



ISSN: 1309 4173 (Online) 1309 - 4688 (Print)
Volume 4 Issue 3, p. 173-192, October 2012

After the End: Rebuilding Post-Imperial Societies *Bitiş'ten Sonrası: İmparatorluk Sonrası Toplumlarını Oluşturmak*

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Öz

Bu makale 20. yy Türk lideri Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ile 5. yy. Hristian lideri Augustin'in liderliklerini analiz ederek iki imparatorluk sonrası toplumunun oluşumunu incelemektedir. Her iki lider de halklarına değerli alternatif gelecekler sunabilmişlerdir. Bu makale iki liderin birbirine benzer hitabet stratejileri kullanarak güçlü bir şekilde halklarının umutlarını, rüyalarını ve beklentilerini etkileyip belli başlı temel sorunlarına akla yakın çözümler sağladıkları tezini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Roma İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Augustin, Atatürk*

Abstract

This article examines the construction of two post-imperial societies comparatively by analyzing the leadership of a twentieth century Turk, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and a fifth century Christian, Augustine of Hippo. Both leaders offered credible alternative vision for their people. This article argues that both leaders provided feasible answers to a handful of basic questions that underlie any viable social order, using similar rhetorical strategies to powerfully reshape the hopes, dreams, and expectations of those they influenced.

Key Words: *Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, Augustine, Atatürk*

A Useful Paradigm: The Suzerainty Treaty

The task at hand is to find, and describe, common themes in two world-changing documents. Given a plethora of complex data, which meta-pattern will help to clarify things, bring order out of chaos, meaning out of confusion? This study applies a paradigm that first appeared in the essays of Biblical scholar Meredith Klein.

Several millennia before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), another military leader and statesman climaxed his career by addressing his people with one final oration, spread over several days. With language that was in turns legalistic and lyrical, Moses summed up for Israel the events that had brought them to that point in their history, and the requirements that the new life they were about to enter would impose upon them. The Book of Deuteronomy impressed the inspired vision of Moses upon Israel, providing explanations that were cited in future challenges, such as three sneering questions addressed to the epitome of Israel at the

beginning of his public ministry.¹ The patterns of power and persuasion employed by Moses still provide insights today's researcher can find profitable.

The issue is the definition of a social order. In his book *The Treaty of the Great King* Klein analyzed the book of Deuteronomy in terms of its cultural and historic setting, and suggested that it was modeled on the suzerainty treaty of its day.² YWYH, as the Great King, treats with Israel, as the subject people, specifying expectations and requirements on the parts of both parties. Klein summarized the irreducible criteria as:

- I. Preamble: Covenant Mediator, Deut. 1:1-5
- II. Historical Prologue: Covenant History, Deut. 1:6-4:49
- III. Stipulations: Covenant Life, Deut. 5:1-26:19
- IV. Sanctions: Covenant Ratification, Deut. 27:1-30:20
- V. Dynastic Disposition: Covenant Continuity, Deut. 31:1-34:12

Someone makes the covenant, and explains the reasons why, at a specific point in history, a new social order needs to be embraced. The covenant maker, the treaty imposer, the suzerain, lays out his expectations for the behavior of the subject people, demands their participation, and spells out the consequences of violating the covenant. Finally, the suzerain makes it clear how the new social arrangement will be propagated. He describes the mechanisms for succession planning.

Klein's paradigm was developed and applied in a variety of contexts by other scholars and writers. Ray Sutton absorbed the various ways that Klein presented the components of the covenant, then applied the paradigm to the Books of Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Matthew, all of which broke down into five logical segments. When he shared these insights with a study group, another member, David Chilton, discovered that this same pattern brought cohesion and clarity to his in-progress exposition of the Book of Revelation. The fine-tuned version of the five-point covenant model that emerged from this circle of scholars, which grew to include George Grant and Gary North, can be summarized thus:

1. Transcendence.
2. Hierarchy / authority
3. Ethics
4. Oath / judgement / sanctions
5. Succession / continuity / inheritance

This study argues that Augustine and Atatürk both provided intellectually and emotionally satisfying answers to all five questions in their signature works, *The City of God* (City) and *Speech* (Nutuk). This structure gave their insights both immediate credibility and generation-spanning relevance. To launch and maintain a new order, visionaries must tell their followers:

¹ Matthew 4. Luke 4.

²Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 17.

1. Who's in charge, here?
2. To whom do I report?
3. What are the rules?
4. What happens if I obey / disobey?
5. Does this outfit have a future?³

How do these principles apply to the documents at hand?

The First Principle: Transcendence, Historical Prologue

A new world has arrived. But where did it come from? And how did it get here?

A new reality requires a new validation, a new transcendent justification. This includes fresh values to embrace, and revised evils to revile. Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem demonstrates that no system of rule-based reasoning can be understood in terms of its own frame of reference.⁴ This is true of social orders as well as of mathematical systems. Unless a society points to something beyond itself, it has no transcendent reason to exist.

A moment of transcendence is a moment of transition. Klein's *historical prologue* speaks of a decision point. The old order is dead. The new order has arrived. The doomed empire might strike back, but in vain; a new hope appears. The successful world-changing message has a negative and a positive element, a devil and a deity, something bad to shun, something good to embrace.

How, then, did Atatürk and Augustine's messages incorporate the transcendent element every significant document needs?

