to signify this.³ At the same time, however, he cautioned his readers against forgetting the necessary *interventio papae*: the Pope could not be excluded from the contract. Solomon was crowned by his mother, and

¹ Loc. cit. pp. 151-2: "Sed additur in themate, et regnabit pro me, ut dicatur illud I *Par.* xxix [28], Regnabit Salomon filius eius pro eo. Sed quare dicit, pro me? Numquid dimittam sibi istam kathedram et istam sedem? Certe non intendo. Sed pro me regnabit quando pro honore meo et istius sedis regnabit; quando pro me regnabit quando suum regimen ad honorem Dei est istius sanctae sedis totaliter ordinabit . . . quia iunior est me . . . quia posterius me . . . quia sua [dignitas] me inferior . . . quia sua originatur a mea . . . Regni enim solio eum praecedam, *Gen.*, xli [40]." Cf. p. 159: "officium assistentiae". For *vicarius papae* see, e.g. Alvarus Pelagius, *De planctu Ecclesiae*, c. 68, p. 247: "Tum quia est imperator, vicarius papae est in temporalibus . . . quia papa recipit imperium et tenet." In the Old Testament the ring was specifically granted by a superior king to those to whom royal power was delegated: *Gen.* xli. 42; *Esth.* iii. 10; viii. 2.

² Conrad of Megenberg (d. 1374), *De translatione Romani imperii*, c. 24, ed. Scholz, *Unbekannte Kirchenpolitische Streitschriften*, ii. 330, "fidelis imperator est discipulus Christi cum sit discipulus discipuli Christi in Ecclesia Dei".

³ See his long comparison of the imperial coronation to Solomon's betrothal, *Summa*, xxxviii. 3, p. 226. The whole ceremony is expounded in the form of a

the *Ecclesia* is not only the bride but the mother of the emperor.¹ It is as the personification of the *Ecclesia* that the Pope grants the imperial crown, and since the mystical *persona Ecclesiae* is virtually Christ himself, the emperor may at last be acclaimed "a Deo coronatus".² He is now the approved and fully accredited ruler of his people: the physical executive in the world of the remote divinity of Rome. And he has become the Lord's anointed whom no man may touch, since God alone—in this analogy the Pope himself—can break a spiritual marriage.

The marriage metaphor was one of the more picturesque means by which medieval political thinkers struggled to express a theory of sovereignty. During the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it came to represent a double tradition. On the one hand the analogy, particularly as used by the medieval papacy, stood for the principle of absolutism, which had indeed always been implicit in the papal claim to a divine plenitude of power, but which had only blossomed out under the impetus of the Roman Law renaissance of the preceding two centuries. Against this there came to stand a tradition of limited rulership, commentary on *Cant. cantic.* iii. 11. The phrase "in die desponsationis illius" is made to refer to an "anuli subarratio". It may be mentioned that in the classical Indian conception of kingship the coronation is presented as a marriage between the king and the priest, and therefore the community. The king is feminine to the priest but male to the community. This makes the ruler into the "sword of God" who acts under the direction of the priesthood. The coronation also symbolizes the union of the divine and the human which translates the community into the city of God: A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (New Haven, 1942).

¹ Loc. cit. "Quo coronavit eum mater sua; mater enim imperatoris ecclesia est", which is then described as an "interventio papae et eius auctoritatis". The medieval notion of the *Ecclesia* as both *mater* and *virgo sponsa* parallels the description of Israel as wife and mother in Hos. ii. 2 f., and is reminiscent of the earth-goddess who is both mother and daughter in Greek mythology: see C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London, 1951), pp. 167 f. This was also found in Minoan civilization where the great mother-goddess Dietyinna is also the virgin daughter Britomartis, who is united to the god in the sacred marriage of heaven and earth: E. Voegelin, *Order and History. II. The World of the Polis* (Baton Rouge, 1957), pp. 56–57. A reflection of this may also be seen in the Irish stories of the god-king Brion (later Christianised as St. Brendan) who marries Brigit, the earth-goddess. Brigit becomes St. Bridget, "the virgin who is the mother and bride of Christ": see Brown, op. cit. pp. 270 f.

² Loc. cit. This recalls the form of the acclamation of Charlemagne in 800.

particularly after Aquinas had made Aristotle one of the main and most respectable sources for medieval political speculation. This notion of the king under the law could also be presented in the form of a mystical marriage between the prince and his subjects, and it is suggested that Chaucer, in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, must be regarded as one of the exponents of this theme. These two traditions, although distinguishable, were not necessarily always distinct from one another, and both might appear in the work of the same author. Even Innocent III had been prepared to allow that spiritual fornication, a sin committed against faith, permitted the members of the community to regard the marriage bond as immediately dissolved.¹ Here too the interpretation of the ring as a *signaculum fidei* played its part. Nor was it altogether without significance that Aristotle, in his comparison of marriage and government, had declared that whilst the wife should uphold the forms of obedience to her husband, there was nevertheless a basic equality between them—and had added that governor and governed might change places.² In this way sovereignty came to be seen as not so much the power to act by a will which was believed to be intrinsically right, but as a force for good only, measured against superior standards of divine and natural justice. The ruler's *imitatio Christi* comes to involve the acceptance of limitations: his authority ceases at the point at which it would become harmful. In short his marriage to the community binds him to the observance of certain fundamental laws and liberties which he cannot transgress without losing the name and office of king. The political

¹ *Sermo in consecratione pontificis maximi*, iii (P.L. ccxvii. 664-5), "Sacramentum autem inter Romanum pontificum et Romanam ecclesiam tam firmum et stabile perseverat, ut non nisi per mortem unquam ab invicem separentur, quia mortuo viro mulier, secundum apostolum, soluta est a lege viri [Rom. vii. 2]. Vir autem iste alligatus uxori, solutionem non quaerit, non cedit, non deponitur . . . Propter causam vero fornicationis ecclesia Romana posset dimittere Romanum pontificem. Fornicationem non dico carnalem, sed spiritualement, quia non est carnale sed spirituale coniugium: id est, propter infidelitatis errorum"; also *Sermo iv* (669-70). This results from the canonists' discussions on Gratian, D. 40 c. 6. Cf. Deut. xxiv. 1.

² Aristotle, *Politics*, i. 12, 1259a-b. Thus Wyclif had said that subjects should obey both kings and Popes by correcting and deposing them when they became tyrannical: *De officio regis*, c. 1, pp. 21-2; c. 2, p. 39; c. 12, pp. 264-5.

marriage, therefore, passed into the early modern period as a symbol of sovereignty, but of sovereignty understood as two different things. When James I told his parliament that he had taken the whole island to be his wife, neither king nor parliament appreciated that they held diametrically opposed conceptions of this union, or realized, until it was too late, that the offspring of that marriage would be revolution and civil war.