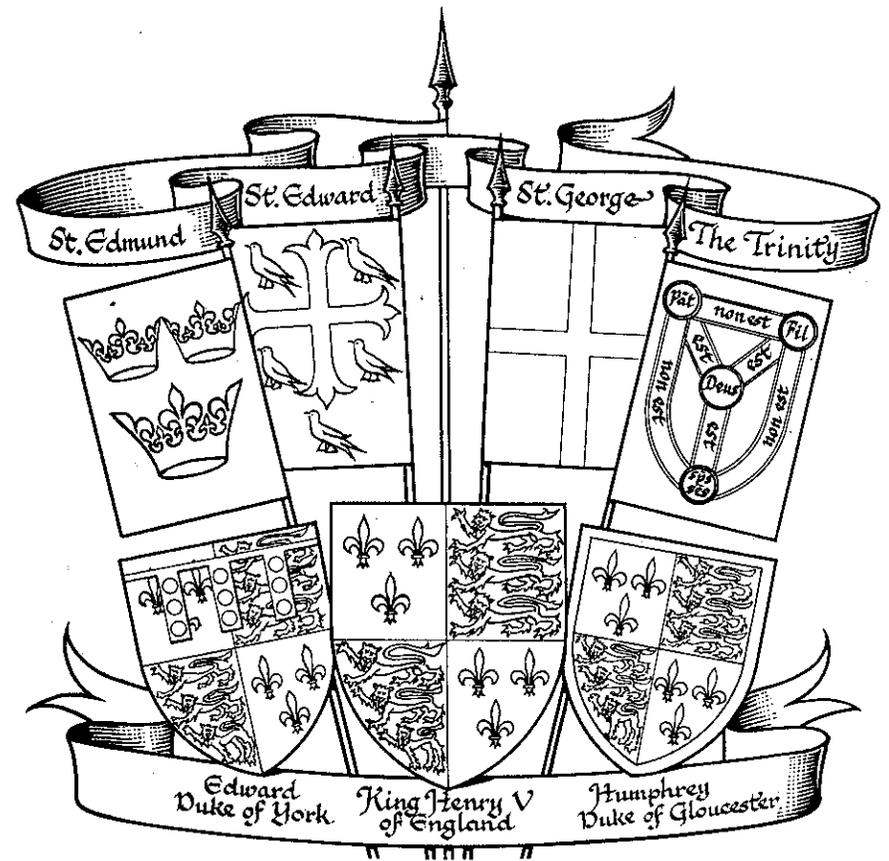


**"GOD FOR HARRY!  
ENGLAND AND SAINT GEORGE!"**

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE SACRED FLAG  
AND THE MODERN NATION-STATE**



**THE FLAG BULLETIN**

January-February 2000 No. 191 Volume XXXIX, No. 1

**THE BLIND VEXILLOGIST**

*Whitney Smith*

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## Editorial

# THE BLIND VEXILLOGIST

It would seem to be an oxymoron to speak of a blind photographer or a blind graphic designer or a blind vexillologist. Precious as sight is to every human, those who deal with the realm of color, form, and composition as part of their profession or as an avocation may be said to have an even greater reliance on vision.

The brilliance and the subtlety of flag design, the endless variations of themes, the shock of unexpected combinations, the force of a simple but striking pattern — all of these speak directly of the beauty and majesty and power which we associate with flags. To one who has never had sight, a verbal explanation of even the simplest flag design must be like hearing a foreign language. On the contrary, the power of flag designs and colors expresses itself strongly and immediately to sighted people from all cultures, at any age, and of different sensitivities and interests.

Simply put, images of flags and actual flags flying in the breeze — even before their fascinating stories were known — are precisely what attracted many individuals, perhaps most, to flags long before they yearned to become vexillologists. Thus it would seem that the only blind vexillologist possible would be someone who became interested in flags and only later lost the faculty of vision, such that new flags could still be “seen” in the imagination if described.

Blindness is not solely an affliction of the eye, however. Literature has long recognized the truth of such human frailties as are reflected in the saying “none are so blind as they who will not see.” Moreover, in vexillology as in religion, believing is seeing. How many have, like this writer, looked at the photograph of the “Jewish national flag” appearing on p. 373 of the September 1934 *National Geographic Magazine* and have seen only a blue over white bicolor with a Shield of David in counter-changed colors? We do not see the black H within the emblem — not because it is invisible, but because we do not expect it to

be there. Conversely, we "see" the Stars and Stripes even if the number of each is fewer than it should be, because we understand the intention of the artist who omits some stripes and some stars for simplicity's sake.

There is another kind of blindness, however, of greater import. Just as the true character of men and women lies in such things as their belief systems and the way they treat other humans, rather than in their physical appearance or the way they dress, so any flag is best understood and judged not by heraldic or other esthetic standards, but by the roles which it plays in molding human lives for better or ill.

To comprehend a flag ultimately requires only modest attention to its shape, colors, emblems, and composition. Which social forces created it and why; what it is said to stand for and what its usage tells us about its real symbolism; what ceremonies and traditions surround it; what coercive measures exist to enforce respect for it; how many have been inspired by it and how many have died for it — these and similar issues define the essence of any flag for the real vexillologist.

To ignore the social, political, historical, and psychological life of a flag while focusing on its esthetic components is to be a blind vexillologist. To acknowledge that fact is in no way to deny the legitimate appeal of the endless colorful flags and images of flags in our streets and public buildings, on television, in books and charts, on the Internet, and in myriad other everyday circumstances. Nevertheless a collection of brilliant mounted butterflies does not make one a lepidopterist nor does the amassing of important paintings guarantee that the owner is an art historian.

There are words and concepts which sometimes illuminate vexillology better than a whole page of flag images. The scholar, the philosopher, and the poet are among the many who can help us "see" flags more clearly: Emily Dickinson, for example, warns us that "flags are a brave sight, but no true eye ever went by one steadily." May the true eye of each vexillologist rely on that inner vision which derives from knowledge and analysis and, while cherishing the brave sight of flags, may it never become blinded by them.

## **"GOD FOR HARRY! ENGLAND AND SAINT GEORGE!"**

### **THE EVOLUTION OF THE SACRED FLAG AND THE MODERN NATION-STATE**

*Ron Hassner*

[The flag] should be kept as inviolate as was the Holy of Holies in King Solomon's temple... those three sacred jewels, the Bible, the Cross and the Flag... command national reverence... [The United States must] develop define and protect the cult of her flag, and the symbol of that cult — the Star Spangled Banner — must be kept inviolate as are the emblems of all religions.

*Charles Kingsbury Miller, quoted in Robert Justin Goldstein, Saving "Old Glory": The History of the American Flag Desecration Controversy (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1995), p.13*

The flag of the United States of America is not sacred. Nor is the republic for which it stands. The flag is not the cross, nor is it the Bible, nor does it symbolize in any way those things that ought to call forth our deepest expressions of devotion or commitment... In our love for our nation and in our respect for its symbols we dare not call sacred or seek to consecrate by language or action things that are not sacred.

*Rick McKinniss, "Speaking Out: Our Flag is Not Sacred," Christianity Today, volume 33, number 12, September 1989*

## THE MIRACLE AT AGINCOURT

As dawn broke over the waterlogged field between Agincourt and Tramecourt on 25 October 1415, King Henry V of England found himself facing an overwhelming French force.<sup>1</sup> He had crossed the Channel to claim the French throne by right of succession and had successfully besieged the port of Harfleur. Having left a garrison to guard that conquered town, he began a 260-mile (416 k) march towards Calais with 5000 archers and 1000 armed men. Now, after 17 days of march, the English troops were in desperate physical condition. They had had little rest, had not eaten for days, were dispirited, cold, wet, and exhausted. Many had contracted dysentery from the swamps around Harfleur and from bad food. They had not seen the French for days when suddenly they found their road to Calais blocked by an immense French host, "like a countless swarm of locusts," their golden armor glittering in the sun.

The 28-year-old king and his 6000 troops were vastly outnumbered by their armored opponents, a formidable horde of at least 20,000 — perhaps even as many as 150,000 — French soldiers, 60 percent of whom were men-at-arms. The French were so confident of victory that several princes had left their knights behind. They had spent the previous evening playing dice over the ransom of Henry and his lords. So great was their eagerness to occupy the leading ranks of attack that their banners and standards had to be moved to the rear to make place for more nobles who wanted to share in the glory. The duke of Brabant had been in such hurry to reach the field that a banner had to be removed from a trumpet and attached to his lance to substitute for his standard, which had not yet arrived at the scene.

The condition of the English troops was so poor that the French delayed the onset of the battle for four tense hours, expecting their opponents to founder from hunger, exhaustion, or despair at the sight of their own might. Henry, fearing the imminent collapse of his men, felt forced to take the initiative and ordered the advance: "In the name of Almighty God and of Saint George, Avaunt [to the front] Banner in the best time of the year, and Saint George this day be thine help!" To the sound

of beating drums and trumpets and the battle cry "St. George! St. George!" the English army had come to within 200 yards (183 m) of the first French division when the French cavalry lunged, sounding their own battle cry — "Montejoie! St. Denis!"

The day had begun with three masses and final confessions, as Henry's chaplain-biographer reports in the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*. Henry, accompanied by his dean and several chaplains, had brought with him from England the royal chapel, containing various relics and a piece of the True Cross. When Henry gave the order to attack, the whole army knelt, drew the sign of the cross on the ground, bent and kissed the earth, each placing a piece of soil in his mouth as a token of reconciliation with God. The priests who were watching these events from the rear fell upon their knees<sup>2</sup>

in prayer before the great mercy-seat of God, crying out aloud in bitterness of spirit that God might even yet remember us and the crown of England and, by grace of His supreme bounty, deliver us from his iron furnace and death which menaced us.

