THE AGE OF HUMANISM
(1453-1658)

Volume III
of
AN ESSAY IN UNIVERSAL HISTORY
From an Orthodox Christian Point of View

Vladimir Moss

Romania has passed away, Romania is taken.
Even if Romania has passed away, it will flower and bear fruit again.
Pontic folk-song, on the Fall of Constantinople.

I and my companions suffer from a disease of the heart that can only be cured by gold.
Hernan Cortes to the Aztecs.

The chief gift of nature… is freedom.
Leonardo da Vinci.

God gave us the papacy; now let us enjoy it.
Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici).

As free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness,
But as the servants of God.
I Peter 2.16.

The king is above the law, as both the author and the giver of strength thereto.
King James I of England.

Knowledge without conscience is but the ruin of the soul.
François Rabelais, Pantagruel (1532).

Know well, those who love Christ and those who love God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the books of the prophet, which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth… Alone on earth the Orthodox, great Russian tsar steers the Church of Christ as Noah in the ark was saved from the flood, and he establishes the Orthodox faith.
Elder Philotheus of Pskov (1540).

Where is my faith if I am silent? Sovereign, I cannot obey your command more than that of God.
St. Philip of Moscow to Ivan the Terrible (1568).

In addition to the counsellors of tyranny, there are others… who are no less dangerous and are maybe even more so. These are the ones who under the pretext of the people's liberties cause subjects to rebel against their natural princes, and thereby open the way to factious anarchy which is worse than tyranny ever was.
Jean Bodin, Six Books on the Republic (1576).

[Monarchy is] the channel through which all the vital elements of citizenship - loyalty, the consecration of secular life, the hierarchical principle, splendour, ceremony, continuity - still trickle down to irrigate the dustbowl of modern economic Statecraft.
C.S. Lewis, "Myth Becomes Fact".

[The people's] liberty consists in having government… It is not their having a share in government, sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clear different things…
King Charles I of England (1649).

At different times, in different places, Emperor and Anarchist alike may find it convenient to appeal to Holy Writ.
Sir Edmund Leech.

Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?
John Milton, Areopagitica (1644).

Temporal and spiritual are two words brought into the world to make men see double, and mistake their lawful sovereign… A man cannot obey two masters… Seeing there are no men on earth whose bodies are spiritual, there can be no spiritual commonwealth among men that are yet in the flesh.
Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (1651).

What is more iniquitous than for a tsar to judge bishops, taking to himself a power which has not been given him by God?… This is apostasy from God.
Patriarch Nikon of Moscow, Razzorenie (Demolition).

We still believe and maintain that our Kings derive not their title from the people, but from God; that to Him only they are accountable; that it belongs not to subjects either to create or censure, but to honour and obey their sovereign, who comes to be so by a fundamental hereditary right of succession.
King Charles II of England (1681).

The Church of Christ is exalted above the hills - above all earthly and human greatness. Human philosophy and art, and all the cultures of people, as well as all earthly values, represent only the low hills in comparison to the infinite heights of Christ's Church.
St. Nikolai Velimirovič.

Sacred are you, O Russia. The ancient writer was correct who said that you are the Third Rome, and there will be no fourth. You have surpassed the ancient Rome by the multitude of exploits of your martyrs, you have surpassed also the Rome which baptized you [Constantinople] by your standing in Orthodoxy, and you will remain unsurpassed to the end of the world. Only the land which was sanctified by the sufferings and the earthly life of the God-man is holier than you in the eyes of Orthodox Christians.
St. John Maximovitch.

III. WEST: ABSOLUTISM AND REVOLUTION   267

IV. EAST: THE ROMANOV DYNASTY   377

CONCLUSION. CHURCH-STATE SYMPHONY IN THE THIRD ROME

INTRODUCTION

This book represents the third volume in my series, *An Essay in Universal History*. The first volume, *The Age of Faith*, ended with the Seventh Ecumenical Councils in 787. The second volume, *The Age of Papism*, ended with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. This third volume ends with the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658. It is called *The Age of Humanism* because, while most men continued to believe in God and Christianity, the focus of their efforts was not God, but man.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 brought to an end the medieval world, which was mainly characterized, on the one hand, by the Christian Faith in its traditional, Orthodox form, and on the other, by monarchical modes of political government that continued to draw inspiration and legitimacy from the Church. In the modern world that was about to begin, both Christianity and monarchism would be on the retreat – although the retreat was accompanied by some notable and prolonged counter-attacks. After 1453, the Orthodox religio-political outlook and civilization that we have called *Orthodox Christian Romanity*, whose political aspect was *Autocracy* and its religious aspect - *Orthodoxy*, largely disappeared from its Mediterranean homeland and as it were bifurcated: while its religious centre remained in Constantinople, in the Ecumenical Patriarchate, its political centre moved north, to Moscow, "the Third Rome". In Moscow, in what most Europeans considered to be a barbaric outpost on the edge of civilization, or even beyond its bounds, Orthodox Christian Romanity was preserved. And so the main theme of this third volume in my history is the struggle between Russia and the waves of new ideas that assaulted it from the West – Humanism and Rationalism, and Protestantism and Catholicism...

The struggle between Russia and the West was foreordained in the very date of her birth: the period between the baptism of Russia under St. Vladimir in 988 and the death of his son, Yaroslav the Wise, in 1054 corresponds almost exactly to the final decline of Western Orthodox civilization, culminating in the great schism between Old Rome and New Rome (Constantinople) in 1054. Thus Orthodox Russia came to life just as the Orthodox West was dying; she appears to have been called by Divine Providence to take the place of the West in the scheme of Universal History in the same way that Matthias took the place of Judas Iscariot, and to defend the whole of Orthodox Christendom against the western heresies. Meanwhile, the Ecumenical Patriarchate retained its leadership role in the ecclesiastical sphere, though under the political yoke of the Ottoman sultans. But from the late sixteenth century Constantinople recognized the Russian Tsar as the political leader of all Orthodox Christians, and Russia herself as "the Third Rome", as she crept slowly southward, aiming at the liberation of the ancient capital of Christendom and the millions of Orthodox Christians languishing under the Ottoman yoke.

The first major turning-point in modern western history was the Humanist Renaissance, which placed man at the centre of the universe and man's reason as the ultimate criterion of truth. As the Thomist scholar Étienne Gilson put it, Renaissance humanism was the Middle Ages "not plus humanity but minus God". It purported, through a resurrection of ancient, Classical Greco-Roman culture to free men from the fetters of medieval scholasticism, to bring the light of reason to bear on every aspect of human life, even the revelations of religion. It sought to raise the common man to his full potential, which he would be capable of achieving supposedly if only he were not enslaved to the tyranny of popes and kings and religious superstition.

The expansion of human consciousness that took place in the Renaissance coincided with a widening of western man's understanding of the bounds of his physical environment, in the discovery of the New World, and in the discovery that the earth revolves around the sun (although many of the ancients knew this already). For this was truly an Age of Discovery… But in discovering some new things, man lost some older, much more important things, notably the knowledge of God in the Church… The sixteenth century saw a reaction against Humanism in the rise of Protestantism, which was followed by a revival of Catholicism in the Counter-Reformation and a series of horrific religious wars. However, the seeds of Renaissance Humanism were not extirpated by the Reformation, but found new and fertile soil in the Protestant world, bringing forth the poisonous fruits of Rationalism and religious scepticism in the eighteenth century.

The Age of Humanism was also an age of great *in*humanity. For this was also the age of the Inquisition, of Bloody Mary and the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, of the mass murder of the Mayans and Aztecs and Incas, of Ivan the Terrible… The coincidence cannot be coincidental: as humanity developed its innate potential in the arts and science, so did it develop its passions for cruelty and lust; for with liberty came licence…

The main victim of the new ways of thinking and behaving was *authority* in both Church and State.

There are essentially three methods by which political authority is transferred: by inheritance, by usurpation (usually violent), and by election. In the early modern period, election was almost unknown, and inheritance was considered the best method as involving the least strife and the coming to power of a man (or woman) who had been prepared for rule from childhood. It was hedged around by the blessing of the Church and by the theory of *Divine Right Monarchy,* a religious form of despotism. But monarchism suffered a severe blow in the English revolution, during which the monarchy was usurped by an oligarchical clique that claimed to represent a new principle of authority – *the will of the people.* This supposedly incarnated the humanist, non-religious value of *freedom,* and gave birth in time to Social Contract theory and – the French revolution.

The early modern period was not a revolutionary movement in the sense that it overthrew tradition *in toto* and in principle. On the contrary, in order to correct what it saw as the distortions of the Middle Ages, it appealed to the authority of the still more ancient past – the literature and art of pagan Greece and Rome ("old books from which new learning springs", as Geoffrey Chaucer put it), and the early, pre-Constantinian Church. And even when humanist modes of thought were already well esconced in the West, Christian modes of thought were not forgotten or erased. Thus as late as the English revolution of the mid-seventeenth century both Catholics and Protestants, Divine right monarchists and anti-monarchist republicans, appealed sincerely and passionately to Holy Scripture. In other words, the early modern age was still a believing age, a Christian age, albeit a predominantly heretical one. And in Muscovite Russia there still existed the last great and right-believing Christian kingdoms.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us!

I. WEST: RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

1. RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

"The world changed in the late fifteenth century," writes Peter Frankopan. "There was no apocalypse, no end of time, as Columbus and others feared – at least not as far as Europe was concerned. A series of long-range expeditions setting out from Spain and Portugal connected the Americas to Africa and Europe and ultimately to Asia for the first time. In the process, new trade routes were established, in some cases extending existing networks, in others replacing them. Ideas, goods and people began to move further and more quickly than at any time in human history – and in greater numbers too.

"The new dawn propelled Europe to centre-stage, enveloping it in golden light and blessing it with a series of golden ages. Its rise, however, brought terrible suffering in newly discovered locations. There was a price for the magnificent cathedrals, the glorious art and the rising standards of living that blossomed from the sixteenth century onwards. It was paid by populations living across the oceans: Europeans were able not only to explore the world but to dominate it. They did so thanks to the relentless advances in military and naval technology that provided an irresistible advantage over the populations they came into contact with. The age of empire and the rise of the west were built on the capacity to inflict violence on a major scale. The Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, the progression towards democracy, civil liberty and human rights, were not the result of an unseen change linking back to Athens in antiquity or a natural state of affairs in Europe; they were the fruits of political, military and economic success in faraway continents."[1]

However, a deeper cause of the propulsion of Western Europe to world dominance was the adoption of certain new *ideas* that turned out to be highly successful from a worldly point of view. The most important of these ideas were *humanism* and *freedom…*

During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, while the Orthodox Autocracy was being transferred from the Second Rome of Constantinople to the Third Rome of Moscow, ideas were being developed in the West that undermined the whole Christian world-view; in essence, they were a reversion to pre-Christian paganism, albeit with a Christian colouring.

The region was going through a period of great turmoil. As Robert Tombs writes, "Geopolitical, cultural and ideological crises were shaking confidence in the authority of established Western civilization so severely that sensible people believed that the end of the world was nigh, or at least that God was punishing unfaithful Christians – the 1512 Lateran Council felt obliged to forbid preachers to touch on such subjects. Muslim forces, having captured Constantinople, were advancing on land and sea. A devastating war was begun

---

[1] Frankopan, *The Silk Roads,* London: Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 202.

in Italy in 1494 between the two greatest Christian powers, France and the Habsburg Hoy Roman Empire. The Dominican friar Savonarola established a theocratic dictatorship in Florence in 1495 to stamp out corruption, but he was overthrown and burned at the stake in 1498. In 1517, a German Augustinian friar, Martin Luther, nailed his own criticism of the ecclesiastical authorities to a church door in Wittenberg. Popes had repeatedly been in conflict with Church Councils and had plunged into secular warfare and politics, and Rome itself was captured and sacked with appalling violence by Habsburg troops in 1527. Muslim armies overran Hungary, killing the king and slaughtering nobles and clergy, and they reached the gates of Vienna in 1530. Arab raiders took perhaps a million Europeans into slavery between 1530 and 1640, including some from Britain. A century of atrocious religious conflict began, leading to persecutions, civil wars and wars between states, culminating in the terrible Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). England escaped the worst: but it could not avoid the seismic shocks, culminating in connected British civil wars, the last of the European wars of religion, which finally ended after a Dutch intervention only in 1691.

"The intellectual roots of the upheaval, stretching back to fourteenth-century Italy, had given little hint of danger. A new interest in Greek and Roman antiquity, the core of what nineteenth-century historians dubbed the Renaissance, was further stimulated by large numbers of previously unknown texts rescued by refugee scholars from Constantinople. This inspired fashionable classical styles of literature, art and architecture. A fascination for Greek and Roman writings (taught by the *umanisti* – 'humanists') made traditional philosophy and culture seem musty, even absurd: some mocked medieval theology as 'debating how many angels could dance on the head of a pin'..."[2]

Humanism is the ancient idea, going back to the Greek philosopher Protagoras, that man is the centre of the universe, "the measure of all things". "Humanism," writes Perez Zagorin, "first originated in Italy in the fourteenth century as an educational and cultural program aiming at a revival and deeper knowledge of the languages, literature, and civilization of classical antiquity. The subjects it pursued, from which its name is derived, were the humanities, or *studia humanitatis*, including grammar and rhetoric, or the arts of language, philology, history, moral philosophy, and poetry. The humanists, those who cultivated these studies, were an intellectual elite made up of teachers, scholars, churchmen, civic officials, secretaries to kings and prelates, diplomats, and men of letters who were devoted to the works of Greek and Roman writers, in which they found a model for literary imitation and the inspiration for a fresh ideal of culture and of living."[3]

---

[2] Tombs, *The English and their History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, pp. 159-160.

[3] Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 47.

This preoccupation of the humanists is well illustrated in Raphael's masterpiece, "The School of Athens" (1509-11), which portrays fifty philosophers of antiquity, Plato and Athens occupying the central places. As long ago as 1082 a Council in Constantinople had forbidden the study of the teaching of the ancient philosophers, especially Plato, except as a means of training the mind, casting an anathema "on those who profess to be Orthodox but shamelessly, or rather blasphemously, introduce into the Orthodox and Catholic Church the impious dogmas of the Hellenes about human souls, and heaven, and earth, and other creatures."[4] However, fifteenth-century Italy was far from worrying about any Byzantine anathemas: "the impious dogmas of the Hellenes" became all the rage…

"The Renaissance," writes Norman Davies, "did not merely refer to the burgeoning interest in classical art and learning, for such a revival had been gathering pace ever since the twelfth century. Nor did it involve either a total rejection of medieval values or a sudden return to the world view of Greece and Rome. Least of all did it involve the conscious abandonment of Christian belief. The term *renatio* or 'rebirth' was a Latin calque for a Greek theological term, *palingenesis*, used in the sense of 'spiritual rebirth' or 'resurrection from the dead'. The essence of the Renaissance lay not in any sudden rediscovery of classical civilisation but rather in the use which was made of classical models to test the authority underlying conventional taste and wisdom. It is incomprehensible without reference to the depths of disrepute into which the medieval Church, the previous fount of all authority, had fallen. In this the Renaissance was part and parcel of the same movement which resulted in religious reforms. In the longer term, it was the first stage in the evolution which led via the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution to the Enlightenment. It was the spiritual force which cracked the mould of medieval civilisation, setting in motion the long process of disintegration which gradually gave birth to 'modern Europe'.

"In that process, the Christian religion was not abandoned. But the power of the Church was gradually corralled within the religious sphere: the influence of religion increasingly limited to the realm of private conscience. As a result the speculations of theologians, scientists, and philosophers, the work of artists and writers, and the policies of princes were freed from the control of a Church with monopoly powers and 'totalitarian' pretensions. The prime quality of the Renaissance has been defined as 'independence of mind'. Its ideal was a person who, by mastering all branches of art and thought, need depend on no outside authority for the formation of knowledge, tastes, and beliefs. Such a person was *l'uomo universale*, the 'complete man'.

"The principal product of the new thinking lay in a growing conviction that humanity was capable of mastering the world in which it lived. The great Renaissance figures were filled with self-confidence. They felt that God-given

---

[4] Fr. Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, p. 320.

ingenuity could, and should, be used to unravel the secrets of God's universe; and that, by extension, man's fate on earth could be controlled and improved…

"Humanism is a label given to the wider intellectual movement of which the New Learning was both precursor and catalyst. It was marked by a fundamental shift from the theocratic or God-centred world-view of the Middle Ages to the anthropocentric or man-centred view of the Renaissance. In time, it diffused all branches of knowledge and art. It is credited with the concept of human personality, created by a new emphasis on the uniqueness and worth of individuals. It is credited with the birth of history, as the study of the processes of change, and hence of the notion of progress; and it is connected with the stirrings of science – that is, the principle that nothing should be taken as true unless it can be tried and demonstrated. In religious thought, it was a necessary precondition for the Protestant emphasis on the individual conscience. In art, it was accompanied by a renewed interest in the human body and in the uniqueness of human faces. In politics it gave emphasis to the idea of the sovereign state as opposed to the community of Christendom, and hence to the beginnings of modern nationality. The sovereign nation-state is the collective counterpart of the autonomous human person.

"Both in its fondness for pagan antiquity and in its insistence on the exercise of man's critical faculties, Renaissance humanism contradicted the prevailing modes and assumptions of Christian practice. Notwithstanding its intentions, traditionalists believed that it was destructive of religion, and ought to have been restrained. Five hundred years later, when the disintegration of Christendom was far more advanced, it has been seen by many Christian theologians as the source of all the rot…"[5]

However, the contrast implicitly drawn here between a religious Middle Ages and an irreligious early modern era needs to be heavily qualified. On the one hand, as the Reformers were to point out with vehemence, medieval Christianity in the West was often far from fervent or profound, being corrupt both in doctrine and in works. And on the other hand, the Renaissance led naturally into the era of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which was full of religious passion, moral earnestness and doctrinal enquiry.

Nevertheless, in essence one must agree with Ferdinand Braudel's verdict that humanism's "acute awareness of humanity's vast and varied potential prepared the way, in the fullness of time, for all the revolutions of modern times, including atheism."[6]…

*

A kind of manifesto of humanism was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in which God the Father is portrayed addressing

---

[5] Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 471, 479.

[6] Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, London: Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 348-349.

mankind thus: "You, constrained by no limits, in accordance with your own free will, in whose hand I have placed you, shall ordain for yourself the limits of your nature. I have set you at the world's centre so you may more easily observe the world from there. I have made you neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honour, as though the maker and builder of yourself, you may fashion yourself in whatever shape you prefer…"[7]

And yet this is a lie: we cannot remake our nature in whatever direction we wish; our free will cannot accomplish whatever we desire. The full capacities of human nature are discovered, not through this self-assertion and fictional self-creation, but only in communion with God, through participation in His grace, through holiness. For man is created in the image of the holy God…

The centuries following the Renaissance and right up to our time have made us aware of the huge capacities of human nature in a vast efflorescence of the arts and sciences – with a correspondingly sharp decline in religious faith, culminating in *de facto* atheism. It could be argued that the finest achievements of western art have kept alive some inkling of spiritual things in a civilization that has lost the Spirit. This may be true. But the loss is immeasurably greater than the gain. It is as if Renaissance man made a Faustian deal with God: I agree to lose communion with, and knowledge of, You, so long as You grant me to explore the full capacities of my (fallen) human nature… Therefore the huge experiment with human nature that is the history of western civilization since the Renaissance has led, in our time, not to an expansion of consciousness, but to its drastic narrowing and impoverishment, and even to the attempt to deny the true nature of man as revealed in the saints. But human nature cannot be denied or abolished, however hard we try. Therefore the attempt to do that must be tortuous and tormenting. And ultimately futile…

Renaissance humanism preached veneration for the greatness of the human being *as an individual*, the cult of genius, stressing personal intelligence and ability. The summit of life was seen, not in holiness, but in the achievements of genius, in what fifteenth-century Italians called *Virtù*, which meant not virtue in the sense of holiness, but glory, effectiveness, versatility and power. In Machiavelli it could even mean deceit and cunning…

The ideal was *l'uomo universale* as described by Leon Battista Alberti – an astonishing all-rounder himself.

Alberti's biography hardly mentions him as an artist, and says nothing at all about his great significance in the history of architecture. Jacob Burkhardt writes of him: "Of his various gymnastic feats and exercises we read with astonishment how, with his feet together, he could spring over a man's head; how, in the cathedral, he threw a coin in the air till it was heard to ring against

[7] Della Mirandola, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations,* London: Cassell, 2004, p. 273.

the distant roof; how the wildest horses trembled under him. In three things he desired to appear faultless to others, in walking, in riding, and in speaking. He learned music without a master, and yet his compositions were admired by professional judges. Under the pressure of poverty, he studied both civil and canonical law for many years, till exhaustion brought on a severe illness. In his twenty-fourth year, finding his memory for words weakened, but his sense of facts unimpaired, he set to work at physics and mathematics. And all the while he acquired every sort of accomplishment and dexterity, cross-examining artists, scholars and artisans of all descriptions, down to the cobblers, about the secrets and peculiarities of their craft. Painting and modelling he performed by the way, and especially excelled in admirable likenesses from memory. Great admiration was excited by his mysterious camera obscura, in which he showed at one time the stars and the moon rising over rocky hills, at another wide landscape without mountains and gulfs receding into dim perspective, and with fleets advancing on the waters in shade or sunshine. And that which others created he welcomed joyfully, and held every human achievement which followed the laws of beauty for something almost divine. To all this must be added his literary works, first of all those on art, which are landmarks and authorities of the first order for the Renaissance of form, especially in architecture; then his Latin prose writings – novels and other works – of which some have been taken for productions of antiquity; his elegies, eclogues and humorous dinner-speeches. He also wrote an Italian treatise on domestic life in four books; and even a funeral oration on his dog. His serious and witty sayings were thought worth collecting, and specimens of them, many columns long, are quoted in his biography. And all that he had and knew he imparted, as rich natures always do, without the least reserve, giving away his chief discoveries for nothing. But the deepest spring of his nature has yet to be spoken of – the sympathetic intensity with which he entered into the whole life around him. At the sight of noble trees and waving cornfields he shed tears; handsome and dignified old men he honoured as 'a delight of nature', and could never look at them enough. Perfectly formed animals won his goodwill as being specially favoured by nature; and more than once, when he was ill, the sight of a beautiful landscape cured him. No wonder that those who saw him in this close and mysterious communion with the world ascribed to him the gift of prophecy. He was said to have foretold a blood catastrophe in the family of Este, the fate of Florence, and the death of the popes years before they happened, and to be able to read into the countenances and hearts of men. It need not be added that an iron will pervaded and sustained his whole personality; like all the great men of the Renaissance, he said, 'Men can do all things if they will'." [8]

"These modern men," writes Burckhardt, "the representatives of the culture of Italy, were born with the same religious instincts as other medieval Europeans. But their powerful individuality made them in religion, as in other matters, altogether subjective, and the intense charm which the discovery of the inner and outer universe exercised upon them rendered them markedly

---

[8] Burckhardt, *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy*, London: Penguin, 1990, pp. 102-103).

worldly. In the rest of Europe religion remained, till a much later period, something given from without, and in practical life egotism and sensuality alternated with devotion and repentance. The latter had no spiritual competitors, as in Italy, or only to a far smaller extent.

"Further, the close and frequent relations of Italy with Byzantium and the Mohammedan peoples had produced a dispassionate tolerance which weakened the ethnographical conception of a privileged Christendom. And when classical antiquity with its men and institutions became an ideal of life, as well as the greatest of historical memories, ancient speculation and skepticism obtained in many cases a complete mastery over the minds of Italians.

"Since, again, the Italians were the first modern people of Europe who gave themselves boldly to speculations on freedom and necessity, and since they did so under violent and lawless political circumstances, to which evil seemed often to win a splendid and lasting victory, their belief in God began to waver, and their view of the government of the world became fatalistic. And when their passionate natures refused to rest in the sense of uncertainty, they made a shift to help themselves out with ancient, oriental or medieval superstition. They took to astrology and magic.

"Finally, these intellectual giants, these representatives of the Renaissance, show, in respect of religion, a quality which is common in youthful natures. Distinguishing keenly between good and evil, they yet are conscious of no sin. Every disturbance of their inward harmony they feel themselves able to make good out of the plastic resources of their own nature, and therefore they feel no repentance. The need of salvation thus becomes felt more and more dimly, while the ambitions and the intellectual activity of the present either shut out altogether every thought of a world to come, or else caused it to assume a poetic instead of a dogmatic form…"[9]

This new humanist attitude to sin is explained further by Michael Allen Gillespie: "Central to the humanist enterprise was the defence of a notion of human dignity. In order to defend such a notion, it was necessary for humanism to emphasize the fact that man was created in the image of God and to minimize the effects of the Fall and original sin. These points were crucial for most humanists but also problematic. They understood that without a liberal reading of both matters, they would have to conclude that the great moral heroes of antiquity, Socrates, Cicero, and Cato, had been damned. Dante had sought to finesse this problem by putting Socrates in limbo, but this was insufficient for most humanists who needed to believe that morality and piety were more or less identical. If men such as Socrates had been damned, it would be hard to avoid the nominalist conclusion that God was indifferent or even unjust. However, if it was possible for such virtuous men to be saved without

---

[9] Burckhardt, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

knowing Christ, then it was hard to understand why Christ and his sacrifice were necessary.

"Humanists employed two different strategies in their efforts to resolve this problem. Following Paul's account in Romans that God's laws were revealed through the order of nature, they argued that pagans who had led virtuous lives according to nature had thus recognized, honoured, and perhaps even 'worshipped' God even though they did not know of Christ. This was especially true for those pagans like Socrates and Cicero who recognized that there was only one god. Thus, the virtuous pagans could by only some slight stretch of the imagination be counted among the elect. The problem with such a view was that it seemed to propel one toward Pelagianism. The second possibility… was to imagine that there was a common origin to both Christianity and pagan thought. Such a common origin could justify the humanists' belief that the moral teachings of pagans were inspired by God and thus essentially identical with the teaching of Christ.

