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## The Paradox of Hitler's Culture

As yet another cultural revival begins in Europe, it is high time to understand its origin.

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Adolf Hitler was one of history's most evil mass murders. Yet during his life, he was an individual of culture. For example, he claimed that only by understanding the music of Richard Wagner could you understand the Third Reich. On a larger scale, only by understanding its culture can you understand what Hitler was trying to revive: the Holy Roman Empire.

Hitler, Fredrick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Maximilian I, Otto the Great, Charlemagne and many other European leaders have had two things in common: their love for culture and their love for conquest.

European culture includes not only its food and its arts but also centuries of heavy influence of the Catholic Church, headquartered in Rome. The church has affected not just the people's deepest beliefs about life and the afterlife, but also everything from political policy to architecture. Time after time, this church has used its influence to align with political leaders and resurrect the Holy Roman Empire.

Although the Holy Roman Empire's influence has ebbed during the modern democratic era, its heritage is still very much alive—and it is beginning to swell once again. The European Commission sponsored the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018, attracting 6.2 million people to 11,700 organized events across 37 countries, celebrating the luster of past Holy Roman Empire leaders like Charlemagne, Otto and Maximilian I.

Included in that heritage is the fact that dozens of those imperial leaders held a fanatic desire to rule the world. While they brought order and prosperity to new regions, they committed atrocities of savage brutality. While they celebrated the fine arts in their palaces, their subjects were tortured in the dungeons beneath.

Today Europe is still viewed as a leader in culture. The Bible prophesies that in the future, Europe will rise to even greater wealth and culture, but it will also unleash even greater atrocities.

Is Europe's barbarity contrary to its culture? Or is there a connection?

## Charlemagne's Vision

Europeans have been celebrating one man in particular as founder of Europe's Christian culture: Charlemagne.

When Charlemagne was crowned king of the Franks in A.D. 771, Europe had comparatively few Christians, and the Continent was divided. His ideal was Roman Emperor Constantine, the first so-called Christian emperor.

Charlemagne lusted for power and allied himself with the Roman Catholic Church to gain it. He also sought to increase the number of European Christians. There is also evidence he believed in the superiority of Roman culture and the beliefs of the Catholic Church. His biographer, Einhard, recounted that he devoted much time to listening to readings of the books of St. Augustine, his favorite of which was *The City of God*. He sought to create an empire with "one God, one emperor, one pope, one city of God."

His thirst for power and his religious and cultural vision motivated Charlemagne to pursue years of violent conquest. He used brutal butchery to conquer the Germanic tribes. Then he established Christian cultural institutions. The spread of Roman-inspired Christian literature, culture and art became known as the Carolingian Renaissance.

Charlemagne required his conquered subjects not only to submit to his rule but also to convert to his religion. He wanted them to be Catholics for life, raising their children and their children's children in the religion. To this day, Europe is predominately Catholic.

Convinced he was fulfilling God's will, Charlemagne used bloody, torturous practices. "The violent methods by which this missionary task was carried out had been unknown to the earlier Middle Ages," *Encyclopedia Britannica* recounts. The Franconian annals recount that in A.D. 782 at Verden, Charlemagne ordered the execution of 4,500 Saxons whom allied Saxon leaders had delivered into his hands. Still the Germanic tribe of Saxony resisted Charlemagne's forced conversion process for 30 years. A generation grew up under Charlemagne's tyranny until his brutality forced them to accept their new religion.

Previous empires had allowed considerable religious freedom. But Charlemagne sought to create something more than just an empire that was unified politically. One example of this is Charlemagne's throne in Aachen Chapel. The chapel later expanded to the Aachen Cathedral, today praised as one of the greatest symbols of Europe's cultural heritage. Inside, Charlemagne's throne was built from materials from Jerusalem. The emperor on the throne was the "anointed one."

"It is certain that Charles constantly attributed his imperial dignity to an act of God, made known of course through the agency of the vicar of Christ" (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*). The term "vicar of Christ" was used "until the ninth century ... for the emperor as well as for bishops and popes," this encyclopedia says. Throughout the centuries, popes and emperors contended over who would claim this supreme position.