The miracle they sought is precisely what they received, according to the most authoritative 15th century text about the battle, the *Brut* or *Chronicle of England*.<sup>3</sup> As the battle reached its apex, swords and axes replaced arrows and lances in a crowded nightmare of archers, horses, and knights up to their knees in bloodied mud or fighting atop man-high heaps of dead and wounded, stabbing, trampling, and clubbing their way through the tightly packed masses of heavy armor and flesh. At that moment, to the astonishment of all present, St. George himself appeared in the skies above the battle, guiding the English to victory:<sup>4</sup>

And that day the Frenche men syhe Seint George  
in the eyre ouer the hoste of the Englysshe men,  
fyghtyng ayenst the Frenche men; and therfor  
they worship & holde of Seint George, in  
Engelond, more than in many other londe... And

thus Almyhti God & Seint George brought oure enemyes to grounde, & yaf us the victory that day.

[And that day the Frenchmen saw St. George in the air over the host of the Englishman, fighting against the Frenchmen; and therefore they worship and hold of St. George, in England, more than in many other land... And thus Almighty God and St. George brought our enemies to ground, and gave us the victory that day.]

Within thirty minutes of the onset of battle the English had annihilated the core of the French army, leading a Parisian writer to comment: "Never since Christ has anyone done so much damage to France." In all between 7000 and 10,000 Frenchmen died at Agincourt; an additional 1500 were taken prisoner including several dukes, counts, and marshals plus the duke of Orleans himself. The English lost fewer than 500 men. Henry continued to Calais and eventually returned to England with the French crown.

On 4 January the next year the archbishop of Canterbury ordered the feast of Saint George to be proclaimed a *magis duplex* (major feast day), second only to Christmas and Easter, describing the saint as "the special patron and protector of the English nation." George was thus no longer merely protector of the crown, a position he had held since the founding of the Order of the Garter by Edward III, around 1348, but the official saint of the English nation. In this capacity he came to replace St. Edward the Confessor, whose banner had also flown over Agincourt. In the Bedford Book of Hours given to Henry's son, Henry VI, at Rouen on Christmas eve 1430, George is illustrated as the actual head of the English nation and at the same time as representing the English nation itself.

Henry VII, the grandson of Henry VI's uncle, made extensive use of St. George and his flag to solidify his tenuous claim to the throne. He was the first king of the Tudor dynasty which emerged from the 100-year long struggle over the throne between the dynasties of York and Lancaster ("the War of the

Roses"). Although he was only a distant and poorly documented relative of Edward III and Henry V, his use of St. George permitted him to create a strong link in the English popular imagination between himself, the Order of the Garter, and the Agincourt victory. After his success at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, in which he defeated the last Yorkist claimant to the throne, he ceremoniously rode through the streets of London with the standard of Saint George, by now a national emblem, which he then offered to St. Paul's Church. In 1495 an Act of Parliament prohibited all battle cries except those invoking the king or Saint George. By the 16th century the banner of Saint George could be found in most depictions of the English army. Henry VIII banned the celebration of any saint's day except his.

By Shakespeare's time George was fully established as the patron saint of England. He was provided with an English birthplace (Coventry) and an English lord for a father; his banner was unchallenged as the national flag of England. Three years after King James VI of Scotland succeeded to the throne of England in 1603 as James I, his heralds united the crosses of George and Andrew, to the dismay of both English and Scots. After the union with Ireland, the crosses were joined by the cross ascribed to Saint Patrick, forming the current Union Flag in 1801. Nevertheless, although overshadowed by the Union Flag, the cross of Saint George continued as the national flag of England and of the Church of England.

Visions of saints were not uncommon, even as late as the mid 15th century. Joan of Arc's visions some 15 years after the Battle of Agincourt inspired her to wrest from the English those very territories which Henry V had secured at Agincourt. The appearance of a saint in the midst of combat, intervening in the course of battle, as witnessed by tens of thousands of soldiers, was nevertheless an event unparalleled since the Crusades, when, at the Battle of Antioch in 1098, St. George had last appeared and had led Geoffrey of Bouillon to victory. A closer reading of the account in the *Chronicles of England* and its origins, as offered by John Schwetman, suggests, however, that the vision of St. George at Agincourt was in fact never claimed — at that time — to have taken place.

The *Brut* derives its description of the battle from the poem "The Batayll of Egyncourte" of 1525, which in turn is based on "The Battle of Agincourt" composed soon after the event.<sup>5</sup> The Batayll, giving an account of the prayers made before the battle, concludes "...Saynt George was sene ouer our hoste, Of very trouthe this syght men dyd se, Downe was he sente by the holygoste, To gyue our kynge the vycory [St. George was seen over our host, Of very truth this sight men did see, Down was he sent by the Holy Ghost, To give our king the victory]."<sup>6</sup> In contrast the original description in "The Battle of Agincourt" reveals that it was not the saint but his banner which was seen above the fray of battle:<sup>7</sup>

Auunt baner with oute lettyng Seynt George be  
fore avowe we hyme The baner of the Trynyte  
forth ye bryng And seynte Edward baner at this  
tyme Ouer he seyde lady hevene Quene Myn  
owne baner with hire shall be The ffrensshman  
seyde al be dene Seynt George all over oure  
Kyng they se...

[Avaunt (forward) banner without letting; St. George before, avow we him. The banner of the Trinity forth they bring and St. Edward's banner at this time, over the said lady heavenly Queen. Mine own banner with her shall be. The Frenchmen said... then St. George all over our King they see.]

The banners of the Virgin, the Trinity, and St. Edward (another protecting saint of England) accompanied that flag of Saint George. At Harfleur, Henry had placed the banner of Saint George with the royal standards over the gates of the town, replacing the French flags. The *Batayll*, according to Schwetman, misread the earlier poem and placed Saint George rather than his banner in the air above the English army. This detail then entered Agincourt lore and was recorded in the *Chronicles*. In fact it was English luck, superior weaponry, and tactics — plus French arrogance and confusion — which won the day at

Agincourt and not divine intervention, however much the banner may have inspired the soldiers.

This confusion, between the appearance of the saint himself and his cross symbol, as depicted on the English standard, is quite telling. It suggests not only a transition period in which there is a gradual transformation of the flag from sacred relic to secular symbol, but also a parallel process in which religious symbolism is appropriated by political actors to bolster national unity. The Battle of Agincourt in the early 15th century offers a focal point for both these processes. More important from a sociological point of view than historical facts are the memories of this battle and other battlefield "miracles" and the contribution of these myths to the conceptualization of the nation-state, as manifested in the form of flags and arms.

This paper addresses two riddles about modern flags. First, why is an abundance of religious symbolism to be observed on modern flags? Flags are designed to represent the very essence of a state — its history, population, geography, ideology. They must do so under great constraint, since the amount of information which can be conveyed by means of clearly distinguishable shapes and colors on a cloth of limited size is restricted. If the modern state is a secular institution, how can the persistence of such "charismatic" symbols on flags be justified? This question pertains to the *design* of flags.

The second question to be answered pertains to *usage*. Why are flags often treated as if they were sacred objects in state ceremony? Underlying these two questions is an assumption essential to any anthropological or sociological inquiry: the use of symbols and ceremonies is neither coincidental nor insignificant. The charismatic symbols which appear on the great majority of state flags and coats of arms today are there neither by accident nor by neglect. These symbols and our reverence towards flags contain considerable information about our political environment, its origins, and about the political institutions which operate today.

Both in their design and in their usage, flags exhibit the characteristics of a sacred object. How has this come about? The sanctity of the modern state flag is the outcome of a historical process of secularization utilized by political actors to forge

national unity. This process is traced here by demonstrating the way many flags have evolved from sacred relics displayed on the battlefield. Writings of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim are used to analyze the dual roles which flags, as the modern version of totems, have performed on the battlefield: they symbolize society and its overwhelming forces, as well as the presence of divine providence. The transformation of the flag, from miraculous object to abstract symbol, is then followed. The theories of Max Weber concerning the rationalization of charisma, applied to flags, show why it was necessary for flags to undergo that change in order to retain the magical power of relics.

That analysis presents the sociological story, but the most important flags today fulfill a political function. Political actors use them to maintain the cohesion of states in such times or circumstances when they are fragile or volatile. Social cohesion, as will be seen in a discussion of Robert Bellah's work, can be forged by means of a "civil religion." Political actors can assign flags a key role in such a civil religion in two ways: first, this is effected by adopting flags which contain charismatic designs, symbols which evoke the magical force of battlefield relics. Political actors can also utilize the religious force of flags by constructing state laws, ceremonies, rituals, and customs in which flags play a central and sacred role.

Thus, some flags will exhibit religious symbols and other flags will be treated as sacred objects; in some cases a flag will both look like *and* be handled like a sacred object. Both factors, the past associations of flags and the present interests of political actors, combine to explain the peculiar design and use of so many flags today. Peculiar, because they amount to treating the flag as a sacred object. An understanding of the religious origins of flags and the manner in which they are transformed into political tools illuminates the study of modern flag design and usage. More importantly, that understanding can be of great importance to students of society and politics wishing to understand the religious sources and current religious underpinnings of the modern state.