"The rapprochement of pagan and Christian thought was facilitated by the work of Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444)… Among his many contributions, Bruni greatly eased religious suspicions that the humanist reading of secular texts corrupted piety by translating and publishing a letter from Basil, one of the greatest Christian heroes, defending the reading of pagan poets by Christian students. He also popularized a new notion of history, originally formulated by Flavio Biondo (1392-1463), that divided history not according to the four empire theory that had dominated historical thinking for almost a thousand years but according to the tripartite division of ancient, medieval, and modern periods. This new understanding, which was indebted to Petrarch's notion of a dark age separating his time from that of the ancients[10], was crucial to the development of Christian humanism, for it legitimized humanist efforts to recover a pristine, ancient Christianity much closer to ancient moral thought than the corrupted Christianity that had developed during the dark, middle age…"[11]

Humanism therefore represented a revival of paganism with Christian overtones. One of the most important channels of paganism was the Byzantine philosopher and polymath George Gemistus (Plethon), who first acquired fame through his lectures on Plato to packed audiences in Florence during the notorious uniate council in 1439. Surprisingly, however, he did not sign the unia with Rome but returned to Greece – although his remains were reverently brought back to Italy for re-burial…

"The enchantment which Plethon exerted," writes B.N. Tatakis, "was so great that the ruler of Florence, Cosimo de Medici, thought out the plan of

---

[10] Bruni: "After the darkness has been dispelled, our grandsons will be able to walk back into the pure radiance of the past" (in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 267). (V.M.)

[11] Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity,* University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp. 78-79.

founding his Platonic Academy. The plan was realized 20 years later (1459) by the fervent admirer of Plethon, Marsilio Ficino…

"Even from Mystras after his return (1441) right up to his death Plethon continued to communicate with his friends in Florence. In this last period of his life, he gave himself to the writing of the *Laws*. He did not have time to publish this work. After his death [Gennadius] Scholarius, who was then Patriarch and a strong opponent of the ideas of Plethon, read the manuscript and found it, as he says, full of impiety and anti-Christian spirit and publicly delivered it to the fire in 1460…"[12]

Another Greek with an enormous influence on the Italians was Bessarion, who, in exchange for betraying Orthodoxy at the council of Florence, was given a cardinal's hat, and donated the whole of his vast library to Venice.

"Renaissance scholars," writes John Henry, "were not simply excited by the fact that they had found old texts. They were excited because they believed that this Ancient wisdom represented a major step towards the recovery of the wisdom of Adam. It had long been assumed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition that Adam had known all things but that this knowledge had gradually been forgotten after the Fall, when Adam and Eve had disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit and had been cast out of Eden. Ancient wisdom was admitted not just for antiquarian reasons, therefore, but because it was regarded as wisdom that was preserved before too much of the Adamic wisdom, directly God-given, had been forgotten…

"It just so happened that there was a set of newly discovered writings that were regarded as particularly close to the Adamic wisdom. These were the writings of the Ancient Greek god Hermes, known as Trismegistus, thrice-great (since he was a great ruler, a great religious teacher and a great magus). We now know that the writings that make up the so-called *Hermetic Corpus* were written in the first and second centuries after Christ by Neoplatonic writers, some of whom were influenced by or sympathetic to Christian beliefs. In order to make their writings seem more important than they were, however, the authors of these magical texts claimed they were written by Hermes Tremegistus. The Renaissance scholars who rediscovered these writings fell for it hook, line and sinker. Assuming that these writings, which obviously included Christian ideas, were written long before the Christian era – since pre-Christian Greeks worshipped Hermes as a god – Renaissance intellectuals believed they had found a pagan strand of Adamic wisdom as old as the Pentateuch of Moses, which represented the oldest Judaeo-Christian strand of Adamic wisdom…"[13]

---

[12] Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition,* Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007, pp. 279, 290.

[13] Henry, *Knowledge is Power. How Magic, the Government and an Apocalyptic Vision Helped Francis Bacon to Create Modern Science,* London: Icon Books, 2017, pp. 71-73.

2. RENAISSANCE ART, SCIENCE AND MAGIC

Renaissance man was obsessed with the art and culure of Greco-Roman antiquity. This obsession was shared by the popes, who became the chief patrons of the greatest artists of the period. Indeed, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: "In modern times the pagan life appeared first of all in the bosom of papism; the pagan feelings and taste of the papists were expressed with particular vividness in the application of the arts to the subjects of religion, in painted and sculpted representations of the saints, in their Church singing and music, in their religious poetry. All their schools bear upon themselves the mark of sinful passions, especially the love of pleasure; they have neither the feeling of simplicity, nor the feelings of purity and spirituality. Such are their Church music and singing. Their poets, in depicting the liberation of Jerusalem and the Lord's Sepulchre, did not flinch from evoking the muse; he sang of Sion in one breath with Helicon, from the muse he passed on to the Archangel Gabriel. The infallible popes, these new idols of Rome, present in themselves images of debauchery, tyranny, atheism and blasphemy against all that is holy. The pagan life with its comedy and tragedy, its dancing, its rejection of shame and decency, its fornication and adultery and other idol-worshipping practices, was resurrected first of all in Rome under the shadow of its gods, the popes, and thence poured out over the whole of Europe."[14]

Under Popes Alexander VI, Julius II and Leo X, the Renaissance reached its climax as a fusion of Classical pagan culture and heretical Christianity. The popes patronized some of the finest artists in history, such as Bellini, Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo, and commissioned them to create Christian works like the Sistine chapel and the Last Supper. At the same time, they tore down some of the greatest monuments of ancient Christianity – Julius II, for example, tore down Constantine's basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican – in order to create beautiful but soulless new ones – for example, the new cathedral of St. Peter, which took 120 years and countless millions in pilgrims' indulgences to complete. Their extravagance and immorality knew no bounds.

*

The profession of *scientist* first appears in the early sixteenth century, when Erasmus humorously wrote: "Near these march the scientists, reverenced for their beards and the fur on their gowns, who teach that they alone are wise while the rest of mortal men flit about as shadows. How pleasantly they dote, indeed, while they construct their numberless worlds, and measure the sun, moon, stars, and spheres as with thumb and line. They assign causes for lightning, winds, eclipses, and other inexplicable things, never hesitating a whit, as if they were privy to the secrets of nature, artificer of things, or as if they visited us fresh from the council of the gods. Yet all the while nature is laughing grandly at them and their conjectures. For to prove that they have

---

[14] Brianchaninov, "The concept of heresy: article 3", *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'* (Church Life), NN 5-6, September – December, 2002, pp. 35-36.

good intelligence of nothing, this is a sufficient argument: they can never explain why they disagree with each other on every subject. Thus knowing nothing in general, they profess to know all things in particular; though they are ignorant even of themselves, and on occasion do not see the ditch or the stone lying across their path, because many of them are blear-eyed or absent-minded; yet they proclaim that they perceive ideas, universals, forms without matter, primary substances, quiddities, and ecceities – things so tenuous, I fear, that Lynceus himself could not see them. When they especially disdain the vulgar crowd is when they bring out their triangles, quadrangles, circles, and mathematical pictures of the sort, lay one upon the other, intertwine them into a maze, then deploy – and all to involve the uninitiated in darkness. Their fraternity does not lack those who predict future events by consulting the stars, and promise wonders even more magical; and these lucky scientists find people to believe them."[15]

Erasmus' description of scientists indicates that at the beginning true science, occultism and simple quackery emerged out of a common intellectual medium, and a common striving for *power over nature*. As C.S. Lewis writes, "There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the wisdom of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious – such as digging up and mutilating the dead."[16]

For, as Fr. Seraphim Rose points out: "Modern science was born out of the experiments of the Platonic alchemists, the astrologers and magicians. The underlying spirit of the new scientific world-view was the spirit of Faustianism, the spirit of magic, which is retained as a definite undertone of contemporary science. The discovery, in fact, of atomic energy would have delighted the Renaissance alchemists very much: they were looking for just such power. The aim of modern science is power over nature. Descartes, who formulated the mechanistic scientific world-view, said that man was to become the master and possessor of nature. It should be noted that this is a religious faith that takes the place of Christian faith."[17]

It was the waning in the Church's authority coincident with the Renaissance and the Reformation that led to this explosion of interest, especially in Protestant lands, in what A.C. Grayling calls "short ways to knowledge" - occultism, astrology and alchemy. The alchemists, for example, believed that

---

[15] Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*.

[16] Lewis, in Fr. Seraphim Johnson, "A Sane Family in an Insane World", www.trueorthodoxy.net/a_sane_family_in_an_insane_world.htm.

[17] Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teachings of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, CA: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993, p. 594.

gold could be created from base metals – obviously a very useful and profitable technology, if it was true, which is why cash-strapped rulers such as Queen Elizabeth I and scientist-magicians like John Dee were interested in it, as were even real scientists such as Newton and Boyle. But alchemy failed the test of empirical experimentation; and real science grew in proportion as these "short cuts" to knowledge were shown to be false.

But that was already in the seventeenth century. Long before that, occultism and demonism flourished in the early Renaissance period of the fifteenth century. Among the earliest and most influential thinkers who clearly crossed the frontier between natural and supernatural into demonic magic were Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and his disciple the Florentine philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94). Ficino translated the recently discovered works of Plato into Latin as well as the *Corpus Hermeticum.* Morris Berman writes of Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*: "The magus, he said, married earth to heaven. Natural magic is the practical part of natural science, and through the use of the cabala, which establishes links between heaven and earth… Pico described the trance state in which, in a state of ecstasy, the soul leaves the body and ascends to heaven… Pico, in fact, learned the techniques from Spanish Jews, who – at least in the thirteenth century… - had been very explicit about these techniques and their effects and even described them in printed texts. 'Through the intensive cult of angels [i.e., demons],' writes Frances Yates, 'cabala reaches up into religious spheres…' In general, she adds, the cabalistic system is a ladder to God, which one climbs by means of meditative techniques. By means of magic, she continues, 'man has learned hot to use the chain linking earth to heaven, and by Cabala, he has learned to manipulate the higher chain linking the celestial world, through the angels, to the divine Nature.' It was the somatic experience of the phenomenon of ascent, the very possibility of soul travel, that for Pico constituted the true 'dignity of man'. Pico thus spoke of man as an operator, a controller of heaven and earth."[18]

Another disseminator of the Cabala in Renaissance Italy was Giles of Viterbo, who, as Pope Julius II's sermon-writer, was very well placed to influence cultural developments at the highest level.[19]

Another deluded magician who was at the same time a famous scientist was Giordano Bruno. "Born in the city of Nola, near Naples, in 1548, Bruno became a Dominican and soon after that a teacher of a branch of magic known as the memory art. His travels were always marked by controversy, and the period 1583-85 found him in England, attached to the retinue of the French ambassador. During this period he wrote his major work, in dialogue form (as Galileo was to do many years later), including *La Cena de la ceneri* (The Supper of Ashes, or Ash Wednesday Supper), which was his defence and exposition of the heliocentric, or Copernican, theory of the universe. In 1592 he returned to Italy, strangely convinced that he could convert the pope to the ancient

---

[18] Berman, *Coming to our Senses,* London: Unwin, 1990, p. 228.
[19] Waldemar Januszczk, "The Michelangelo Codes`', *Sky Arts*, April 6, 2021.

Hermetic philosophy, which he regarded as the 'true' Christianity. He was soon arrested by the Inquisition and imprisoned for eight years, during which time his apparently heretical views were examined on a number of occasions. On February 17, 1600, scoffing at his executioner and refusing to look at the crucifix held up before him, Bruno was led out to the Campo dei Fiori in Rome and burnt at the stake.

"We might get confused if we regard Bruno's Copernicanism as strictly, or even largely, scientific in nature. After all, would a book on heliocentricity be called *Ash Wednesday Supper*? *Cena,* in fact, refers to the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper (in Italian, Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece is called *Il Cenacolo*). The light in the center of the universe is hardly an optical one for Bruno (though it could be); it is more specifically the divine light present in every human being, and accessibly by means of magical practice; which was (he believed) what the Mass, and the Eucharist – i.e., the miracle of transubstantiation – originally were. The Copernican sun was for Bruno an ancient Egyptian light, one that would dispel the present darkness of the world. Heliocentricity – the physical fact of a sun-centered universe (or, at least, solar system) – was thus for Bruno the astronomical confirmation of an ancient magic, and his ill-fated trip to Italy was an attempt to get the pope to 'see the light', the Egyptian/Hermetic core of the original Christian religion, from which, he asserted, the Roman Church had strayed. Hence also his refusal to look at the cross when taken out to die: the Church was using this symbol to deny the real (magical) content of its own religion – as the Cathars, among other heretics, had argued repeatedly….

"Another important figure is this tradition was Tommaso Campanella, whose career embodied changing attitudes to magic and what we would today call paranormal phenomena. Campanella was a practitioner of Ficinian magic and, like Bruno, was committed to a magical reform of Christianity. For him, Christ was simply a magus (albeit a very great one); and Campanella led a revolt in Calabria in 1599 that led to his imprisonment – he spent twenty-seven years of his life behind bars – and torture. In his book, *City of the Sun,* written in prison circa 1602, he envisioned a utopian community governed by the laws of natural magic. Although condemned as of 1603, to perpetual imprisonment as a heretic, Campanella was in Rome in 1628, practicing Ficinian magic, constructing a sealed room and employing talismans for Pope Urban VIII (!), to protect him from his enemies (this was the same pope who would condemn Galileo only five years later)… in one of his books he wrote that there was a divine magic that had been used by Moses and the saints, and that it enabled one to reach the higher regions, to move out beyond the limits of the known world and out to infinity. Campanella talked of divine inspiration and angelic visions, and said that God had allowed him to witness miracles, angels, and demons.

"Like Bruno, Campanella saw heliocentricity as a return to ancient truth, and he wrote about this in letters to Galileo."[20]

---

[20] Berman, op. cit., pp. 225-226.

According to A.C. Grayling, "The effective demise of the credibility of *magia, alchymia, cabala*, even though credulousness in them remained (and among a few, remains to this day), can plausibly be attributed to the failure of the supposed 'movement' known as Rosicrucianism in the events led up to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War.[21] The Rosicrucian panic in the first quarter of the seventeenth century was what in dramaturgical terms would be called the *crisis* of occult philosophy, that is, the last great gasp of an outlook that had overstayed its welcome in the intellectual economy of the age, and in that final fling demonstrated its vacuity. Arguably, the interest in questions of methodology of the two chief formulators of philosophical and scientific method in the seventeenth century – Francis Bacon[22] and René Descartes – was piqued not just by the Aristotelianism they rejected, but by the confusion of alchemy with chemistry, magic with medicine, astrology with astronomy, mysticism with mathematics, that was getting in the way of the advance of knowledge. What they rejected, in arguing for responsible methods of enquiry, was the very *magia, alchymia, cabala* which had engrossed the previous century's epistemological and metaphysical imaginations."[23]

However, Bacon (1561-1626) by no means rejected everything going by the name of "magic". For there was an important distinction to be made between *natural magic* and *speculative or demonic magic* or *witchcraft*. Natural magic was based on a belief that many of the phenomena of nature could be explained in an entirely natural (non-spiritual) manner in terms of the sympathies and antipathies of different material substances; its practitioners carried out experiments in a proto-scientific manner in order to achieve certain natural results. Bacon had such a respect for natural magic, trying to incorporate the best of it into his scientific project, while rejecting with horror speculative or demonic magic.

As Henry writes, "modern historians have not properly understood the magical tradition. In particular they have failed to grasp what was meant by the term 'natural magic'. There was nothing irrational in Bacon's day in believing in magic. The belief that bodies had specific properties and virtues

---

[21] The Brotherhood of the Rosy-Cross, or Rosicrucian Brotherhood seems to have been "a secret society devoted to religious, magical and philosophical reform. "News of this secret Brotherhood, which appeared in three published manifestos, caused a stir among intellectuals all over Europe. Some of those who sympathized with these ideas on reform tried all they could to make contact with them. Most famous of these was the French philosopher René Descartes. But he, like everybody else who tried to join the Brotherhood, failed. The truth is that the Rosicrucian Brotherhood was never anything more than another fiction devised by the author of *Christianopolis* [the alchemist Andreae]" (Henry, op. cit.p. 129). (V.M.)

[22] Francis Bacon was not the first Englishman of that name to hail the virtues of scientific method. On 11 June 1292 (?), Roger Bacon (1214–1292) died at Oxford, England. He was a Franciscan monk who was one of the first to propose mathematics & experimentation as methods of science. Drawing on Latin translations of Aristotle and the writings Arab scientists, he described a repeating cycle of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and verification. Cf. https://sciencemeetsfaith.wordpress.com/.../roger-bacon.../ (V.M.)

[23] Grayling, *The Age of Genius,* London: Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 184.

that enabled them to act upon or interact with other bodies to bring about particular ends entirely conforms with modern beliefs.

"While today we would not think of such activities in terms of sympathies and antipathies (although, by the way, chemists still talk about chemicals having different levels of affinity for one another), this does not mean that this belief was irrational. You can call it wrong, but not irrational. It was, after all, based on a belief in corresponding planes along the Great Chain of Being, so there was a logic behind any claims about sympathies…

"Neither Bacon nor his contemporaries would have thought of magic as irrational. They did not think of it as supernatural either. The pre-eminent form of magic was always natural magic, so called because it was based on assumptions about the natural properties and powers of bodies…

"During the seventeenth century, major aspects of the natural magic tradition were amalgamated with natural philosophy to provide a new philosophy of science that combined the pragmatic utility and experimentation of magic with the rationalism and concern to understand causes of the natural philosophical tradition. The result was something much more recognizably like modern science…"[24]

*

The relationship between Renaissance science and religion was still more complicated. On the one hand, the "advanced" spirits of the Renaissance rejected with some disdain the Catholic-Aristotelean-Ptolemaic understanding of the physical universe, which never changed and depended more on deduction from Aristotelean axioms than inductive construction of testable hypotheses. On the other hand, they were all convinced Christians, who would not have dreamed of denying the faith (which is why they were so against speculative magic).

By about 1625, the Catholic Church, spearheaded by the Jesuits (of whom, Grayling claims, Descartes was an agent) had triumphed over *magia, alchymia, cabala* in its last major, Rosicrucian "fling". At the same time, however, it had set itself against the beginnings of the scientific revolution, thereby as it were throwing the baby out with the bath-water. For, as Grayling notes: "Remembering that occultism was motivated by a Faustian desire to find short cuts to knowledge and control of the mysteries of nature explains much about the threat it posed to the view – the Church's view – that those mysteries are not mankind's but God's alone to know. From the Church's point of view there was no point in drawing a line between real and occult science. Finding a way of unlocking the universe's secrets was every enquirer's ambition, whatever kind of enquirer was involved – whether by the short-cuts of occultism, or by

---

[24] Henry, op. cit., pp. 80, 81, 86.

the empirical and quantitative methods of genuine science. The Church was against both; it did not distinguish them."[25]

Having said that, we must acknowledge that modern opponents of religion have exaggerated their case against Catholic Christianity, as if the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo overthrew not only the old Aristotelean-Ptolemaic model of the heavens and the earth, but Christianity in general. They did not - at all… In this connection it is essential to dissect the Thomist synthesis of spiritual and material knowledge that was accepted by both Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century into its constituent parts. Aquinas, as Grayling writes, "brought together the material and the spiritual by joining Aristotle's science, Ptolemy's astronomy and Galen's medical theories – together offering a picture of the material aspect of man's existence – with the Church's teaching on the nature and destiny of the soul."[26] But the Church's teaching "on the nature and destiny of the soul" did not have to be bound up with "the material aspect of man's existence": there was nothing in the Holy Scriptures or the Holy Fathers of the first millennium of Christianity that necessitated an acceptance of Ptolemy's astronomy. Indeed, St. Basil in his *Hexaemeron* shows contempt for *all* pagan speculations on the nature of the universe.[27]

The Roman Catholics' dogmatization of pagan physical speculations was a critical mistake – or rather, heresy. For by giving the pagan Aristotle, and then his Christian follower Aquinas, a status and honour above that of the Apostles themselves, they departed from the faith of the Apostles. By contrast, the Orthodox Church in the East respected, and sometimes used, but never idolized Aristotle (still less, Ptolemy).[28]

The discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo certainly overthrew Ptolemy's astronomy, but in no way did they overthrow the authority of the real sources of Christian tradition – which was by no means to be identified with the foolish

---

[25] Grayling, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

[26] Grayling, op. cit., p. 234.

[27] "Those who have written about the nature of the universe have discussed at length the shape of the earth. If it be spherical or cylindrical. If it resemble a disc and is equally rounded in all parts, or if it has the form of a winnowing basket and is hollow in the middle; all those conjectures have been suggested by cosmographers, each one upsetting that of his predecessor. It will not lead me to give less importance to the creation of the universe that the servant of God Moses is silent as to shapes; he has not said that the earth is a hundred and eighty thousand furlongs in circumference; he has not measured into what extent of air its shadow, casting itself upon the moon, produces eclipses. He has passed over in silence, *as useless,* all that is unimportant to us. Shall I then prefer *foolish wisdom* to the oracles of the Holy Spirit? Shall I not rather exalt Him Who, not wishing to fill our minds with these vanities, has regulated all the economy of Scripture in view of the edification and the making perfect of our souls?" (*Hexaemeron,* Homily IX). Again, St. Antony the Great described as "empty" the word "that seeks to determine the measure of heaven and earth, their distance apart, and the size of the sun and stars"; for these men are motivated by "empty vainglory" and "seek things that bring them no profit" (*170 Texts on Saintly Life,* 109).

[28] St. John of Damascus used Aristotle's logic extensively in his *Fount of Knowledge.*

wisdom of the Popes! Much confusion has been generated in this connection by Galileo's trial, in which, so it is said, a Pope who falsely believed that the earth was flat and that the sun circled the earth persecuted Galileo, who believed on empirical evidence that the earth circled the sun. But the truth, as Jay Wesley Richards explains, is somewhat different. "First of all, some claim Copernicus was persecuted, but history shows he wasn't; in fact, he died of natural causes the same year his ideas were published. As for Galileo, his case can't be reduced to a simple conflict between scientific truth and religious superstition. He insisted the church immediately endorse his views rather than allow them to gradually gain acceptance, he mocked the Pope, and so forth. Yes, he was censured, but the church kept giving him his pension for the rest of his life."

The earlier case of Bruno, continues Richards, "was very sad. He was executed in Rome in 1600. Certainly this is a stain on church history. But again, this was a complicated case. His Copernican views were incidental. He defended pantheism and was actually executed for his heretical views on the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other doctrines that had nothing to do with Copernicanism."[29]

In fact, *the true Christian Tradition never denied a spherical earth*. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of Him Who "sits above the *circle* of the earth" (Isaiah 40.22). The Holy Fathers knew that the earth was round: St. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, calls the earth "spherical"[30], and the Venerable Bede held that the sun goes around the spherical Earth, and that the moon and stars shine, not with their own light, but with light reflected from the sun.[31] "The truth is," writes David Lindberg, "that it's almost impossible to find an educated person after Aristotle who doubts that the Earth is a sphere."[32]

So the whole heliocentrism versus geocentrism debate was a *red herring* as regards the debate between science and religion.

Christopher Johns writes: "The misconception here is not only that medieval people thought that the earth was flat, but that the ancient Greek theory of a spherical earth was somehow 'lost' or forgotten in the Middle Ages, and that the Church taught the alleged 'flat earth theory' as a matter of dogma, until

---

[29] Richards, in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator,* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, pp. 162-163. "The historian William R. Shea said, 'Galileo's condemnation was the result of the complex interplay of untoward political circumstances, political ambitions, and wounded prides.' Historical researcher Philip J. Sampson noted that Galileo himself was convinced that the 'major cause' of his troubles was that he had made 'fun of his Holiness' – that is, Pope Urban VIII – in a 1632 treatise. As for his punishment, Alfred North Whitehead put it this way: 'Galileo suffered an honorable detention and a mild reproof, before dying peacefully in his bed.'" (Strobel, op. cit., p. 163) As Montefiore puts it, "his imprisonment amounted to little more than enforced internal exile to the Tuscan hills, where he was free to continue his work in a more muted form" (*Titans in History*, London: Quercius, 2012, p. 234).
[30] St. Gregory, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, chapter 4.
[31] St. Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*.
[32] Lindberg, in Strobel, op. cit., p. 164.

Christopher Columbus proved them wrong by sailing far into the west without falling over the edge of the earth. The reality is that Medieval people were well aware of the spherical shape of the earth. Medieval art consistently depicts the earth as shaped like a sphere, a spherical earth appears in church sermons of the period, and the earth is explicitly described as a sphere in the writings of Dante and Chaucer. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*, also gives the round earth as an example of an accepted scientific fact and a rational truth: 'The astronomer and the physicist both may prove the same conclusion: that the earth, for instance, is round: the astronomer by means of mathematics (i.e. abstracting from matter), but the physicist by means of matter itself' (emphasis mine). Meanwhile, Bede the Venerable, the Anglo-Saxon monk, would note the following in *The Reckoning of Time*: 'Not without reason is [the earth] called "the orb of the world" on the pages of Holy Scripture and of ordinary literature. It is, in fact, set like a sphere in the middle of the whole universe'. Stephen Jay Gould, a historian of science, noted the following: 'There never was a period of "flat Earth darkness" among scholars (regardless of how the public at large may have conceptualized our planet both then and now). Greek knowledge of sphericity never faded, and all major medieval scholars accepted the Earth's roundness as an established fact of cosmology."[33]

---

[33]   Johns,   "Misconceptions   about   the   Middle   Ages", https://medievalfacts.quora.com/Misconceptions-about-the-Middle-Ages?ref=fb.

3. THE WORSHIP OF FREEDOM

The Renaissance introduced what was in essence a new religion – the worship of man, otherwise known as *humanism*, whose essence was *freedom* understood as man's capacity for *self-creation*. Humanism is of various kinds; but its earliest variety in modern – that is, post-medieval - history is *liberal* humanism, which remains the dominant religion of the western world to this day. Liberal humanism is the idea that man is by nature autonomous, free and self-creative, and that his political and social environment can and should be reconstructed by all means possible – up to and including political revolution - so as to maximize his freedom.

"Today," writes Yuval Noah Harari, "the most important humanist sect is liberal humanism, which believes that 'humanity' is a quality of individual humans, and that the liberty of individuals is therefore sacrosanct. According to liberals, the sacred nature of humanity resides within each and every individual *Homo Sapiens*. The inner core of individual humans gives meaning to the world, and is the source for all ethical and political authority. If we encounter an ethical or political dilemma, we should look inside and listen to our inner voice – the voice of humanity. The chief commandments of liberal humanism are meant to protect the liberty of this inner voice against intrusion or harm. These commandments are collectively known as 'human rights'."[34]

Thus just as peace among men – secular peace, the *Pax Romana* – had been the key ideal of the Roman Empire, and peace with God – that is, right faith and the works of faith – the ideal of the Christian Roman Empire (and, albeit in a distorted way, of the western medieval church and empire), so *liberty*, in the sense of the full development of the potentialities of (fallen) man, to the extent of the *recreation* of human nature itself, has been the goal of European civilization from the Renaissance to the present day.