Charlemagne gave the impression that he accepted the pope's authority over him. But through the divine rule granted by the pope, he believed he directly executed God's will on Earth, or ruled his empire in Christ's place. "Although Charlemagne is not considered a saint in the whole church, he may be revered as such in Aachen—despite his crusades and women stories," the archdiocese of Cologne's *Domradio.de* recounts (*Trumpet* translation throughout).

Dean of Aachen Cathedral "Von Holtum recalls that Charles spent the last eight years of his life in Aachen from Christmas to Easter, and from Hochmünster [part of the Cathedral] he took part in the choral prayer ... in the morning, noon and evening. [Charlemagne] hence was also 'a deeply devout man.'

"He was very much interested in the origins of Christianity. [Charlemagne's] throne could be connected with the beginnings of Christianity, whose marble slabs probably come from the Holy Sepulcher, according to the dean of the cathedral" (ibid).

Charlemagne's love for culture was rooted in his devotion to the Catholic way of life. He possessed a fanatic desire to establish "God's Kingdom" on Earth by using Catholicism to rule Europe and even the world in Christ's stead. There was no room for other religions.

There is no contradiction in Charlemagne's love for culture and his desire to subjugate the world: The one nourished the other.

Many Holy Roman emperors have followed Charlemagne's footsteps. Even his name became extremely popular among later emperors. A famous example is Charles V, grandson of emperor Maximilian I. He also swore his allegiance to the Catholic Church, led many conquests, brutally converted Latin Americans to Catholicism, and pushed back a Muslim invasion.

Charles V's greatest challenge came with the Protestant Reformation, which divided Europe. He ordered the killing of "heretics" and advanced the Inquisition. As Protestantism swept through Europe, heretics were tortured until they denied their faith or lost their lives. Charles wanted to preserve Europe's Catholic culture, but the reformers grew stronger and formed military alliances to fight back. The religious conflict culminated in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648).

The ambition of Holy Roman emperors, however, continued much longer than most people know.

## Hitler: Lover of Culture

More than 1,100 years after Charlemagne, another lover of culture, deeply motivated by a potent cause, exerted his will on Europe.

Many know of Adolf Hitler's claim to establish an empire that would last a thousand years. And that he presented himself as a "messianic savior," as the Jewish Virtual Library notes. Almost everyone knows of Hitler's fanaticism to seek the extinction of all Jews.

Yet few recognize the origin of Hitler's motives. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler noted: "And so I believe today that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator. In standing guard against the Jew I am defending the handiwork of the Lord. ... Therefore, I am convinced that I am acting as the agent of our Creator. By fighting off the Jews, I am doing the Lord's work."

Like Charlemagne, Hitler thought he was doing God's Work on Earth!

Various predominantly Catholic Christian movements over the centuries saw the Jews as Christ's primary enemy, which led to waves of persecution. Believers also came to believe that only Christ's prophesied coming millennial rule could eradicate all Jews from the world.

Hitler's claim of a thousand-year reich and his promise to extinguish the world's Jewry go hand in hand. Hitler saw himself as "the Redeemer" to bring about God's rule in the earthly realm.

This "Christian" ideology formed the foundation of his belief and is evident in everything he did. Though other Germanic traditions and socialistic concepts factored into Hitler's everyday agenda, the Catholic institution and this perverted view of Christianity formed the basis of his ideas and heavily influenced his goals.

*Mein Kampf* was edited by a Catholic priest. Hitler's hierarchical government also was patterned after that of the Catholic Church. Heinrich Himmler, though he is said to have later distanced himself from his traditional Catholic upbringing, modeled the SS after the principles of the Catholic Jesuit Order. He revitalized the Holy Roman Empire brotherhood of soldier-priests called the Teutonic Knights.

The Nazis also initiated a large-scale effort to rewrite the New Testament to prove that Jesus Christ was actually Aryan and that the Jews are His primary enemies.

Certainly, there were different beliefs and divisions in Hitler's and Himmler's ideologies. There are also different ideologies within the Catholic Church. Some supported Hitler; others did not. But in the end, they all shared the culture of the Holy Roman Empire.