## FROM RELIC TO FLAG

The triple combination — the battlefield, the miracle, and the flag — runs like a golden thread through European history. It is first encountered in an account by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea about the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, an event which symbolically represented the transition of Constantine's Rome from the Pagan worship of *Sol Invictus* (the Unconquered Sun [god]) to Christianity.<sup>8</sup> On the evening of 27 October 312 CE, before his battle with the tyrant Maxentius and in response to his prayer for divine intervention, Constantine and his army beheld a vision above the setting sun — a cross outlined in rays of light with the words "In this sign you shall conquer." In a dream that night, Christ commanded Constantine to use this sign, a symbol of triumph over death, as a talisman of defense in battle. Constantine had a standard of gold and purple with sparkling jewels prepared, which was borne at the head of his army, and the monogram of Christ was set on his helmet and painted on the shields of his soldiers.

Constantine publicly attributed his great victory at the Milvian Bridge to these symbolic acts. Two days later, as Constantine's troops marched triumphantly into Rome, the people there first saw on the shields of the soldiers the Christian sign which was to become the sacred ensign of the armies of Constantine and, later, that of the Christian empire. This was, however, by no means a demonstration of pure Christian faith. Rather, it occurred within the context of a general superstitious belief in the power of magical signs, formulas, and rites. Eusebius referred to Constantine's banner, the *labarum*, as a "magic charm." It was defended by its own guard of soldiers during battle and was kept in a special tent. The emperor later made use of additional talismans of Christian character, for example by placing nails from the True Cross in his golden diadem and using another as a snaffle for his war horse. Until his conversion in 324, Constantine continued to honor the "Unconquered Sun," although he replaced it with the Christian monogram on coins.<sup>9</sup>

It is hardly surprising to find constant recourse to talismans during battle. The "supernatural forces" called upon in such

hours of need are in reality the forces of society, above all the necessity for unity and courage in facing a group task. So far as the soldiers are concerned, however, the physical presence of magic relics and symbols on the battlefield has always been an assurance of divine providence. The first vexilloids and flags were precisely such artifacts — they contained holy relics or were themselves seen as having been blessed by the heavens. Those standards often assumed the shape of holy artifacts or had amulets and saints depicted on them.

Ancient Egyptians marched to war beneath the sacred emblems of their gods, while the Greeks used as emblems sacred animals such as the Athenian owl, the pegasus, the minotaur, and the Boetian bull. Roman standards were guarded with religious veneration in the temples of the chief cities and later in churches, a system surviving today in the practice whereby the colors of a regiment are consecrated when new and then, when worn out, are laid up in a public building or church to disintegrate.<sup>10</sup> Among countless other examples are the practices of the tribes on East Timor which, until recently, kept their venerated *lulik* (sacred) flags in a special hut which housed other religious relics relating to tribal history.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, the design of flags came to depict magic in a stylized or abstract form. Saints and miracles were represented by conventionalized sacred shapes, inscriptions, or natural forms.

Almost 200 years after Constantine's vision, Clovis, ruler of the Franks and the third of the Merovingian kings, had a similar experience which earned him the title "the new Constantine."<sup>12</sup> There are numerous versions of this tale but all include a flag of divine origin, adopted before or during battle and resulting in victory and conversion. In 493 CE Clovis married Clotilda, a princess from Burgundia, and vowed to her that he would convert to her Catholic faith if he emerged victorious from the Battle of Montjoie. Clovis' original banner bore pagan symbols — three toads in some accounts, three crescents in others. These were exchanged by Clotilda for the fleur de lis, a symbol of the Trinity and the Virgin, either before or during a battle with a foreign foe. Clotilda had received the new symbol from a pious hermit, who in turn had been given the design by an angel.

Other traditions trace that emblem to Saint Denis, patron saint of French royalty, whose relics were kept in the same abbey church that was the burial place of the monarchs, along with the royal regalia and the Oriflamme, the sacred battle standard of the French armies. Saint Denis was identified with Dionysius the Areopagite, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as having been a convert of Saint Paul. He was said to have brought Christianity from Greece to France and with it the lily with its three petals representing learning, chivalry, and faith. In another account, he is said to have received it from an angel while residing in the castle of Montjoie. Such tales flourished in France, especially in periods when the right of French kings to the throne had to be justified and bolstered by linkage to divine providence, symbolically provided by tales of the divine origins of the French royal emblem. That was the case for Philip VI of France when challenged by Edward III of England, great-grandfather of Henry V, from whom Henry derived his claim to the French throne.

Thus it was that the forces facing each other at Agincourt, almost one thousand years after Clovis' vision, both bore the fleur de lis in their royal banners. The English wore the red cross of Saint George on their surcoats, while their French opponents bore the white cross of Saint Denis on their surcoats. The English battle-call, made famous by Shakespeare's Henry — "God for Harry! England and Saint George!" — was echoed by the French battle cry, "Montjoie-Saint Denis!"<sup>13</sup> Later, just as the cross of Saint George came to occupy the foremost position among the standards of the English army, the cross of Saint Denis would be adopted as the insignia of the standing French army which replaced the old feudal levies that had brought ignominious defeat at Agincourt. Today the white cross of Saint Denis and the fleur de lis appear on the flag of Quebec.

This was not the only sacred flag in the lore of the French monarchy. Saint Martin, like George a soldier, was patron saint of the Gauls. He was revered for a famous act of charity: according to tradition, while still a pagan serving in the Roman army, he had given a cold beggar half his cloak. His vision of Christ wearing that same cape led him to convert to Christianity in 340 CE. That very cape was said to have been used by

Clovis as a flag after his conversion — perhaps serving as the blue background for the fleur de lis — and was kept in a special sanctuary at Tours. The French *chape* (cape) thus was the origin of the term “chapel.”

The cape of St. Martin combined the major characteristics of a relic and a flag — it was an object imbued with magical powers on the one hand and a symbol of authority and identity in battle on the other. Other traditions suggest that the Abbey of Saint Denis was the repository of the Oriflamme, the sacred battle standard of the French army. That flag, also reputedly bestowed upon Clovis as a heavenly gift, was ceremoniously handed to French kings at the abbey before they marched into battle. A 14th century text explains:<sup>14</sup>

After being received by the monks in procession, the king is taken to the altar of the martyrs, whose relics and those of Saint Louis are placed on the altar, and the oriflamme is then folded under the corporals [vestment cloth]. At the conclusion of the mass, it is handed over to its chosen guardian. The guardian of the oriflamme holds it while it is being kissed like a relic. He then solemnly swears to guard it, to the honor of the king and his realm. Thus Charlemagne received the oriflamme before going to the aid of the Emperor Constantine of Constantinople against the Saracens.

In the period from the Crusades to the late Middle Ages a gradual transition from relic to flag may be witnessed. Where praying monks once carried relics into battle, they now guarded sacred flags borne onto the field of battle, a practice paralleled today in the banners of solemn church processions. As late as 1513, at the Battle of Flodden, the earl of Surrey carried the banner of St. Cuthbert, containing actual relics of the saint, which had supposedly worked miracles for Queen Phillipa at the Battle of Neville's Cross. Where once flags were believed to be imbued with magical powers by virtue of being sacred objects in and of themselves, gradually they came to fulfill this function by displaying symbols associated with those powers.

This process, by which relics are replaced by charismatic symbols, is the prime focus of this study. The term “charismatic symbol” is used here to denote a symbol — such as the Christian cross — associated with a religion or with an element of a religion (a saint, an event, a miracle) and which, because of this association, still retains some of the “magic” of the original. The symbols may not have the ability to cause miracles, but they remind the observer of the original element and its religious power. To do so, such a symbol must be linked to divine providence by means of an etiological tale. That story explains the miraculous origin of such a symbol, as in the examples of Constantine and Clovis. Most charismatic elements incorporated in modern flags have similar stories of origin which justify their position as venerated symbols.<sup>15</sup> From a sociological point of view the historical authenticity of the tale is of little significance. It is the popular credence in these stories and the social function which such beliefs fulfill which are of importance to sociologists and political scientists in understanding the workings of society.

Several examples illustrate the frequency of these flag “creation myths.” The cross of St. Andrew (a saltire) is said to have been revealed to King Achaius of the Scots the night before his great battle with Athelstan in 832 CE. Victorious, the king walked barefoot to the Church of Saint Andrew, patron saint of Scotland since the 8th century, and vowed to adopt this cross as his national device. Possibly Achaius had seen what appeared to be the chi (X), the first letter of the Greek monogram of Christ, as did Constantine before him. A different version of the monogram of Christ, IHS, used by the Holy League during the Thirty Years War, was opposed by the “Sun of Jehovah,” a Protestant emblem.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps its last appearance in similar form is in the inscriptions “Jehovah Nissi” (Hebrew for “the Lord is my banner”) and “For Christ & His Truths” on the famous Bloody Banner carried by the Scottish Covenanters in the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679.<sup>17</sup>

The Danish national flag, the Dannebrog, is said to have fallen out of the skies into the hands of King Valdemar II during his crusade into heathen Estonia in 1219. The 15th of June, the date of the Battle of Lyndanisse, is still celebrated annually

as Valdemar's day and the festival of the Dannebrog, one of the oldest European flags in continuous use.<sup>18</sup> The hexagram appearing on the flags of Israel, colonial Nigeria, and the standard of the sovereigns of Tonga is known alternatively as the "Shield of David" or the "Seal of Solomon." As a medieval charm, it was believed to have protected King David (or Solomon) against evil spirits in battle or to have been painted on a shield which later served Judas the Maccabee in battle. It was used as a decoration, in the official seals of Jewish communities, and on the flags of those communities from the mid 14th century until its adoption by the Zionist movement in the late 19th century.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout two millennia of European history, the power of a religious or magical symbol on a banner may be measured on the battlefield. King Edward I of England, King David of Scotland at the Battle of Northallerton, Saint Louis, and King Philip the Fair of France are all reported to have carried banners or standards of patron saints into battle. Many flag histories assert that the general use of banners and flags in Europe was based on an adoption by Crusaders of the practice of their Saracen opponents. The original orders of knighthood to carry banners were religious ones — the Hospitalers, Templars, and Teutonic Knights. Throughout the age of chivalry, heroic knights received the title "knight-banneret" in a ceremony of investiture which had to be conducted by the sovereign on the field of battle beneath the royal banner. Soldier-saints such as George, Sebastian, and Maurice were invoked by bishops as they blessed the newly dubbed knight and his weapon. Lesser knights who were not "bannereted" were not permitted to carry banners and had to bear the smaller pennons on their lances.<sup>20</sup>