"Imagine," writes Braudel, "that it might be possible to assemble the sum total of our knowledge of European history from the fifth century to the present, or perhaps to the eighteenth century, and to record it (if such a recording were conceivable) in an electronic memory. Imagine that the computer was then asked to indicate the one problem which recurred most frequently, in time and space, throughout this lengthy history. Without a doubt, that problem is liberty, or rather liberties. The word liberty is the operative word.

"The very fact that, in the twentieth-century conflict of ideologies, the Western world has chosen to call itself 'the free world', however mixed its motives, is both fair and appropriate in view of Europe's history during these many centuries.

---

[34] Harari, *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind,* London: Vintage, 2011, p. 257.

"The word liberty has to be understood in all its connotations, including such pejorative senses as in 'taking liberties'. All liberties, in fact, threaten each other: one limits another, and later succumbs to a further rival. This process has never been peaceful…"[35]

And that is why the history of Western Europe and of its overseas colonies has never been, and never can be, peaceful…

We have already met the first notable modern propagandist of the religion of liberal humanism: Pico de la Mirandello, who went beyond the bounds of Christian thought in his search for an ideology of freedom. Pico studied with the Jewish Averroist Elea del Medigo, and learned Hebrew and Arabic in Perugia, after developing a deep interest in the Kabbalah. According to Dan Cohn-Scherbok he "was able to engage in kabbalistic study, making use of the concept of the *sefirot* in his compositions. He and other Christian humanists believed that the *Zohar* [the Kabbala] contained doctrines which support the Christian faith. In this milieu Judah Abravanel composed a Neoplatonic work which had an important impact on Italian humanism."[36]

Following his teacher Ficino's arguments in *The Christian religion*, Pico asserted that humans were self-creating beings who could choose their own nature. This power for Pico is not intrinsic to human beings but is a divine gift. As he wrote: "O sublime generosity of God the Father! O highest and most wonderful felicity of Man! To him it was granted to be what he wills. The Father endowed him with all kinds of seeds and with the germs of every way of life. Whatever seeds each man cultivates will grow and bear fruit in him."[37]

The idea that man can create himself, *becoming what he wills*, can be characterised as the root folly and delusion of western civilization to the present day. This idea was made the foundation for a new theory of politics whose aim was the creation of a social and political order oriented, not towards the commandments of God and the salvation of the souls, but towards maximum individual self-development, that is, the maximum satisfaction of the demands of fallen human nature – an ideal that thinkers from Aristotle to the Holy Fathers labelled as "licence" rather than "liberty".

Of course, the Christian understanding of politics did not disappear overnight. After all, as Harari writes, "even though liberal humanism sanctifies humans, it does not deny the existence of God, and is, in fact, founded on monotheist beliefs. The liberal belief in the free and sacred nature of each individual is a direct legacy of the traditional Christian belief in free will and eternal individual souls. Without recourse to eternal souls and a Creator God, it becomes embarrassingly difficult for liberals to explain what is so special

---

[35] Braudel, op. cit., pp. 315-316.

[36] Cohn-Shherbok, *Atlas of Jewish History*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 112.

[37] Pico, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.

about individual Sapiens."[38] Nevertheless, the general tendency was to disconnect politics from religion – or, at any rate, the Christian religion – and make its central dogma and goal the humanist idea of freedom - that is, the freedom, not to *be* yourself as you really, unalterably are, but to *become* yourself as what you want to be.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The cult of freedom was demonstrated first of all by the freedom won by artists. It was the genius of such men as Leonardo, Rafael and Michelangelo that acquired for them not just reputation and glory, but a certain professional freedom as individual artists. And not only men, but also women, such as Artemisia Gentileschi, a kind of proto-feminist who showed her murderous attitude to men in paintings such as *Judith and Holofernes,* and who was promoted by the Medicis of Florence. "Artemisia was born in Rome, the eldest of five children and only daughter of <u>Orazio Gentileschi</u>, under whom she trained. Artemisia's earliest signed and dated painting, 'Susanna and the Elders' (Schloss Weißenstein collection, Pommersfelden, Germany), is from 1610. A year later Artemisia was raped by the painter <u>Agostino Tassi</u>, an acquaintance and collaborator of her father's. An infamous trial, meticulously recorded in documents that survive, ensued in 1612. Tassi was found guilty and banished from Rome, though his punishment was never enforced.

"Following the trial Artemisia married a little-known Florentine artist by the name of Pierantonio di Vincenzo Stiattesi, and left Rome for Florence shortly thereafter. There she had five children and established herself as an independent artist, becoming the first woman to gain membership to the Academy of the Arts of Drawing in 1616. Artemisia returned to Rome in 1620, beset by creditors after running up debts, and she remained there for 10 years (except for a trip to Venice in 1628).

"From 1630 she settled in Naples, where she ran a successful studio until her death. She briefly visited London in 1639, perhaps to assist her ailing father on the ceiling painting of the Queen's House in Greenwich (now at Marlborough House in London), but was back in Naples the following year. The precise date of her death is not known but a recently discovered document records her still living in Naples in August 1654."[39]

Artists depend on patronage, which in turn depends on a certain degree of wealth, both individual and collective. The Renaissance saw a gradual increase in *economic* freedom. Already in the twelfth century we see free crafts, guilds and lodges (such as the stonemasons' lodges, which developed into Freemasonry). These first chinks in the prison of feudal servitude appeared in the towns of Northern Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, allowing them to acquire independent or semi-independent status. "Egoistic, vigilant and

---

[38] Harari, op. cit., pp. 257-258.

[39] https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/artemisia-gentileschi.

ferocious, towns were ready to defend their liberties against the rest of the world, often with very great courage and sometimes without any concern for the liberties of the others. Bloodthirsty wars between cities were the forerunner of the national wars to come."[40]

Now the towns were built on commerce, and commerce was built on the commercial contract. Therefore it is not surprising that the town-dwellers' dominant theory of *politics* came to be the theory of the *social contract*, based on the idea of mutual rights and obligations. For, as Philip Bobbitt notes, "the medieval system had been a rights-based system. Each member of that society had a particular place that determined rights, obligations, and a well-defined role."[41] The basic form of relationship between men in the Middle Ages had been the feudal contract that was hierarchical in form; it defined the mutual rights of lord and vassal, with the pope and/or the king as the supreme lord or lords. But the rights and obligations binding municipalities and tradesmen and guilds were more egalitarian.

Similarly, the basic form of *political* relationship between men in the early modern period became (although not immediately and by no means everywhere) more egalitarian and exchange-based, resulting in the theory of *the social contract*: that is, the people have freely entered into a contract with their political rulers whereby they buy security in exchange for obedience. They are free in the sense that if the ruler breaks his contract, they are released from the obligation of obedience. They are free to rebel against him.

The most important of the various kinds of freedom proclaimed at the Renaissance was the idea of the freedom and autonomy of *the mind,* the belief that the mind and reason do not need to be checked against any higher authority or revelation. This belief is known as *rationalism*, and came in three major forms: Jewish, Catholic and Protestant. While the ideas of economic and (somewhat later) of political freedom flourished in the conditions of early modern Europe, the idea of *religious* freedom, freedom of *conscience*, or *intellectual* freedom was slower to catch on. Like the ideas of economic and political freedom, it had its roots in the Middle Ages, in the attempts to limit or destroy intellectual freedom through the *Kahal* or *Sanhedrin* (in Judaism) and the *Inquisition* (in Catholicism).

---

[40] Braudel, op. cit., p. 322.
[41] Braudel, op. cit., p. 322.

4. THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES

The Italian city-states may be described as the earliest political expression of Renaissance individualism. As such, they represented a powerful challenge to the medieval understanding of collective, social life. The Italians' political "organization" was a disunited mass of city-states acknowledging no political head that challenged the medieval love of order and elicited the spread of intellectual, political and religious anarchy throughout Western Europe. In the medieval period, the medieval bastions of order – the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire – had fought each other to a bitter draw that undermined the credibility of both, opening the path for a new form of political order that, by comparison with the earlier orders, was no order at all. For the princely leaders of the independent city-states, such as the Sforzas of Milan, the Medicis of Florence and the Borgias of Rome, broke the traditional bonds of loyalty to Church and feudal lord and acted in general without any moral restraint.

Medieval Italy already led the way in this tendency towards the disintegration of larger polities and the formation of small city-states. Thus David Weinstein writes: "By the late thirteenth century the struggle between Popes and Emperors had played itself out leaving the communes and other Italian powers alone in the field. The collapse of universal authority meant that for the next two hundred years Italy, the garden of the Empire, was virtually closed to foreign invaders, and the search for the New Rome left to the fantasies of poets and prophets. In these two centuries the communes acquired a degree of political and administrative sophistication unmatched anywhere in Europe. In expanding their borders as well as the range of their competence, communes became city-states, brought to maturity and rich variety at Milan, Venice, Verona, Genoa, Mantua, Ferrara, Urbino, Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Siena, and many smaller places. Where communes were weak or absent, more traditional forms prevailed, as in the Duchy of Savoy, the Kingdoms of Sicily and Naples, with their Hispanic dynasties, and the signories of the Romagna. But even these were affected by the collapse of Papal and Imperial hegemony and were drawn into the new political culture. The Italians of the Renaissance discarded feudalism (except for its cult of nobility and chivalric violence). They revived the ancient conception of republican citizenship and began to explore the secular nature of politics and community, looking for alternatives to medieval political theology.

"The engines that drove Renaissance states in their dealings with each other were greed, competition, mutual distrust, and secrecy. Chauvinist, acquisitive, fearful of each other, the communes had been aggressive from the start. With the removal of papal and imperial restraints they entered a more intense period of expansion, the larger, more powerful states establishing their hegemony over the smaller and weaker. Maritime cities fought each other for colonies and markets, with Genoa and Venice the big winners. In relations between governments anarchy rather than order was the rule. Paradoxically, as war became the main business of governments, the internal trend was away from

the disorderly popular regimes of the communal period toward a sterner discipline. By the fifteenth century most of the Italian republics had reconciled themselves to some form of oligarchic or authoritarian rule; none were democracies. Even Florence, which celebrated itself as the model of republican liberty, barring nobles from its chief magistracies and filling offices by election and sortition, was run by a network of propertied families, and in 1454 came under the domination of a single family, the Medici. The popolo minuto who toiled in Florence's dingy workshops and damp woollen mills were even more disenfranchised than the tiny minority of nobles, and without the nobles' compensations of wealth, status, and influence. Neither in domestic nor in external relations did the Renaissance find a practical alternative to the rule of the stronger.

"In the mid-fifteenth century Italy was a geographical expression, a no-man's land of competing and warring entities. By then many of the weaker had been swallowed up by their more powerful neighbours. Italian political space was now divided among a dozen or so important powers, endlessly making and breaking alliances and waging war on each other. Five states dominated the play: Venice, Milan, Florence, Naples, and the Papacy. They were finding it increasingly difficult to manoeuvre without knocking into each other, and their wars were growing longer and more costly…"[42]

There were some good by-products of this chaos… As indicated above, the rise of the Italian city-states was the main cause of the gradual break-down of serfdom in Western Europe, which in the year 1300 had three times the population of Eastern Europe. "In the economic boom that had started in the eleventh century, it had also become much more urbanized. The existence of urban centers radiating from northern Italy up through Flanders was first and foremost the product of political weakness and the fact that kings found it useful to protect the independence of cities as a means of undercutting the great territorial lords who were their rivals. Cities were also protected by ancient feudal rights, and the urban tradition from Roman times had never been entirely lost. Thus sheltered, the cities evolved as independent communes that, through growing trade, developed their own resources independently of the manorial economy. The existence of free cities in turn made serfdom increasingly difficult to maintain; they were like an internal frontier to which serfs could escape to win their freedom (hence the medieval saying, 'Stadtluft macht frei' – City air makes you free). In the less densely populated parts of Eastern Europe, by contrast, cities were smaller and served more as administrative centers for the existing political powers, as they did in China and the Middle East.

"The trend toward freedom in the west and unfreedom in the east was stimulated by the disastrous population decline that occurred in the fourteenth century as recurring waves of plague and famine struck Western Europe harder and earlier than the east. As economic growth returned in the fifteenth

---

[42] Weinstein, "Savanorola – Preacher and Patriot?", *History Today,* vol. 39, November, 1989.

century, Western Europe saw regeneration of towns and cities, which offered sanctuary and economic opportunities that prevented the nobility from squeezing its own peasantry harder. Indeed, to keep labor on the land, lords had to offer peasants greater freedom in what was becoming a modern labor market. The centralizing monarchies of the region found they could weaken their aristocratic rivals by protecting the rights of cities and towns. Increased demand had to be met instead by imports of food and precious metals from Eastern and Central Europe. But east of the Elbe, the weakness of both independent cities and kings permitted the nobility to develop export agriculture on the backs of their own peasantry. In the words of the historian Jenö Szücs, 'The regions beyond the Elbe paid, in the long run, for the West's recovery… The legislative omens of the 'second serfdom' appeared with awesome synchronicity in Brandenburg (1494), Poland (1496), Hungary (1492 and 1498), and also in Russia (1497).'"[43]

As worshippers of individualism, the Italian princes liked to rule on their own: senatorial or oligarchical rule was one feature of ancient Roman republicanism that they chose not to imitate. The one exception to this rule was Venice, "the eldest child of Liberty", in Wordsworth's phrase.

"The city was historically the capital of the Republic of Venice for a millennium and more, from 697 to 1797. It was a major financial and maritime power during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and a staging area for the Crusades and the Battle of Lepanto, as well as an important center of commerce - especially silk, grain, and spice, and of art from the 13th century to the end of the 17th. The city-state of Venice is considered to have been the first real international financial center [and, with Florence, the inventor of banking], emerging in the 9th century and reaching its greatest prominence in the 14th century…

"At the peak of its power and wealth, it had 36,000 sailors operating 3,300 ships, dominating Mediterranean commerce. Venice's leading families vied with each other to build the grandest palaces and to support the work of the greatest and most talented artists. The city was governed by the Great Council, which was made up of members of the noble families of Venice. The Great Council appointed all public officials, and elected a Senate of 200 to 300 individuals. Since this group was too large for efficient administration, a Council of Ten (also called the Ducal Council, or the Signoria), controlled much of the administration of the city. One member of the great council was elected "doge", or duke, to be the chief executive; he would usually hold the title until his death, although several Doges were forced, by pressure from their oligarchical peers, to resign and retire into monastic seclusion, when they were felt to have been discredited by political failure."[44]

---

[43] Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order,* London: Profile, 2012, pp. 376-377.
[44] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice

In its oligarchical structure governing a large commercial empire in the Adriatic and the Aegean based on sea-power, Venice can be compared to the London and British empire. Again like the British, the Venetians were highly tolerant in religious matters, considering commercial prosperity the main value. But this is not to say that they were free of all constraints and rules. Even economic empires need discipline in order to fight off other economic empires (Venice's main rival was Genoa). And so, writes John Ralston Saul, "while the prism was commerce, the government maintained strict economic regulations directly related to the functioning of society. … Music, painting, sculpture, architecture were all encouraged, valued, admired. Writing, ideas and debate were discouraged and limited. The commercial republic saw freedom of speech as an expression of disloyalty and therefore dangerous…"[45]

In the early sixteenth century, bloody wars over the possession of Italy were waged by the French, the Spanish and the papacy. By the time of the death of the warmongering Pope Julius II (the patron of Michelangelo) in 1513, the Spanish Habsburgs were in control of the south of Italy and Sicily ("the kingdom of the Two Sicilies"), the papacy of the centre, and the French of the north. However, the French had to withdraw to their homeland to face the English, who had captured Tournai.

Venice survived; so did Milan under the Sforzas and Florence under the Medicis. The age of the Italian city-states was a brilliant age, which produced many great artists, but which still further shamed the image of Western Christianity and the papacy…

The Italian city-states, writes Bobbit, "were defined geographically, as opposed to the usual springing dynastic inheritances of princes", which were scattered non-contiguously in many places depending on feudal and dynastic marriage ties. This tendency towards geographical cohesion still had a long way to go in Italy and its northern neighbour, Germany. But, combined with the increasing cohesion of such contemporary states as England, France and Spain, it constituted another important contribution of the Italian city-states to the new political culture.

"Another important innovation was *banking*. The city-states derived their power mainly from a burgeoning capitalist economy based on the new techniques of banking. Indeed, it could be argued that modern banking was invented by the Medicis of Florence."[46]

Territorial integrity and financial independence were the two things that distinguished the Italian city-states from medieval polities.

---

[45] Ralston, *The Collapse of Globalism*, London: Atlantic Books, 2018, p. 18.

[46] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 83. "Florence had an annual income greater than that of the king of England and the revenue of Venice and its *Terra Firma* in the middle of the fifteenth century was 60 percent higher than that of France, more than double that of England and Spain". (Niall Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money*, New York: Penguin Press, 2008, pp. 41-47)

The big problem for them was *legitimacy,* which had to be founded on different principles from those that had prevailed in the Middle Ages – that is, dynastic succession and papal blessing.

As Bobbitt writes: "The medieval world had been roughly split in two halves. In the west, there were realms where dynastic power had devolved on princes who were hemmed in by customary law, the autonomy of their vassals, and the local rights of towns. These were realms where legitimacy was solid, but the power of the prince circumscribed. In the east, in central Europe, princes were subject to the dual universality of the pope and the emperor, both elected rulers representing complex sets of competing interests. As cities in Italy and princely realms in the Netherlands and parts of Germany began to assert their independence and accumulate wealth and power, they found themselves subject to assaults on their legitimacy, because their assertions of independence were not endorsed by the papacy or the empire…

"The Italian solution, adopted, for example, by the pope himself, was the princely state. The pope became a prince, and the Roman Church his state. Western kings envied the power that this innovation was able to concentrate in the hands of the prince…"[47]

However, the case of the papal princely state was a special one. The papacy had been known as a despotic ruler of both souls and territories for hundreds of years. Moreover, the papacy could confer legitimacy on itself…

More problematic was the legitimacy of the other princes. Their dynastic claims to power were often weak. And as Renaissance humanists they were sceptical of the power of the Pope to confer legitimacy – especially when he was essentially just such a rapacious and secularised despot as themselves.

Ultimately, however, if the Church could not confer right, only *might* could confer it – might was right in the brave new world of the Italian Renaissance. The clearest example, again, is Florence. "Florence was effectively ruled by the Medicis, a banking house whose head, Cosimo, was able to affect events throughout Europe including, for example, the Wars of the Roses (through loans to Edward IV[48]), and to paralyze Naples and Venice by withholding credit that would have been used to finance mercenaries. Yet the Medicis ruled by competence, not royal bloodlines, and thus always had to refresh their legitimacy through further successful acts on behalf of Florentine society."[49] Another example was the Rome of the Borgias. Cesare Borgia, the illegitimate

---

[47] Bobbitt, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

[48] It was a bad loan to Edward IV that brought down Cosimo's bank in 1494.

[49] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 84.

son of Pope Alexander VI, acted like a warlord from the time of the later Roman republic. His motto was: *Aut Caesar aut nihil* - "Either Caesar or nothing"[50]…

Essentially the same could be said of modern states, which do not receive legitimacy from outside (in spite of the United Nations' claim to confer legitimacy) but simply by virtue of their perceived competency, their *might*. It is therefore no surprise to discover that the main ideologist of Italian city statehood, Machiavelli, should be seen as trying to justify the amoralism and tyranny of contemporary Italian politics.

*

In May, 1526 the Medici Pope Clement VII "recruited Milan, Venice and Florence to form an anti-imperialist league for the defence of a free and independent Italy. King Francis I of France was also persuaded to join what was called the League of Cognac. John Julius Norwich has noted the important of this league for the concept of united Italy: "The *Risorgimento* was still more than three centuries away; but here, perhaps, were the first glimmerings of the national sentiment that gave it birth."[51]

In addition to the usual woes of the Romans – malaria, plague and floods – God sent even greater floods, a new disease, syphilis, which particularly afflicted priests, and, worst of all, the invasion of Rome by 34,000 Imperial Spanish and German troops early in 1527. They were angry because they had not been paid for their services to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles; and their sack of Rome has been described as "one of the most horrible in recorded history".

"The bloodbaths continued unabated; to venture out into the street was to invite almost certain death, and to remain indoors very little safer: scarcely a single church, palace or house of any size escaped pillage and devastation. Monasteries were plundered and convents violated, the mor attractive nuns being offered for sale in the streets. The Vatican Library was saved only because [the military commander] Philibert had established his headquarters there. At least two of the cardinals who had failed to escape to the Castel Sant' Angelo were dragged through the city and tortured; one of them, who was well over eighty, subsequently died from his injuries. 'Hell,' reported a Venetian eyewitness, 'has nothing to compare with the present state of Rome.'

"Not till May, with the arrival of Cardinal Pompeo Colonna – a sworn enemy of Pope Clement – and his two brothers with eight thousand of their men, was a semblance of order restored. By this time virtually every street in the city had been gutted and was strewn with corpses. One captured Spanish sapper later reported that on the north bank of the Tiber alone he and his

---

[50] Andrea Frediani, "Becoming Machiavelli", *National Geographic History,* September-October, 2020, p. 82.
[51] Norwich, *Four Princes,* London: John Murray, 2017, pp. 86-88.

companions had buried nearly ten thousand and had thrown another two thousand into the river. Six months later, thanks to widespread starvation and an epidemic of plague – due probably to the thousands of bodies lying unburied during the hottest season of the year – the population of Rome had been reduced to less than half of what it had been before. Paintings, sculpture and libraries were ravaged and destroyed, the pontifical archives ransacked…

"The imperial army had suffered almost as much as the Romans. It too was virtually without food; its soldier – unpaid for months – were totally demoralised, interested only in loot and pillage. Discipline had broken down. Germans and Spaniards were at each others' throats. Pope Clement had no course open to him but once again to capitulate. The official price he paid was the cities of Ostia, Civitavecchia, Piacenza and Modena, together with 400,000 ducats – a sum that could be raised only by melting down all the papal tiaras and selling the jewels with which they were encrusted. The Papal States, in which an efficient government had been developing for the first time in history, had crumbled away. Clement himself had escaped from Castel Sant' Angelo in early December 1527. Rome was still uninhabitable, so the unhappy Pope, disguised as a poor pedlar [and wearing a beard for the rest of his life as a sign of mourning], struggled off with a few cardinals to Orvieto, where he settled as best he could in the draughty, dilapidated and bitterly cold place of the local bishop…"[52]

Luxurious Rome's impoverishment and humiliation were complete...

Clement's successor, Paul IV, changed the tone of Roman life dramatically, initiating the Counter-Reformation. "The Catholic Church came under the spell of a new purism that was far more invidious than that of the eleventh-century reformists…"[53]

---

[52] John Julius Norwich, *Four Princes,* London: John Murray, 2017, pp. 99, 102.
[53] Matthew Kneale, *Rome. A History in Seven Sackings*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2017, p. 216.

5. MACHIAVELLI'S POLITICAL MORALITY

If the Roman papacy was, paradoxically, the spiritual centre of Renaissance neo-pagan humanism, the religious reaction against it was centred in Florence, another centre of humanism, but the home also of the monk Girolano Savonarola, who was born in the same year as Leonardo da Vinci but represented the religious polar opposite to Leonardo's humanism. If Leonardo's humanism represented the "broad way", embracing every kind of experience and knowledge without the fear of the forbidden, of sin, Savonarola tried to bring men's thoughts back to the narrow way that alone leads to salvation. Coming to Florence with the (perhaps surprising) support of such typically Renaissance figures as Pico della Mirandola and Lorenzo de Medici, the ruler of Florence, Savonarola's bold call for a cleansing of both Church and State drew the respect and admiration of the people.[54] Thus he condemned the sensuous art of the popes, saying of the paintings in the cathedral in Florence: "You would do well to obliterate these figures that are painted so unchastely. You make the Virgin Mary seem dressed like a whore…"[55]

Savanorola denounced the Medicis' despotic rule and the exploitation of the poor, and prophesied the coming of a biblical flood and a new Cyrus from the north who would reform the Church.[56] "Such predictions seemed altogether vindicated when the French king, Charles VIII, invaded Florence in 1494. Lorenzo de Medici's son and successor, Piero, was driven out of the city, which was by then in the grip of Savonarola's demagoguery. With French support, a democratic republic was now established in Florence, with Savonarola as its leading figure. In his new role, combining political and religious power, he was determined to create a 'Christian and religious republic'. One of the first acts of this new, wholesome republic was to make homosexuality punishable by death.

"Savonarola intensified his criticism of the Roman curia – its corruption personified by the notorious Borgias – and he even went so far as to attack Pope Alexander VI's disreputable private life."[57]

But in vain, as Lev Tikhomirov writes, did he thunder against Pope Alexander. "Neither the Pope, nor his 'beautiful Julia' paid any attention to him. At every Church feast Julia appeared as the lawful wife of the Pope, and when a son was born to her, the Pope immediately recognized him, as he also recognized his other children. His son, Cesare Borgia, was well-known for fratricide. The daughter of the Pope, Lucretia, quarrelled with her husband because of her amorous relationships with her own brothers."[58]

---

[54] One of his admirers was the young St. Maximus the Greek, who would later display a similar zeal at the court of the Muscovite Great Prince.

[55] Savanorola, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 273.

[56] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola

[57] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola.

[58] Montefiore, *Titans of History,* London: Quercus, 2012.

"In 1495 when Florence refused to join Pope Alexander VI's Holy League against the French, the Vatican summoned Savonarola to Rome. He disobeyed and further defied the pope by preaching under a ban, highlighting his campaign for reform with processions, bonfires of the vanities[59], and pious theatricals. In retaliation, the pope excommunicated him in May 1497, and threatened to place Florence under an interdict. [The French having withdrawn back to France, and the Duke of Milan having turned against him, Savanorola was isolated.] A trial by fire proposed by a rival Florentine preacher in April 1498 to test Savonarola's divine mandate turned into a fiasco, and popular opinion turned against him. Savonarola and two of his supporting friars were imprisoned."[60]

He was tortured into making an admission of guilt, and on 23 May 1498, Church and civil authorities condemned the three friars and burned them at the stake in the main square of Florence.

