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Editorial Political Power in Judeo-Christian Tradition

The relationship between religion and the political community formed within the framework of polytheistic systems led to the phenomenon of state religion. We find its first traces in ancient Egypt and Sumer. In Egypt, the pharaohs were considered the incarnation of the god Horus, whose name they took when they embraced the throne. Pharaohs presided over religious ceremonies. They were also responsible for sustaining Maat – a divine world order that guaranteed order, harmony, balance, justice and law. In Sumer, in turn, the city-states had guardian gods, who from among the entire pantheon of deities enjoyed special favors. Sumerian and Akkadian rulers often presided over religious practices. Some of them entered the pantheon of the gods, either after death (Gilgamesh, Sargon the Great), or during their lifetime (Gudea of Lagash, Shulgi of Ur). The Greek city-states also had their gods, whose exceptional cult and worship in a given city were to guarantee the safety and prosperity of the entire community on the part of the divine guardian. State religion also played an important role in ancient Rome. First, it served as an integrating factor for Rome's inhabitants. Second, it strengthened the significance and importance of state institutions. Along with imperial development, the search for more universal religious and political forms, a cult of emperors – both living and dead – developed.

The shaping of the concept of the relationship between religion and political power in the Jewish religion is exceptional against this background. With the formation of first, monolatry, then monotheism at the turn of the first and second millennium BC the ideas of theocracy and theonomy were born. While in the light of the latest historical

and archaeological research a scientific consensus has formed that thoroughly revises the historical accuracy of the biblical message regarding the origins of the identity of ancient Israelis and the political forms of this identity, the significance and permanence of the idea of monotheistic theocracy extends far beyond this historical adequacy. There is no doubt that Jewish monotheism transformed into the monotheism of the Christian religion changed the social and political history of Europe as well as its history of religious, political, and social ideas in a very significant way.

Christian monotheism, from the period of discrimination and persecution, through its legal equalization with polytheistic cults (311–313 AD), to its status (February 27, 380 AD) as the state religion of the Roman Empire, became the source for a kind of “allied dualism” of spiritual and secular power previously unknown to our civilization. The further strengthening of Christianity during and after the fall of the Western Empire led to a situation in which the church’s spiritual power was strengthened by its secular position. Since then, the church has become not only a religious reinforcement of political power, as was the case with ancient cults, but also an equal partner to that power, additionally realizing the universalist ambition of leading all Christian peoples. The most synthetic and emblematic exemplification of this state of affairs was the status of the bishop of Rome and his titlature. Thus, we enter into the realm of *Christianitas*.

The latest issue of *Horizons of Politics* addresses the problem of this very important intellectual impulse in the history of European civilization, which is the Old Testament ideas of monotheism, theocracy and theonomy on the one hand, and their Christian reception, on the other, adapted to the conditions of the Roman Empire and the turbulent times after the fall of its western part.

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