Atatürk and the First Theme

The Book of Deuteronomy presents Moses as a sage, a leader, bequeathing his nation a retrospective glance at the trials, traumas, struggles, and victories that brought them to this point in their history. In *Nutuk*, Kemal Atatürk did the same. His nation had encountered, and triumphed over, the greatest threat they'd ever faced to their cultural survival. A millennium of unbroken victories had been followed by several centuries of contraction, climaxing in a final attempt to obliterate the Turkish national identity. In the stirring words that open this epic speech, Atatürk hints at the devil of his cosmology, and makes it plain where the shame, blame, and opprobrium rest:

Gentlemen,

I landed at Samsun on the 19th May, 1919. This was the position at that time:

³ Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical principles for government* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), xiv.

⁴ Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

The group of Powers which included the Ottoman Government had been defeated in the Great War. The Ottoman Army had been crushed on every front. An armistice had been signed under severe conditions. The prolongation of the Great War had left the people exhausted and impoverished. Those who had driven the people and the country into the general conflict had fled and now cared for nothing but their own safety. Wahideddin, the degenerate occupant of the throne and the Caliphate, was seeking for some despicable way to save his person and his throne, the only objects of his anxiety. The Cabinet, of which Damad Ferid Pasha was the head, was weak and lacked dignity and courage. It was subservient to the will of the Sultan alone and agreed to every proposal that could protect its members and their sovereign.

The Army had been deprived of their arms and ammunition, and this state of affairs continued.

The Entente Powers did not consider it necessary to respect the terms of the armistice. On various pretexts, their men-of-war and troops remained at Constantinople. The Vilayet of Adana was occupied by the French; Urfah, Marash, Aintab, by the English. In Adalia and Konia were the Italians, whilst at Merifun and Samsoun were English troops. Foreign officers and officials and their special agents were very active in all directions. At last, on the 15th May, that is to say, four days before the following account of events begins, the Greek Army, with the consent of the Entente Powers, had landed at Smyrna.⁵

Succinctly, with a few vivid, well-chosen words, Atatürk sets the stage in his narrative: unworthy shepherds had led a proud empire into a state of abject humiliation. These highly placed traitors against the people had more in common with their conquerors than they did with their own subjects. The Sultan and his coterie had willingly colluded with enemy powers to pillage a subjugated, deeply wounded homeland.

Atatürk had the villains he needed for his drama. Yet, everyone is the hero of his own story. People have reasons for what they do, justifications for their actions. As the visible focus of worldwide Muslim identity, the Sultan had a legacy to keep. The office of Sultan /Caliph was not his to lay aside. This emblem of the united *dar es salaam*, the house of Islam, had to be protected, preserved, and maintained. Even the Anatolian heartland mattered less, in the Caliph's eyes, than his role as a living link that demonstrated and ensured the continuity of Muslims past and present, local and global.

The Anatolians begged to differ. They did not consider themselves expendable, and most of them followed the Salonika-born hero who spoke and acted on their behalf. However, the numinous stature and status of the Caliph was inextricably blended with the Muslim identity in the minds of many. As one religious leader and enemy of Atatürk's programs wrote,

We want the re-establishment of the Caliphate; we do not want new laws; we are satisfied with the [religious law]; we shall protect the Medressas, the Tekkes, the pious institutions, the Softahs, the Sheikhs, and their disciples. Be on our side; the party of Mustapha Kemal, having abolished the Caliphate, is

⁵ Mustafa Atatürk, *A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal Atatürk in October 1927: Nutuk*. (İstanbul: Üçdal Publishing Company, [1927] 1985), 9-10.

*breaking Islam into ruins; they will make you into unbelievers ...; they will make you wear hats [emphasis added].*⁶

The editor of newspaper *Tanin* was also was a passionate advocate for the Caliph:

*[I]f we lose the Caliphate, the Turkish State ... would have no longer any weight in the Mohamedan world, and that we would degrade ourselves in addition in the eyes of European diplomacy to the rank of a small state without any importance. Is this a national way of thinking? Every Turk who really possesses national feeling must support the Caliphate with all his strength.*⁷

There were reasons for the failures of the Ottoman system. Confronting the root causes of those failures would, Atatürk believed, help his people find a better way. Atatürk blamed traditional Islam for the woes that had befallen the Turkish people. He responded to his enemies' charge ("They will make you wear hats") with a diatribe against the fez, the traditional Ottoman headgear:

Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on our heads as a sign of ignorance, of fanaticism, of hatred to progress and civilisation, and to adopt in its place the hat, the customary head-dress of the whole civilised world, thus showing, among other things, that no difference existed in the manner of thought between the Turkish nation and the whole family of civilised mankind. ...

...

*One will be able to imagine how necessary the carrying through of these measures was, in order to prove that our nation as a whole was no primitive nation, filled with superstitions and prejudices.*⁸

In *Nutuk*, Atatürk stressed the need to embrace the doctrine of sunk costs. The past is the past. The old order was dead—and justifiably so. The Ottoman Empire was, according to Atatürk, rotten with superstition, backward, paralyzed by tradition, unequal to the demands of modern life, and a source of contemptuous amusement to the imagined audience he played to—those western nations he viewed as the truly civilized, truly modern, truly scientific social orders. The ignorance and obdurate stubbornness of the old Ottomans had left the Turkish heartland defenseless, pillaged, in disarray, no longer master of its own destiny. And who was to blame for that? The superstitious people, or the charlatans who catered to their superstitions?