Before Hitler became a dictator, he studied art. Once he rose to power in Germany and became a mass murderer, his passion for culture remained. His ruinous regime included a vast cultural program. His effort to revive European culture is vividly documented in *Hitler's Holy Relics*, by Sidney D. Kirkpatrick. In fact, his passion for culture *sparked his motivation*.

It all started in Vienna, Austria.

## The Crown of Charlemagne

"In Vienna, Hitler came to believe that God had replaced the Jews with the Germans and the Holy Roman Empire. He learned it in that cultured city—looking at all those crown jewels and the opulence of the Habsburgs," *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry explains in *Daniel Unlocks Revelation*.

"This was the time in which the greatest change I was ever to experience took place in me," Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* concerning his time in Vienna. "From a feeble cosmopolite I had turned into a fanatical anti-Semite." He also wrote: "To me the big city appeared as the personification of incest. ... The longer I stayed in this city, the more my hatred increased against the mixture of foreign nations that began to eat up this site of old German culture."

Culture is a recurring theme in *Mein Kampf*; the word appears more than a hundred times. What are people really calling for today when they claim we must defend "Europe's culture"?

In Vienna at the time were the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire, which he brought back to Nuremberg in 1938, where prior emperors had sworn to keep them forever. Their return was a massive cultural event. The centerpiece of these crown jewels is today known as Charlemagne's crown.

Hitler visits the Imperial Crown exhibition in Nuremberg in 1938. Ullstein Bild/Getty Images

Hitler celebrated these jewels' return to the city with a large-scale ceremony. Black-uniformed SS soldiers stood at attention. Trumpeters played from the balcony in medieval costumes. Nuremberg's choral society sang the "Awake" chorus from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* as Hitler entered the sanctuary of St. Catherine's Church.

At the ceremony, Hitler said: "In no other German city is there as strong a connection between the past and present ... as in Nuremberg, the old and new imperial city. This city, which the German Reich deemed fit to defend the regalia behind its walls, has regained ownership of these symbols, which testifies to the power and the strength of the old Reich ... and is manifestation of German power and greatness in a new German Reich."

Touching the crown, he said: "The German people have declared themselves the bearers of the 1,000-year crown."

Hitler's fascination with the Holy Roman Empire spread throughout Germany. Millions traveled to Nuremberg to view the holy relics. An impressive movie production aimed to tell the jewels' whole story, but it was interrupted by the Allies' invasion.

In his vision, Hitler saw Nuremberg as the center of his resurrected empire. He wanted to establish the city as a shining light of cultural glory.

In the vast projects of transforming and renovating the city, Hitler also sought to eliminate all traces of Jewish influence. In

this, as Kirkpatrick recounts, the “Nazis merely picked up where the city fathers had left off centuries before.” The Church of Our Lady in Nuremberg was built following the destruction of Jewish synagogues on the initiative of Charles IV, Holy Roman emperor between 1352 and 1362.

During Hitler’s reign, Nuremberg’s castle, as well as its Catholic churches, were vastly renovated. Beneath the castle, Hitler ordered the creation of a large bunker to host the best of Europe’s art and preserve it with the most modern technology.

Hitler’s cultural fascination also played an important role in his conquests. Before burning down villages, Nazi soldiers were told to save famous artifacts from churches and bring them to Germany. Thus the Nazis learned to appreciate certain cultural artifacts more than certain human lives. Hitler also shaped the arts and architecture of the empire and spared no expense to establish universities, museums and other cultural institutions.

Hitler sought to eradicate all Jewishness from German art. Jewish artists were banned and persecuted while Nazi artwork was promoted. All paintings were required to portray Aryan families and European tradition. City renovations followed the architecture of the old empire. Music and movies were used to rally nationalism.

Hitler’s favorite composer was Richard Wagner; his favorite living artist, Adolf Ziegler; his favorite architect, Albert Speer. He used the works of these three men to spread his anti-Semitic ideology. “Hitler used to love to go to the opera and have his mind saturated with the music of Richard Wagner. He even said that one couldn’t understand the Third Reich without understanding Wagner—a sex pervert and an anti-Semite—yet Hitler was intoxicated by him,” writes Mr. Flurry (op cit).

For most people, what Hitler did is unfathomable. But to comprehend his actions, consider his motives. He believed *German culture* was under threat!