Although Savanarola showed clear signs of spiritual delusion, it is hard not to sympathize with him, just as it is hard to condemn the other victims of the Inquisition's *autos-do-fé* ("festivals of faith"). Nevertheless, such movements of opposition to the truly heretical and debauched papacy of the time, instead of restoring the truth, only led to further heresy – ultimately, Protestantism – because they took place outside the True Church and without the grace that only the True Church provides. For, as Tikhomirov writes, "among people protesting and striving for a true Christian life there often gradually developed heretical thought, which is natural when one has broken from the Church… Other Christians, without entering upon a useless open battle, departed into secret societies, hoping to live in a pure environment and gradually prepare the reform of Christian practice. However, departure from the Church, albeit not open, did not fail to affect them, too. These societies could easily be joined both by heretics and by enemies of Christianity who hid this enmity on the grounds of a criticism of truly shocking behaviour. All these protesting elements were willingly joined by the Jews, who found it easy gradually to pervert the originally Christian feelings of the participants…"[61]

*

One man who witnessed the fall of Savanorola was Nicolo Machiavelli. From it he concluded, falsely, that it is impossible to live a Christian life and be a successful ruler, and that "All armed prophets have conquered and unarmed ones failed."[62]

---

[59] This famous phrase describes an event "in which personal effects, books and works of art, including some by Botticelli and Michelangelo, were destroyed in a conflagration in Florence's Piazza della Signoria" (Montefiore).

[60] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola.

[61] Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 363.

[62] Machiavelli, *The Prince,* chapter 12.

Again, at Pisa Machiavelli observed how quickly hired mercenaries, the *condottiere*, switched sides. So "mercenary and auxiliary troops," he concluded, "are both useless and dangerous". This was confirmed for him at Sinigaglia in 1502, where he had been present "when Cesare Borgia persuaded a number of hostile *condottiere* to meet with him and had them murdered once they arrived. These events confirmed for Machiavelli the weaknesses of reliance on the *condottiere* and the need for a ruthless and decisive political leader."[63] His political ideals were Periclean Athens and the Roman Republic in its heyday. His aim in his writings was to describe what a ruler who aspired to create a state with the stability and power and glory of these ancient city-states should and should not do.

Drawing on these lessons from experience, Machiavelli drew up his famous political philosophy in *The Prince* and *The Discourses on Livy*. His advice for rulers, as summarised by Bobbitt, was: "(1) Florence should have a conscripted militia: the love of gain would inevitably corrupt the *condottiere* who would avoid decisive battles to preserve his forces, betray his employers for a higher bidder, and seize power when it became advantageous; (2) the prince had to create institutions that would evoke loyalty from his subjects which in other countries was provided by the feudal structure of vassalage, but which in Italy had been lost with the collapse of medieval society; (3) legal and strategic organization are interdependent: 'there must be good laws where there are good arms and where there are good arms there must be good laws'. 'Although I have elsewhere maintained that the foundation of states is a good military organization, yet it seems to me not superfluous to report here that without such a military organization there can neither be good laws nor anything else good'; (4) deceit and violence are wrong for an individual, but justified when the prince is acting in behalf of his state; (5) permanent embassies and sophisticated sources of intelligence must be maintained in order to enable successful diplomacy; and (6) the tactics of the prince, in law and in war, must be measured by a rational assessment of the contribution of those tactics to the strategic goals of statecraft, which are governed by the contingencies of history. All of these conclusions compel a final one: princes must develop the princely state.

"The princely state enables the prince to rationalize his acts on the basis of *ragione di stato*. He is not acting merely on his own behalf, but is compelled to act in the service of the State…"[64]

However, this summary does not convey the peculiar quality of Machiavelli's advice which has attracted - and appalled - generations of readers and which made Bertrand Russell call *The Prince* "a handbook for gangsters".

---

[63] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 86.

[64] Bobbitt, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

Certainly, the idea that the prince was permitted to do, for "reasons of state", what he was by no means permitted to do as an individual, was revolutionary. In view of its importance, let us examine it more closely…

His subject was "what principalities are, how they are gained, how they are kept, and how they are lost." The best means of gaining power, and of keeping power, are different. To keep power, "it is better to be feared than to love." For "Love is a bond of obligation which [subjects] break whenever it suits them to do so, but fear holds them fast by a dread of punishment that never passes." Savanorola, for example, was able to gain power "by acting in accordance with the times and coloured his lies accordingly". But clever words were not able to keep him in power. Cesare Borgia, on the other hand, "was considered cruel. Nevertheless, that cruelty united Romagna and brought it peace and stability."

"*The Prince*, writes Russell, "is concerned to discover, from history and from contemporary events, how principalities are won, how they are held, and how they are lost. Fifteenth-century Italy afforded a multitude of examples, both great and small. Few rulers were legitimate; even the popes, in many cases, secured election by corrupt means. The rules for achieving success were not quite the same as they became when times grew more settled, for no one was shocked by cruelties and treacheries which would have disqualified a man in the eighteenth century or the nineteenth century. Perhaps our age, again, can better appreciate Machiavelli, for some of the most notable successes of our time have been achieved by methods as base as any employed in Renaissance Italy. He would have applauded, as an artistic connoisseur in statecraft, Hitler's Reichstag fire, his purge of the party in 1934, and his breach of faith after Munich.

"Caesar Borgia, son of Alexander VI, comes in for high praise. His problem was a difficult one: first, by the death of his brother, to become the sole beneficiary of his father's dynastic ambition; second, conquer by force of arms, in the name of the Pope, territories which should, after Alexander's death, belong to himself and not to the Papal States; third, to manipulate the College of Cardinals so that the next Pope should be his friend. He pursued this difficult end with great skill; from his practice, Machiavelli says, a new prince should derive precepts. Caesar failed, it is true, but only 'by the extraordinary malignity of fortune'. It happened that, when his father died, he also was dangerously ill; by the time he recovered, his enemies had organized their forces, and his bitterest opponent had been elected Pope. On the day of this election, Caesar told Machiavelli that he had provided for everything, 'except that he had never thought that at his father's death he would be dying himself'.

"Machiavelli, who was intimately acquainted with his villainies, sums up thus: 'Reviewing thus all the actions of the duke [Caesar], I find nothing to blame, on the contrary, I feel bound, as I have done, to hold him as an example to be imitated by all who by fortune and with the arms of others have risen to power.'…

"*The Prince* is very explicit in repudiating received morality where the conduct of rulers is concerned. A ruler will perish if he is always good; he must be as cunning as a fox and as fierce as a lion. There is a chapter (XVIII) entitled: 'In What Way Princes Must Keep Faith'. We learn that they should keep faith when it pays to do so, but not otherwise. A prince must on occasion be faithless.[65]

"'But it is necessary to be able to disguise this character well, and to be a great feigner and dissembler; and men are so simple and so read to obey present necessities, that one who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived. I will mention only one modern instance. Alexander VI did nothing else but deceive men, he thought of nothing else, and found the occasion for it; no man was ever more able to give assurances, or affirmed things with stronger oaths, and no man observed them less; however, he always succeeded in his deceptions, as he knew well this aspect of things. It is not necessary therefore for a prince to have all the above-named qualities [the conventional virtues], but it is very necessary to seem to have them.' He goes on to say that, above all, a prince should seem to be religious…

"A prince who desires to maintain his position," he wrote, "must learn to be good or not as needs may require." "War should be the only study of a prince. He should look upon peace as a breathing space which… gives him the means to execute military plans."[66]

Machiavelli's utilitarian views on religion anticipate those of Napoleon, of Hitler and Mussolini - and of Vladimir Putin. For him, writes Sir Isaiah Berlin, "religion… is not much more than a socially indispensable instrument, so much utilitarian cement: the criterion of the worth of a religion is its role as a promoter of solidarity and cohesion – he anticipates Saint-Simon and Durkheim in stressing its crucial social importance. The great founders of religions are among the men he most greatly admires. Some varieties of religion (for example, Roman paganism) are good for societies, since they make them strong or spirited; others on the contrary (for example, Christian meekness and unworldliness) cause decay or disintegration. The weakening of religious ties is a part of general decadence and corruption: there is no need for a religion to rest on truth, provided that it is socially effective (*Discourses* I, 12). Hence his veneration of those who set their societies on sound spiritual foundations – Moses, Numa, Lycurgus.

"There is no serious assumption of the existence of God and divine law; whatever our author's private convictions, an atheist can read Machiavelli with

---

[65] As Machiavelli put it: "Everyone knows how admirable it is in a prince to keep faith and live by integrity, not by deceit. Nevertheless, the experience of our age shows that the princes who have done remarkable things are the one who have paid little heed to keeping faith and who have had the adroitness to confuse minds. In the end they have overcome those who relied on loyalty... The promise given was a necessity of the past, the word broken is a necessity of the present." (*The Prince,* chapter 18) (V.M.).

[66] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy,* London: Allen Lane, 1946, pp. 526-527, 528-529, 520.

perfect intellectual comfort. Nor is there piety towards authority, or prescription – nor any interest in the role of the individual conscience, or in any other metaphysical or theological issue. The only freedom he recognizes is political freedom, freedom from arbitrary despotic rule, that is, republicanism, and the freedom of one State from control by other States."[67]

On the other hand, a prince should be prepared to sacrifice freedom for stability: "He who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it, for in rebellion it has always the watchword of liberty…"[68]

A good society, according to Machiavelli, "is a society that enjoys stability, internal harmony, security, justice, a sense of power and of splendour, like Athens in its best days, like Sparta, like the kingdoms of David and Solomon, like Venice as it used to be, but, above all, like the Roman Republic. 'Truly it is a marvellous thing to consider to what greatness Athens came in the space of a hundred years after she freed herself from the tyranny of Pisistratus. But above all, it is very marvellous to observe what greatness Rome came to after she freed herself from her kings' (*Discourses*, ii, 2).[69]

"The reason for this is that there were men in these societies who knew how to make cities great. How did they do it? By developing certain faculties in men, of inner moral strength, magnanimity, vigour, vitality, generosity, loyalty, above all public spirit, civic sense, dedication to the security, power, glory, expansion of the patria. The ancients developed these qualities by all kinds of means, among which were dazzling shows and blood-stained sacrifices that excited men's senses and aroused their martial prowess, and especially by the kind of legislation and education that promoted the pagan virtues. Power, magnificence, pride, austerity, pursuit of glory, vigour, discipline, *antiqua virtus* – this is what makes States great."[70]

A purely pagan ideal. And if it is to be attained, pagan means will have to be applied. Christian virtues are no use here. For the Christian faith has made men "weak", easy prey to "wicked men", since "they think more about enduring their injuries than about avenging them" (*Discourses*, ii, 2). Therefore Machiavelli "does not explicitly condemn Christian morality: he merely points out that it is, at least in rulers (but to some degree in subjects too), incompatible with those social ends which he thinks it is natural and wise for men to seek. One can save one's soul, or one can found or maintain or serve a great and glorious State; but not always both at once."[71]

---

[67] Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli", in *The Proper Study of Mankind,* London: Pimlico, 1998, p. 281.

[68] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter V.

[69] Berlin, op. cit., p. 291.

[70] Berlin, op. cit., pp. 287-288.

[71] Berlin, op. cit., p. 294.

"In other words you can opt out of the public world, but in that case he has nothing to say to you, for it is to the public world and to the men in it that he addresses himself. This is expressed most clearly in his notorious advice to the victor who has to hold down a conquered province. He advises a clean sweep: new governors, new titles, new powers and new men; he should 'make the rich poor, the poor rich, as David did when he became king: 'the poor he filled with good things and the rich he sent empty away'. Besides this, he should build new cities, overthrow those already built, change the inhabitants from one place to another; and in short he should leave nothing in that province untouched, and make sure that no rank or position or office or wealth is held by anyone who does not acknowledge it as from you' (*Discourses*, I, 26). He should take Philip of Macedon as his model, who 'grew in these ways until he became lord of Greece'.

"Now Philip's historian informs us – Machiavelli goes on to say – that he transferred the inhabitants from one province to another 'as herdsmen transfer their herds' from one place to another. Doubtless, Machiavelli continued, 'these methods are very cruel, and enemies to all government not merely Christian but human, and any man ought to avoid them and prefer to live a private life rather than to be a king who brings such ruin on men. Notwithstanding, a ruler who does not wish to take that first good way of lawful government, if he wishes to maintain himself, must enter upon this evil one. But men take certain middle ways that are very injurious; indeed, they are unable to be altogether good or altogether bad' (*Discourses*, I, 26).

"This is plain enough. There are two worlds, that of personal morality and that of public organization. There are two ethical codes, both ultimate; not two 'autonomous' regions, one of 'ethics', another of 'politics', but two (for him) exhaustive alternatives between two conflicting systems of value. If a man chooses the 'first good way', he must, presumably, give up all hope of Athens and Rome, of a noble and glorious society in which human beings can thrive and grow strong, proud, wise and productive; indeed, they must abandon all hope of a tolerable life on earth: for men cannot live outside society; they will not survive collectively if they are led by men who… are influenced by the first, 'private' morality; they will not be able to realize their minimal goals as men; they will end in a state of moral, not merely political, degradation. But if a man chooses, as Machiavelli himself has done, the second course, then he must suppress his private qualms, if he has any, for it is certain that those who are too squeamish during the remaking of a society, or even during the pursuit and maintenance of its power and glory, will go to the wall. Whoever has chosen to make an omelette cannot do so without breaking eggs."[72]

*

[72] Berlin, op. cit., pp. 302-303.

47

If Machiavelli is right, then Christian political power that is both successful and truly Christian is an impossibility. Even some modern Christian politicians, such as Enoch Powell, have been tempted to believe that he was right. Fortunately, however, he is wrong, because there have been many truly Christian and successful rulers since Constantine the Great, some of whom have even been acknowledged as saints.

But of course the criteria of success in the two cases are different. For a truly Christian ruler success consists, not in the power and glory of him and his people, but in their salvation in eternity. If a Christian ruler keeps the faith and presides over his subjects' coming closer to God and salvation, then he has succeeded, even if he should be defeated in war. However, for a pagan ruler of the kind Machiavelli admires success is measured in exclusively secular terms. It is not to be wondered at that Machiavelli has had many admirers, both philosophers such as Nietzsche and politicians such as Lenin, in our modern, neo-pagan age…

We return to the point made by Russell: that Machiavelli's model for the ideal prince was Cesare Borgia – and yet Borgia *failed.* And he failed because God – Who does not enter at all into the essentially atheist vision of Machiavelli – did not allow him to succeed. For, as the model of all Christian kings, the Prophet-King David, says: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horse, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God. They have been fettered and have fallen, but we are risen and are set upright. O Lord, save the king, and hearken unto us when we call upon Thee" (Psalm 19.7-9).

6. KINGS AND PARLIAMENTS

For centuries European history had been riven by conflicts over rights: the rights of popes as opposed to the rights of emperors, the rights of feudal lords as opposed to the rights of vassals, the rights of kings as opposed to the rights of barons and burghers. And the rapid development of law, both ecclesiastical and royal, in the medieval period had accentuated the concept of individual rights and liberties generally. Nevertheless, the whole system of rights presupposed one society professing one faith with one head of the church – the pope, who remained the final court of appeal in all disputes over rights throughout the medieval period. Therefore Catholic kings felt obliged to uphold the Catholic faith and punish heretics. But this meant that the ideas of religious freedom, and of freedom of the mind and conscience, were slower in developing than those of political or economic freedom, with the result that the early modern period was a period of great religious intolerance – not least because European society was now divided between Catholics and Protestants, and Catholic kings had to prove their Catholicism to the Pope, while Protestant kings, though absolved from obligation to a transnational religious institution, still felt obliged, as believers in a believing society, to defend the faith of their subjects.

However, the seeds of the idea of religious freedom, too, had already been sown, and it was given a further important impulse in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as a result of the spirit of inquiry let loose by the Renaissance. Moreover, when religious passions began to cool in the late seventeenth century, the idea of religious freedom came into its own, with rulers changing their role from prosecutors of the national religious idea and persecutors of its enemies to preservers of the religious peace among their multi-confessional subjects.

But a paradox remains: why, in an age when the idea of political freedom was, as we have seen, flourishing, did the main form of political organization remain the monarchy? For as the Wars of the Roses came to an end in England and France, and the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand united Castile and Aragon in Spain, these countries developed powerful monarchies that were little beholden to their fledgling national parliaments. States became more concentrated territorially, which led to the growth of the feeling of nationalism centre on the person of the monarch.

However, this feeling was still covered with a cloak of religion, as Erasmus complained: "For in France they say God is on the French side and they can never overcome that have God for their protector. In England and Spain the cry is: the war is not the King's, but God's."[73]

Why this strengthening of the monarchical principle at precisely the moment when ideas of liberty were becoming so popular? Larry Siedentop has

---

[73] Erasmus, in John Adair, *Puritans,* Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998, p. 28.

an interesting theory to explain this paradox, a theory based on the fact that trends towards egalitarianism in Europe elicited an equal and opposite trend towards a new centre of monarchical authority: "The outstanding fact of fifteenth-century Europe was the centralizing of authority and power by monarchs seeking to leave feudal constraints behind and become 'sovereigns' properly so called. Louis XI of France, Henry VII of England and Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain all took remarkable steps in that direction. Why did they have such success? How did they overcome the resistance of other institutions? For they certainly met with resistance. In effect, there were four institutions which might have provided a model for the political organization of Europe: feudalism, the church, the boroughs and monarchy.

"However, after the frustration of the theocratic ambitions of Innocent IV and Boniface VIII, neither the feudal nobility nor the cities were able to shape the political organization of Europe. By the fourteenth century, it was clear that feudal 'law' could not provide the basis for a stable political system. Its incoherence and constant reliance on force made that impossible. Yet at the same time the feudal nobility was strong enough to prevent anything like the generalizing of 'republican' civic institutions. That was a development improbable in any case, for the burghers of the cities lacked wider political ambitions. In the face of the feudal nobility, burghers exhibited a sense of inferiority. Fierce as they were if it was a question of defending their own boroughs, they had no vision of a republican organization for society at large, though the Netherlands was perhaps an exception.

"So there was a stand-off. Before the triumph of monarchy, however, there was a last quasi-feudal attempt to organize Europe. It took the form of bringing together the representatives of these different institutions with a view to their cooperating, while retaining their original character. Thus, awareness of centralizing pressures led to the creation of assemblies which sought to reflect and organize the diversity of European institutions – the Estates-General in France, the English Parliament, the Cortes of Spain and the Imperial Diet in Germany. These assemblies were organized according to rank, with the nobility, clergy and burghers each in their assigned place.

"But these attempts at national organization – with the signal exception of England's Parliament (which benefited from a stronger crown) – failed. The assemblies were too heterogeneous. While the feudal nobles were accustomed to exercising political will, neither the clergy nor the representatives of the boroughs were used to direct political power, and they had little taste for it, fearing new taxes. As a result, these assemblies failed to become effective instruments of government.

"But these assemblies did not fail merely because of their diversity, their clinging to traditional privileges. There was a deeper reason. It was because the new idea of a 'sovereign' authority vested in monarchs projected a different image of society, an egalitarian image which now had a popular resonance that it had previously lacked. The appeal of royalty released and reinforced new

aspirations. Popular attitudes had changed enough to deprive the traditional corporate model of society of its legitimacy. That is why 'equal subjection' to a sovereign was perceived not as loss but as gain. So we have to be careful when speaking of the 'triumph' of royalty in the fifteenth century. For, indirectly, it was also the triumph of moral intuitions generated by the church.

"The task of organizing Europe fell to monarchy because its way had been prepared by the church. It was not merely that the royal ambition to acquire a sovereign authority had been shaped by the papal revolution. At the deepest level – the moral and intellectual level – the church had won the struggle for the future of Europe. The church had projected the image of society as an association of individuals, an image which unleashed the centralizing process in Europe.

"Of course, monarchs were not disinterested exponents of an egalitarian form of society. They rapidly came to understand how much they stood to gain in power from the centralizing of legal authority. For them, the prospect of subduing leading feudal magnates and controlling the church within their realms was as important as moral considerations generated by Christian beliefs – often far more important. Nevertheless, unintended consequences overtook the monarchs. In the process of centralizing laws, manners and ideas – forging a single society out of what had been separate, parochial societies – the monarchs not only created states, but also the foundation for a 'public' or 'national' opinion. The partial emergence of national opinions in the fifteenth century provides further evidence of the impact of the new image of society as an association of individuals.

"How was this manifest? The prestige of royalty grew because royal power became the symbol of social progress, the abolition of privilege through 'equal subjection'. The Third Estate in France or the 'Commons' in England were at times prepared to sacrifice even local self-government in order to destroy feudal privilege. The creation of a 'sovereign' agency seemed far the most important objective. This was the pattern that marked the growth of royal power, especially in France. But across France it invested royalty with a kind of idealism. Equal subjection to a sovereign was seen as developing at the expense of subordinations based on 'mere' custom.

"It would be a mistake therefore to see only the tyrannical potential of the growth of sovereign authorities, that royal 'absolutism' which came to the fore during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For it contained the seeds of individual liberty. By claiming a monopoly of legal authority, sovereigns deprived many traditional attitudes and practices of legal status. What royal commands did not positively enjoin or forbid, defined – at least potentially – a sphere of choice and personal freedom."[74]

---

[74] Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism,* London: Penguin, 2015, pp. 344-347.

Perhaps Siedentop exaggerates the newness of the concepts of "sovereignty" and "equal subjection" in the fifteenth century. In the early, pre-feudal Middle Ages, they were certainly present, and they were the more present the more lively was the Christian faith of the people. Nevertheless, the web of feudal rights and obligations that arose in the later Middle Ages had obscured these concepts in the eyes of the average peasant, whose field of mental vision was very limited both geographically and socially. Therefore as local feudal obligations became weaker – we may take 1349, the year of the Black Death, as critical here, because from that time social mobility increased as labour became scarcer and more valuable, - so the sense of solidarity between peasants of more distant villages became stronger, together with their loyalty to, or antagonism against, higher lords, including the king himself, whose power became increasingly felt, not only in the administration of law, but also in the imposition of taxes and the recruitment of soldiers to fight in national wars. Thus we find the peasants uniting to rebel *against* Richard II to protest against taxes in 1381 – and uniting *under* Henry V to fight the French at Agincourt in 1415.

But we may perhaps see a more general psychological law at work here. When the bonds uniting society at a local level become weaker, and individualist tendencies increase, so the need for a "sovereign" who will counter these centripetal tendencies and give the people again a sense of unity and solidarity becomes greater. In early modern Europe such a sovereign could only be the king for the reasons that Siedentop cites. We see a more extreme example of the same law in operation in early twentieth-century Europe, when the atomized masses of the German and Russian people, who had lost their faith in their previous sovereigns, attached themselves politically and *emotionally,* to an all-powerful leader who would unite them and protect them against their enemies, real and fictitious. Human nature abhors a vacuum; and when the old certainties and authorities lose their power to command obedience, the masses will unfailingly look for other certainties and authorities to obey – however rational, free and autonomous they may think and want themselves to be…

In this connection, an early attempt to reconcile the ideas of political liberty and monarchism was made in England, by Sir John Fortescue (c. 1394–1479). His work *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy* was written in English in about 1471 but only published in 1714. Fortescue, write Ofir Haivry and Yoram Hazony, "occupies a position in the Anglo-American conservative tradition somewhat analogous to Locke in the later liberal tradition: although not the founder of this tradition, he is nonetheless its first truly outstanding expositor and the model in light of which the entire subsequent tradition developed. It is here that any conservative should begin his or her education in the Anglo-American tradition.

"For eight years during the Wars of the Roses, beginning in 1463, John Fortescue lived in France with the court of the young prince Edward of

Lancaster, the 'Red Rose' claimant to the English throne, who had been driven into exile by the 'White Rose' king Edward IV of York. Fortescue had been a member of Parliament and for nearly two decades chief justice of the King's Bench, the English Supreme Court. In the exiled court, he became the nominal chancellor of England. While in exile, Fortescue composed several treatises on the constitution and laws of England, foremost among them a small book entitled *Praise of the Laws of England*.

"Although *Praise of the Laws of England* is often mischaracterized as a work on law, anyone picking it up will immediately recognize it for what it is: an early great work of English political philosophy. Far from being a sterile rehearsal of existing law, it is written as a dialogue between the chancellor of England and the young prince he is educating, so that he may wisely rule his realm. It offers a theorist's explanation of the reasons for regarding the English constitution as the best model of political government known to man. (Those who have been taught that it was Montesquieu who first argued that, of all constitutions, the English constitution is the one best suited for human freedom will be dismayed to find that this argument is presented more clearly by Fortescue nearly three hundred years earlier, in a work with which Montesquieu was probably familiar.)

"According to Fortescue, the English constitution provides for what he calls 'political and royal government,' by which he means that English kings do not rule by their own authority alone (i.e., 'royal government'), but together with the representatives of the nation in Parliament and in the courts (i.e., 'political government'). In other words, the powers of the English king are limited by the traditional laws of the English nation, in the same way—as Fortescue emphasizes—that the powers of the Jewish king in the Mosaic constitution in Deuteronomy are limited by the traditional laws of the Israelite nation. This is in contrast with the Holy Roman Empire of Fortescue's day, which was supposedly governed by Roman law, and therefore by the maxim that 'what pleases the prince has the force of law,' and in contrast with the kings of France, who governed absolutely. Among other things, the English law is described as providing for the people's representatives, rather than the king, to determine the laws of the realm and to approve requests from the king for taxes.

"In addition to this discussion of what later tradition would call the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances, Fortescue also devotes extended discussion to the guarantee of due process under law, which he explores in his discussion of the superior protections afforded to the individual under the English system of trial by jury. Crucially, Fortescue consistently connects the character of a nation's laws and their protection of private property to economic prosperity, arguing that limited government bolsters such prosperity, while an absolute government leads the people to destitution and ruin. In another of his writings, *The Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy* (also known as *The Governance of England*, c. 1471), he starkly contrasts the well-fed and healthy English population living under their limited government with the French, whose government was

constantly confiscating their property and quartering armies in their towns—at the residents' expense—by unilateral order of the king. The result of such arbitrary taxation and quartering is, as Fortescue writes, that the French people have been 'so impoverished and destroyed that they may hardly live. . . . Verily, they live in the most extreme poverty and misery, and yet they dwell in one of the most fertile parts of the world.'

"Like later conservative tradition, Fortescue does not believe that either scripture or human reason can provide a universal law suitable for all nations. We do find him drawing frequently on the Mosaic constitution and the biblical 'Four Books of Kings' (1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings) to assist in understanding the political order and the English constitution. Nevertheless, Fortescue emphasizes that the laws of each realm reflect the historic experience and character of each nation, just as the English common law is in accord with England's historic experience. Thus, for example, Fortescue argues that a nation that is self-disciplined and accustomed to obeying the laws voluntarily rather than by coercion is one that can productively participate in the way it is governed. This, Fortescue proposes, was true of the people of England, while the French, who were of undisciplined character, could be governed only by the harsh and arbitrary rule of absolute royal government. On the other hand, Fortescue also insisted, again in keeping with biblical precedent and later conservative tradition, that this kind of national character was not set in stone, and that such traits could be gradually improved or worsened over time.

