

*After The Sheiks: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies.* By Christopher M. Davidson. Pp. xiii, 298, London, Hurst & Company, 2012, £29.99.

This study focuses on the Gulf monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. In the teeth of the Arab Spring these countries have remained stable monarchies despite the violence and unrest in recent years. The author argues that the pressures below the surface in the Arab republics are now present in the Gulf States and that the unrest in Egypt, Libya, and Syria will serve as a catalyst for the demise of the Gulf monarchies in the next two to five years. Davidson bases his forecast on an array of empirical data and on recent studies such as Beblawi's research on the 'rentier state.' In a rentier state the government doles out to its citizens public sector jobs, services, free housing, money, and other government subsidies, thus buying political acquiescence. In the Gulf States expatriate workers do most of the work, while the indigenous population depends on the rent derived from hydrocarbon exports such as oil and gas. However, the life of the citizens or nationals may not be so rosy once the various governments/monarchies in the Gulf States run out of money from the exportation of oil and gas, as has happened in Dubai. All of the Gulf monarchies utilize the *kafala* or sponsorship system, in which unskilled workers are sponsored by their employers who assume responsibility for their legal status and their visas. This system has many flaws inasmuch as an unscrupulous employer can force domestic workers to work against their will, thus preventing them from returning to their country of origin.

Chapter One outlines the history of the Gulf States and their economic development with a focus on the discovery of oil and its ramifications. Chapter Two deals with domestic factors that help us understand how the Gulf monarchies survive, for example, the exploitation and co-opting of religion, which varies in each of the Gulf monarchies, depending on their particular situation. Davidson notes that loyal clerics have used quranic verses to legitimize absolute, political power. This should come as no surprise in states where clerics are well-paid, government employees, whose sermons are chosen from an official list of approved topics. Also, there exists a bifurcation or great divide between citizens or nationals and expatriates. Practically any and all citizens can readily assume a relatively high social standing by reason of their passports or identity papers. As a rule national women must marry national men, although men may marry whomever they wish. Women who marry foreigners are ostracized by their own families. Moreover, a strict dress code is operative in the Gulf States. In the wealthiest Gulf States like Qatar, women who are nationals wear black *abaya*; men wear a white *thobe*, thus distinguishing themselves from expatri-

ates, who in Saudi Arabia constitute one-quarter of the entire population. However, the younger set sport Western style attire during their leisure time.

Chapter Three considers several strategies used to improve the status of the Gulf monarchies, both regionally and internationally. The Gulf monarchies have curried favor with Western powers that can guarantee their security, joined organizations such as the Arab league, and have lavished development aid on Arab countries in North Africa, in the Middle East, (Lebanon, the Palestinians), in Africa (Somalia, the Sudan, Kenya) in Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan), as well as in the Balkans. Additionally, the Gulf monarchies have invested heavily in the U.K. (buying Harrods department store, financing the London Shard, the tallest skyscraper in Europe) and the Chrysler building in New York City. They have supported art galleries, museums, forging partnerships and branch campuses with top-notch universities such as the Sorbonne in Paris, Oxford, and Georgetown. Chapter Four details the various challenges and internal pressures facing the Gulf monarchies: an increasingly large indigenous population most of whom are under the age of twenty-one, declining oil and gas reserves, a need for more domestic energy, high unemployment, the accumulation of vast wealth by the ruling families, repressive forms of censorship, the ongoing cost of development aid, the financing of showcase projects, the squandering of national resources, and the discrimination against minorities such as the Shia and *bidoon* or people without a nationality.

Chapter Five points out the external pressures facing the Gulf monarchies such as: the isolation of Iran achieved by strengthening ties with Israel, in part, to appease the United States, and the attempt to make tourists and investors feel welcome in the Gulf States at the expense of Islamic values and traditions. The author notes that in some Gulf States during the month of Ramadan, alcohol can be consumed and food may be eaten during the day. Also, prostitution is on the rise in some areas and the accoutrements of Christmas are displayed, e.g., Christmas trees decorate the shopping malls in December. Moreover, the Gulf monarchies have hosted foreign military bases, and, equally disturbing, is the amount of money expended in purchasing military hardware from the West. Another symptom of concern is the rivalry and tension that continues to exist among the various Gulf countries. This does not augur well for the future. In Chapter Six the author notes that the Arab Spring in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Tunisia have made it increasingly difficult for the Gulf monarchies to paint opposition movements as a bunch of radicals and terrorists. In this way the Gulf monarchies have

re-invented themselves as a healthy alternative to the various opposition groups that have sprung up in the last few years. In Saudi Arabia itself cracks in the system are now surfacing, e.g., the wealth gap between rich and poor, high youth unemployment, poverty, and the great divide between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Finally, the attempt to limit dissent and freedom of expression in the Gulf monarchies is impossible with the advent of social media like Twitter and Facebook, cell phones, and the Internet.