Could a civilised nation tolerate a mass of people who let themselves be led by the nose by a herd of (charlatans) ... ? Ought one to conserve in the Turkish State, in the Turkish Republic, elements and institutions such as those which had for centuries given the nation the appearance of being other than it really was? Would one not therewith have committed the greatest, most irreparable error to the cause of progress and reawakening? If we made use of the law for the Restoration of Order in this manner, it was in order to avoid such a historic error;

⁶ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 717.

⁷ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 669.

⁸ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 720.

*to show the nation's brow pure and luminous, as it is; to prove that our people think neither in a fanatical nor a reactionary manner.*⁹

Atatürk insisted that the Ottoman Empire was bankrupt, broken, demoralized, obsolete, as a result, in large measure, of the malfeasance of its spiritual leaders. Under his wise guidance, Atatürk preached, the people made the right choices, jettisoned the trappings and ornamental fetters of cloying tradition, and embraced a new lodestar of existence. Although they still shared a common language, and privately practiced a common religious faith, Turkish public life was defined by a new transcendent principle.

And what were the god-words of this new order, the new transcendent points of reference? For Atatürk, the side of the angels consisted of that which was modern, scientific, secular. He proclaimed that the nation itself could be its own polestar, if scientifically managed. Kasaba cites Atatürk's paean to progress:

*It is futile to try to resist the thunderous advance of civilization, for it has no pity on those who are ignorant or rebellious. The sublime force of civilization pierces mountains, crosses the skies, enlightens and explores everything from the smallest particle of dust to stars. When faced with this, those nations who try to follow the superstitions of the Middle Ages are condemned to be destroyed or at least to become enslaved and debased.*¹⁰

Atatürk, like the Georgian monk who later became Stalin, and the Austrian lad who later became Hitler, was born in one culture, but achieved his place in history in another. Salonika, on the western edge of the Ottoman Empire, echoed with both the cries of the muezzin and the bells of churches. Different classes, religions, and nationalities encountered one another every day in this cosmopolitan milieu. Sophisticated professionals mingled with superstitious peasants. And which social class did young Kemal emulate?

A brief detour through Russia may help us grasp more clearly the underlying motif of Atatürk's passion. Orhan Pamuk discussed, in several of his essays, the kindred spirit he encountered in Russian writers who, like the secular Turk, experienced an uneasy borderland existence between their own culture and Western Europe.¹¹ The Russian word *intelligentsia* has entered the English vernacular as a dismissive label for the self-alienated pretentious intellectual. In the early twentieth century, as the estrangement between people and rulers reached lethal proportions, Soviet citizens desperately yearned to be "somewhere else." Russian American novelist Ayn Rand wrote of the magic word *abroad*, which encapsulated for the Soviet citizen a vision of a far better life, a yearned-for and unattainable utopia:

That concept is made of brilliant bits sneaked, smuggled or floating in through the dense gray fog of the foreign movies, magazines, radio broadcasts, or even the clothing and the confident posture of foreign visitors. These bits are so un-Soviet and so alive, that they blend in one's mind into a vision of freedom,

⁹ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 610.

¹⁰ R. Kasaba, "Kemalist certainties and modern ambiguities." in *Rethinking modernity and national identity in Turkey*, Edt. by S Bozdogan and R. Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

¹¹ Orhan Pamuk, *Other Colors: Essays and a Story* (New York: Vintage , 2008), 137.

*abundance, unimaginable technological efficiency and, above all, a sense of joyous, fearless, benevolent gaiety.*¹²

At the end of their war of independence, Atatürk claimed, the Turkish people had shed the old order, like a discarded snake skin, and also whole-heartedly embraced the new order. In one speech, Atatürk waxed lyrical as he described the passions that sustained him, and the nation, through their struggles:

*On that day our precious town of Smyrna, our beautiful Brusa, our Stambul and our Thrace will all be re-embodied in our mother-country. On that day, together with the nation, we shall live to experience the greatest happiness ... Is there a nobler joy than to be a free man among a free people?*¹³

The Ottoman Empire assumed that the Caliph was the defender of Islam, and derived his transcendent mandate from that faith. Atatürk, in contrast, asserted the glory of being “a free man among a free people,” and “declared that the new source of legitimacy should be ‘the people,’ whose collective interest should be represented by a new leadership that would usher in a new era and a new consciousness.”¹⁴ This harkens back to Rousseau’s doctrine of the “general will,” as incarnated in the rule of the new philosopher kings who could interpret to the people what their will really was. Left to themselves, after all, the people might continue to wallow in ignorance, look foolish to the West, and would be, in Atatürk’s words, “a laughingstock in the eyes of the really civilized and cultured people of the world.”¹⁵

When Esra Özürek interviewed “the elderly children of the Republic,” people who had come of age during the intoxicating days of the early Turkish republic, she discovered that Atatürk had, indeed, sold his vision to the Turkish people. These people, in their 80s at the time Özürek talked with them, recalled their youth as a time of optimism, utopian expectations, and unlimited possibilities. “Atatürk’s era was like heaven on earth,” said one. A retired university professor reminisced: “Some say Atatürk was a dictator. There was no need for him to be ... Everyone was so happy in those days. They gave him full support.” Four themes frequently were cited in the collected memoirs of this demographic: love and support for Atatürk and his reforms, secularism, peace and unity, and the event that brought the good times to an end: the introduction of multi-party democracy in 1950, and the election of a new party to power.¹⁶

Atatürk, in his role as a world-changer, convinced a dispirited people that a newer world, a better world, was not only possible, but necessary. So, too, did the Bishop of Hippo, Augustine.