It is by no means coincidental that the first appearance of political flags and the transition from charismatic relic to charismatic symbol take place in a period when the dividing line between religious conflict and political enterprise is constantly blurred. Saint George made his first appearance in battle during the Crusades — not surprisingly one related to his flag. At the Battle of Cerami in 1063 between the Normans and the Sicilian Muslims, the saint is said to have appeared on a white horse in shining armor carrying on his lance a white

banner decorated with a cross. At the moment this vision appeared to the Christian warriors, the same banner appeared on the lance of the Norman leader, Count Roger. Saint George later appeared to Geoffrey of Bouillon during the Battle of Antioch in 1098 and by 1189 his name was officially recognized as the English battle cry of the third crusade. In 1349 Edward III made him co-patron (with St. Edward and the Blessed Virgin) of the College of the prestigious Order of the Garter. His cross appeared at the center of the badge of the Order. Venice, Genoa, Bulgaria, and Portugal were among those states which displayed his cross or image on their flags and, after his miraculous appearance at the Battle of Puig, the Spanish kingdoms adopted him in their struggle against the Moors.<sup>21</sup>

Only after the Crusades did heraldic and political symbols begin to supplant ecclesiastical ones. That process, unfinished by the time of the Battle of Agincourt, indeed has not been completed to this day. There are claims that several modern flags had their origin in heroic acts of the crusader period, ones defined precisely by the opposition of one religion to another. The flag of Austria traces its legendary roots to the bloodstained white surcoat of Leopold of Babenberg at the Battle of Ptolemais in 1191.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the shield of Aragon is said to represent four bloody fingers drawn over a yellow shield.

The Scandinavian, Swiss, and Maltese crosses draw on the chief symbol of the Crusades, as does the Greek flag which represents the defense of Christendom against the forces of Islam. The blue and white of the Greek flag were used in the early wars against the Ottoman Empire, while the cross is a reminder that Greece has ever been a champion of Christianity against the Muslims. The crescent and star, prevalent in many Islamic flags, has been associated with a passage in the Koran or with the fall of Constantinople into Muslim hands in 1453, an event supposedly accompanied by the appearance of a star within the arms of a crescent moon. The eagle of Saladin which appears on the flag of Egypt recalls Muslim unity in the face of Christian invasion.<sup>23</sup>

Irrespective of their date of origin, in a majority of modern state flags and arms there are symbols, figures, and inscriptions which attest to the religious or magical power of those symbols

and which point at the reputed divine origin of that power. Even where such symbols are absent, the religious nature of the flag is reflected in the treatment it receives as a sacred artifact in the context of a civil religion. In either case, flags must fulfill a religious role in order to perform a political function. A sociological analysis of flags and their role in society can explain both the religious function of flags and the process by which material charisma came to be replaced by the charisma of symbols.

## THE ROUTINIZATION OF CHARISMA

The original power which magical flags had on the battlefield, its source, and its evolution must be examined. The work of Emile Durkheim on totemic religions can explain how flags, as modern versions of the totem, came to represent both society and the religious forces which drive that society. To understand how flags slowly change from magical objects to the abstract representations encountered today, the writings of Max Weber are of value. The rationalization of charisma reveals the fragility of charismatic authority and the need to routinize it until it assumes the form of legal authority.

In 1912 Durkheim embarked on his final and most ambitious project — to reveal *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (as his book was entitled) and thereby define that force for social cohesion which could substitute scientific rationale for the failing force of religion which he observed in society. He began his search by redefining religion. From his study of primitive societies he had learned that neither the supernatural nor the divine were necessary elements in religious rites and beliefs. Rather, Durkheim asserted that religion presupposes a division of the universe into two exclusive classes, the sacred and the profane. Furthermore, religion can be distinguished from an individualistic act of magic because it unites believers and practitioners into a single moral community, the Church.<sup>24</sup>

The elementary form of religious life which Durkheim discovered, more fundamental and primitive than animistic and naturalistic religions, was the cult of the totem. Focusing on the religious practices of Australian tribes, he revealed the totem as the designator of the elementary social structure, the clan. Each clan had its own totem — usually a plant, animal, or natural phenomenon — which served as its name and emblem, “a veritable coat of arms whose analogies with the arms of heraldry have often been remarked.”<sup>25</sup> While many books on flags introduce the totem as the earliest form of symbolic group identification and an early ancestor of coats of arms and flags, none probe the real social dynamics involved. Durkheim detailed the practical uses of the totem.

While they serve most often as identification during battle, totems are more than mere emblems or clan names. They possess a religious character and are employed in the course of religious ceremonies. It is in connection with the totem that things are classified as sacred or profane. It is "the very type of sacred things."<sup>26</sup> The totem is held to be the source of the tribe, its ancestry, and the origin of all that is sacred to the tribe. Yet ultimately it is only a symbol, a material expression of something far stronger: this mysterious force, which finds its expression in the totem, is the force of society itself. The totem is thus the junction between god and society:<sup>27</sup>

In first place, it is the outward and visible form of what we have called the totemic principle of god. But it is also the symbol of the determined society called the clan. It is its flag; it is the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from others... So if it is at once the symbol of the god and of the society, is that not because the god and the society are only one? How could the emblem of the group have been able to become the figure of this quasi-divinity, if the group and the divinity were two distinct realities? The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem.

Durkheim thus discovered the image of god in the anonymous and impersonal forces of society. Because many do not understand the forces of society acting upon the individual and the sentiments which they raise and because these forces seem external, people simplify those forces by associating them with a concrete object. Then some sign takes the place of this object and it is to this that people connect the emotions excited in them. This is the origin of the totem. The idea of society and its symbol are so closely united in the mind that emotions provoked by one extend contagiously to the other.

The clan and the obscure forces it generates are too complex an idea to be comprehended by the primitive mind as the source of these mysterious religious sentiments, while the totem — the "flag" of the clan — is both common to all and abstract enough to fulfill this function.<sup>28</sup>

While Durkheim's focus was neither on saints nor flags, his conclusion can be applied to the analysis of flags and their religious role on the battlefield. In the clash of nations each group generates immense forces felt by all individuals involved. These superhuman forces — the ecstasy of the battle, the power generated by the unity of the group, the hidden energy which (for example) erupted from within Henry's hungry and tired "band of brothers" as they charged against the overwhelming French cohort, the sudden courage which gripped the armies of Constantine, Charlemagne, and Geoffrey of Bouillon, the violent surge which drove Kings Achaius, Valdemar, and Clovis to victory — these forces were attributed to the symbolic essence of their society, the flag which they bore into battle.

The flag is not merely a successor of the totem. It forms the junction between the "anonymous and impersonal" forces of society which Durkheim identifies with religion and the unified political identity of all individuals in that society. Some of the earliest flags known to us — the standards of the early Egyptian *nomes* (city states) — represented at once both god, flag, and polity.<sup>29</sup> Likewise flags today must fulfill a religious function in order to realize their political function: in the flag, society and religion become one.

Max Weber's analysis of charisma sheds further light on the process by which this force was transposed into the abstract symbolism of the modern flag. Weber did not specifically analyze the role of flags, but his writings on charisma and obedience suggest a rationale behind the confusion surrounding the appearance of Saint George at Agincourt. Weber analyzed charisma in the context of his work on authority. According to Weber, authority assumes three forms — traditional, legal, and charismatic. The term charisma derives from the Greek *charizesthai*, "to favor," and *charis*, "grace."

The Weberian term, while shifting and ambiguous in his writings, refers to that quality of leadership which appeals to

non-rational motives.<sup>30</sup> The charismatic leader incarnates specific gifts of the body and spirit which are believed to be supernatural. He demands to be followed and obeyed by virtue of his divine mission; his charismatic claim breaks down if this mission is not recognized or if his gifts fail him.<sup>31</sup> The further back into history one looks, the more common are charismatic leaders arising in times of psychic, physical, economic, religious, ethical, or political distress. They are most needed when courageous leadership can salvage the identity and existence of society from foreign threat, i.e. at times of war.

Charisma can range from a divine calling for leadership to magical power and consequently is contagious.<sup>32</sup> Precisely because charismatic authority is based on the supernatural power of one individual, it must be transformed into permanence and legitimacy by the successors of that leader.<sup>33</sup> Otherwise authority ceases after the leader's passing or degenerates into base motives.<sup>34</sup> Successors to such a leader can secure permanent authority by transforming charismatic and traditional authority, acquiescence in leadership based on habit, into legal authority. After the process of formal rationalization develops, bureaucracy eventually emerges as the purest variety of legal authority.<sup>35</sup> Of all three bases for legitimacy of rule, legal authority is the most rational and the least permeated with grace or divinity and hence is the very opposite of charismatic leadership. In examining modern forms of authority and law, there is difficulty even in recognizing the charismatic roots underlying bureaucracy and institutionalization.