"Fortescue was eventually permitted to return to England, but his loyalty to the defeated House of Lancaster meant that he never returned to power. He was to play the part of chancellor of England only in his philosophical dialogue, *Praise of the Laws of England*. His book, however, went on to become one of the most influential works of political thought in history. Fortescue wrote in the decades before the Reformation, and as a firm Catholic. But every page of his work breathes the spirit of English nationalism—the belief that through long centuries of experience, and thanks to a powerful ongoing identification with Hebrew Scripture, the English had succeeded in creating a form of government more conducive to human freedom and flourishing than any other known to man. First printed around 1545, Fortescue's *Praise of the Laws of England* spoke in a resounding voice to that period of heightened nationalist sentiment in which English traditions, now inextricably identified with Protestantism, were pitted against the threat of invasion by Spanish-Catholic forces aligned with the Holy Roman Emperor.

"This environment quickly established Fortescue as England's first great political theorist, paving the way for him to be read by centuries of law students in both England and America and by educated persons wherever the broader Anglo-American conservative tradition struck root…

"Under the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, Fortescue's account of the virtues of England's traditional institutions [became] an integral part of the self-understanding of a politically independent English nation."[75]

---

[75] Haivry and Hazony "What is Conservatism?" *American Affairs,* Summer, 2017, vol. I, no. 2.

7. THE SPANISH, THE MUSLIMS AND THE JEWS

Probably the most powerful and illiberal state in Early Modern Europe was Spain, whose history was dominated by its relationship to its non-Spanish minorities, Jewish and Muslim.

A large number of Jews in Spain had obtained important posts under the Moors during the Middle Ages. This caused tensions between Christians and Jew. However, these were tempered, writes P. Hersch, "by a measure of *convivencia* in a land where Christian, Muslim and Jew dwelt side by side. Thus there were no anti-Jewish riots in Castile during the Black Death, although such riots did occur in the Crown of Aragon which was more open to the currents of mainstream European anti-semitism.

"From the mid-fourteenth century, however, *convivencia* began to break down in the face of an increasing exclusivity. In the late 1370s Ferrant Martínez, the archdeacon of Ecija, began a campaign against the Jews which culminated in a wave of massacres throughout Castile and the Crown of Aragon during the summer of 1391. Many Jews were killed; many submitted to baptism to save their lives. Although forced conversion was in theory frowned upon by the Church, *conversos* were nevertheless considered to be technically Christians and were prohibited from returning to Judaism. Thus *converso* communities sprang up alongside decimated Jewish ones or, as in the case of Barcelona, supplanted the Jewish community altogether. Henceforth Jewish life would tend to shift from the large towns to smaller rural centres.

"If forced conversion was meant to solve 'the Jewish problem', it only compounded it in Christian eyes. The sincerity of *converso* faith was inevitably questioned—and all the more fiercely by 'Old Christians' who saw former Jews successfully scaling the social, economic and political barriers which, as Jews, they had previously found insurmountable. [76] Accordingly in the anti-*converso* uprising in Toledo in 1449 'statutes' were drafted by the Toledan Old Christians which prohibited *conversos* from holding all offices and benefices. Anti-*converso* violence, which surfaced again in Toledo in 1467, was particularly acute in the massacres which were perpetrated in many Andalusian towns in 1473.

"The existence of the *converso* communities led to greater pressure on the Jews, for they were perceived as the cause of continuing crypto-Judaism amongst *conversos*. To combat this, segregatory laws were promulgated in 1412 designed 'to seek the best method...so that Christian believers...shall not be brought into any errors as a result of close contact with the infidels'. In 1415, after the Disputation at Tortosa, similar decrees were enacted in Aragon.

---

[76] Many of these *conversos* – or, as they were less politely known, *marranos* ("pigs") - did well under their new rulers. One became Bishop of Burgos; another was King Ferdinand's treasurer; the five top administrative posts in Aragon were occupied by them. (V.M.)

"Christian zealots, however, were not satisfied with segregation and the limiting of Jewish rights. Two courses of action, it was argued, were required. First, crypto-Judaism could only be overcome by the introduction of an Inquisition; second, Jewish influence over the *conversos* could only be overcome by their expulsion. These ideas, adumbrated in works such as Alonso de Espina's *Fortalitium Fidei,* continued to gain ground, and on 27 September 1480 the Catholic Monarchs appointed Inquisitors in Castile who began their work in Seville shortly after (1481). *Conversos,* often subjected to torture, were discovered to be crypto-Jews and received varying punishments, ranging from pilgrimage to death by burning. During the first decade of the Inquisition's operations over 10,000 *conversos* were condemned. The expulsion of the Jews was authorized on 31 March 1492; in May those Jews who refused to convert left for Portugal, North Africa and Turkey. Those who fled to Portugal only found temporary refuge, for five years later they again faced the problem of forcible conversion. As in Spain, this led to the rise of crypto-Judaism, and on 23 May 1536 an Inquisition was set up on the Spanish model.

"With the expulsion of the Jews anti-semitism took on a more racial tone. It is true that anti- Jewish libels had already reappeared in an anti- *converso* form, as in the famous blood libel trial of the case of 'the holy child of La Guardia' (1490–1). Similarly *conversos,* like Jews, kept hosts for evil purposes. But now purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre)* became an obsession and, although many *conversos* managed to hide their 'defect', those who were known not to possess 'pure' blood increasingly found themselves barred from entering many offices in Church and State."[77]

It came to be thought that a Jew by race could never really become a Christian. As Andrew Wheatcroft writes: "During the fifteenth century, the dominant Christian states in Spain began to develop a new theory of the infidel. In this view, Judaism and, by extension, Islam, carried a genetic taint and thus no convert of Jewish or Muslim stock could ever carry the True Faith purely, as could someone of 'untainted' Christian descent…

"This latent tendency within Hispanic society was elaborated into a body of law from the mid fifteenth century, but emerging from below rather than by royal decree. The first instance was in 1449, when Pero Sarmiento – the leader of a rebellion in Toledo against royal support for Jewish converts – issued a declaration that no one except an Old Christian of untainted blood could ever hold public office… Over the next forty years, more and more institutions adopted requirements that 'purity of blood' (*limpieza de sangre*) should be a prerequisite for membership of a guild or any similar body. The vocabulary that was used is particularly significant: the 'Old Christians' described themselves as the 'pure' (*limpios)*; they were 'fine Christians', and the assumption was that the converts were impure and coarse."[78]

---

[77] Hersch, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe,* London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 229.

[78] Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 104-105.

The Inquisition, which had originally been created to hunt down the Cathar heretics, was re-founded by Pope Sixtus IV in 1478. In 1480 it was called in by Queen Isabella of Castile, with the approval of her husband, King Ferdinand of Aragon, to determine the truth of an individual's convictions by means of torture. The notorious Spanish Inquisition, "the first institution of united Spain"[79], while officially an ecclesiastical institution, served the desire of the Spanish state for uniformity within its dominions so well that "henceforth treason and heresy were virtually indistinguishable".[80] Some 13,000 *conversos* were killed by the Inquisition during the first twelve years of its existence.[81]

Ironically, the first inspector-general of the Inquisition in Spain, the notorious Tomas de Torquemada (1420-98), was himself of Jewish descent – his grandmother was a *converso*.[82] He became the model for Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor…

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh write: "From the outset of its creation, the Spanish Inquisition had cast covetous eyes on Judaic wealth. It also regarded Jews themselves with implacable antipathy, simply because they lay outside its official legal jurisdiction. According to its original brief, the Inquisition was authorised to deal with heretics – that is, with Christians who had deviated from orthodox formulations of the faith. It had no powers, however, over adherents of altogether different religions, such as Jews and Muslims. Judaic and Islamic communities in Spain were large. In consequence, a considerable portion of the population remained exempt from the Inquisition's control; and for an institution that sought to exercise total control, such a situation was deemed intolerable.

"The Inquisition's first step was to act against so-called 'Judaizers'. A converso who returned to Judaism after having embraced Christianity could conveniently be labelled a heretic. By extension, so could anyone who encouraged him in his heresy – and this transgression could be further extended to include, by implication, all Jews. But the Inquisition was still handicapped because it had to produce – or concoct – evidence for each case it sought to prosecute; and this was not always easy to do.

"The Inquisition enthusiastically endorsed the virulent anti-Semitism already being promulgated by a notorious preacher, Alonso de Espina, who

---

[79] Davies, op. cit., p. 453. United, also, with the people; for "throughout the history of the Inquisition, commentators agreed on the impressive support given to it by the people" (Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, London: The Folio Society, 1998, p. 69). At the same time, Torquemada went around with an armed escort numbering in the hundreds, which implies that he had something to fear from the people…

[80] Davies, op. cit., p. 453.

[81] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God,* New York: Ballantine Books, 2001, p. 7. William Winsham gives the lower figure of 3000 in the reign of Isabella ("Isabella of Castile's Spanish Inquisition", *All About History,* p. 37).

[82] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Titans of History,* London: Quercus, 2012, p. 170.

hated both Jews and conversos alike. Mobilising popular support behind him, Alonso had advocated the complete extirpation of Judaism from Spain – either by expulsion or by extermination. Embracing Alonso's programme, the Inquisition embarked on its own assiduous anti-Semitic propaganda… Citing the anti-Semitism it had thus contrived to provoke in the populace at large, the Inquisition petitioned the Crown to adopt 'appropriate' measures. The proposal to expel all Jews from Spain stemmed directly from the Inquisition [specifically, from Torquemada]…

"King Ferdinand recognised that persecution of Jews and conversos would inevitably have adverse economic repercussions for the country. Neither he nor Queen Isabella, however, could resist the combined pressure of the Inquisition and the popular sentiment it had invoked. In a letter to his most influential nobles and courtiers, the king wrote: 'The Holy Office of the Inquisition, seeing how some Christians are endangered by contact and communication with the Jews, has provided that the Jews be expelled from all our realms and territories, and has persuaded us to give our support and agreement to this… we do so despite the great harm to ourselves, seeking and preferring the salvation of our souls above our own profit…'

"On 1 January 1483, the monarchs wrote to appease the Inquisition in Andalucia, announcing that all Jews living in the region were to be expelled. On 12 May 1486, all Jews were driven from large tracts of Aragon. But wholesale expulsion had to be deferred for the moment because money and other forms of support from Jews and conversos were urgently needed for the ongoing campaign against the Muslims, pushed back into their ever-contracting Kingdom of Granada."[83]

In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella, having united Aragon and Castile by their marriage, conquered Granada in the south to complete the reconquest of Spain for the Cross. "With deep emotion," writes Karen Armstrong, "the crowd watched the Christian banner raised ceremonially upon the city walls and, as the news broke, bells pealed triumphantly all over Europe, for Granada was the last Muslim stronghold in [Western] Christendom. The Crusades against Islam in the Middle East had failed, but at least the Muslims had been flushed out of Europe. In 1499, the Muslim inhabitants of Spain were given the option of conversion to Christianity or deportation, after which, for a few centuries, Europe would become Muslim-free."[84]

Three months after the conquest of Granada the Edict of Expulsion was issued. "Spanish Jewry was destroyed," writes Armstrong. "About 70,000 Jews converted to Christianity, and stayed on to be plagued by the Inquisition; the

---

[83] Baigent and Leigh, *The Inquisition,* London: Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 76-78.

[84] Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, pp. 3-4. In 1610 all the Moors, whether converted or not, were expelled from Spain.

remaining 130,000... went into exile."[85] The Jews who were expelled – called the Sephardic Jews after their word for Spain, "Sepharad" – spread throughout the West, especially Portugal and Amsterdam (then in the Spanish Netherlands); a substantial minority migrated to the Ottoman empire, to Constantinople, Smyrna and Thessalonica. They brought with them ideas and influences that were to be of enormous importance in the development of the West and in the eventual destruction of its Christian character.

Many of the *conversos* who remained in Spain accepted Catholicism – for example, Teresa of Avila. "It is not an exaggeration," writes Cantor, "to see the role of scions of converted Jewish families as central to the Spanish Renaissance of the early sixteenth century, as were Jews in the modernist cultural revolution of the early twentieth century. In both cases complete access to general culture induced an explosion of intellectual creativity."[86]

However, there were many who both lost touch with Judaism and could not adapt to Catholicism. "In consequence," writes Armstrong, "they had no real allegiance to any faith. Long before secularism, atheism, and religious indifference became common in the rest of Europe, we find instances of these essentially modern attitudes among the Marrano Jews of the Iberian peninsula."[87]

As Cantor writes, "a rationalist, scientific, anti-traditional frame of mind, sceptical about the core of religious culture, arose among some Marrano families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The emergence of a post-Christian commonwealth secular mentality can be traced to a handful of Marrano families who found themselves caught between Judaism and Christianity, bouncing back and forth between the two faiths and cultures, until they became disoriented and disenchanted equally with priests and rabbis.

"We can see this secularisation with the Spanish New Christian Fernando de Rojas, the creator of the subversive picaresque novel (*La Celestina*) in the early sixteenth century, and the forerunner of Cervantes's critique of decaying medieval culture. We can see it in the sceptical humanism of the French humanist Montaigne, who was also of Marrano lineage. We can see it in the writings of two Dutch Jews of Portuguese extraction in the third quarter of the seventeenth century – Uriel de Costa, who condemned rabbinical Judaism and was excommunicated by the Jewish community of Amsterdam, and Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, who turned away from the whole theistic tradition toward a new kind of scientific naturalism and universalism and was also excommunicated from the Jewish community.

---

[85] Armstrong, op. cit., p. 7. However, the Jewish Professor Norman Cantor disputes this figure, giving the true figure as "only around forty thousand, about half the practicing Jews left the country in 1492" (*The Sacred Chain,* London: Fontana, 1996, pp. 189-190). Another Jewish professor, Montefiore (op. cit., p. 173) gives 30-80,000.

[86] Cantor, op. cit., p. 189.

[87] Armstrong, op. cit., p. 15.

"The Marrano descendants who were buffeted about in the sixteenth century from one religion to another became alienated from both, and turned first to money-making in international mercantilist capitalism and then secular, scientific rationalism. They were immensely successful in these endeavours…"[88]

Of these Marrano rationalists, probably the most important was Spinoza, who was excommunicated by the rabbis of Amsterdam in 1656. "Like many modern people," writes Armstrong, "Spinoza regarded religion with distaste. Given his experience of excommunication, this was hardly surprising. He dismissed the revealed faiths as a 'compound of credulity and prejudices', and 'a tissue of meaningless mysteries'. He had found ecstasy in the untrammelled use of reason, not by immersing himself in the biblical text, and as a result, he viewed Scripture in an entirely objective way [*sic!*]. Instead of experiencing it as a revelation of the divine, Spinoza insisted that the Bible be read like any other text. He was one of the first to study the Bible scientifically, examining the historical background, the literary genres, and the question of authorship. He also used the Bible to explore his philosophical ideas. Spinoza was one of the first people in Europe to promote the ideal of a secular, democratic state which would become one of the hallmarks of Western modernity. He argued that once the priests had acquired more power than the kings of Israel, the laws of the state became punitive and restrictive. Originally, the kingdom of Israel had been theocratic but because, in Spinoza's view, God and the people were one and the same, the voice of the people had been supreme. Once the priests seized control, the voice of God could no longer be heard. But Spinoza was no populist. Like most pre-modern philosophers, he was an elitist who believed the masses to be incapable of rational thought. They would need some form of religion to give them a modicum of enlightenment, but this religion must be reformed, based not on so-called revealed law but on the natural principles of justice, fraternity, and liberty…"[89]

In 2012, after a consultation with four scholars, the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam Pinchas Toledano refused to lift the *herem* (excommunication) on Spinoza. "In his announcement," writes Steven Nadler, "he noted that 'the fact that [Spinoza] has been buried in a non-Jewish cemetery shows clearly that, to the last breath of his life, he was indifferent to the *herem*, and that he never asked for forgiveness or did *teshuva*.' Moreover, he said: 'How on earth can we even consider removing the *herem* from a person with such preposterous ideas, where he was tearing apart the very fundaments of our religion… The moment we rescind the *herem*…it would imply that we share his heretic views.' Toledano concluded that the leaders of the community in

---

[88] Cantor, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

[89] Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

the 17th century knew exactly what they were doing, and therefore he had no right to rescind their ruling.[90]

In 1502 Ferdinand and Isabella turned their attention to the Muslims, who suffered the same fate as the Jews. In 1605 Miguel de Cervantes published his famous novel *Don Quixote.* As Miranda France notes, in the novel "compassion [is] shown towards a Muslim character who has been first made to convert by the Inquisition, and then expelled from Spain – as all Muslim converts were, in 1609. [In 2015], Spain offered citizenship to the descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled in 1492, but the offer wasn't extended to the descendants of expelled Muslims. Meanwhile, residents of the village Castrillo Matajudios ('Kill Jews Camp') voted to change the name, but Valle de Matamoros ('Kill Moors Valley') has yet to follow suit. What would Cervantes say?"[91]

---

[90] Nader, "In or Out: the Spinoza Case", *The Tablet,* December 8, 2015, http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/195668/in-or-out-the-spinoza-case.
[91] France, "Nothing is What it Seems", *Prospect,* April, 2016, p. 68.

8. CHARLES V, HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR

In 1500, in spite of the growth in power of national kingdoms such as Spain, England and France, the titular secular overlord of Western Christendom remained the Holy Roman Emperor, who claimed that his was the empire created by Charlemagne (and/or the Pope) in 800. After the disintegration of the western, French part of the empire in the ninth century, it was the eastern, German part that inherited the mantle of empire in the tenth century under the Ottonian dynasty. However, while the heart of the empire remained German throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, through various complicated dynastic alliances the empire of Charles V came to include an extraordinary patchwork, not only of German, but also of Spanish, Flemish, Burgundian, Italian and many other principalities and kingdoms.…

Charles was the grandson, on the one side, of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian, and on the other, of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. And so in him were united the Austrian Habsburgs and the Spanish monarchy with their vast dominions stretching across the New World. This brought the empire to new heights of power. "His first great chief minister, Mercurio Arborio de Gattinara, fed him the idea that he was, or would be, 'monarch of the world', and he seems to have believed this…"[92]

"'God the Creator,' Gattinara announced at Charles' reception of the German imperial crown in 1519, 'has given you this grace of raising you in dignity above all Christian kings and princes by constituting you the greatest emperor and king who has been since the division of the empire, which was realized in the person of Charlemagne your predecessor, and by drawing you to the right of monarchy in order to lead back the entire world to a single shepherd.' Time and again, Charles and his ministers would justify policies 'as much on account of the Empire as on account of our kingdoms of Spain'. Charles proved unable, however, to persuade or force enough German princes to elect his son Philip King of the Romans, and thus his designated successor. While Philip succeeded as King of Spain, the imperial title devolved to the Austrian branch of the family. The Spanish Habsburgs and the emperor continued to work closely together, all the same. One way or the other, the German imperial crown was to be an important component of Habsburg power in Europe…"[93]

As a fervent Catholic, Charles was also well placed to lead the struggle against Protestantism. Thus as Philip Bobbitt writes, his inheritance "created the conditions for a perfect experiment to determine whether in fact the State could encompass many different nations once the Reformation had so greatly sharpened the cultural differences among the peoples under his rule." [94]

---

[92] John Edwards, "God-given Right to Rule", *BBC History Magazine,* November, 2019, p. 76.

[93] Bernard Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, 1453 to the Present*, London: Allen Lane, 2013, p. 17.

[94] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 104.

However, according to Joachim Whaley, the empire in fact contracted in size in Europe. For "the Swiss cantons and the northern Netherlands seceded in the 16th century, and France acquired Metz, Toul, Verdun and Alsace in 1648." But this mattered less than the fact that the empire "made significant contributions to the development of west-central and central Europe, notably the creation of an enduring system of public order and law. Successive medieval emperors experimented with internal peace decrees. And around 1500 the empire developed a legal system that pacified the territories and cities of German-speaking Europe. By 1519 [the year of Charles' coronation] it had a supreme court and a regional enforcement system that ended feuding for good. That year Charles V was obliged to sign an electoral capitulation before his coronation, which explicitly guaranteed the rights of all Germans."[95]

"In the tradition of Charlemagne," writes Henry Kissinger, "at his coronation Charles vowed to be 'the protector and defender of the Holy Roman Church,' and crowds paid him obeisance as 'Caesare' and 'Imperio'; Pope Clement affirmed Charles as the temporal force for 'seeing peace and order re-established in Christendom.

"A Chinese or Turkish visitor to Europe at that time might well have perceived a seemingly familiar political system: a continent presided over by a single dynasty imbued with a sense of divine mandate. If Charles had been able to consolidate his authority and manage an orderly succession in the vast Habsburg territorial conglomerate, Europe would have been shaped by a dominant central authority like the Chinese Empire of the Islamic Caliphate.

"It did not happen; nor did Charles try. In the end, he was satisfied to base order on equilibrium. Hegemony might be his inheritance but not his objective…

"The universality of the Church Charles sought to vindicate was not to be had. He proved unable to prevent the new doctrine of Protestantism from spreading through the lands that were the principal base of his power. Both religious and political unity was fracturing. The effort to fulfil his aspirations inherent in his office was beyond the capabilities of a single individual…"[96]

*

It was not only the Protestants who frustrated Charles. There was also King Francis I of France, a lover of glory, power and women, whose politics resembled the *realpolitik* of the Italian princes, albeit on a much larger scale. For "Francis," writes John Julius Norwich, "was, in every fibre of his being, a man of the Renaissance: it could almost be said that in France he *was* the Renaissance. Not only did he show a genuine passion for art; he also possessed

[95] Whaley, *BBC World Histories,* N 3, April/May, 2017, p. 35.
[96] Kissinger, *World Order,* pp. 15-16.

the wealth to indulge it. Long before he was thirty, he was famous as the greatest patron of his time. It was entirely typical of him that he should have brought Leonardo da Vinci from Italy, settling him in the magnificent apartments at Amboise in which the great man lived in comfort until his death. He was also a compulsive builder; Amboise was very largely his creation, as were Blois and Chambord and, best loved of all his chateaux, Fontainebleu, where he gave his favourite painter Primaticcio a free hand and which still bears his character – as well his salamander emblem – in every room…

"It would have been an excellent thing for Francis if the Valois kings had been able to keep their hands off Italy. Alas, they could not. Francis had taken care that his claim to Milan was included in his coronation oath, and the loss of Milan after [the battle of] Novara in 1513 rankled badly. He wasted no time. Less than nine months after his coronation, he took his revenge on Sforza and his Swiss pikemen. He met them on 13 September 1515 at Marignano – now Melegnano – some ten miles south-east of Milan. The battle was long and hard: beginning in mid-afternoon, it raged throughout the night until the morning sun was high in the sky. The king fought with his usual courage… At last, on 11 October, he rode triumphantly into Milan, beside himself with joy and pride.

"But there were other prizes to be won, greater far than Milan; and the greatest of all was the Holy Roman Empire. It was elective: the present emperor, Maximilian of Habsburg, was already in his late fifties, an old man in those days, and the seven Electors – the Archbishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne, the King of Bohemia, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg and the Count Palatine of the Rhine - would, Francis suspected, probably not be averse to a little gentle bribery. There were strategic reasons too: Maximilian's grandson Charles – his principal rival – already had title to Spain, the Low Countries, Austria and Naples; were he to acquire all the imperial territories as well, he would hold France in a vice, virtually surrounding it. The king was well aware, of course, that Charles would be equally determined on his own election, for precisely the converse reason – that were he, Francis, to be successful, the imperial dominion would be split down the middle. Francis did his best, but the odds were stacked against him. The Electors – all German – hated the idea of a French emperor as much as Charles himself; the Fuggers, that colossally rich and influential banking family from Augsburg, lined as many pockets as was necessary; and in 1519 Charles was elected – unanimously."[97]

Francis suffered another major setback in his rivalry with Charles when, still striving for domination in Milan, he was defeated by imperial forces in the Battle of Pavia in 1525. Charles imprisoned him in Madrid, but later released him, showing a lack of the "killer instinct" that real candidates for universal dominion must possess… Instead, Charles hoped that Francis would accept Pope Clement's proposal that the two Catholic monarchs unite in a new crusade against Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

---

[97] Norwich, *France. From Gaul to De Gaulle,* London: John Murray, 2018, pp. 119, 121-122

*

The threat from the Turks was real. Mohammed had believed that Constantinople was the centre of the world; and when Mehmet II conquered the City in 1453 he adopted the title of the Roman Autocrats and planned to advance westwards against the only remaining power that contested that title with him – the Western Holy Roman Emperor (Moscow's claim to be "the third Rome" came soon after, but little attention was paid to it).

"It was now only a matter of time," writes Bernard Simms, "before the Ottomans launched a fresh offensive across the Mediterranean, or into the Balkans towards central Europe, in order to make good this claim to the Roman Empire, to achieve world domination through control of Europe, and to vindicate their universal mission to promote the spread of Islam. For this reason, the fall of Constantinople provoked a panic across Christendom. Even in far-off Denmark and Norway, King Christian I declared that 'the grand Turk was the beast rising out of the sea described in the Apocalypse'.

"In the early sixteenth century, the Ottoman advance resumed under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent [he called himself 'the second Solomon']. His aim was nothing less than Universal Monarchy: an inscription above the entrance to the Grand Mosque in Constantinople later proclaimed him 'Conqueror of the lands of the Orient and the Occident with the help of Almighty God and his victorious army, possessor of the Kingdoms of the World'. Liaising closely with disaffected Spanish Moors [the pirate Barbarossa] and their exiled associates along the North African coast, he struck in the Mediterranean. After turning Algeria into an Ottoman vassal, crushing the Knight Hospitaller garrison at Rhodes, and securing most of the Black Sea littoral, the Sultan crashed into central Europe. In 1521, Suleiman took the great fortress of Belgrade, and five years later he shattered the Hungarian army at the battle of Mohacs. A huge swathe of south-eastern Europe, including nearly the entire fertile Danube Basin, fell under Ottoman control. Hungary – whose nobles had described themselves as the 'shield and rampart of Christianity' – was no more. In his self-proclaimed capacity as 'Distributor of Crowns to the monarchs of the world', Suleiman made his satellite John Zapolya 'King' of Hungary. The Sultan, the Greek historian Theodore Spandounes warned, 'was preparing an innumerable force to make war upon the Christians by land and sea', with 'no other thought but to devour' them 'like a dragon with his gullet wide open'. It was only with great difficulty that the Habsburgs repulsed a Turkish assault on Vienna itself in 1529."[98]

It made good sense, therefore, that the two Catholic monarchs, in response to the pope's plea, and putting their rivalry on hold, should unite against the

---

[98] Simms, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

Sultan.[99] This would be a resurrection of the crusading spirit of the Middle Ages. And both monarchs in principle agreed to it.