¹² Ayn Rand, *The New Left: The Anti-industrial Revolution* (New York: Signet, 1970), 121-122.

¹³ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 485.

¹⁴ Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 148.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham, NC and London, UK: Duke University Press, 2006), 49-55.

Augustine and the First Theme

Augustine dealt with the Roman Empire, a social order that was founded on fratricide, rotten with pagan superstition, and patently unequal to the demands of the day. The barbarian hoards had progressed from nibbling around the edges to striding triumphantly into the urban heart of the empire. Even though this was a devastating heartbreak to those whose identity was so heavily invested in that order, Augustine asserted, Romulus's city was an ugly order, and deserved to die. The Roman Empire had hitched its wagon to the wrong star, a falling star.

Atatürk was a secular leader of a religious nation, who viewed the faith of his people as a problem to overcome. Augustine was a Christian pastor with a more straightforward task. Augustine's God was forthrightly the Christian deity, the God defined in the orthodox creeds of the church, the God who had intervened in such a powerful way in his personal life, and who was worshipped by Christians of all social strata in places throughout the Roman Empire.

Yet, since Augustine wished to persuade responsible pagans, he dealt in depth with their faith. He spent the first five books of the *City of God* refuting the notion that the adoration of the pagan gods had value in terms of earthly benefits conferred upon the worshippers. The gods of Rome, he pointed out, were often transplants from realms that Rome had overrun. Many of the Roman gods were used goods, such as the hand-me-down deities of Troy, Ileum, and Alba, three cities Rome had obliterated. These gods, which had been unable to protect their own people, were then revered by the victorious party that had destroyed their previous worshippers.

Augustine then discusses the ethical component of paganism. Could the pagan deities lead those who served them to live more righteous lives on Earth, and to realistically hope for a blessed afterlife? Augustine, who had evidently been an avid theatergoer in his youth, took savage delight in ridiculing the plays that the Romans used in the service of their older religion. These theatrical spectacles depicted the gods doing things that any self-respecting human would blush to undertake:

*Does the society of wicked men pollute our life if they insinuate themselves into our affections and win our assent and does not the society of demons pollute the life, who are worshipped with their own crimes? If with true crimes, how wicked the demons! If with false, how wicked the worship!*¹⁷

*If these are sacred rites, what is sacrilege? If this is purification, what is pollution?*¹⁸

Even in terms of routine, everyday competence, Augustine wrote, the Roman gods fell short. You can trust one man, a porter, to keep a door, since he is a man. It takes three pagan gods to perform the same task—"Forculus to the doors, Cardea to the hinge, Limentinus to the threshold".¹⁹

¹⁷ City VI.6.

¹⁸ City II. 4.

¹⁹ City IV.8.

In one of the most exquisitely sarcastic passages found in ancient literature, Augustine discusses the gods of the wedding chamber, enumerating their names and functions, arriving at last to the goddess Pertunda. He then asks the obvious question, “What has the goddess Pertunda to do there? Let her blush; let her go forth. Let the husband himself do something. It is disgraceful that any one but himself should do that from which she gets her name”²⁰

Obviously, the source of Roman morality had to be sought in something other than its putative religion. The Roman gods were, Augustine wrote, unworthy of the honor rendered them. The Romans, in their days of greatness, held themselves to higher standards of conduct than they expected of their gods. If they could not look to the heavens for the wellsprings of their greatness, what did inspire their noble achievements? Augustine concluded that the world-bestriving imperial Romans were driven by a love of “glory.”

*Glory they most ardently loved; for it they wished to live, for it they did not hesitate to die. Every other desire was repressed by the strength of their passion for that one thing. ...*²¹

*At that time it was their greatest ambition either to die bravely or to live free; but when liberty was obtained, so great a desire of glory took possession of them, that liberty alone was not enough unless domination also would be sought.*²²

Not all vices are created equal. Some debilitate, while others spur the vicious person or society to achieve notable exploits, heroic endeavors.

However, in terms of power to ennoble life in the present, and to afford devotees hope for the future life, the God adored by orthodox Christians had achieved a credibility that even nostalgic pagans could only rue. The old gods might be cherished family heirlooms, but the present and future belonged to the Lord Christ. “And whoever now-a-days demands to see prodigies that he may believe, is himself a great prodigy, because he does not believe, though the whole world does,” Augustine wrote.²³

Atatürk and Augustine both offered their audiences a transcendent frame of reference, a basis for believing that things could, and should, be other than as they were at the moment.

The Second Principle—Clearly Identify the Rival Teams

In the low-budget movie *The Return of Captain Invincible*, the embittered and disillusioned title character played by Alan Arkin sings this cynical dirge:

*Now who's wearing black hats and who's wearing white,
And who's on the side of justice and right.*

*The line is so fine between Heaven and Hell,
Not even a hero can tell.*

²⁰ City VI.9.

²¹ City V.12.

²² City V.12.

²³ City XXII.8.

*The good guys from the bad guys.*²⁴

*Skeptics can easily point out the foibles of the agents of the old order, even if they are unable to suggest better alternatives. Jonathan Swift's scatological Gulliver's Travels and Voltaire's Candide both lampoon the pillars of the current regime, but in such a way as to leave the reader disgruntled, and sometimes disgusted, rather than inspired. A defter American satirist lampooned William Jennings Bryan, "the lion of the prairies," the gold standard, and greenbacks, with such a sly and amusing parable that people still chuckle at "the little man behind the curtain" generations after the monetary policy issues that inspired The Wizard of Oz became ancient history.*²⁵

In 5th century Italy and 20th century Anatolia, the old regime, the failed social order, had its vested interests, forces that would rather see their nation in ruins than cede an inch of personal prestige, status, position. Yet, these vested interests derived much of their influence from their solidarity. Obviously, those who would supplant them also need to work with like-minded allies. And yes, a real hero can tell "the good guys from the bad guys."