Weber, like Durkheim, did not dedicate any portion of his writings to the study of flags. Nevertheless his conclusions may be applied to the transformation which charismatic flags undergo. Charismatic flags are those believed to be imbued with divine power. Examples previously mentioned include flags falling out of the skies, appearing in visions or dreams, being granted by angels, or containing relics of saints. These flags are successful in commanding authority by being associated with a charismatic leader and by performing miracles, the most valuable of which are those achieved on the field of battle. A sacred flag which "fails to perform" on the battlefield, as was the case with the banner of Saint Cuthbert at Flodden, is perceived to have lost its charisma.

Nonetheless even successful charismatic flags must at some point be replaced. Just as the successors to a charismatic hero must find a way to routinize obedience after his death, the keepers of charismatic flags must find a way to routinize the charismatic powers of those disintegrating pieces of cloth. One manner in which the charismatic and traditional power of flags is routinized lies in a gradual shift from the flag as relic to the flag as symbol of that relic. Symbols, unlike relics, can be reproduced. The design of symbols on flags can be standardized and legalized. Whereas the original Oriflamme, authentic cape of Saint Martin, or true Dannebrog cannot survive forever, the crosses of Saint George, Saint Edward, and Saint Denis, the Muslim crescent, and the fleur de lis can and do survive.

The case of Saint Blaise, patron saint of Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik), is instructive.<sup>36</sup> His relics had been translated to Ragusa in the 11th century. Some time later, probably in the 12th century, his image began appearing on a civic flag which was kept in the city's principal church. The flag came to represent the relics at public events: the anniversary of the translation of his relics to the city was celebrated by means of a flag race and Saint Blaise was often referred to by citizens as "our standard bearer." The flag then began to symbolize the spirit of the city itself: as a Venetian dependency, Ragusa's installment of its foreign overlord involved ritualistic use of the flag. The palladium of the city, the flag was granted to the ruler and marched ceremonially into the church. Thus Saint Blaise and his flag came to stand for liberty from Venetian oppression.

Eventually, given the complexity of the saint's image as represented on flags, a process of routinization and legalization took place. Ragusa turned to a simpler flag with the inscription *Libertas* (liberty), although this change was by no means abrupt. Throughout the 17th century there were flags combining both image and word, or the *Libertas* flag with the colors of Blaise, as indicators of a gradual transition. The *Libertas* flag, a distant descendant of the relics of Saint Blaise, captured and expressed the charisma of those bones in a simple and replicable form.

According to this interpretation of Weber and Durkheim, many of the world's flags today have charismatic origins,

routinized to some degree or other. They represent a society on the one hand, and, on the other, the divine forces by which this society feels itself united and driven. To this sociological point of view must be added the standpoint of political science, for flags are not merely symbols — they are also tools of governance. As such, they have a function to fulfill, namely creating social cohesion among disparate individuals. Every new regime must establish its identity in a credible and recognized form. The flag is a means of normative communication and opinion-shaping, designed to affect the population as well as foreign governments and international institutions. By means of the flag, the government declares its existence as a political force, asserts itself as unchallenged and competent, familiarizes citizens with the corporate character of the regime, its personnel and their qualifications, and induces them to accept these assertions and to interact positively with the regime.<sup>37</sup>

Although often created by an elite, national symbols such as the flag appeal to common values, shared history, the passions and loyalties of the collective. Because of these characteristics, they can serve a wide variety of functions in the daily existence of the nation.<sup>38</sup> Flags crystallize national identity, create bonds among citizens through common public usage (during ceremonies and pledges of allegiance, for example) or by means of their design — often combining ethnic and religious symbols on a single flag. Flags motivate patriotic action (a “rallying around the flag”); they have the power to confer honor or, if withheld, shame. Of course the flag is not the only political tool available for forging the image of a state and encouraging loyalty to that image: the constitution, the anthem, heroes, myths, and monuments can all make similar contributions.

The memory of Agincourt served such a function. Through their retelling in plays, poems, and narrative, the events of 1415 were reformulated to highlight political interests. Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, premiering in 1599, was composed in a period when England began to be conceptualized as a unitary state rather than simply a country, people, or realm. The importance of the battle and the speeches framing it in the formation of a sovereign national image are evident throughout the play.<sup>39</sup> The inclusion of Welsh, Irish, Scottish, and English soldiers — quite

contrary to the historical reality — was one mechanism of creating connections across social classes and sub-national boundaries and a significant one, given the Tudor attempt to incorporate Ireland in the 1590s.

The choice of Saint George as the guardian of this union of peoples and the shrewd transformation of the church calendar and its festivals into a monarchical and nationalist calendar (Saint Crispin’s day is to be remembered as Agincourt day) all indicate a second process highlighted by the battle. It is not merely a juncture in the transformation of St. George from relic to flag, but also a formative event in the creation of a modern nation-state, a process in which the sacred flag is an indispensable component. As the title of this paper is meant to suggest, Agincourt is an extraordinary juncture at which god, nation, king, and saint — and, hence by implication, the flag — meet.

Each nation is a collective image rather than a natural reality. Søren Askegaard has argued that the most central and profound of the connotations which the individual has towards the society form a whole image, the totality of which can be expressed through the national flag. That flag becomes a sign of the nation’s myth of itself as a coherent community.<sup>40</sup>

It has been suggested that flags are successful in acting as cohesive agents because they appeal to those social forces which Durkheim associated with religion. Nations can routinize these emotions by designing flags which exhibit symbols that are associated with, and are derived from, charisma. Alternatively, societies can do so by treating the flag in the context of a civil religion as a modern sacred object. Thus the process comes full circle: flags begin as sacred objects but undergo secularization. At the end of this process they serve as political instruments either by exhibiting religious symbolism or by being used, once again, as sacred objects.

## THE MODERN SACRED FLAG

The sanctity of flags assumes different forms over time; two products of this process are flags which incorporate religious symbolism on the one hand and, on the other hand, flags which are treated as sacred objects. Those in the first category, a survival of charismatic symbols on modern flags, are neither the result of blind tradition nor of neglect. The frequency at which flags are adopted, changed, and forsaken exceeds the birth and death rate of nations by far. A change in regime or even government leadership may bring about a change in national flag design.<sup>41</sup> In French history, for example, the alternation between the secular/revolutionary Tricolor and sectarian/royalist symbols (the white flag and the fleurs de lis), involving repeated violent clashes, serves as an indicator of changes in the regime and society.<sup>42</sup>

Flag disputes between Norway and Sweden and between Panama and the United States as well as ones within Canada, Germany, Ireland, and Cyprus are among many which indicate the passions evoked by, and political significance attributed to, flag designs. In each of these cases, the choice of a new flag was the result of careful deliberation by special committees set up to choose the design as well as political pressures exerted by the government leadership, the public at large, or occasionally foreign countries or the expert opinion of specialists.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, charismatic symbols appear on an overwhelming number of state flags, arms, and similar emblems. Clearly, such symbols survive on modern flags as a result of conscious and frequent deliberations which affirm their importance, not because their origin has been forgotten over time.<sup>44</sup>

The three types of charismatic symbols on modern state flags and emblems may be designated explicit, implicit, and equivocal. Explicit symbols are those which evoke sectarian associations among adherents to the religion and among many non-members. These include crosses on European flags, quotes from the Koran on Muslim flags, depictions of religious artifacts (such as the prayer niche and pulpit in former flags of Afghanistan or the menorah on the arms of Israel),<sup>45</sup> religious sites (such as the Angkor temple on the Cambodian flag), and

references to deities (as in the sun on the Japanese flag), worship (in the arms of St. Vincent and the Grenadines), or an aspect of the religion's world-view (such as the *chakra* on the flag of India or the *um-yang* on the Korean flag).

On other flags the symbolism is implicit or partially hidden. This may be the result of an attempt to reconcile traditional religious symbolism with revolutionary or secular symbols. Such was the case on the 1945-1992 Mongolian flag which combined the *soyonbo*, ancient religious symbol of Lamaism, with the Communist star.<sup>46</sup> Various states formerly part of the Soviet Union combine traditional religious symbolism with secular emblems in their flags. The eagle on the Mexican national flag and the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe in several Mexican flags and state arms are all attempts to reinterpret traditional religious icons as modern symbols.<sup>47</sup> This can also be achieved by placing the flag in a religious context: the flag of Israel is often found in synagogues, for example. Regarding use of the flag of Mexico in shrines to the Virgin of Guadalupe, one government official commented that "these displays make the flag holy... they show that Our Lady and the flag are at the same level."<sup>48</sup>

At other times implicit symbolism may simply be the result of a complex religious meaning which lay observers cannot easily decipher. The "Eye of Providence" on the obverse side of the Great Seal of the United States has thus been the source of considerable speculation. Similarly, there are biblical references to the cedar on the flag of Lebanon and the Lion of Judah formerly appearing on the Ethiopian flag, allusions to the Holy Roman Empire or Byzantium in the use of the eagle on several European arms, a link to Saint Olav in the use of his axe on the Norwegian arms, and a reference to the Buddha in the leaves of the *bo* tree on the Sri Lankan flag. In the flags of the Arab Revolt in the early 20th century, black and white refer to the colors of the battle banners of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>49</sup> The flag colors of Ireland, India, and Pakistan as well as the pan-Arab colors<sup>50</sup> and the pan-African colors<sup>51</sup> contain veiled religious references.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, we are faced with a plethora of symbols on flags which might or might not be intentional allusions to religious

meaning. It is known, for example, that the Confederate Southern Cross was designed by the staff of General Beauregard after several incidents of confusion at the Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) involving the similarity between the Stars and Bars and the Union flag. It is not known if the choice of the saltire was intentionally of religious significance, although the prevalence of various crosses such as the Maltese cross and the cross of Saint George on many Confederate battle flags and other colors of Southern regiments, cannot be ignored. Similarly, various transmutations of the British Union Flag on flags of Commonwealth countries may or may not have "inherited" the symbolic significance of the saints' crosses. The intended meaning, however, is less significant by far than the emotions evoked by those who revere the flag. In response to the removal of the British Union Flag from the canton of the Canadian flag a Canadian clergyman wrote:<sup>53</sup>

As citizen and churchman I earnestly deplore the design of the projected new flag as pagan and a flat rejection of Canada's Christian heritage. The glory of the Union Jack is the union of three Christian Crosses. How unworthy, how unfeeling to replace so inspiring a symbol with one reminiscent of a hockey team or an Indian tribe. How can the Canadian Government expect priests and clergy to bless a national flag which utterly ignores our holy heritage?