There were problems, however, in the Christian alliance. The most notorious was Charles V's dreadful sacking of Rome in 1527, undertaken because Pope Clement VII had sided with the Italian city-states in trying to rid the country of foreign influence. However, the atrocities were blamed on Charles' German mercenaries, who had been whipped up by Luther's anti-papist propaganda[100]; and in general the alliance with Rome remained firm.

A still more serious problem was the amazing fact that Francis, for much of this period, was in a kind of alliance with the Sultan! The most shocking result of this shameful Franco-Turkish alliance was the joint sacking of Nice in 1543 – in which, however, the French played the major part. For, as the Marechal of Vielleville wrote in 1571: 'The city of Nice was plundered and burned, for which neither [the Sultan's vassal, the pirate] Barbarossa nor the Saracens can be blamed; for when it occurred they were already far away… Responsibility for the outrage was thrown at poor Barbarossa to protect the honour and reputation of France, and indeed of Christendom itself."[101]

However, while Charles was probably a more sincere Catholic than Francis, he, too, made compromises with the Sultan. At a meeting with the French and Spanish ambassadors in Istanbul in June, 1545, the Habsburgs "gave their full recognition to Ottoman Hungary and undertook to pay an annual tribute of 30,000 gold florins in respect of their Habsburg possessions in the north and west of the country. [The Sultan] in return gave his assurance that peace would be maintained along his borders. He then wrote Francis a cordial letter of explanation, in which he promised to maintain the 'friendship and fidelity' that the two had enjoyed in the past.

"The agreement was eventually signed at Adrianople – modern Edirne – in November 1545, and was replaced by a full peace treaty two years later. Charles was at last free to turn to his problems in Germany; he was, however, bitterly criticised throughout Europe. For all good God-fearing Catholics, the Sultan was the Antichrist, the Beast of the Apocalypse; to treat him as an equal – arguably even as a superior – was a sin not to be forgiven. It had been bad enough when Francis, the Most Christian King, had allied himself to do so, and to undertake furthermore to make an annual payment of a very considerable sum in return for the relatively small part of Hungary under Habsburg control

---

[99] "One might almost call it Christian jihad," writes Sir Noel Malcolm, "were it not for one basic difference: their [the Popes'] aim was not simply to fight infidels because they were infidels, but to fight them because they ruled over populations of Christians." (*Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies,* London: Allen Lane, 2015; quoted by Daniel Johnson in his review of the book in *Standpoint,* 72, May, 2015, p. 60). However, it should be pointed out that the papacy's zeal to protect *Orthodox* Christians, the main victims of the Turks, was never great.

[100] Matthew Kneale, "Imperial Troops Sack Rome", *World Histories,* 8, February/March, 2018, p. 36.

[101] John Julius Norwich, *Four Princes,* London: John Murray, 2017, p. 177.

– a payment that implied recognition of Turkish sovereignty over the whole country and which the Turks unhesitatingly described as a tribute – that was far, far worse. What was it indeed but a betrayal not only Christendom but of Jesus Christ himself? Patriotic Hungarians now spat at the very mention of the Emperor's name. They had looked to him to help them regain their ancient kingdom, but this last action had proved that he was no longer to be trusted, that he had feet of clay…"[102]

Charles compounded this flabbiness by concluding "the Peace of Augsburg, which in 1555 pacified Germany by conceding to the Lutherans those areas that had Lutheran rulers."[103]

<div align="center">*</div>

Towards the end of his life, writes E.H. Gombrich, Charles grew weary of his vast empire, "with all its trouble and confusion, and the increasingly savage battles fought in the name of religion. He had spent life battling against German princes who were followers of Luther, against the pope, against the kings of both England and France, and against the Turks…

"And having grown tired of his empire, along with its sun that never set, Charles V installed his brother Ferdinand as ruler of Austria and emperor of Germany, and gave Spain and the Netherlands to his son Philip. He then withdrew, in 1556, an old and broken man, to the Spanish monastery of San Geronimo de Yuste…"[104]

A tragic end for a universal emperor… Nevertheless, under Charles V, the Empire had attained the peak of its power. This power was reflected in its most famous architecture: "The serenity and splendour of the Spanish throne," wrote the Catholic author Hilaire Belloc, "the magnificence of its externals, expressed in ritual, in every detail of comportment, still more in architecture, profoundly affected the mind of Europe: and rightly so; they remain to-day to astonish us. I may be thought extravagant if I say that the Escorial, that huge block of dark granite unearthly proportioned, is a parallel to the Pyramids… At any rate there is nothing else in Europe which so presents the eternal and the simple combined… But the Escorial is not a mere symbol, still less a façade; it is the very soul of the imperial name. It could only have been raised and inhabited by kings who were believed by themselves to be, and were believed by others to be, the chief on earth."[105]

---

[102] Norwich, *Four Princes,* pp. 188-189.

[103] Norwich, *Four Princes,* p. 214.

[104] Gombrich, *A Little History of the World,* London: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 185-186.

[105] Belloc, *Richelieu*, London: Ernest Benn, 1930, pp. 67-68.

9. MARTIN LUTHER

"The first step of the Reformation," writes V.A. Zhukovsky, "decided the fate of the European world: instead of the historical abuses of ecclesiastical power, it destroyed the spiritual… power of the Church herself; it incited the democratic mind to rebel against her being above judgement; in allowing revelation to be checked, it shook the faith, and with the faith everything holy. For this holiness was substituted the pagan wisdom of the ancients; the spirit of contradiction was born; the revolt against all authority, Divine as well as human, began. This revolt went along two paths: on the first – the destruction of the authority of the Church produced rationalism (the rejection of the Divinity of Christ), whence came… atheism (the rejection of the existence of God); and on the other – the concept of autocratic power as proceeding from God gave way to the concept of the social contract. Thence came the concept of the autocracy of the people, whose first step is representative democracy, second step – democracy, and third step – socialism and communism. Perhaps there is also a fourth and final step: the destruction of the family, and in consequence of this the exaltation of humanity, liberated from every obligation that might in any way limit its personal independence, to the dignity of completely free cattle. And so two paths: on the one hand, the autocracy of the human mind and the annihilation of the Kingdom of God; on the other – the dominion of each and every one, and the annihilation of society."[106]

*

It all began at St. Peter's cathedral at the Vatican in Rome, which had witnessed many of the most important events in European Christian history: the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul in 64; the conquest of the city by St. Constantine, who built the first basilica; the crowning of Charlemagne in 800; innumerable papist councils and decree. Now the destruction of the old Orthodox building by Pope Julius II in what John Julius Norwich calls "one of the most shameless acts of official vandalism in all Christian history"[107], became the indirect cause of one of the great revolutions in human thought. Not coincidentally, the first major schism from the Roman Catholic schism in the West, Protestantism, appeared as the result of an act of vandalism against the West's oldest monument to its Orthodox Christian past…

Julius II was succeeded by Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici). As Gombrich writes, the two Medici popes were the patrons of some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance, and had transformed their native city of Florence. Now, on their initiative, "the grandest and most magnificent buildings rose into the sky of Rome. Old St. Peter's… was too plain for their taste. They planned to build a new church, far bigger and more beautiful than any seen before. But it would

---

[106] Zhukovsky, "O stikhotvorenii 'Sviataia Rus'" ("On the Poem 'Holy Rus'"), in V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do Nashikh Dnej* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry: from Peter I to our Days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow: "Moskva", 1997, p. 74.

[107] Norwich, op. cit., p. 116.

cost a great deal of money. Where that money came from mattered less to the popes of the day than getting hold of it and completing their wonderful church. And in their desire to please the pope, priests and monks collected money in a way which did not conform with the teachings of the Church. They made the faithful pay for the forgiveness of their sins, and called it 'selling indulgences'. They did this in spite of the Church's own teaching, according to which only sinner who repented might be forgiven."[108]

"In 1517, a theological dispute about the methods employed by Dominicans to raise funds for the papal building programme had led to a particular stir in the Saxon fortress town of Wittenberg. There, a friar who served the recently founded university as its professor of biblical studies had issued a formal objection, in the form of ninety-five written theses…."[109]

The monk was Martin Luther. He denounced the trade in the forgiveness of sins. What shocked him most "was that people might think that they could atone for their sins with *money*, that God's free, forgiving mercy could be bought. He had always seen himself as a sinner, living, like all sinners, in fear of God's wrath. Only one thing could save him from God's punishment and that was God's infinite mercy which, as Luther believed, could not be bought, for if it could, it would no longer be mercy. Before God, who sees all and knows all, even a good person is a sinner who deserves to be punished. Only faith in God's freely given mercy can save him, and nothing else.

"In the bitter arguments that broke out on the subject of indulgences and their abuse, Luther's opinions took on an increasingly insistent and forceful tone, both in his teaching and his writings. Nothing but faith matters, said Luther. All else is superfluous. And that also goes for the Church and the priests who, when they celebrate Mass, intercede on behalf of the faithful so that they, too, may share in God's mercy. God's mercy needs no intercessors. All an individual needs to be saved if is his own unshakable belief and faith in his God. Faith means believing in the great mysteries of the Gospel, believing that we are eating Christ's body and drinking his blood from the chalice when we take Holy Communion. No one can help another person to obtain God's grace. Every believer is, as it were, his own priest. A priest of the Church is not more than a teacher and helper, and as such may live like other men, and even marry: A believer must not be content to accept this teaching of the Church. He must look to the Bible for God's purpose and seek it out for himself. For, in Luther's opinion, the truth was only to be found in the Bible."[110]

Meanwhile, the papacy, "sent the ninety-five theses by the local archbishop, had pondered them for eight months before finally pronouncing, in August 1518, that they were indeed heretical. The author had been summoned to Rome.

---

[108] Gombrich, *A Little History of the World,* London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 180.

[109] Holland, *Dominion,* p. 294.

[110] Gombrich, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

Yet this, far from settling the matter, had only stoked the flames. Already, in Wittenberg, writing by the local inquisition had been burnt in the market square. [The papal legate] Cajetan, tracking events from his residence in Augsburg, fretted that the bush-fires of controversy might spread out of control. The best and most Christian way of doing this he decided, was to summon the troublesome author of the ninety-five theses to Augsburg, and persuade him in person to recant. His invitation was accepted. On 7 October 1518, Martin Luther arrived in Augsburg…

"… Cajetan aimed to persuade him in a gentle tone of his errors, and thereby spare him a trial in Rome. Recognisably, the cardinal spoke as the philosopher who had condemned the use of force against the Indians.

"His hopes were to be bitterly disappointed. Over the course of his first meeting with Luther, Cajetan found his voice steadily rising. By the end of it, he was shouting his opponent down. At stake, the cardinal had come to realise, were not the details of Luther's ninety-five theses, but an altogether more fundamental question: how Christians were best to pursue holiness. To Cajetan, the answer appeared self-evident. Outside of the Roman Church, there could be no salvation. Its immense structure was nothing less than the City of god. Generation upon generation of Christian had labored to build it. The popes who had followed in a line of succession from Saint Peter himself, and the lawyers who had compiled books of canons and commentaries and the scholars who had succeeded in integrating divine revelation with pagan philosophy – all had contributed to its edifice. Yet Luther, it began to dawn on Cajetan, was content to put all this in question. He seemed to despise every buttress of the Church's authority: Aquinas, and canon law, and even the papacy itself. Over them all, defiantly and unyieldingly, he affirmed the witness of scripture. 'For the pope is not above, but under the word of God.' Cajetan, stupefied that an obscure monk should think to place his personal interpretation of the Bible on such a pedestal, dismissed the argument as 'mere words'; but Luther, quoting verses with a facility that came naturally to a professor of scripture, appealed for the first time to a concept that he had discovered in Paul: 'I must believe according to the testimony of my conscience'.

"The result was deadlock. After three meetings, during which Luther obdurately held firm to his position, Cajetan lost patience for good. Expelling the monk from his presence, he ordered him not to return unless he was ready to recant. Luther took the cardinal at his word. Released from his monastic vows by the head of his order, who had accompanied him to Augsburg, he clambered over the city was and beat a speedy retreat…"[111]

---

[111] Holland, *Dominion,* pp. 294-296.

10. LUTHER: WORDS, MUSIC AND PRINT

Almost all the main ideas of Protestantism had appeared centuries before, in the Proto-Protestantism of such men as the Italian Marsilius, the Englishman John Wycliffe and the Czech Jan Hus. But by about 1450 they had been crushed by the resurgent power of the post-Avignon papacy. What enabled them finally to revive and take root in the early sixteenth century was, first, the general atmosphere of intellectual freedom engendered by Renaissance humanism. And secondly, the invention of the printing press.

The printing press was invented in Mainz between 1446 and 1450 by Johannes Gutenburg. "By 1500, printing presses in operation throughout Western Europe had already produced more than twenty million volumes. In the 16th century, with presses spreading further afield, their output rose tenfold to an estimated 150 to 200 million copies. The operation of a press became synonymous with the enterprise of printing, and lent its name to a new branch of media, 'the press'."[112]

Luther's tracts were written in German, and were immediately spread far and wide through the new technology. It gave an important impulse to the unity and self-consciousness of the German nation. Luther's translation of the Bible "into sharp, pungent, popular German"[113] was the most culturally influential work to come off Gutenberg's presses. It has been called "the central document in the evolution of the German language", comparable to the influence of the King James translation of the Bible on English.

Only a little less important was his influence on liturgical music. "He himself contributed new German texts to sixteen out of the twenty-four hymns printed for the first time in 1524. One of the most stirring of them – 'Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott' ('A mighty fortress is our God') – has music *and* words by Luther."[114] This gave Lutheranism an aesthetic attractiveness that the Catholics had difficulty in matching. And for centuries to come, especially through the music of that archetypal Lutheran, Johann Sebastian Bach… For John Eliot Gardiner notes a "close synergy between Luther and Bach, though separated by almost two centuries. The bond between them was established at birth: by geography [Thuringia was their common homeland], by the coincidence of their schooling and membership of the Georgenschule choir and the extracurricular singing for bread. It was reinforced by the thoroughgoing ways that Luther's hymns and theology impregnated Bach's school lessons…; they really were the principal means by which he imbibed and assimilated knowledge of the world around him. By the time Bach reached his early twenties Luther's teaching had become all-pervasive in his musical training,

---

[112] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press

[113] Andrew Marr, *A History of the World,* London: Pan, 2012, p. 277.

[114] John Eliot Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven. A Portrait of Johann Sebastian Bach,* London: Penguin, 2013, p. 29.

and now formed the very clay from which he modelled his first music for use in church…

"The specific task of music, as defined by Luther, is to give expression and added eloquence to biblical texts: *Die Noten machen den Text lebendig* ('The notes make the words live'). As two of God's most powerful gifts to humanity, words and music must be forged into one invisible and indivisible force, the text appealing primarily to the intellect (but also to the passions); while music is addressed primarily to the passions (but also to the intellect). Luther maintained that without music, man is little more than a stone; but, with music, he can drive the Devil away: 'It has often revived me and relieved me from heavy burdens,' he admitted. This belief was to give fundamental justification to Bach's vocation (*Amt*) and craft as a musician, lending credence to his professional status and comfort to his artistic goals, while his emphasis on a 'vocal' delivery of Scripture would later help to provide his *raison d'etre* as a composer of church music…"[115]

*

Printing was crucial to the Reformation's success. "Cities with at least one printing press," writes Niall Ferguson, "were significantly more likely to adopt Protestantism than cities without printing, but it was cities with multiple competing printers that were most likely to turn Protestant."[116] In fact, the invention of the press gave an enormous impetus to learning of all kinds. Not since the great Irish monastic schools of the early Middle Ages were so many people able to read, not only Latin, but also Greek and Hebrew as a result of the printing revolution. Of course, this was partly the result of the emigration of many Greek scholars to the West after 1453.

Robert Tombs writes: "There was a desire to re-examine the sources of beliefs by studying original texts. In the 1430s, for example, philology had demonstrated that the supposedly fourth-century 'Donation of Constantine', which the papacy had claimed as the origin of its temporal authority, was a forgery.

"By far the most important new text was the Bible itself. Newly acquired knowledge of languages meant that humanist scholars could study the recently published Greek and Hebrew originals, even finding mistakes in the orthodox Latin 'Vulgate', St. Jerome's thousand-year-old translation on which the Western Church had based its teachings. The most famous humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam, in 1516 produced an edition of the Greek New Testament with a new parallel Latin translation giving changes of wording – significant because fundamental beliefs could hang on particular phrases, even words. Humanists

---

[115] Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven,* pp. 128, 129.

[116] Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower, L*ondon: Penguin, 2018, p. 83.

such as Erasmus[117], John Colet, the dean of St. Paul's, and Thomas More, lawyer, member of Parliament and 1529 Chancellor, had hoped that these intellectual advances would lead to religious reform and renewal. But they became weapons in an assault on authority.

"Printing (from the 1430s) and cheaper paper meant that copies of ancient texts and modern translations could be made available outside the clerical and aristocratic elite, even to ordinary literate people – the gentry, merchants, yeomen, artisans. Printed Bibles appeared in German in 1466, and in Italian, Dutch, French, Spanish and Czech in the 1470s. Lay readers ceased to be dependent on the clergy to transmit the word of God. Instead of asking what God meant (which required experts to explain) they began to ask simply what God said, and decide on his meaning themselves. England was well behind on this because of strict anti-Lollard legislation.

"Late medieval Christianity, like most religions, invested enormously in mechanisms of salvation: ceremonies, rituals, chapels, chantries, shrines, relics, statues, pilgrimages and indulgences. This familiar, beautiful, mysterious and yet accessible form of worship provided comfort and hope. Most people clung to it. Most of the cultural glories of Europe derived from it, as did the power and wealth of the Church. But it could become a squalid transaction between man and God by which favour, forgiveness and salvation were bought by performing a quasi-magical act, paying a fee, making a material gift to God or a saint, or bequeathing money for posthumous prayers. Intellectual scepticism could draw on traditional resentment of the clergy's wealth, as in the early example of Lollardy. 'Jesus said, "Feed my lambs," not "Shear my sheep", joked English reformers.'

"Luther's open challenge in 1517 was a denunciation of the 'sale' of indulgences, by which punishment for sin could be remitted by a cash donation to the Church – currently, to build the magnificent basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Luther rejected the whole system of belief on which this kind of piety was based. Drawing on ideas of the fifth-century St. Augustine [and the first-century St. Paul], he denied that merit or forgiveness could be gained by anything that sinful man could do: salvation depended solely on the mercy of God. Human beings could do nothing to deserve this mercy: God chose them to receive it. Though this idea had always been present in Western Christian teaching, the conclusions that Luther began to draw were that many of the activities of the Church, including most of the sacraments, were best useless and at worst blasphemous, and that its ruling authorities were corrupt and oppressive, in effect perpetrating a huge confidence trick on Christians.

---

[117] The Dutch Christian humanist and Bible scholar Desiderius Erasmus was an especially important figure. If the Reformation had proceeded along his, rather than Luther's lines, history might have been very different. "His slogan was *Ad fontes*: 'Back to the wellsprings!' Erasmus believed that the authentic Christian faith of the early church had been buried under a mound of lifeless medieval theology. By stripping away these later accretions and going back to the sources – the Bible and the Fathers of the Church – Christians would recover the living kernel of the Gospels and experience new birth" (Armstrong, op. cit., p. 5).

"Luther's message appealed to many educated people, first of all in the German and Swiss cities, who were already emancipating themselves intellectually from the clergy by reading the Bible, which seemed to be the true way to faith, godliness and salvation. Luther also appealed, as Wyclif had done more than a century earlier, to nobles and princes for whom bishops, abbots and the Pope were powerful and wealthy rivals. Luther and his followers believed that religion and society needed authority, but that Christian princes, not the Pope, would yield it. It turned out that authority and order were not so easily preserved amid the moral and intellectual revolution Luther had ignited. Over much of northern Europe, crowds smashed statues in churches. In 1524, popular revolts, the so-called Peasants' War, began to sweep across Central Europe from the Rhine to Poland. Ancient social tensions were inflamed by religious radicalism, despite Luther's furious denunciation of 'thieving murdering peasants'. Many thousands were eventually slaughtered, tortured and executed in the biggest ideological upheaval in Europe since before the French Revolution. No one could doubt that religious dissension affected everything.

"Amid this European turmoil, in 1526 a young former Oxford scholar, William Tyndale, began to print copies in Cologne of his English translation of the New Testament from the Greek, undertaken in defiance of English law. They were seized in a raid on his printer, but he began again in Worms, and then again in Antwerp. Tyndale… believed that biblical interpretation did not require clerical authority, for it was simple and unambiguous: 'The scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense'. Perhaps 16,000 copies of his translation were smuggled into England over the next ten years (compared with the hundreds of manuscript copies the Lollards had managed to produce). He is supposed to have said to a critic that 'ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost'. This was a truly revolutionary ambition…"[118]

"Nervously aware of the clandestine import trade in Tyndale Bibles, the guardians of orthodoxy resolved to root out the 'most pestiferous and pernicious poison', no matter how ugly the means needed to do it. The most zealous enforcers were not from the reactionary wing of the Catholic Church at all, but were men whom we usually and wrongly think of as liberal, martyrs for the freedom of conscience: Thomas More and John Fisher. Both received for themselves and men like them the luxury of debating niceties of scripture, but in the prospect of 'each one man to be a church alone' they saw the collapse of all theological authority: a time when every man or woman, no matter how ignorant, would be presumptuous enough to judge doctrine for themselves. The ranks of the horrified included Henry VIII, who in 1521 had allowed a treatise attacking Lutheranism as an abominable heresy to be published under his name. His most trusted servant, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, was likewise eager to muffle what Tyndale had called 'the noise of the new Bible' before it

---

[118] Tombs, op. cit., pp. 160-162.

became a cacophonous din. And he went about it with systematic determination, infiltrating cells of Bible readers and staging show trials at St. Paul's, where the monsters were forced to recant, carry faggots for the fire and kneel in abject supplication as their writings were fed to the flames. They were solemnly warned that should they be tempted to stray from the straight and narrow (as some inevitably did) it would be their bodies, as well as their books, that would be the next to burn…"[119]

[119] Simon Schama, *A History of Britain 1,* London: BBC Publications, 2003, pp. 240-241.

11. LUTHERANISM

Thanks to the accessibility of Luther's printed works, "Many people were won over by his argument. When the pope came to hear of it, he threatened to excommunicate Luther. But Luther's following was by now so great that he no longer cared. He burned the pope's letter in public, and then he really was excommunicated. Next he announced that he and his followers had left the Church altogether. Germany was in an uproar, and many people sided with him, for the luxury-loving pope, with all his wealth, was not at all popular in Germany. Nor was there much opposition from the German princes, for if the bishops and archbishops were to lose their power, the Church's vast estates would fall to them. So they, too, joined the Reformation, which was the name that was given to Luther's attempt to reawaken the Christian piety of old."[120]

In January, 1521 Holy Roman Emperor Charles V summoned Luther to appear before him at the Imperial Diet in Worms. "Already excommunicated by Leo X," writes Bridget Heal, "Luther faced condemnation by the pope's secular counterpart, the most powerful monarch in Christendom. Even more than the posting of the *Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther's appearance at the Rhineland city was a defining moment in the Reformation. Luther and his companions spent ten days travelling west from Wittenberg and were greeted enthusiastically along the way. When the reformer arrived at Worms, 2,000 people supposedly gathered in the streets, testimony to the public interest Luther had awoken. On April 17th, as he went to the Diet, people climbed onto rooftops in their eagerness to see him; his arrival was described in terms that consciously echo the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Clothed in a simple black cassock, he stood alone before the assembled might and splendour of the Empire. He was presented with a pile of books and was asked whether they were his and whether he would retract what he had written. He requested an adjournment and when he appeared again the following day, he delivered an extraordinarily courageous speech, refusing to recant and concluding that 'unless I am convinced by the testimony of scriptures I have quoted and by clear reason… I am bound by the scriptures and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.' According to the account of events published by his supporters shortly afterwards, he added: 'I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.' "[121]

These words represent the essence of his creed and of his revolutionary challenge to the whole of Christendom. For by placing his individual conscience above every collective authority, whether secular or ecclesiastical, he undermined *all* authority, replacing it with the most individualist kind of anarchism, covered by the honourable name of "conscience". This individualism – which, as we have seen, had its roots in the Renaissance - is the real dogma of Protestantism, more fundamental than its other official teachings.

---

[120] Gombrich, op. cit., p. 182.

[121] Heal, "Martin Luther and the German Reformation", *History Today,* March, 2017, pp. 34-35.

Of course, Luther also appealed to Scripture, to the Word of God, as a figleaf for his anarchism. For what was Holy Scripture? Luther himself would judge that… "Notoriously," writes John Barton, "he went further than almost any Christian before or since in concluding that certain books were not an authentic expression of the gospel, and when he translated the Bible he removed them to an appendix. The books in question are Esther (demoted because it nowhere mentions God), Hebrews, James and Revelation. Conversely, Luther was prepared to say which books were the most important, the 'truest and noblest books': John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and 1 John… Thus Luther's criticism of authority reached even to criticism of the authority of parts of the Bible itself, in the name of principles derived from what he took to be the Bible's overall drift."[122]

However, by making every individual believer the interpreter of Scripture, Luther undermined scriptural authority also. Scripture, the written word of God, was only a seeming authority, a fig-leaf to hide the real authority, the believer's self-will. The only authority left was the naked ego… And yet even the holy Apostle Paul did not rely on his own individual conscience and revelation alone, but checked his convictions against those of the other apostles. As he writes: "I communicated to them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any chance I might run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2.2). For Paul knew that although he had received the Gospel from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, he could still err because of the sin that still dwelt in him as it dwells in all mortal men. For the truth is given collectively to the Church, "the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15), whose existence and authority will survive even the gates of hell (Matthew 16.18). But any individual member of the Church, no matter who he is, may fall away from the truth. That is why St. Paul disciplined his body, "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9.27) as a witness to the truth. "So let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10.12).

Luther's attitude is what we may call Protestant rationalism; it was born in the soil of Catholic rationalism, which placed the mind of one man, the Pope, above the Catholic consciousness of the Church, the Mind of Christ. Protestantism rejected Papism, but did not reject its underlying principle. Thus instead of placing the mind of *one* man above the Church, it placed the mind of *every* man, every believer, above it.

As Luther himself declared: "In matters of faith each Christian is for himself Pope and Church."[123]

---

[122] Barton, *A History of the Bible,* London: Allen Lane, 2019, pp. 394-395.