The Atatürk Team and the Rival Teams

After the dramatic introduction to *Nutuk*, Atatürk kept the momentum of his narrative going with a detailed account of the steps he took to assemble his team. When Hıfzı Velidedeoğlu translated *Nutuk* into modern Turkish, he added chapter titles. Chapter 3 introduces the National Congresses (*Ulusal Kongreler*) Atatürk convened in Ankara, in the heart of the Anatolian heartland, far from the corrupting dead hand of the failed order cowering in İstanbul. The title of Chapter 4 makes clear exactly who wore the black hats: struggles against domestic treacherors during Damat Ferit Pasha government/*Damat Ferit Paşa hükümeti döneminde yerli hayınlarla uğraşmalar*.²⁶

As the alternative to the various "official" governments organized by the lackeys of the sultan and the foreign powers the Sublime Porte colluded with, Atatürk summoned patriotic delegates to a national gathering in the hitherto obscure town of Angora, present-day Ankara. The initials T.B.M.M. do not appear in several standard Turkish / English dictionaries, and need no definition in Turkish history books. *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi* (the Turkish Grand National Assembly) entered history and legend as the birthplace of the modern Turkish republic, even as the American Constitutional Convention defined an earlier new nation. Team Atatürk was coming together.

Atatürk minced no words when heaping contempt and scorn upon the heads of "the degenerate occupant of the throne," and his handlers and enablers. The Sultan, he asserted, had forfeited his right to speak for the nation when he consented to the desecration of his nation. Atatürk, a soldier and a leader of soldiers, was unsparing in his praise of the heroism of Mehmetçik, the stalwart Turkish infantryman. The losses of the last century, he asserted, could not be laid at the feet of those who'd fought to preserve the empire. Rather, the blame must be

²⁴ *The return of Captain Invincible*. Directed by P. Mora. Performed by Alan Arkin. 1983.

²⁵ L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979).

²⁶ Atatürk, 1997, 63.

assigned to those who mismanaged the empire, betrayed the people who were counting upon them for wise and relevant leadership, and foolishly meddled in the tribal quarrels of alien powers.

Like Oliver Cromwell, an earlier military leader who translated success in battle into a new form of government, Atatürk relied heavily upon fellow members of the old empire's military elite.²⁷ Good leaders in battle were entrusted with power in civil government. For example, Colonel İsmet (İnönü)'s success at the First Battle of İnönü established the credibility of the Turkish resistance, and paved the way for the Treaty of Moscow.²⁸ When Atatürk compelled the Turks to adopt surnames, this politically-active military hero named himself for the battle, and as İsmet İnönü took the reins of power upon Atatürk's death.²⁹ Atatürk may have been the midwife of the modern Turkish republic, but he did not work alone. Neither did Augustine.

Team Augustine and the Rivals

In the turmoil surrounding the fall of Rome, Augustine wrote his magnum opus as a means of encouragement to his fellow Romans. Yes, their empire had fallen on hard times. However, the wise man did not put all his eggs in one rotten basket. The wise man did not pin his hopes upon a fallible, and corrupt, human commonwealth. The wise man participated joyfully in an alternate reality, an alternate polity, an alternate community.

So, what is a "city?" Augustine proposes a useful definition:

But if we ... say that a people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love, then, in order to discover the character of any people, we have only to observe what they love. ... (It will be a superior people in proportion as it is bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it is bound together by lower.)³⁰

The *City of God*, Augustine wrote, predated the creation of the earth, and had as its first citizens the holy angels of God.³¹ It is defined by allegiance to God, even as the city of man is defined by the love of self.

[T]wo cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.'³²

²⁷ Robert Paul, *The Lord Protector: Religion and politics in the life of Oliver Cromwell* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1964), 1964.

²⁸ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 459.

²⁹ Patrick Kinross, *Atatürk: A biography of Mustafa Kemal, father of modern Turkey* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965), 4.

³⁰ City XIX.24.

³¹ City XI.9.

³² City XIV.28.

The two cities do not, however, inhabit different geographical spheres, or wear distinctive uniforms. Citizens of both cities rub elbows in the course of everyday life. However, they are distinguished from each other by the quality of their lives and loves.

Team Augustine, like Team Atatürk, also had its influential citizens and shapers, its saints, bishops, and martyrs. Atatürk and Augustine were simultaneously coaches and team players, who achieved much through both building upon, and inspiring the work of the others.

The Third Principle: Ethics

Expediency has no power to summon the loyalty of people to charge the barricades. Those who would carve their initials on history must be able to conjure up that kind of passion. Communism was an odious ideology that somehow appealed to the noblest instincts of the best people, even as it made it possible for the “more equal” people to get on top.³³ Douglas Hyde reports the motivational speech given to Viet Cong soldiers sent to overrun Dien Bien Phu:

*You will almost certainly die. Already, even to get within gun range, you have to clamber and slither over men’s rotting bodies, the bodies of your own comrades. The probability is that you will die, just as they have done. If you do, you will not just be dying in the fight against French colonialism. You will not just be dying for Vietnam. You will be dying for suffering, oppressed humanity all over the world. Your death will help to make the world a better place.*³⁴

Even people without a deity to invoke yearn for significance, and aspire to be a part of something bigger than themselves. As the various anti-colonial movements and brushfire wars of the 20th century demonstrated, nationalism can motivate both stunning atrocities and real heroism.