Similar protests surrounded the intended preservation of the eagle as the arms of Austria — considered by progressive members of government too strong a link to the Holy Roman Empire — when it regained full sovereignty in 1955. The Adelsarchiv, a department of the Ministry of Interior which had been responsible for heraldry under the Austrian monarchy, forcefully intervened in the design process. It managed to preserve the royal symbol, although its orb and scepter were replaced by a hammer and a sickle. The arms were also reinterpreted as a symbol of sovereignty and freedom.<sup>54</sup>

The Southern Cross constellation appears on the flags of Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Niue, Papua New Guinea, and

the Australian states of New South Wales, Victoria, plus the Northern Territory. Is it intended as a religious reference? Should it awaken such associations in the minds of an observer? The cult of the Southern Cross in Brazil, "Land of the Holy Cross," and its connection there with the crosses of Christ and Avis led one flag analyst to conclude that it "readily attracts the attention and admiration... because of its disposition in a form paralleling the supreme symbol of Christianity."<sup>55</sup> Skeptics who might insist that a cross is merely the intersection of two lines and no more will be challenged to find any cross on a flag, diagonal or upright, used by a non-Christian state or regime.

Even when the intention is to shun religious associations, or when such associations lead to an undesired outcome, the symbolism may be unavoidable. All attempts to design a common neutral flag for organizations responsible for the monitoring and exchange of prisoners of war have failed. The 1929 Geneva Convention recognized the red cross, red crescent, and red lion and sun (then the emblem of Iran) but unsuccessfully tried to restrict the latter two to countries where those symbols were already in use. The 1949 Geneva Convention claimed that the red cross had been chosen as a "compliment to Switzerland," thus downplaying the religious significance of the cross in the Swiss flag itself.

Several countries, such as Pakistan and Malaysia, purposefully changed from the red cross to the red crescent for local usage. Israel has insisted on the use of a red Shield of David, as yet unrecognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and a red swastika flag may be seen in Korea. This partisan behavior surrounding a symbol which could in principle be interpreted as an innocent red "plus sign" (+) led one scholar to conclude that "the emblem as adopted by the Red Cross may in fact be viewed by some within or outside the movement as having a religious significance."<sup>56</sup>

The importance of charismatic designs in those flags calling for a suspension of war is further highlighted by the failure of flags in which they are absent. In 1931 Professor Nicholas Roerich designed a religiously neutral emblem to protect cultural assets in war. This emblem, three red balls within a red circle, was adopted by several states in numerous international

conferences, but was never used.<sup>57</sup> An attempt by Count Folke Bernadotte to replace the red cross by a red heart and to change the name of the organization to the International Committee of the Red Heart in order to "evoke respect in all humans irrespective of their religious denomination" never came to fruition.<sup>58</sup> As is suggested below, the disuse of flags which fail to combine religious symbols coherently or fail to suggest a common ground between opposing religious groups is often indicative of the failure of the state itself to accommodate two communities. Such failures are often correlated with the onset of civil wars or secessionist movements in those states.

## CIVIL RELIGION

The prevalence and importance of charismatic symbols on state flags seem to contradict their role of representing the modern state as a secular institution, yet the limited space available on flags has been allocated again and again to charismatic symbolism. The suggestion that religious elements in flags are necessary for the creation of a cohesive state image is alien to the intuition of secular citizens of a secular state. If many are driven by nationalism and patriotism rather than by religious sentiments, this is not only due to ignorance of the religious origins of the modern nation-state but because the modern political man is often defined by contrast to the religious man. Yet, as noted historian of religion Mircea Eliade has pointed out, like it or not, we are the descendants of *homo religiosus*, the outcome of a process of desacralization. While many attempt to free humans, the states in which they live, and the symbols which define those states from religious meaning, we continue to be haunted by the realities that secular citizens have often refused and denied.<sup>59</sup>

This tension within modern man can only be resolved by means of symbols and rituals which transform individual experience into spiritual experience. In the secular state this is frequently achieved by means of a civil religion. A civil religion, according to Ellis West, is<sup>60</sup>

a set of beliefs and attitudes that explain the meaning and purpose of any given political society in terms of its relationship to a transcendent spiritual reality, that are held by the people of that society, and that are expressed in public rituals, myths and symbols.

A civil religion satisfies the need for an emerging nation state to find unity within a secular belief system.

This need is especially important when the state is composed of a variety of ethnic and religious communities. In heterogeneous states such as the United States, Russia, or South Africa, civil religion can provide a mediation between ethnic

groups by exerting a pull away from ethnic particularity to those characteristics which the state considers morally and religiously universal.<sup>61</sup> This is essential when a republic attempts to elicit the ethical commitment of its citizens by supplying them with a purpose and a set of values.<sup>62</sup>

In order to function effectively, the group must have a condensed and highly general definition of the environment and of itself to serve as the group's conception of identity. In the words of the foremost student of civil religion, Robert Bellah,<sup>63</sup>

It is precisely the role of religion... to provide such a cognitively and motivationally meaningful identity conception or set of identity symbols... In sufficiently important circumstances the emotional investment in the maintenance of such superordinate systems is extremely great and may take the form of irrational attachment and hostile reaction to any threat. When this occurs one can say that the superordinate system has become in some sense "sacred." For certain persons or groups, symbol systems in the area of politics or kinship may be in this sense "sacred" without any direct relation to what is ordinarily thought of as religion.

The flag is a symbol of this kind and it is treated as sacred in states where civil religion plays a central function. This is in part because the flag constitutes a "hierophany," a term used by Eliade to designate the manifestation of the sacred in an object — the sacred "making itself seen."<sup>64</sup> As such, the flag is venerated not as the material object called a "flag" but as the manifestation of something greater, the sacred state. It maintains its original nature while also assuming the role of a sacred object. This has led some to view the sanctity of the flag in civil religion as an aberration, a confusion between the flag as means (a signifier of what is really sacred) and as end (the signified, the flag itself as sacred).<sup>65</sup> Those who conceive of the flag as a mere indicator conflate the actual practice of flag veneration with wishful thinking, the desire to see the flag used as a symbol

and no more. The sanctity of the flag can be demonstrated by observing three parameters — rituals and rules surrounding the flag, characteristics attributed to the flag, and the response to these two parameters by the religious community in the state.

Among the activities listed by Crampton as useful for creating a given image for a state are "laws and regulations to ensure the respectful and correct use of the flag and national emblem by members of the public and enhance their status and endow them with 'sacred' properties," linking this flag in national propaganda material with "emotion generating incidents or legends already established in the public consciousness," as well as using the flag for public oaths, on the coffins of recognized heroes, establishing official regulations for its design, proportions, and colors, and connecting it with national monuments and war memorials.<sup>66</sup> Such practices in particular flourish in states of heterogeneous composition where no one traditional religion can command the allegiance of all citizens.

There is a high degree of symbolism and legalism connected with flags in highly centralized states such as the former Soviet Union. Such symbolism serves to reinforce loyalty to the state, its leadership, and the goals which the rulers and the ruling ideology postulate. The state flag of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, for example, was defined and described in exacting detail in a 1953 pamphlet, *The Technical Conditions of the BSSR State Flag*.<sup>67</sup> Flag specifications for the Soviet Republics were decreed by Moscow.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, provisions of the Flag Code and other American flag legislation are remarkable for their detail and specificity, designating how the flag is to be positioned in relation to the magnetic poles,<sup>69</sup> what it may or may not touch, which objects similar in design may or may not be used, and the penalties arising therefrom.<sup>70</sup> The Code, the outcome of several National Flag Conferences and Public Laws approved by the President, is incorporated into the *United States Code* (federal law) and into the laws of most states. This is the rationalization process of religious charisma in its purest form.<sup>71</sup>

The use of the flag in ceremony reveals some of its sacred characteristics. Throughout the world, flags are honored by being placed in central locations around which state ceremonial activities take place. The display, parading, and solemn transfers

of flags between military units form a central part of the official Memorial Day and Independence Day ceremonies in Israel. The hoisting and lowering of flags, the height to which flags are raised, the activities accompanying these procedures (salute, song, silence), and the roles of the individual and the group in these ceremonies convey a great deal of information about the society's conceptions of space, time, memory, death, joy, hierarchy, gender, and similar fundamental themes.<sup>72</sup> Students of civil religion have not exhausted the interpretation of the meaning of these rituals and by no means can they be dismissed as mere decorum.<sup>73</sup>

As Durkheim indicated in his analysis of the distinction between sacred and profane, sacredness is contagious. The use of flags on the caskets of fallen or deceased US veterans is an example of this quality.<sup>74</sup> A flag, which has been furnished by the service branch but which has no affiliation with the deceased other than its placement on the casket for the duration of the funeral ceremony, is solemnly passed on to a next of kin. The Flag Code does not detail the intended purpose of this practice, but it can be assumed that the flag is either believed capable of transferring some quality from the deceased or is capable of retaining a memory of the ceremony itself. Similarly, the tradition of distributing US flags flown over the Capitol in Washington, which has reached gargantuan proportions, suggests that flags are seen as recalling the significance of those places and events at which they were flown.<sup>75</sup> For this same reason people honor historic flags, especially banners which have participated in combat.