This book is worth its weight in gold and what Davidson portends has, in fact, already partially happened. During 2012 the President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, has stepped down when a national referendum elected Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi as the

new President. In 2011 the crown prince of Abu Dhabi found government jobs for 6,000 Emiratis who were without work. Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed did this in order to quell public social unrest. Unfortunately, this is a band-aid approach and will not encourage long-term economic development. I agree with Davidson's thesis. The winds of change will only increase exponentially in the Gulf monarchies, unless the ruling families take this book to heart and put into practice the lessons learned. Do not hold your breath that this will occur. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, as Lord Acton noted many years ago.

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*Cyprian and Roman Carthage*. By Allen Brent. Pp. xv, 329, Cambridge University Press, 2010, \$91.53.

Cyprian's story plays in a time of imperial crisis. When Decius Trajan became emperor in 249, he intended to justify his victory over Philip I not simply as *pax*, but as *pax deorum* that would secure peace in nature and throughout society. The pagan cult and pagan gods reflected 'sacramentally' on the historical process of recovery. The power of the official religion of the Roman state would deliver nature and society from metaphysical chaos, and divine and rational order would be increased to its full potentiality. A golden age *saeculum nouum* would result. Imperial greatness would be recovered by means of imperial leadership and its forms of official, public worship. The desired response of the gods would be achieved through rites of divination and augury. Reinforcing universal citizenship decreed by Caracalla in 212, Decius would summon all citizens to central shrines for propitiary sacrifice to the gods. Each citizen would receive a certificate (*libellus*) as proof of participation. Shirkers were liable to the full force of imperial power.

For Roman Carthage's bishop Cyprian, God's peace and unity in society were accomplished through baptism and Eucharist. No other worship was effective or permitted. Even so, many Christians 'caught up in the universal enthusiasm of the moment [sought] relief from their fear and anxiety through pagan means that they had learned from their forefathers' [7]. These sought the *libellus*, despite its theological inconsistency with Christianity.

Rather than offer sacrifice, Cyprian controversially went into exile and administered the Church through priests and deacons whom he had commanded to remain at their posts, claiming his own prominence would make him exposed in ways that his clergy would not be. His letters from exile indicate burgeoning controversy in the Church at Carthage. Could those who lapsed from their faith by succumbing to the imperial edict be received at Eucharist? What comprised apostasy? There were degrees of this

scandal: *libellatici*, accomplished through bribe or proxy; *thurifeti*, through burning of incense; *sacrificati*, through full rites, whether eagerly or reluctantly. The crucial sacramental and therefore soteriological questions: What form should reconciliation take, and how, and mediated by whom – by a presbyter? a bishop? to be determined *ad hoc* or in council? or by a new means, unanticipated by Cyprian, by sacramental grace administered by a confessor or martyr by virtue of his confession or martyrdom alone, without formal ordination to any ecclesiastical office? Cyprian said all who sacrificed were apostates, whether they had done so eagerly or after imprisonment, whether they had sacrificed in part (incense, but not animal sacrifice) or bribed officials to give them the *libellus* even when they had not sacrificed at all; whether they were saving themselves, or whole households of family and slaves. Unfortunately, not all his clergy agreed. On these tenterhooks hang the tale.

It is worthwhile for such a meticulously researched and carefully written and cross-referenced study to be so handsomely produced. Rare is such section-and-sub-sectioning of chapters, frequently footnoted with locations where subjects are treated in further detail. Repetitive, yes, but this much on this topic, on these several pages, might be all one needs to know for the moment; on the other hand, this much more in these several portions of subsequent chapters would be useful in these different ways. Withal, there is no evident skimping on bibliography or indices. Plus there are plates! Plates! Each is listed in a table of contents with its own bibliographic details. Throughout the book feels useful, legible, and clear. Because the eight tightly argued, expansively explained, digressively explored and carefully organized chapters are presented with such careful attention to the sorts of questions scholars ponder, Brent's work is likely to become a default point of entry to further research. Its provocative chapters could stand alone in bibliogra-