Which ethical imperatives informed the messages of Atatürk and Augustine?

The Ethics of Atatürk

In several of his more famous military orders, Atatürk summoned his troops to make the ultimate effort. At Gallipolis he wrote: “I don’t order you to attack, I order you to die. In the time it takes us to die, other troops and commanders can come and take our places.” Kinross tells the rest of the story: “By the end of the battle almost the whole of the 57th Regiment had died, charging continuously through a curtain of enemy rifle fire to win immortality in the annals of the Turkish army.”³⁵

Somewhere, somehow, the successful change agent must be able to point towards a standard of behavior that provides a rationale for sacrificial actions, and permits true nobility. People hunger for significance, after all. In Atatürk’s cosmology, the unified Turkish national republic was the *summum bonum*, the ultimate good, and the collective reality that would make possible the noblest of personal living. The nation was a good so worthy it was worth dying for.

³³ George Orwell, *Animal farm* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 88.

³⁴ Douglas Hyde, *Dedication and leadership: Learning from the Communists* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 149.

³⁵ Kinross 1965, 90.

A clear-cut standard of ethics has both its positive and negative poles. If that which contributes to the union and health of the nation is the ultimate good, then factions must be the ultimate evil. This conviction resonated with Atatürk's audience, since it reflected a deeply rooted traditional *bête noire*. To this day, Muslim clerics treat divisiveness (*fitna*) as the ultimate evil. Peace will only come, they preach when all of humanity is united under the one green banner of Islam.

Fitna means divisiveness. In particular, *fitna* referred to the bloody interregnum that befell Islam a few generations after Mohammed's death, and resulted in the splits between Shiite and Sunni that persist to this day. Apparently, the unity of the community is something so imperative in the Islamic ethos that divisiveness needs to be suppressed at all costs.

Atatürk exploited this deeply-embedded moral imperative, but refocused it, away from an abstract global community and on to the concrete Turkish nation, defined by Turkish geography, language and culture. The ethical imperative Atatürk preached was the integrity and health of the nation. That which is good for the nation is good. That which threatens the integrity, the wholeness, of the nation is bad.

This passion shows up throughout *Nutuk*. In the beginning of the speech, Atatürk dwells at length on the perfidy of the Sultan and his coterie, who were willing participants in the planned dismemberment of the Turkish heartland. As the history of the Turkish social revolution continues, Atatürk deals decisively with other divisive forces; the conservative Muslim establishment, restive Kurds, bitter Christian minorities. He lived the ideal, and reached the climax of his public life with a unified nation to bequeath to "the youth of Turkey."

Although his personal moral failures are widely acknowledged—the founder of modern Turkey died of cirrhosis of the liver—Atatürk's message had a sincerely-believed ethical component that resonated with his audience. Augustine's message also relied heavily upon its intrinsic ethical merits.

The Ethics of Augustine

Augustine pointed to that distillation of Christian life and practice, the City of God, that community of those whose lives bore the imprint of a superior moral order. The City of God is, first and foremost, from, by, and about God. Citizens of this heavenly community are loved by God, love God more than self, and love others for the sake of the God who loved and redeemed them. Although lesser loves might bring a measure of earthly happiness, or earthly achievement, nothing less than God Himself will satisfy in the long run. In a colorful metaphor, Augustine talks about the source of true felicity:

But if Felicity is not a goddess, because, as is true, it is a gift of God, that god must be sought who has power to give it For he cannot be free from infelicity who worships Felicity as a goddess, and forsakes God, the giver of felicity; just as he cannot be free from hunger who licks a painted loaf of bread, and does not buy it of the man who has a real one.³⁶

³⁶ City IV.23.

The ethics of Augustine begin with that which is due to God—worship, adoration, obedience. His ethics go on to include that which is due to people—justice, tempered by humility. Yet, even in the context of human relationships, only the reality of God, and His standards, make justice possible. “But the fact is, true justice has no existence save in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ...”³⁷

Like Atatürk, Augustine had little patience with those who sought excuses for schism. The Donatists of Africa saw much of their credibility evaporate beneath the blowtorch heat of Augustine’s barbed wit and busy pen.

The Fourth Principle: Public Commitments

Atatürk’s Diplomacy

Every corporate entity is defined by the commitments it makes, the commitments it breaks, and the commitments to which it binds its members. For this reason, *Nutuk* gives a great deal of thought and space to discussing the treaties that developed and grew up around the sunset of the Ottoman Empire and the dawn of the Turkish Republic.

Atatürk did not begin his work of nation building in a vacuum. He inherited the fallout from four secret agreements that various European powers had made about the future of Turkey without, however, consulting the Turks: the Constantinople agreement (1915), the Secret Treaty of London (1915), the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), and the St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement (1916).³⁸ These furtive plots to divide the Turkish heartland into various spheres of political and economic influence lend credence to Augustine’s cynical observation that unjust governments are large-scale criminal syndicates.³⁹

Matters did not improve greatly when the people whom Atatürk portrayed as the obsequious lackeys surrounding the Sublime Porte decided that securing their own positions mattered more than the good of the Turkish people. The European victors had found quislings who were willing to give the color of legality to their depredations, native token “leaders” who would affix their signatures to the documents they were handed. Atatürk discussed this perfidy in one of his famous “open letter” telegrams sent to various military commands and loyal local governing bodies:

On account of the reactionary attitude of the Government and in order to secure the defence of our rights in these most dangerous days ..., the election and speedy meeting of a National Assembly is our most urgent duty to undertake.