[123] *Martin Luthers Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Weimar, 1885, 405, 35. Quoted by Deacon John Whiteford in ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU, September 6, 1999.

And so Protestantism, as New Hieromartyr Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky) put it, "placed a papal tiara on every German professor and, with its countless number of popes, completely destroyed the concept of the Church, substituting faith with the reason of each separate personality."[124]

As Frank Furedi writes, "His defiant stand, would eventually provide legitimation for disobeying all forms of authority….

"Did Luther really hurl the legendary words – 'Here I stand, so help me God, I can do no other' – at his accusers? In a sense it does not matter. Luther did not merely assert the authority of individual conscience to justify his own actions: he advanced a compelling case for the value of people being able to act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience. In so doing his argument implicitly called into question the right of external authority to exercise power over the inner life of people.

"The distinction that Luther drew about the nature of authority represented an important step in the conceptualisation of a new limit on its exercise. His *Treatise on Good Works* (1520) asserted that 'the power of the temporal authority, whether it does right or wrong, cannot harm the soul'. This idealisation of the soul and its protected status from external authority encouraged European culture to devote greater interest in individual conscience and eventually to endow the self with moral authority.

"In helping to free the inner person from the power of external authority, Luther's theology contributed to the weakening of the very concept of external authority, *including that of divine authority* [my italics – V.M.]. The freeing of the inner person from the power of external authority restricted the exercise of absolute authority in all its forms."[125]

The Russian Slavophile Ivan Vasilievich Kireyevsky wrote: "The main trait distinguishing Orthodox Christianity from the Latin confession and the Protestant teaching of the faith in their influence on the intellectual and moral development of man consists in the fact that the Orthodox Church strictly adheres to the boundary between Divine Revelation and human reason, that it preserves without any change the dogmas of Revelation as they have existed from the first days of Christianity and have been confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils, not allowing the hand of man to touch their holiness or allowing human reason to modify their meaning and expression in accordance with its temporary systems. But at the same time the Orthodox Church does not restrict reason in its natural activity and in its free striving to search out the truths not communicated to it by Revelation; but it does not give to any rational system or plausible view of science the status of infallible truth, ascribing to them an identical inviolability and holiness to that possessed by Divine Revelation.

---

[124] Troitsky, *Christianity or the Church?*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1971, p. 28.

[125] Furedi, "The Invention of Individual Freedom", *History Today,* April, 2017, p. 7.

"The Latin church, on the contrary, does not know any firm boundaries between human reason and Divine Revelation. It ascribes to its visible head or to a local council the right to introduce a new dogma into the number of those revealed and confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils; to some systems of human reason it ascribes the exceptional right of ascendancy over others, and in this way, even if it does not directly destroy the revealed dogmas, it changes their meaning, while it restricts human reason in the freedom of its natural activity and limits its sacred right and duty to seek from a rapprochement between human truths and Divine truths, natural truths and revealed ones.

"The Protestant teachings of the faith are based on the same annihilation of the boundary between human reason and Divine revelation, with this difference from the Latin teaching, however, that they do not raise any human point of view or systematic mental construction to the level of Divine Revelation, thereby restricting the activity of reason; but, on the contrary, they give human reason ascendancy over the Divine dogmas, changing them or annihilating them in accordance with the personal reasoning of man…

"It is natural that the follower of the Protestant confession, recognizing reason to be the chief foundation of truth, should in accordance with the measure of his education more and more submit his faith itself to his personal reasoning, until the concepts of natural reason take the place for him of all the Traditions of Divine Revelation and the Holy Apostolic Church.

"[However,] where only pure Divine Revelation is recognized to be higher than reason – Revelation which man cannot alter in accordance with his own reasonings, but with which he can only bring his reasoning into agreement, - there, naturally, the more educated a man or a people is, the more its concepts will be penetrated with the teaching of the faith, for the truth is one and the striving to find this oneness amidst the variety of the cognitive and productive actions of the mind is the constant law of all development. But in order to bring the truths of reason into agreement with the truth of Revelation that is above reason a dual activity of reason is necessary. It is not enough to arrange one's rational concepts in accordance with the postulates of faith, to choose those that agree with them and exclude those that contradict them, and thereby purify them of all contradiction: it is also necessary to raise the very mode of rational activity to the level at which reason can sympathise with faith and where both spheres merge into one seamless contemplation of the truth. Such is the aim determining the direction of the mental development of the Orthodox Christian, and the inner consciousness of this sought-after region of mental activity is constantly present in every movement of his reason, the breathing of his mental life…"[126]

Protesting all the time, and too much, that he was being faithful to scriptural truth, Luther followed what he thought was his heart and his conscience in

---

[126] Kireyevsky, "Indifferentizm" ("Indifferentism"), in *Razum na puti k istine* (Reason on the Path to Truth), Moscow, 2002, pp. 88-91.

preference to the Holy Scriptures. He forgot that "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17.9), and that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1.20). He wanted to be free of all authority, deceiving himself that he had the Holy Spirit, which alone gives true freedom.

Holland correctly traces the origins of Lutheran Protestantism back to the original "protest" against the One, Holy, Orthodox-Catholic and Apostolic Church delivered by Pope Gregory VII in the late eleventh century: "'Where the Spirit of the Lord is,' Paul had written to the Corinthians, 'there is freedom'. Between this assertion and the insistence that there existed only the one way to God, only the one truth, only the one life, there had always been a tension. The genius of Gregory VII and his fellow radicals had been to attempt its resolution with a programme of reform so far-reaching that the whole of [Western] Christendom had been set by it upon a new and decisive course. Yet the claims of the papacy to embody both the ideal of liberty and the principle of authority had never been universally accepted. For centuries various groups of Christians had been defying its jurisdiction by making appeal to the Spirit. Luther had lit the match – but others before him had laid the trial of gunpowder. This was why, in the wake of his defiant appearance at Worms, he found himself impotent to control the explosions that he had done so much to set in train. Nor was he alone. Every claim by a reformer to an authority over his fellow Christians might be met by appeals to the Spirit, every appeal to the Spirit by a claim to authority. The consequence, detonating across entire reaches of Christendom, was a veritable chain-reaction of protest.

"Flailingly, five Lutheran princes had sought to put this process on an official footing. In 1529, summoned to an imperial diet, they had dared to object to measures passed there by the Catholic majority by issuing a formal 'Protestation'. By 1546, when Luther died, commending his spirit into the hands of the God of Truth, other princes too had come to be seen as 'Protestant' – and not only in the empire. Denmark had been Lutheran since 1537, Sweden was well on its way to becoming so. Yet elsewhere, the spectrum of what it might mean to be Protestant yawned as unbridgeable as it had ever done. Luther, whose genius for vituperation had helped to make the whole of Christendom shake, had never been content merely to insult the pope. Those who, like him, had dared to repudiate the Roman Church but had then been guilty of what Luther condemned as a failure properly to understand the Spirit, had also been the object of his ire. Theologians in Swiss or German cities who presumed to dispute his views on the eucharist: Anabaptists, with their wild contempt for infant baptism and secular authority; Henry VIII, who seemed to think he was God. Luther, fretting where it all might lead, had not shrunk from contemplating a nightmarish prospect: a world in which the very concept of truth might end up dissolving, and everything appear relative. For whoever has gone astray in the faith may thereafter believe what he wants…"[127]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

---

[127] Holland, *Dominion,* pp. 311-312.

Having established that the root of Lutheranism is simply self-will, the exaltation of the human mind above all authority, secular and ecclesiastical, human and Divine, let us return and look more closely at its teaching on faith and works.

The first protest of Lutheran Protestantism was against an unquestionably evil work, the practice of indulgences, from which was derived the teaching of the superiority of faith to works… Now the practice of indulgences was based on the belief that "as soon as the coin in the coffer rings,/The soul from purgatory springs". The Reformation grew out of a reasoned protest against this and other undoubted abuses by the Roman Catholic Church. As Jacques Barzun writes: "The priest, instead of being a teacher, was ignorant; the monk, instead of helping to save the world by his piety, was an idle profiteer; the bishop, instead of supervising the care of souls in his diocese was a politician and a businessman. One of them here or there might be pious and a scholar – he showed that goodness was not impossible. But too often the bishop was a boy of twelve, his influential family having provided early for his future happiness. The system was rotten…"[128]

But it was not simply a question of the hypocrisy of so many clergy. More radically, the Lutherans did not see the need for clergy at all. As Schama writes, "they attacked the received wisdom that only the priest can consecrate the Host as an unlawful usurpation, and they launched that attack with startling vehemence. How could a priest have the power to undo what God had already decided? The decision on the fate of a poor sinner was the Lord's alone, and the notion that masses, chantries, pilgrimages and penances could do anything about it was the height of sacrilegious presumption. All the good works and alm-giving in the world would cut no ice with the Almighty if in his infinite mercy he decided to save the most miserable transgressor. All that was asked, as St. Paul had insisted, was that the sinner surrender himself to the inscrutable but infinitely compassionate grace of God. Faith in that mercy, faith in the Bible and faith that the sacrifice of Jesus had been sufficient (without the intercession of the saints) was enough. *Solus fides*. Faith alone."[129]

This denial of the necessity for clergy and their ministrations led to the teaching that good works – especially such hypocritical good works as those that earned papal indulgences – were not necessary for salvation. In fact, according to Luther, sin is so deeply rooted in human nature that it cannot be extirpated. Nevertheless, salvation is given to us by faith in Christ's sacrifice, which wipes out all sin without the necessity of good works. "Faith alone," wrote Luther in *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), "without works, justifies, frees and saves." For that reason Luther rejected the Epistle of James and Revelation because of their emphasis on the importance of good works – the first example of his refusal to accept Holy Scripture if it did not accord with his teaching.

---

[128] Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, p. 11.

[129] Schama, op. cit., pp. 238-239.

Since faith alone justifies the sinner, why undertake good works such as fasting, virginity and alms-giving? And so the Reformation became, as Jacob Burckhardt said, not the *restoration* of a discipline that the Catholics had violated, but an *escape* from discipline…[130]

The Protestant escape from discipline manifested itself in three ways. First, as we have seen, in escape from the obligation to follow the conciliar conscience of the Church – hence the Protestant doctrine of the infallibility of the individual conscience and the individual's interpretation of Scripture. The Holy Fathers were not authorities for Luther – he called St. John Chrysostom "only a foolish babbler". Secondly, in escape from the obligation to do good works or practice asceticism. And thirdly, in escape from the obligation to obey not only ecclesiastical, but also secular authorities, which we do not find in Luther himself, but in many more radical Protestants, especially the Calvinists. Taken together, these allow us to define the fundamental essence of Protestantism as *escape from the moral law, from the Church and from the State* – in other words, *from all authority*.

With regard to the most basic of good works, participation in the sacraments, the Lutherans decreed that baptism was to be retained as obligatory, together with some form of Eucharistic service; but the significance and centrality of these sacraments to the Christian life was greatly diminished, and in general the very idea that matter can be sanctified by the Spirit in the form of icons, relics, holy water, holy oil and all the symbols and ceremonies of Catholic worship, was discarded.

The Swiss Reformer Zwingli, who greatly influenced the first Anglican Archbishop Cranmer, rejected the belief that the Eucharist was, after consecration, the Body and Blood of Christ, treating it as a service of remembrance, a memorial meal, no more. Luther did believe in the Body and Blood of Christ; but he thought that it coexisted with the bread and the wine. So he did not believe in what the Catholics called Transubstantiation.

One might have expected that the Reformers would here encounter some difficulties, in that if, as William Tyndale said, "The scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense", then there could be no doubt that the Eucharist was the Body and Blood of Christ insofar as Christ said as much clearly and unambiguously in the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 26.26-28; John 6.53-56). Moreover, the whole of Church tradition, in both East and West, had asserted for the last 1500 years that these passages were indeed to be interpreted literally. But the Protestants rejected the literal interpretation, thereby showing that their real motivation was not obedience to Scripture alone, but *revolution* – the overthrow of traditional Christianity by individual "conscience".

---

[130] Burckhardt, *Judgements on History.*

In view of this selective, biased and inconsistent approach to Holy Scripture, it is not to be wondered at that even the text of the Bible itself was cut down to size by Luther's rationalistic axe. Thus he reduced the number of canonical books, rejecting the so-called "apocryphal" books of the Old Testament and casting doubt on such New Testament books as the Epistle of James. Moreover, it was from the Protestants (and Jews such as Spinoza) that the terribly destructive so-called "Higher Criticism" of the Bible began.

Nothing was sacred for the Protestants, but only the disembodied, thinking mind of the individual believer – as long as he was one of the elect...

*

What gave Luther this boldness, this extreme self-confidence in the infallibility of his own conscience and his own reasoning? The answer lies in another characteristic and fundamental doctrine of Protestantism, *predestination*. It was the Protestants' belief that they were elect and saved that gave them the boldness – more exactly, the extreme folly – to raise their minds above all established authority.

Unlike Erasmus, who believed in free will, Luther believed, as the title of one his works, *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525), declares, in the enslavement of free will. This made salvation a matter of God's will alone. Thus he wrote: "With regard to God, and in all that bears on salvation or damnation, (man) has no 'free-will', but is a captive, prisoner and bondslave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan."[131]

"Predestination," wrote Christopher Hill, "is at the heart of Protestantism. Luther saw that it was the only guarantee of the Covenant. 'For if you doubt, or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe confidently, trust to and depend upon his promises?' Without predestination, 'Christian faith is utterly destroyed, and the promises of God and the whole Gospel entirely fall to the ground for the greatest and only consolation of Christians in their adversities is the knowing that God lies not, but does all things immutably, and that his will cannot be resisted, changed or hindered'. *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.* Luther declared that he would not have wanted free will, even if it could have been granted to him: only God can make salvation *certain*, for some it not for all. Indeed, the whole point for Luther lies in the *uniqueness* of the elect. Once touched with divine grace they are differentiated from the mass of humanity: their consciousness of salvation will make them work consciously to glorify God. The psychological effects of this *conscious* segregation of a group from the mass is enormous.

---

[131] Luther, "Bondage of the Will," *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings,* ed. by Dillenberger, Anchor Books, 1962 p. 190.

"Calvin went a step further and boldly proclaimed that God was useless to humanity unless he had knowable purposes which we can trust and with which we can cooperate. 'What avails it, in short, to know a God with whom we have nothing to do… How can the idea of God enter your mind without instantly giving rise to the thought that since you are his workmanship, you are bound, by the very law of creation, to submit to his authority?' 'Ignorance of Providence is the greatest of all miseries, and the knowledge of it the highest happiness.' Faith gives us 'sure certainty and complete security of mind', of a sort that is self-evident to those who possess it and inexplicable to those who do not.

"Men have often commented on the apparent paradox of a predestinarian theological system producing in its adherents an emphasis on effort, on moral energy. One explanation that has been offered is that, for the Calvinist, faith revealed itself in works, and that therefore the only way in which an individual could be assured of his own salvation was by scrutinizing his behaviour carefully night and day to see where he did in fact bring forth works worthy of salvation…

"But I am not entirely convinced that this is the sole explanation. It is highly sophisticated. Most of the evidence for it among the preachers comes from the later seventeenth century, when for other reasons works were being emphasized once more. I believe that the resolution of the paradox is psychologically simpler, if philosophically more complex. Salvation, consciousness of election, consisted of the turning of the heart towards God. A man knew that he was saved because he felt, at some stage of his life, an inner satisfaction, a glow, which told him that he was in direct communion with God. Cromwell was said to have died happy when assured that grace once known could never be lost: for once he had been in a state of grace. We are not dealing here with the mystical ecstasy of a recluse: we are dealing rather with the conscience of the average gentleman, merchant or artisan. What gave him consciousness of election was not the painful scrutiny of his works, for the preachers never tired of telling him that none could keep the commandment, that 'we cannot cooperate with any grace of God' unless there is 'a special spirit infused'. It was the sense of elation and power that justified him and his worldly activities, that gave him self-confidence in a world of economic uncertainty and political hostility. The elect were those who thought they were elect, because they had an inner faith which made them feel free, whatever their external difficulties.

"Philosophically, the argument is circular. But Calvinism did not exist primarily as a philosophical system. It gave courage and confidence to a group of those who believed themselves to be God's elect. It justified them, in this world and the next… 'Men, who have assurance that they are to inherit heaven, have a way of presently taking possession of the earth.'"[132]

---

[132] Hill, *God's Englishman,* London: Penguin, 1970, pp. 211-213.

Thus in order to understand Protestantism we must go beyond the intellectual pride that it inherited from Papism and Renaissance Humanism to the emotional vacuum that it sought to fill – and filled with some success, although the new wine it proposed to pour into the old bottles of Christendom turned out to be distinctly vinegary. For it was not their protests against the abuses of Papism that made Luther and Calvin such important figures: Wycliff and Hus, Machiavelli and Erasmus and many others had been exposing these abuses long before Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg. What distinguished Luther and Calvin was that they were able to offer hungry hearts that no longer believed in the certainties of Holy Tradition another kind of certainty – that offered by faith in one's individual infallibility and salvation, giving to those who no longer believed in the consolations of Mother Church another kind of consolation – that offered by predestination to salvation. All that was necessary was to say: I believe, and the believer could be sure that he was saved! Nor did he need the Church or the Priesthood or the Sacraments or good works to be saved. For faith alone justifies, and all believing men are "priests for ever… worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one another mutually the things that are of God."[133]

Thus was Western thought directed along a path of ever-increasing individualism and subjectivism. We can see this in the close relationship between the thought of Luther and that of the French rationalist philosopher René Descartes. For Luther, the individual's consciousness that he believed was the guarantee of his salvation. For Descartes, the existence of this disembodied, thinking mind – a mind free from the limitations of space and time – was the first axiom of all knowledge: *Cogito, ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am". From the existence of the thinking mind he deduced his own existence, and from that the existence of everything else.

Of course, since this was still a believing, Christian age, the existence of some objective truths that were independent of the subject was still affirmed. Descartes sometimes wrote as if Divine Revelation were a still higher criterion of truth than his own thought. Thus he wrote*:* "Above all else we must impress on our memory the overriding rule that whatever God has revealed to us must be accepted as more certain than anything else. And although the light of reason may, with the utmost clarity and evidence appear to suggest something different, we must still put our entire faith in Divine authority rather than in our own judgement."[134] However, the course of western philosophy after Descartes showed that, once human reason is given a place that is not fitting to it, it squeezes out Divine Revelation altogether.

Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" was only a desiccated, secularised and intellectualised version of Luther's "I believe, therefore I am saved". The difference between Luther and Descartes was the difference between theological rationalism and philosophical rationalism: the Protestant deduced

---

[133] Luther, *On the Liberty of the Christian.*
[134] Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy.*

the certainty of salvation from his personal faith, while the philosopher derived the certainty of his existence from his personal thought. The one deduction was momentous in its consequences and the other was relatively trivial; the one had a big emotional charge and the other had very little. But in essence they were very similar. In this way was philosophical rationalism born from Protestant rationalism. The philosophical rationalism of a Descartes or a Kant was unthinkable without the religious rationalism of a Luther or a Calvin.

"As… V.A. Kozhevnikov points out in his study of mangodhood, 'the Cartesian: "I think, therefore I am" already gave a basis for godmanhood in the sense of human self-affirmation.' In fact, in that all-encompassing doubt, which was permitted by Descartes before this affirmation, all knowledge that does not depend on the reasoning subject is rejected, and it is admitted that if a man had no help from anyone or anything, his mind would manage with its own resources to learn the truth. 'The isolation and self-sufficiency of the thinking person is put as the head of the corner of the temple of philosophical wisdom.' With such a *terminus a quo*, 'the purely subjective attainment of the truth, remarks V. Kozhevnikov, 'becomes the sole confirmation of existence itself. The existent is confirmed on the basis of the conceivable, the real – on the intellectual… The purely human, and the solely human, acquires its basis and justification in the purely human mind. The whole evolution of the new philosophical thinking from Descartes to Kant revolves and unfolds under a conscious or unnoticed, but irresistible attraction in this direction.'"[135]

*

On the issue of obedience to secular authorities, Luther was less extreme – and less consistent - than some other Reformers. Nevertheless, he laid the foundations for the secular as well as the ecclesiastical revolutions that have so blighted the history of humanity since his time. In *On the Freedom of the Christian* (1520) and *On Temporal Authority* (1523), he makes a very sharp distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. If the Christian was free from authority in the Kingdom of God, he was by no means free in the kingdom of man: "A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all". Nevertheless, Luther did not attach an absolute authority to the Prince: "When a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him then too? I answer, No, for it is no one's duty to do wrong; we ought to obey God who desires the right, rather than men."[136]

As Gabriel Dagron interprets his thought: "The Christian, being at the same time part of the spiritual kingdom and of the temporal kingdom is at the same time absolutely free and absolutely enslaved. If God has instituted two kingdoms, it is because only a very small élite of true Christians participate in

---

[135] Tikhomirov, *Religio-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 474.

[136] Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed", in Englander, op. cit., p. 190.

His Kingdom; the great mass needs the 'temporal sword' and must submit to it in accordance with the teaching of Paul (<u>Romans</u> 13.1: 'there is no authority that is not of God') and of Peter (<u>I Peter</u> 2.13: 'Submit yourselves to every human authority'). But if the temporal princes hold their power from God and they are often Christian, they cannot pretend to 'govern in a Christian manner' and in accordance with the Gospel. 'It is impossible for a Christian kingdom to extend throughout the world, and even over a single country.' No accommodation is possible between a religion that is conceived as above all personal and a State defined as above all repressive; and Luther is ironic about the temporal sovereigns 'who arrogate to themselves the right to sit on the throne of God, to rule the consciences and the faith and to… guide the Holy Spirit over the pews of the school', as also about the popes or bishops 'become temporal princes' and pretending to be invested with a 'power' and not with a simple 'function'. This radical distinction between the temporal and the spiritual did not, therefore, lead to the recognition of two powers, 'since all the Christians truly belong to the ecclesiastical state' and there is no reason to deny Christian princes the 'titles of priest and bishop.'"[137]

Since the Lutherans rejected the authority of the papacy, and paid no attention to the claims of the Orthodox Church[138], they were logically committed to the thesis that the historical Church had perished, and that they were recreating it.

To this end apostolic succession was not necessary: since there were no true bishops, no true successors of the apostles left, the people could take their place. For Luther believed in "the priesthood of all believers": "There is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status… All are truly priests, bishops, and popes."[139]

Nevertheless, the Lutherans did not wish to break all ties with tradition, and did not abolish bishops and priests entirely. But their ideas about them were by no means traditional. In the last analysis, it was the democratic assembly of believers, not the bishop standing in an unbroken chain of succession from the apostles, who bestowed the priesthood upon the candidates. Luther believed that both the papacy and the general councils of the Church had failed to save it. So it was now up to the people, freed from any higher authority than his conscience, to appoint bishops and clergy to lead the Church: "A Christian man is a perfectly free lord, subject to none."[140] And again: "The only thing left is either to let the Church of God perish without the Word or to allow the propriety of a church meeting to cast its votes and choose from its own resources one or as many as are necessary and suitable and commend and

---

[137] Dagron, *Empereur et Pretre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris, 1996, pp 292-293.

[138] A Lutheran delegation from Tubingen put several questions to Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople in 1596, but were not satisfied with his answers.

[139] Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, 1520.

[140] Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 1520.

confirm these to the whole community by prayer and the laying-on of hands. These should then be recognised and honoured as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, in the assured faith that God Himself is the Author of what the common consent of the faithful has so performed – of those, that is, who accept and confess the Gospel…"[141]

In essence, the Lutherans decided to *recreate* the Church, and call it "Apostolic" when in fact it had no connection with the truly Apostolic Church. St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The truth does not exist outside the Orthodox Church. It is the only faithful guardian of all that was commanded by the Lord through the Holy Apostles, and therefore it is the true Apostolic Church. Some lost the Apostolic Church; but since their Christian conscience tells them that only an Apostolic Church can truly preserve and manifest the truth, they decided to make such a church, and they made it, and called it by that name. They could call it the Apostolic Church, but they could not impart the essence to it. For the Apostolic Church was created according to the good will of the Father by the Lord and Saviour, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Such a church cannot be created by people. Those who think they can create such a church are like children playing with dolls. If there is no Apostolic Church on the earth, there is no need to waste effort on the creation of it. But thanks to the Lord He has not allowed the gates of hell to prevail against the holy Apostolic Church…"[142]

*

Luther was at one time kidnapped for his own protection by Frederick the Wise and given accommodation at his castle, the Wartburg. So he was naturally inclined in favour of the princes' power. However, his ideas on authority were tested in the 1520s, when one of his early followers, Thomas Müntzer, led a German Peasants' War against all authorities.

Müntzer was an early and frightening demonstration of the evil results of Luther's teaching on conscience. He proclaimed that Scripture itself was a less certain witness of truth than God's direct speaking to the soul.[143] As Charles George writes, he was "a learned priest and mystic who had struggled for faith as Luther had – desperately – but found it not in the historic Jesus, not in the revelation of words, but in the blinding visions of immediate knowledge, and in association with an amazing group of militant prophets in the town of Zwickau. Zwickau is on the border of Bohemia, and there a weaver named Storch had made Tabor [the centre of early-fifteenth-century chiliastic revolution among the Czechs of Bohemia] live again. Müntzer began to preach in Zwickau a prophecy of millenial revolution – in his vision, a terrible final

---

[141] Luther, *On the Appointment of Ministers*, 1523; translated in D. Englander et al. (eds.) *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450-1600,* Oxford: Blackwells, 1990, p. 186.

[142] St. Theophan, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year,* Moscow: Sretensky Monastery, 2010, January 1, pp. 26-27.

[143] Müntzer, in Holland, *Dominion,* p. 349.

blood-bath in which the elect of God would rise up to destroy first the Turkish Antichrist, and then the masses of the unrighteous. Before long he and Storch led their evangelized weavers in a revolt which failed, and Müntzer fled to Bohemia where he searched for the embers of Taborite chiliasm, and ended up being driven from Bohemia.

"For two years he wandered in central Germany, his delusions now settled into doctrine. ('The living God is sharpening his scythe in me, so that later I can cut down the red poppies and the blue cornflowers'). In 1523 he was invited to preach in Allstedt, and from there he created a revolutionary organization, the League of the Elect, made up of peasants and miners. His church became the most radical center of Christianity in Europe; for it he created the first liturgy in German, and to it came hundreds of miners from Mansfeld and peasants from the countryside as well as artisans from Allstedt.