Today, Hitler is known only for starting World War II and exterminating 6 million Jews. His efforts to resurrect the culture of the Holy Roman Empire are forgotten. Remembering only Hitler’s cruelty is a mistake. He is one of the best examples of where fanaticism for Holy Roman imperial culture leads.

## The Woman That Rides the Beast

This truth becomes all the more important when you understand that the Holy Roman Empire was prophesied to rise seven times and that one of these resurrections is yet to come. Revelation 17 depicts it as a mighty beast—a political-military power—ridden by a “great whore”—a symbol of a powerful false church. This prophecy is thoroughly explained in our booklet *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* by Gerald Flurry (free upon request).

There is yet one more resurrection coming before God will end it *forever*.

Concerning the leader of this prophesied last resurrection, the Bible foretells that at one point “shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god” (Habakkuk 1:11).

Hitler had his mind change when regarding Vienna’s cultural treasures. This prophesied last leader will also be steeped in Europe’s culture.

“The next dictator will be much more sophisticated—much more cultured. But he is going to ~~fight~~ **RIGHT CHRIST!**” Mr. Flurry explains in *Daniel Unlocks Revelation*.

Also notice what Mr. Flurry notes about this man in *The New Throne of David*: “The leader of this modern-day Holy Roman Empire will be guided by a religious power that has fornicated with the kings of the Earth. He will impute his war-making power ‘unto his god’—Satan the devil. This man will worship Satan in a way that other people do not: directly and personally!” Still, those who exalt the Holy Roman Empire are really worshiping the devil! This is what Revelation 13:4 prophesies: “And they worshipped *the dragon* which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast ....”

History shows that the fruits of this empire are grotesque. Despite the great architecture and fine music, there is something terribly evil in this empire.

## The Origin of Culture

Of course there is nothing wrong with loving culture. God equipped mankind with creative minds that can produce marvelous art and invention. And certainly not all European culture is an incitement to evil. However, the culture of the Holy Roman Empire is a prime example of how good and evil can mix—and it has inspired much evil.

God Himself is the author of true and wholesome culture. He had a hand in establishing wholesome culture in ancient Israel that greatly impacted this world. Men used their God-given creative talents to create beautiful works of art that can uplift the human spirit. There is even evidence that much of Europe’s culture had a righteous foundation: The *Austrian Chronicles* indicates that the Hebrew patriarch Abraham spent years in Austria prior to his conversion and established Austria as Europe’s first cultural center. More recently, to take one example, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote sublime music that we still enjoy; he gave credit to the Almighty God who made his mind and gave him the power to think and create.

We can appreciate musical talent and creative design and glorify the God who gave the ability. But over the centuries, people have also created much perverted art. Some of Europe's artwork is truly wonderful; some is grotesque. If you visit a large European cathedral, you see both sides.

How has this mixture of good and perverted culture inspired the Holy Roman Empire? To truly understand, we must study the origin of all culture: God's throne room.

God Himself is the origin of all true and wholesome culture. Through creative power, He created myriads of angels, one named Lucifer. All indications the Bible gives us is that this being was trained at God's throne room with the vision to bring light, culture, music and God's glory to the universe (Ezekiel 28:14).

However, Lucifer rebelled (Isaiah 14:13-14). His name was changed to Satan, and he sought to exalt himself above God. Eventually, his rebellion led to universal destruction.

Satan still has impressive creative power, but he now uses his abilities to effect unfathomable evil. To this day, he counterfeits God's wholesome culture (Revelation 12:9). In the Holy Roman Empire, he influenced a great deal of culture produced within his system and used these works of art to bolster the empire. Instead of glorifying God, it glorified the empire. By mixing good and evil, Satan was able to both uplift the human spirit and inspire atrocities. The people and the emperors believed they were fighting for a good cause. But Satan perverted their minds.

While we see much abuse and perversion in Europe's culture, there are still traces of good culture that truly point to God the Creator. While Satan's counterfeit culture can be a direct path to worshiping evil, true and wholesome culture can lead us to God. One can only imagine what the world will be like when all of mankind's God-given creative powers will be used to produce pure culture. Let's pray for the day when God will restore true culture to this world and the universe.

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