*The Government has deceived the people and has postponed the elections from month to month. In the same manner, on different pretexts, it has postponed the execution of the order it had eventually issued.*⁴⁰

While the Sultan and his court continued treating with the victors of The Great War, Atatürk, the military, the Grand National Assembly, and the local “Unions for the Defence of

³⁷ City II.21.

³⁸ Lewis, 1960, 48-49.

³⁹ City IV.4.

⁴⁰ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 90.

the Rights” withheld their consent. Shortly after the Greek armies, despite their superior equipment, were halted at the First Battle of İnönü, Russia broke ranks with the other European powers and negotiated a separate peace. The new Bolshevik regime had worries of its own, and signed the Treaty of Moscow on March 13, 1921.⁴¹

When the European powers began dealing with the Grand National Assembly, they initially tried to treat with both Turkish governments—the monarchy and the Republic—as equally legitimate peers. Atatürk complained vehemently. After the Sultan was dethroned, the point became moot, and the Treaty of Lausanne recognized the new realities on the ground.

Augustine’s Diplomacy

Augustine may not have conducted formal negotiations at conference tables, but his explanation of the relationships between the two cities, between the realm of Caesar and the realm of Jesus, between state and church, continue to shape public discourse 1,500 years later.

Although he heaped withering scorn upon the deities of Rome, Augustine regarded the pagans as people who deserved to be treated with respect. As a gifted scholar, Augustine could describe in detail the rationales behind the various forms of Roman piety: civil, religious, poetic. In a long paragraph that pulls together the main strands of Augustine’s polemic against Rome’s gods and civil religion, he directly but kindly challenges Varro to rethink his positions on these matters.⁴²

A modern writer could summarize and paraphrase this section: “My excellent friend, you are embarrassed by your own gods, even when you try to cherry-pick the useful ones from the unspeakable ones.” Juggling civic, poetic, and natural deities, defending some, while reviling others, is a lost cause. These mental gymnastics take more effort than any reasonable man would invest in such a problematic enterprise. Yes, the traditional gods may have been the binding mental and emotional framework of the old order. But, since the old order is gone anyhow, why not take the opportunity to jettison those dead weights?

In Books XVII through XIX, Augustine displayed his mastery of secular history, discussing the developments of civil and religious institutions in Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. As he discussed this timeline, he interleaved the chronologies of the Old Testament kings and prophets. The *City of God*, he thus demonstrated, was not an ethereal state of timeless *gnosis*, but a solid historical reality, involving real people doing real deeds at real points in time.

Early in this work, in Book V, Augustine discussed the interactions and intersections of the two Cities in the persons of various Christian Roman emperors, and their foes. The most blessed emperors, he asserted, were those who used their power to advance God’s kingdom, who abstained from rapacious behavior and overbearing dictates, who first ruled over themselves.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 361.

⁴² City VI. 6.

⁴³ City V. 24.

Augustine and Atatürk were both men of their times, who had messages that powerfully influenced the contemporary audiences they wrote for. However, both men envisioned their beloved community as surviving their day, and extending into the indefinite, but glorious, future.

The Fifth Principle: The Basis for Continuity.

Atatürk and Continuity

In a stirring conclusion to a national epic, Atatürk speaks directly to his immediate audience:

Gentlemen, I have taken trouble to show, in these accounts, how a great people, whose national course was considered as ended, reconquered its independence; how it created a national and modern State founded on the latest results of science.

The result we have attained to day is the fruit of teachings which arose from centuries of suffering, and the price of streams of blood which have drenched every foot of the ground of our beloved Fatherland.

This holy treasure I lay in the hands of the youth of Turkey.⁴⁴

He then utters his memorable challenge to the living and future youth of Turkey, in a passionate oration that Turkish schoolchildren still memorize and recite, even as American schoolchildren once memorized the Gettysburg Address:

Turkish Youth! your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the National independence, the Turkish Republic.

That is the only basis of your existence and your future. This basis contains your most precious treasure. In the future, too, there will be ill-will, both in the country itself and abroad, which will try to tear this treasure from you. If one day you are compelled to defend your independence and the Republic, then, in order to fulfil your duty, you will have to look beyond the possibilities and conditions in which you might find yourself. It may be that these conditions and possibilities are altogether unfavourable. It is possible that the enemies who desire to destroy your independence and your Republic represent the strongest force that the earth has ever seen; that they have, through craft and force, taken possession of all the fortresses and arsenals of the fatherland; that all its armies are scattered and the country actually and completely occupied.

Assuming, in order to look still darker possibilities in the face, that those who hold the power of Government within the country have fallen into error, that they are fools or traitors, yes, even that these leading, persons, identify their personal interests with the enemy's political goals, in might happen that the nation came into complete privation, into the most extreme distress; that it found itself in a condition, of ruin and complete exhaustion.

⁴⁴ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 610.

Even under those circumstances, O Turkish child of future generations! It is your duty to save the independence, the Turkish Republic.