Flag contagion at its most radical could be observed in Germany under the Nazi regime. Hitler had kept the *Blutfahne*, stained with the blood of his comrades during the unsuccessful 1923 putsch, and this "blood-flag" was thereafter treated as a sacred relic by the Nazis, with its own shrine and bodyguard. In Nazi rallies it was used to "impart virtue to all the other Nazi flags" by touching new standards.<sup>76</sup> Many military units in other armies adopt a variation of this procedure in demanding that new recruits swear an oath of allegiance which involves kissing or otherwise touching the flag. Alternatively, one soldier will often touch the flag on behalf of all those present.<sup>77</sup>

In Israel, certain segments of the religious population have embraced the flag as an integral part of their religious paraphernalia.<sup>78</sup> It is compared to other "accouterments" used in celebrating holy days: it is the sacred object associated with Independence Day and prayers and psalms have been composed for this purpose to be recited before and during the raising of the flag. It also plays an important role in religious services during Independence Day, despite the contentiousness of the issue of hanging a secular symbol in a synagogue. In response to criticisms, rabbis have developed an elaborate system of rulings in regard to the positioning and permanency of flags displayed in synagogues, based on varying interpretations of the symbolic significance of these flags.

In the United States the only flag which may be placed above the Stars and Stripes is the church pennant and then only during navy religious services at sea, a curious regulation which is as indicative of the relative sanctity of the US flag as it is of the sanctity of the church pennant.<sup>79</sup> Equally interesting is the Flag Code's listing of the days on which flag display is endorsed. Independence Day, Veterans Day, and Memorial Day are obviously included, but Thanksgiving Day and Christmas are also mentioned although the high holidays of other religions are not on this official list.<sup>80</sup> A proposal in New Hampshire to fly the flag at halfstaff on Good Friday was based on political motivations but encompassed judicial and religious aspects.<sup>81</sup>

Orthodox and fundamentalist religious groups in countries with a well developed civil religion often respond with anger or protest to these rituals, which are overt indicators of the religious status which these flags have assumed. When the Shield of David became a symbol of the secular Zionist movement, certain Jewish religious groups began boycotting it and in several cases tore it from curtains and other decorations in synagogues. Most contentious has been the refusal by certain religious sects in the US to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag.

Thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious minorities across the United States were persecuted for their refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, especially following a 1940 US Supreme Court ruling sanctioning laws which made

## CONCLUSION

the Pledge mandatory. The 1930s and 1940s saw incidents of blinding, castration, maiming, murder, and the expulsion of individuals from town in the effort to force these groups to recite the Pledge.<sup>82</sup> The legions of those abjuring the Pledge were not insubstantial, but included some two million Jehovah's Witnesses, 250,000 Mennonites, close to 80,000 Amish, around 5000 Christadelphians, over 600 Jehovahites, the Molokans, the Elijah Voice Society, and the Church of God.

Religious objections in the US to the flag salute are of two kinds. On one hand, there is the clear refusal to participate in any political activity, to demonstrate obedience to the authority of an earthly government, and the attempt to avoid excess involvement in secular society. Similar beliefs had earlier been held by Anabaptists, Waldenses, Lollards, and perhaps primitive Christians. From this type of objection little can be learned about the status of flags in the eyes of protesters. The other form of religious objection, however, is based on the Second Commandment prohibition against the fashioning of graven images and any bowing down to or serving of those images.<sup>83</sup>

This commandment is read to suggest that flags constitute graven images which offer a substitute for the true image of God and that bowing to the flag thereby constitutes idol worship. Hence, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses consider this act a gross sin against God which could result in everlasting damnation. Members of the church who violate these rules are considered "lost" in the eyes of God and are subject to "disfellowshipping" (expulsion from the church). Pro-saluters argue that neither the American state nor the president claim to be God and thus saluting is not strictly comparable to bowing down to a god. Hence, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the flag salute only constitutes a problem when the flag and the state are suspected of acting, or claiming to act, in a religious capacity.

In June 1989, in response to the US Supreme Court ruling in *Texas v. Johnson* concerning flag burning, President George Bush proposed a constitutional amendment to the Bill of Rights which would read: "The Congress and the states shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." This led an editorialist in the *Journal of Church and State* to ask:<sup>84</sup>

How is it possible to "desecrate" a secular symbol of a secular state? How does one make sacred a symbol, of something that is not sacred?... This American proclivity threatens the very essence of America's nationhood and the integrity of authentic religious faith. In doing so, the state becomes an idol and religion is profaned.

This essay has attempted to address this contentious issue by providing an analysis of the treatment of sacred flags and the charismatic designs common on modern state flags. It has detailed the sociological process which has shaped the flag and its significance — a rationalization and routinization in which charismatic artifacts are gradually transformed into charismatic flags and eventually into charismatic symbols on flags, i.e. the "religious symbols" of current state flags. The political science aspect has also been considered. By harnessing the religious power of flags, political actors use flags to reinforce a nation's civil religion. Flags forge state identity and unity by exhibiting charismatic symbols and by playing sacred roles in state ceremony. Thus in many cases modern flags are treated similarly to the ancient charismatic banners utilized before the process of routinization occurred.

Future research could clarify both processes. It would be useful to quantify and categorize the charismatic symbols appearing on state flags and arms and to correlate those with the countries using them and their religious composition. In what ways or degrees are the flags of states with a history dominated

by a single religion different from flags designed to forge a civil religion? If the expectation is for charismatic designs in the former case and a flag cult in the latter, is it reasonable to expect both in an ethnically heterogeneous state dominated by a single religion such as Israel? Which of the following best correlates with charismatic flag design — a religiously observant population, a theocratic regime, a history conceived in religious terms, or a political link with a great power which demonstrates these attributes?

Another avenue for possible research is the correlation between civil strife and the inability of certain flags to strike a common ground among ethnic groups. The neutral flag designed for the common Greek-Turkish government in Cyprus failed. It was used by neither side, each preferring instead to fly the flag of its ally — Greece and Turkey, respectively — flags which were intentionally utilized to express antagonism towards the opposing religion. In Ireland, a “flag of union” was developed in the attempt to combine symbols for both Protestants (orange) and Catholics (green). This compromise has been widely rejected by the former, who maliciously interpret the orange as the pope’s color and prefer the British flag instead.

These failures of flag design and the many incidents of violence caused by demonstrative use of one flag over another raise serious doubts about the possibility of creating neutral flags acceptable to all parties involved. Can flags play a role in sustaining a disintegrating society by positing a shared national image or is their acceptance and rejection by people always indicative of the success of underlying political processes? Can a flag expressive of civil religion ever offer a substitute for a bland neutral design without expressing preference to one religious group over another?

What is the relationship between popular insurrection and the appearance of charismatic symbolism on flags of rebellion? The Free French used the Cross of Lorraine on their flag of defiance against the Vichy regime<sup>85</sup> and the German resistance movement against Hitler used a cross in its flag,<sup>86</sup> yet in neither case was the conflict religious *per se*. What role can a charismatic symbol play when the cause is already clearly defined by the presence of a distinct foe? The flags of the French Revo-

lution, defined largely by opposition to the Catholic church in France, were kept in the cathedral of Notre Dame and blessed by the archbishop. What conditions allow a flag cult to thrive in a secular revolutionary context?

Finally, those states which exhibit neither flag cult nor charismatic symbolism on flags and arms must be examined. How can vexillologists account for states which seem to invest little effort in promoting their flags? What characterizes these states in terms of regime type, demography, and ideology? How do these nations differ in their attitude towards conflict and social cohesion? How are these flags treated? Do other state rituals compensate for the absence of a flag cult?

Whatever findings future scholars present on these questions, the sacred flag remains an issue pertinent to sociologists, political scientists, and vexillologists. Neither charismatic symbols nor the treatment of flags as venerated objects are accidental or without consequence. Both can reveal significant information about the history of a modern state, its religious origins, and the ongoing relationship between religion and the state.

## NOTES

1. See John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking, 1976); Earl of Orrey, *The History of Henry the Fifth* (London: Cornmarket, 1969; original from 1668); Harold F. Hutchison, *King Henry V, Biography* (New York: John Day, 1967); Margaret Wade Labarge, *Henry V, the Cautious Conqueror* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975); Elizabeth Hallam (editor), *The Chronicles of The Wars of the Roses* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988); Frank Taylor and John S. Roskell (translators), *Gesta Henrici Quinti; The Deeds of Henry the Fifth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975; original probably around 1416-1417); Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, *Henry V, the Typical Medieval Hero* (New York: Putnam's, 1901); Alfred H. Burne, *The Agincourt War: A Military History of the Latter Part of the Hundred Years War from 1369 to 1453* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956); E.F.Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485*, in Sir George Clark (editor), *The Oxford History of England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961); Christopher Rothero, *The Armies of Agincourt* (London: Osprey, 1996); E. F. Jacob, *Henry V and the Invasion of France* (London: Hooder & Stoughton, 1947); Aaron Hill, *King Henry the Fifth, or The Conquest of France by the English — A Tragedy* (London: Cornmarket, 1969; original from 1723); William Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry V*, in W. J. Craig (editor), *Shakespeare, Complete Works* (Oxford: University Press, 1991).