The strength that you will need for this is mighty in the noble blood which flows in your veins.⁴⁵

In Atatürk's perspective, military service was synonymous with continuity. The willingness of the youth of Turkey to serve in the armed forces of their nation, to "make of their breasts a shield for the nation," was the guarantor of this republic's future. He apparently viewed the military as embodying all that was most noble, and most professional, in Turkish culture. The military reciprocated this confidence, and viewed it as their mission to protect the modern, secular, Turkish republic from all enemies, foreign, or domestic.

Augustine and Continuity

Marcus Varro, the scholar and writer Augustine addressed, and the prudent magistrates he also had in mind, have long since joined him in the dust. Yet Augustine assumed that the *City of God* would continue. He imagined a mechanism for ensuring the continuity of this entity. Somehow, the God of the City would continue incorporating people into this ongoing project, so they could each play their brief roles in turn. For Augustine, the sacrament of baptism incorporated people into the *City of God* and the grace of God. In a number of passages, he spoke of "the font of regeneration," and of miracles that had happened when people went through the waters of baptism.⁴⁶

The word *sacrament* is derived from the Latin word *sacramentum*. *Cassell's New Latin Dictionary* (1960) defines *sacramentum* as "the engagement entered into by newly enlisted soldiers, the military oath of allegiance." Those who submit to Christian baptism enlist in a life-long struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil, but they do not fight alone. They serve under the banner of a glorious Commander, follow the inspiring examples of heroes of the past, shoulder to shoulder with God's people today, and anticipate final victory as the outcome of their lives.

Atatürk and Augustine both rejoiced in their bright hopes for a world they would not live to see. Both were confident that their efforts would propagate forward through time to redirect the course of history, and continue to protect those the community they had given their lives to.

Conclusion

Two writers and opinion leaders, a fifth century African Christian and a twentieth century secular Muslim, were able to summon desperate people to heroic efforts that successfully remade their broken worlds. They answered the big questions persuasively, redeemed their situations, and left an enduring legacy of beneficent paradigm-setting. For this paper, we selected one useful tool from a parallel academic discipline. Having previously argued that *City of God* and *Nutuk* are members of a specific genre—blueprints for redefining

⁴⁵ Atatürk [1927] 1985, 611-612.

⁴⁶ City XXII.8.

social reality—we borrowed from the discipline of theology a paradigm that works well for other such documents. We then discussed the ways in which Atatürk and Augustine dealt with five major themes: transcendent purpose, hierarchies, ethics, covenants, and succession. Both of these world-makers provided substantive answers to those questions, answers that their audiences found convincing.

Transcendent Purpose

When people are overwhelmed by events, they can find it nearly impossible to look beyond the exigencies and demands of the moment. Survival trumps aesthetics, and nearly everything else. However, successful world-changers can direct the attention of those who heed them to a larger frame of reference.

Atatürk held before his audience the vision of national prestige, as a modern nation that could treat as an equal with all the other modern powers. This ideal combined a pride in Turkish culture with an admiration for the achievements of the west.

Augustine assured his readers that God was bigger than Caesar, and the City of God both predated and would long outlive the City of Man. People could invest their identities in a more durable kingdom, one that could not be shaken, even as the kingdoms of this world crumbled around their ears.

Hierarchies

People need to know their position in the social order, where they stand, who stands with them, and who stands against them. Successful world-changers are team players, who take leading roles, but do not act alone.

Atatürk made it clear to his audience who the enemy was—the discredited imperial court, the Sublime Porte, which had betrayed the interests of the Turkish people in order to make common cause with the enemies of the nation. True and faithful leadership, however, could be found in the ranks of the professional military establishment, and epitomes to imitate noted in the valiant warriors who fought in the nation's wars.

Augustine reminded his Christian readers that the hierarchy of the Catholic church endured. In fact, even the barbarian invaders respected the properties of the church, and honored the right of sanctuary for those who took shelter in Christian buildings.⁴⁷ The prestige of the Christian organization had been secured by the routine charity and holiness of individual lay members, and underlined by the heroic martyrdoms of the saints.

Ethics

What lodestone can people use as a quick way to weight decisions in stressful time? What pocket magnet can instantly distinguish between sound metal auto body and Bondo-concealed damage?

⁴⁷ City I.1.

For Atatürk, the integrity of the Turkish people, reposing in a secure heartland, was the governing criteria. Those who fought for this united homeland were on the side of the angels. Those who traded in portions of their patria and patrimony for personal opulence were, obviously, on the other side.

For Augustine, a willingness to love God and neighbor more than self defined heaven, and characterized the citizens of heaven who happened to be residing currently, and temporarily, on earth.

Covenants

Atatürk paid a great deal of attention to the various treaties, the formal commitments that framed the discourse of Nutuk. Secret treaties provoked the War of Salvation (*Kurtulu Savaşı*) by imposing unacceptable conditions upon the Turks, and by dismembering the nation. The Turks stood tall among the nations when they pushed back, and forcefully asserted their own terms, their own interests, through formally recognized treaties.

Augustine described the formal covenants God made throughout history with his people, and the fate of secular rulers who either honored, or persecuted, the citizens of God's city.

Succession

Nutuk is a book of wars that presents military service as the guarantor of national survival. In his stirring address to the youth of Turkey, Atatürk calls upon them to "make of their breasts a shield for the nation."

Augustine celebrated the sacraments, especially baptism, as formal enlistments in the ongoing life of the City of God. A sacrament, like a soldier's oath of enlistment, commits him to the struggle in progress, for the duration of hostilities.

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