2. Taylor, *ibid*, pp. 88-89.

3. Friedrich W. D. Brie (editor), *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England* (Oxford: University Press, 1960). There were several versions of this text published in the mid to late 15th century.

4. Brie, *The Brut*, version 596, *ibid*, as quoted in John W. Schwetman, "The Appearance of Saint George above the English Troops at Agincourt: The Source of a Detail in the Historical Record," *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 41, No. 3, September 1994.

5. *Ibid*.

6. The Batayll of Egyngcourte, quoted in Schwetman, lines 307-322.

7. The Battle of Agincourt, quoted in Schwetman, lines 369-376.

8. Andrew Alfoldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948).

9. *Ibid*; Arnold Rabbow, *dtv-Lexikon politischer Symbole* (Munich: dtv, 1970).

10. E. M. C. Barraclough, *Flags of the World* (London: Warne, 1965).

11. David Rogers, "Flags of East Timor," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 23-32.

12. William M. Hinkle, *The Fleur de Lis of the Kings of France, 1285-1488* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1991); Wolfram von den Steinen, *Chlodwigs Uebergang zum Christentum* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969).

13. The ballad of St. George for England runs "St. George, he was for England, St. Denis was for France; Sing, Honi soit qui mal y pense," thus linking Saint George to the motto of the Order of the Garter. Mrs. Bury Palliser, *Historic Devices, Badges and War-Cries* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870).

14. From the introduction to the *Cité de Dieu* by Raoul de Presles (1376), paraphrased by Hinkle, pp.163-164.

15. Barraclough, *ibid*; Christian Pedersen, *The International Flag Book in Color* (New York: Morrow, 1971); William Crampton, *The World of Flags: A Pictorial History* (London: Studio, 1992).

16. For the use of saints' flags during the Thirty Years' War, see A.W.Etchells, "The Development of Military Flags Exemplified in the Thirty Years' War," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XIX, Nos. 3-5, pp. 139-146.

17. The monogram (XP) is currently used in Germany and Britain as a sign of peace, perhaps because of its resemblance to the Latin word *pax* (peace); cf. Whitney Smith, "Symbols of Peace and Pacifism," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 6, pp. 211-222.

18. Sven Tito Achen, "Dannebrog," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. VIII, No.4, pp. 146-165.

19. Gershom Scholem, "The Star of David: History of a Symbol," *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

20. Barraclough, p.3.

21. Rebecca Colman, "Saint George for England," *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 270, No. 1575 (1997).

22. "The Austrian Red-White-Red," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXIII, No. 5, pp. 176-181.

23. "New Flags: Arab Republic of Egypt," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, pp. 39-44.

24. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, translated by Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), p.134.

25. *Ibid*.

26. *Ibid*, p. 140.

27. *Ibid*, p. 236.

28. *Ibid*, p. 251.
29. Rodney C. Walker, "The Earliest Flags," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 27-29.
30. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons (New York, 1992); translator's note, p. 281.
31. Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, editors, *From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University, 1958), p.246.
32. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon, 1993), pp. 78 and 164.
33. Max Weber, "The Meaning of Discipline," Gerth, p.262.
34. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," Gerth, p.125.
35. Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions," Gerth, p.299.
36. This information is based on James Marill, "St. Blaise and Liberty: The Flags of Ragusa," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, Nos. 1-3, pp. 96-110, although Marill does not engage in an analysis of flag transformation.
37. W.G. Crampton, "The Promotion and Acceptance of Political Symbols with Particular Reference to the German Flaggenstreit of 1926," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, Nos. 1-3, pp. 47-56.
38. Karen A. Cerulo, *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University, 1995), pp. 14-33.
39. Jonathan Baldo, "Wars of Memory in Henry V," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1996); Steven Marx, "Holy War in Henry V," *Shakespeare Survey*, Vol. 48 (1995).
40. Søren Askegaard, "The National Flag and the Myth of the Nation," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, pp. 16-22.
41. See, for example, "New Flags: St. Vincent and the Grenadines," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, No. 6, pp. 203-208. St. Vincent and the Grenadines changed its flag after the Democratic Party defeated the Labor Party in elections in 1984.
42. George Pasch, "French Attitudes Towards the Symbols of France," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 4, pp. 119-140.
43. This occurred in several instances; see for example "New Flags: Island Territory of Aruba," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, pp. 83-94.
44. The writer's use of the term "deliberation" is not intended to indicate that the institutions responsible for designing new flags are necessarily conscious of the origins of these symbols or the rationale behind their appeal.
45. Whitney Smith, "National Flags of Modern Afghanistan," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XIX, No. 6, pp. 337-359.
46. Brambyn Rinchen, "Mongolia's Ancient Symbol: The Soyombo," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 6, pp. 255-261.
47. Whitney Smith, "La Virgen de Guadalupe: A Contribution to Mexican Political Symbolism," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 136-142.
48. Mexican cultural attaché, quoted in Cerulo, p. 135. For the appearance of traditional symbols in Mexican flags see Teodoro Amerlinck, "Symbols of Mexico," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXI, No. 6, pp. 204-216, and John L. Cross, "Flags of Mexico: An Overview," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XIX, No. 3-5, pp. 110-126.
49. See Robert E. Wyllie, "The Colors of Islam," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXII, No. 6, pp. 252-260.
50. Based on the Arab Revolt flag; see Sulaiman Musa, "Origins of the Arab Revolt Flag," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 6, pp. 266-273.
51. If indeed they are based on the flag of the Ethiopian emperor who claimed to be a descendant of King Solomon and the queen of Sheba; see Crampton, pp. 136-137.
52. For the significance of flag colors, see Arnold Rabbow, "Flag Color Specifications," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 3, pp. 95-104, and Seamas Ó Brógain, "Further Reflections on Flag Color Specifications," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, pp. 58-61.
53. Quoted in John Ross Matheson, *Canada's Flag: A Search for a Country* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980), p.198.
54. Norber Lesser and Manfred Wagner, *Oesterreichs Politische Symbole* (Vienna: Boehlau Verlag, 1993).
55. Juan F. Aparicio, "The Southern Cross", *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, pp. 148-154.
56. Dr. Peter Macalister-Smith, "Symbols of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 5, pp. 223-233.
57. Rabbow, p.197.
58. *Ibid*, p.209.
59. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*,

translated by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1987), p. 204.

60. Ellis M. West, "A Proposed Definition of Civil Religion," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 22 (Winter 1980), quoted in Dr. Scot Guenter, "Civil Religion as a Political Tool: Bush, Dukakis and the Pledge," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVII, No. 5, p. 168.

61. Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), p.108.

62. *Ibid*, pp. 176-177.

63. Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), pp.11-12, p. 261.

64. Eliade, pp. 11-12.

65. Sheldon H. Nahmood, "The Sacred Flag and the First Amendment," *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Spring 1991).

66. Crampton, 1987.

67. V.A.Sokolov, "Evolution of the State Symbols of the Byelorussian S.S.R.," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, pp. 108-117.

68. "New Flags," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, pp. 19-27.

69. Title 4 of the Flag Code, Sections 7j and 7o. See Whitney Smith, *The Flag Book of the United States* (New York: William Morrow, 1970); Robert L. Loeffelbein, *The United States Flagbook* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 1996), commenting that not all streets run east-west or north-south, has called for more detail on this section of the code.

70. See Titles 36, 18 and 4 in *United States Code*.

71. The degree to which minute subsections of the Code are continuously challenged, interpreted, and reinterpreted does suggest, however, that for some the Code itself has assumed a prominence short only of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

72. Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983); Don Handelman and Elihu Katz, "State Ceremonies in Israel — Remembrance Day and Independence Day," in Don Handelman, *Models and Mirror: Towards and Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990).

73. Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, p.170.

74. U.S. Flag Code, Title 38, Chapter 23, Section 901.

75. In 1985 more than 90,000 such flags were raised above the Capitol for 15 seconds each, as many as 10,471 flags on a single day. Scot M.

Guenter, "This Flag Flew over the U.S. Capitol," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, pp. 147-159.

76. Crampton, 1992, p.141.

77. *Ibid*, p.156.

78. Aaron Ahrend, *Israel's Independence Day — Research Studies* (Bar-Ilan University, 1998).

79. The Flag Code, Title 4, Section 7c.

80. *Ibid*, paragraph 174 (d).

81. Anne del Prado, "Flag Antics," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, pp. 27-32.

82. Jerry Bergman, "Religious Objections to the Flag Salute," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, pp. 178-195; Jerry Bergman, "The Modern Religious Objection to Mandatory Flag Salute in America: A History and Evaluation," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring 1997).

83. Exodus 20:4-5.

84. James E. Wood, "Making the Nation's Flag a Sacred Symbol," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Autumn 1989). Note also the title of an article on flag mistreatment in Turkey and Greece by Emmet V. Mittlebeeler: "Flag Profanation: An Aegean Perspective," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, pp. 78-83.

85. This cross is also said to have appeared to Charles V of France in a Constantine-like vision. A cross in this shape was used as early as 570 CE on Byzantine coins under the rule of Justin II. Pierre Marot, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix de Lorraine* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1948).

86. Arnold Rabbow, "A Flag Against Hitler: The 1944 Flag Proposal of the German Resistance Movement," *The Flag Bulletin*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 3-4, pp. 167-181.

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**FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION:**

The illustration of coats of arms, attributed by medieval heralds to the Holy Patrons of England at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, are taken from designs of Cecil Humphery-Smith executed by the late John Bainbridge, with kind permission of the trustees of The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, Canterbury, England.