"Müntzer's revolution was not, like Luther's, a proposed reformation of men and institutions. To him Luther was a Pharisee bound to books and Wittenberg was the center of 'the unspiritual soft-living flesh'. He attacked the emasculated social imagination of the reformers, branded them tools of the rich and powerful, and when Luther wrote his Letter to the Princes of Saxony warning of the danger of this radical agitation, Müntzer reacted by openly declaring social revolution to be indispensably a part of faith in Christ: 'The wretched flatterer is silent… about the origin of all theft… Look, the seed-grounds of usury and theft and robbery are our lords and princes, they take all creatures as their property… These robbers use the Law to forbid others to rob… They oppress all people, and shear and shave the poor plowman and everything that lives – yet if (the plowman) commits the slightest offense, he must hang.' Like the magnificent Hebrew prophets from whom he took his texts, Müntzer denounced the princes to their faces (Duke John, the Elector's brother, came to Allstedt to hear him, and he was summoned to Weimar to explain himself as a result of Luther's complaint) and left them shaken. Müntzer, with red crucifix and sword, led another frustrated revolt in Mühlhausen, wandered to Nuremberg and the Swiss border, preaching revolution and distributing his pamphlets, and finally was called back to Mühlhausen as Saxony caught the fever that was agitating the rest of Germany….

"… Frederick the Wise wrote to his brother the following: 'Perhaps the peasants have been given just occasion for their uprising through the impeding the Word of God. In many ways the poor folk have been wronged by the rulers, and now God is visiting his wrath upon us. If it be his will, the common man will come to rule; and if it be not his will, the end will soon be otherwise.' Duke John wrote: 'As princes we are ruined.' Luther was less passive before the will of God; although hooted out of countenance by the groups of peasants whom he tried to command into submission to their prince, he continued to fight the rude social rooting of the heresy he had spawned. Müntzer presented a graphic portrait of Luther's confrontation with the peasants: 'He claims the Word of God is sufficient. Doesn't he realize that men whose every moment is

consumed in the making of a living have no time to learn to read the Word of God? The princes bleed the people with usury and count as their own the fish in the stream, the bird of the air, and the grass of the field, and Dr. Liar says "Amen!" What courage has he, Dr. Pussyfoot, the new pope of Wittenberg, Dr. Easychair, the basking sycophant? He says there should be no rebellion because the sword has been committed by God to the ruler, but the power of the sword belongs to the whole community. In the good old days the people stood by when judgement was rendered lest the ruler pervert justice, and the rulers have perverted justice.'"[144]

The only authority for Müntzer was the people. Matheson writes: "He addressed his lords and masters as 'brothers', if, that is, they were willing to listen to him. They are part of his general audience, on the same level as everyone else… Everything has to come out into the open, to be witnessed by the common people. Worship has to be intelligible, not some 'mumbo-jumbo' that no one could understand. The holy Gospel has to be pulled out from under the bed where it has languished for four hundred years. Preaching and teaching and judgement can no longer be a hole-and-corner affair, for God has given power and judgement to the common people. In the Eucharist, for example, the consecration of the elements is to be 'performed not just by one person but by the whole gathered congregation'. He encourages popular participation in the election of clergy. In the Peasants' War a kind of crude popular justice was executed 'in the ring'. 'Nothing without the consent of the people'; their visible presence as audience is the guarantor of justice… The audience of the poor is not beholden to prince or priest. Liturgies are no longer subject to the approval of synods. A liberating Gospel, taking the lid off corruption and exploitation, is bound to be polemical, and doomed to meet persecution. 'Hole-in-the-corner' judgements by courts and universities have to be replaced by accountability to the elect throughout the world."[145]

Shockingly, Luther called on the lords, the secular authorities, to destroy the rebellious peasants: "Wherefore, my lords, free, save, help and pity the poor people. Stab, smite and slay, all ye that can. If you die in battle you could never have a more blessed end, for you die obedient to God's Word in Romans 13, and in the service of love to free your neighbour from the bands of hell and the devil. I implore every one who can to avoid the peasants as he would the devil himself. I pray God will enlighten them and turn their hearts. But if they do not turn, I wish them no happiness for evermore… Let none think this is too hard who consider how intolerable is rebellion."[146]

---

[144] George, *500 Years of Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin,* Chicago, 1998, pp. 55-56, 57.

[145] Peter Matheson, "Thomas Müntzer's idea of an audience", *History,* vol. 76, no. 247, June, 1991, pp. 192, 193.

[146] Luther, *Against the Thievish, Murderous Hordes of Peasants*; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 357.

This led to the massacre or exile of some 30,000 families. Such was the price Luther had to pay for keeping the support of the princes.[147] If he had relied solely on the power of his word, his Reformation would have been quickly crushed by the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who rejected his call to rise up against the pope on behalf of "the glorious Teutonic people". It was the Protestant Princes of Germany that saved Luther. In any case, if there were no sacramental, hierarchical priesthood, and all the laity were in fact priests, the Prince as the senior layman was bound to take the leading role in the Church. For, as Luther's favourite apostle in his favourite epistle says, the Prince "beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13.4).

The problem was, however, that in relying on the power of "the godly prince" Lutheranism tended to give him excessive power in church life. According to Luther, writes Lev Tikhomirov, "ecclesiastical power belongs to the same society to which State power also belongs, so that if it entrusts this power to the Prince, it transfers to him episcopal rights, too. The Prince becomes the possessor both of political and of ecclesiastical power. 'In the Protestant state,' writes Professor Suvorov, 'both ecclesiastical and state power must belong to the prince, the master of the territory (*Landsherr*) who is at the same time the master of religion – *Cuius est regio – ejus religio*'."[148]

Thus Luther wrote: "That seditious articles of doctrine should be punished by the sword needed no further proof. For the rest, the Anabaptists hold tenets relating to infant baptism, original sin, and inspiration, which have no connection with the Word of God, and are indeed opposed to it . . . Secular authorities are also bound to restrain and punish avowedly false doctrine… For think what disaster would ensue if children were not baptized? . . . Besides this the Anabaptists separate themselves from the churches . . . and they set up a ministry and congregation of their own, which is also contrary to the command of God. From all this it becomes clear that the secular authorities are bound . . . to inflict corporal punishment on the offenders . . . Also when it is a case of only upholding some spiritual tenet, such as infant baptism, original sin, and unnecessary separation, then . . . we conclude that . . . the stubborn sectaries must be put to death."[149]

---

[147] For the same reason Luther was compelled to condone "the bigamous marriage of Philip of Hesse by advising the new faith's leading patron 'to tell a good strong lie'" (Davis, op. cit., p. 492). Müntzer had a point in calling him "Dr. Liar"!

[148] Tikhomirov, *Religio-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 271. We can thus see the path from Luther to Hitler. For as W.H. Auden wrote in *September 1, 1939*:

> *Accurate scholarship can*
> *Unearth the whole offence*
> *From Luther until now*
> *That has driven a culture mad...*

[149] Luther, pamphlet of 1536; in Johannes Janssen, *History of the German People From the Close of the Middle Ages*, St. Louis: B. Herder, 1910 [orig. 1891]; Vol. X, 222-223.

The paradoxical upshot of Luther's teaching on Church and State, is that he who undermined *all* authority, both secular and ecclesiastical, on the basis of the ultimate authority of the individual conscience alone, ended by giving *all* authority, both secular and ecclesiastical, to the Christian prince alone.

*

However, violently fissiparous tendencies continued to reveal themselves in the Lutheran camp. One cause of disagreement concerned the issue of whether babies should baptized. The Anabaptist faction believed they should not.

Owen Chadwick writes: "At the end of 1533 the Anabaptist group at Münster in Westphalia, under the leadership of a former Lutheran minister Bernard Rothmann, gained control of the city council. Early in 1534 a Dutch prophet and ex-innkeeper named John of Leyden appeared in Münster, believing that he was called to make the city the new Jerusalem. On 9 February 1534 his party seized the city hall. By 2 March all who refused to be baptized were banished, and it was proclaimed a city of refuge for the oppressed. Though the Bishop of Münster collected an army and began the siege of his city, an attempted coup within the walls was brutally suppressed, and John of Leyden was proclaimed King of New Zion, wore vestments as his royal robes, and held his court and throne in the market-place. Laws were decreed to establish a community of goods, and the Old Testament was adduced to permit polygamy. Bernard Rothmann, once a man of sense, once the friend of Melanchthon, took nine wives.

"They now believed that they had been given the duty and the power of exterminating the ungodly. The world would perish, and only Münster would be saved. Rothmann issued a public incitement to world rebellion: 'Dear brethren, arm yourselves for the battle, not only with the humble weapons of the apostles for suffering, but also with the glorious armour of David for vengeance… in God's strength, and help to annihilate the ungodly.' An ex-soldier named John of Feelen slipped out of the city, carrying copies of this proclamation into the Netherlands, and planned sudden coups in the Dutch cities. On a night in February 1535 a group of men and women ran naked and unarmed through the streets of Amsterdam shouting: 'Woe! Woe! The wrath of God falls on this city.' On 30 March 1535 John of Geelen with 300 Anabaptists, men and women, stormed an old monastery in Friesland, fortified it, made sallies to conquer the province, and were only winkled out after bombardment by heavy cannon. On the night of 10 May 1535 John of Geelen with a band of some thirty men attacked the city hall of Amsterdam during a municipal banquet, and the burgomaster and several citizens were killed. At last, on 25 June 1535, the gates of Münster were opened by sane men within the walls, and the bishop's army entered the city…"[150]

---

[150] Chadwick, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

The Anabaptist revolution in Münster came exactly a century after the destruction of the Taborite revolution in Bohemia, which it closely imitated. The Taborites and Anabaptists were in effect communists, a fact which shows that there is a blood-red thread linking the revolutionary movements of late medieval Catholicism, early Protestantism and twentieth-century militant atheism.

The immediate effect of the revolution in Münster, coming so soon after the similar madness of Thomas Münzter and the Germans' Peasant War, - which Luther, we should remember, opposed, - was to strengthen the argument for the intervention of the strong hand of the State in order to cool and control religious and political passions, if necessary by violent means.

The need for a strong political centre in order to suppress anarchic-apocalyptic outbursts interacted with older political factors, such as the centuries-old dispute between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, and the rise of German nationalism. As Bridget Healy writes, "Within the Holy Roman Empire, humanists and early evangelicals found common ground not only in their criticism of abuses within the Church and in their emphasis on the importance of textual criticism and biblical scholarship, but also in their articulation of early nationalist sentiments. The Empire was fragmented, both politically and culturally, yet during the 15th century a sense of shared German identity emerged, defined in opposition to Rome… Calls for the emperor to assume responsibility for the Church echoed throughout the period."[151]

In this context, Luther's doctrine of "the godly prince" came at just the right time and was eagerly taken up by the German princes…

And so, as Andrew Marr writes, "The original 'rebel' was now firmly on the side of the German princes who would, in turn, shift their allegiance to Lutheran Christianity. In Saxony, Hesse, Schleswig, Brunswick and Brandenburg they came over. So did most of the northern towns and cities. Though Charles V tried hard for conciliation, and planned ways to reunite his empire, there were simply too many rulers and influential soldiers now with Luther's cause to make that practicable. Luther told his ally and fellow Reformer Philipp Melanchthon that 'agreement in doctrine is plainly impossible, unless the pope will abolish the papacy'. Luther's theology had become more conservative in its social effect: he was a fierce advocate of a husband's rights over his wife, and hostile to easy marriages. Against suitors he wrote: 'If I raised a daughter with so much expense and effort, care and trouble, diligence and work and had bet all my life, body and property on her for so many years, should she not be better protected than a cow who has wandered into the forest?' He also became a bitter anti-Semite.

"In 1531 a treaty between Lutheran princes, known as the Schmalkaldic League, made the political split [with the Empire] irrevocable. There was then

---

[151] Healy, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

a golden pause. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 allowed a time of rebuilding and economic growth, during which German culture flourished and German universities became famous – a time when even Elizabethan English plays and actors travelled to Germany to find fame. Yet the great divide that Luther had wrenched open would poison the future of Europe. The Thirty Years War was looming…"[152]

However, the longer-term lesson to be drawn from it was that the Protestant Reformation, by undermining the authority of the Church, had also, albeit unwittingly, undermined that of the State. For even if the more moderate Protestants (Lutherans and Anglicans) accepted and exalted the authority of "the godly Prince", the more extreme Protestants (Anabaptists, Calvinists) felt no obligation to obey any earthly authority, but rather created their own church-cum-state communities recognising no authority except Christ's alone.

---

[152] Marr, *A History of the World,* London: Pan, 2012.

12. CALVINISM

Although the Reformers shared the same root belief in the primacy of the individual conscience or mind, almost from the beginning there were significant differences between the most important of them in the degree and thoroughness of their rejection of the old religion. The most important differences were between the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

Unlike the Lutherans, the Calvinists denied any sacramental significance to the Eucharist. With regard to the vital question of the sources of the faith, both parties rejected Tradition and held to *Sola Scriptura,* although the Calvinists had a higher opinion of the Old Testament Scriptures than did Luther, while the Lutherans still retained some of the traditional forms – for example, an episcopate - inherited from the Catholics. But while the Lutherans taught that a custom was godly if it was not contrary to the Bible, the Calvinists went further and asserted that only that which was explicitly taught by the Bible was godly. A little later, the Anglicans, in the person of Richard Hooker, took a slightly different, but ultimately no less rationalist line, teaching that only that which was in accordance with the Bible *and natural law* was godly.

Whereas Luther taught predestination to salvation, but did not mention predestination to damnation, Calvin taught double predestination. In other words, according to Calvin, those who will be damned have already been rejected by God, and there is nothing they can do to change His sentence. In view of this, it is paradoxical that Calvin had greater respect than Luther for the observance of the law – not as a condition of salvation, but as a sign that one is already saved. As Barton writes, "in Calvin the law makes a triumphant re-entry: the ability to keep the law is a sure indication that one is among the saved. Hence moral striving becomes important, almost as important, it might be said, as it had been for medieval Catholicism, though now manifested not in pilgrimages and indulgences, but in sobriety and probity in secular affairs."[153]

"Calvin read and quoted many Holy Fathers. He admired St. John Chrysostom's biblical commentaries and once had resolved to translate them into French. He was a devotee of St. Augustine, and quoted Ss. Cyprian and Athanasius and others frequently. However, his attitude towards them was not an Orthodox one. Here are his words,

"'Certainly, Origen, Tertullian, Basil, Chrysostom and others like them would never have spoken as they do, if they had followed what judgment God had given them. But from desire to please the wise of the world, or at least from fear of annoying them, they mixed the earthly with the heavenly. That was a hateful thing, totally to cast man down, and repugnant to the common judgment of the flesh. These good persons seek a means more in conformity with human understanding: that is to concede I know of not what to free will,

---

[153] Barton, op. cit., p. 399.

and allow some natural virtue to man; but meanwhile the purity of the doctrine is profaned.'

"Here is Calvin in all his arrogance and theological overconfidence. His accusations against the likes of Ss. Chrysostom and Basil the Great are that they were too worldly, too submissive to worldly powers, and not willing enough to defy merely human judgments.

"These charges are ironic in that they apply far more to Calvin himself and the Protestant Reformers than to the Holy Fathers he attacks. Chrysostom and Basil were ascetic monks who were other-worldly, and show Calvin as still quite fixed to the earth by comparison. Who was the one who rejected his tonsure and married? And that a widow? Who was the one so irascible that he could not bear to be contradicted? Who was the one who received a large salary from the state? Who was the one complicit in the execution of heretics? Who was the one who died in the comfort of his own home with the approbation of the wise of Geneva, instead of in harsh exile with the opposition of emperor? That the Holy Fathers refused to articulate Calvin's doctrine of predestination is hardly a sign of complicity with worldly men, but rather a refusal to articulate what does not have the support of the Holy Scriptures and the consensus patrum.

"…Were not the 318 Nicene Fathers bishops? Did they not believe that the Eucharist was the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? Did they not celebrate the liturgy, honor monasticism, venerate relics, make holy pilgrimage, express devotion to the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, pray for the departed, invoke the Saints, obey sacred canons, and read Scripture in accord with the tradition? The answer, of course, to these questions is 'Yes'.

"And so, the Reformers and their descendants have this question to answer: Why do they demand adherence to the Trinitarian positions of the Holy Fathers while explicitly or implicitly degrading these same Holy Fathers by their Protestant criticisms. How can Protestant teachers be consistent in demanding adherence to the dogmas of Fathers of the early councils when these same Fathers believed the Holy Eucharist to be the very Body and Blood of Christ, worshipped liturgically, prayed to Saints, venerated the Mother of God, insisted on the governance of the church by bishops, and interceded for the repose of departed souls? Why accept the creeds of these four councils but reject their canons, something that the Fathers of the councils themselves explicitly forbade? This dilemma remains unsolved even for Protestants today. Protestants say they wish to preserve the fundamental teachings of Christianity, yet denigrate the lives of those Christians who articulated these fundamental teachings."[154]

---

[154] *Rock and Sand: An Orthodox Appraisal of the Protestant Reformers and Their Teachings*, pp. 131-134.

*

No less important than his strictly theological teaching was Calvin's attitude to politics…

Now Calvin was not German, but French Swiss, and since the Swiss Confederation was probably the most democratic state in the world (and still is)[155], his approach to Church-State relations was consequently more consistently democratic than Luther's. The people, according to Calvin, are the supreme power in both Church and State. There is thus a direct link between Calvinist Protestantism and the Democratic Revolution.

Consequently, Calvin aimed at a greater independence for the Church than existed in the Lutheran States, which were governed by unelected princes: "The Church," he wrote, "does not assume what is proper to the magistrate: nor can the magistrate execute what is carried out by the Church."[156]

At the same time, it was not always easy to see where the Church ended and the State began in Calvin's Geneva. Thus Owen Chadwick writes: "Where authority existed among the Protestant Churches, apart from the personal authority of individual men of stature, it rested with the prince or the city magistrate. Calvin believed that in organising the Church at Geneva he must organise it in imitation of the primitive Church, and thereby reassert the independence of the Church and the divine authority of its ministers…

---

[155] "The Old Swiss Confederacy was an alliance among the valley communities of the central Alps. The Confederacy, governed by nobles and patricians of various cantons, facilitated management of common interests and ensured peace on the important mountain trade routes. The Federal Charter of 1291 agreed between the rural communes of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden is considered the confederacy's founding document, even though similar alliances are likely to have existed decades earlier.

"By 1353, the three original cantons had joined with the cantons of Glarus and Zug and the Lucerne, Zürich and Bern city states to form the "Old Confederacy" of eight states that existed until the end of the 15th century. The expansion led to increased power and wealth for the confederation. By 1460, the confederates controlled most of the territory south and west of the Rhine to the Alps and the Jura mountains, particularly after victories against the Habsburgs (Battle of Sempach, Battle of Näfels), over Charles the Bold of Burgundy during the 1470s, and the success of the Swiss mercenaries. The Swiss victory in the Swabian War against the Swabian League of Emperor Maximilian I in 1499 amounted to *de facto* independence within the Holy Roman Empire. In 1501, Basel and Schaffhausen joined the Old Swiss Confederacy.

"The Old Swiss Confederacy had acquired a reputation of invincibility during these earlier wars, but expansion of the confederation suffered a setback in 1515 with the Swiss defeat in the Battle of Marignano. This ended the so-called 'heroic' epoch of Swiss history. The success of Zwingli's Reformation in some cantons led to inter-cantonal religious conflicts in 1529 and 1531 (Wars of Kappel). It was not until more than one hundred years after these internal wars that, in 1648, under the Peace of Westphalia, European countries recognised Switzerland's independence from the Holy Roman Empire and its neutrality." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland#cite_note-Nationsonline-41)

[156] Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xi.3.

"[However,] the boundaries between the jurisdiction of Church and State… were not easy to define in Geneva… The consistory [the Church authority] gave its opinions on the bank rate, on the level of interest for war loans, on exports and imports, on speeding the law courts, on the cost of living and the shortage of candles. On the other hand the council [the State authority], even during Calvin's last years, may be found supervising the clergy and performing other functions which logic would have allotted to the consistory. The council was not backward in protesting against overlong sermons, or against pastors who neglected to visit the homes of the people; they examined the proclamations by the pastors even if the proclamations called the city to a general fast, sanctioned the dates for days of public penitence, agreed or refused to lend pastors to other churches, provided for the housing and stipend of the pastors, licensed the printing of theological books."[157]

"Petty rules," writes Jean Comby, "dictated the whole way of life of the citizens of Geneva. Many [thousands] were condemned to death. Personal quarrels were common. Rather more seriously, the doctrinal conflicts took a dramatic turn when Michael Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553 for having denied the Trinity."[158]

In fact, while Calvinism was more democratic *in principle* than Lutheranism, it very soon displayed a tendency to turn into a fairly extreme form of despotism *in practice*, as Calvin himself became a kind of Protestant Pope. Thus Geoffrey Elton writes: "The more democratic institutions in the city's civil government disappeared, and the surviving top council came in effect to be an agent of the now all-powerful consistory. Laws of mounting severity were passed – against blasphemy and adultery, for attendance at church and compulsory schooling, concerning cleanliness and public health. Many of them were sensible and necessary, others bigoted and stultifying; all were the same to Calvin… Calvin's Geneva should not be disbelieved or despise: it should be treated seriously, as an awful warning."[159]

Calvin's radically new ideas of Church administration, writes Ian McClelland, "could only have radical effects on men's attitudes to the running of the state. On a very simple level, it could be argued that what applied to Church government should apply straightforwardly to the state's government on the principle of *a fortiori* (the greater should contain the lesser). If the government of the community which means most to Christian people should be governed according to the reflection and choice of its members, then why should the government of the state, an inferior institution by comparison, not be governed in the same way too?"[160]

[157] Chadwick, *The Reformation*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 83, 86-87.

[158] Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 2, p. 19.

[159] Elton, *Reformation Europe*, Fontana, 1963.

[160] McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 175.

"Reformed political theory… still thought the law served good and godly ends. The social peace, which only obedience to duly constituted authority could provide, was always going to be pleasing in God's sight. What was no longer so clear was that God intended us to obey that prince and those laws. How could God be saying anything very clear about political obligation when Christendom was split into two warring halves, one Catholic and one Protestant? In these circumstances it is no surprise that thoughtful men began to wonder whether it really was true that the laws under which they lived were instances of a universal law as it applies to particulars. That very general unease was sharpened by the very particular problem of what was to be done if you remained a Catholic when your prince became a Protestant, or if you became a Protestant and your prince remained a Catholic. The implied covenant of the coronation stated clearly that the prince agreed to preserve true religion, and, in an age when men felt obliged to believe that any religion other than their own was false, the fact that your prince's religion was not your own showed *prima facie* that the original contract to preserve true religion had been broken. It followed that a new contract could be made, perhaps with a new prince, to preserve true religion, as in the case of John Knox and the Scottish Covenanter movement to oust the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots in favour of a Protestant king."[161]

Spellman writes: "Placing obedience to God's law before conformity to the will of the prince, political theorists writing within a Calvinist theological perspective insisted that the king who violated divine ordinances was not to be obeyed. Anti-absolutist sentiment was decisively advanced by the emergence of these religiously motivated resistance theories. Works such as the anonymous *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* and George Buchanan's *De jure regni apud Scotos*, both appearing in print in 1579, argued on behalf of religious minorities who found themselves persecuted by their monarchs. In the midst of the French wars of religion, the Protestant Philippe Duplessis Mornay insisted that 'God's jurisdiction is immeasurable, whilst that of kings is measured; that God's sway is infinite, whilst that of kings is limited.' Mornay's *Defense of Liberty against Tyrants* was first published in Latin in 1579 but quickly translated into French and finally into English just one year before the execution of King Charles I in 1649 by his Calvinist opponents.

"Mornay employed metaphors drawn from the medieval feudal tradition in describing the proper relationship between subjects and their rulers. Since God created heaven and earth out of nothing, he alone 'is truly the lord [*dominus*] and proprietor [*proprietarius*] of heaven and earth'. Earthly monarchs, on the other hand, are 'beneficiaries and vassals [*beneficiarii & clientes*] and are bound to receive and acknowledge investiture from Him'. Facing religious persecution at the hands of a Catholic monarch, this spokesman for the French Protestant minority took the bold step of denying kings any sacred or special distinction. Men do not attain royal status 'because they differ from others in species, and because they ought to be in charge of these by a certain natural

---

[161] McClelland, op. cit., p. 174.

superiority, like shepherds with sheep'. Instead of lording over subjects, legitimate monarchs are those who protect the subjects in their care, both from the aggressions of individuals within the kingdom and from hostile neighbours. In language striking in its modernity, Mornay claimed that 'royal dignity is not really an honour, but a burden; not an immunity, but a function; not a dispensation, but a vocation; not license, but public service'."[162]

*

Calvinism was soon influencing the nature of politics in several states in a revolutionary way.

Thus in the Netherlands, writes Bamber Gascoigne, "Calvinism became the rallying point for opposition to the oppressive rule of Catholic Spain. Calvinist ministers had been among the earliest leaders of a small group which we would describe today as guerrillas or freedom fighters, from whom there developed a national party of the northern provinces. The princely leader of the fight for independence, William the Silent, joined the reformed church in 1573 and during the next decade a Dutch republic gradually emerged…

"In Scotland, the Calvinists went one stage further, in a political programme which was even more radical in its implications. At precisely the same period as the Lutherans in Germany were establishing the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, the Scots were asserting the very opposite – that the people had the right to choose their own religion, regardless of the will of the monarch. In 1560 the Scottish parliament abolished papal authority and decreed a form of Calvinism as the religion of the country. Scotland became something unique in the Europe of the day: a land of one religion with a monarch of another. Admittedly there were, as always, political as well as religious causes for this state of affairs. The monarch, Mary Queen of Scots, was an eighteen-year-old girl living abroad, and English troops were underwriting Scottish independence for fear that Mary might deliver Scotland into the hands of her husband, the king of France. But the notion that the people could assert themselves against their ruler was a triumph for the ideas of one man, John Knox. 'God help us', wrote the archbishop of Canterbury, 'from such visitation as Knox has attempted in Scotland, the people to be the orderers of things.'"[163]

The Calvinists were usually persecuted by the authorities, as the Huguenots were in 16th century France. So they felt no obligation to obey them. They were obliged to obey only Christ. Thus the founder of the Calvinist sect of the Congregationalists, Robert Browne, wrote in 1582: "The Lord's people is of the willing sorte. It is conscience, not the power of man, that will drive us to seek the Lord's Kingdom. Therefore it belongeth not to the magistrate to compel religion, to plant churches by power, and to force a submission to ecclesiastical government by laws and penalties." And gain: "True Christians unite into

---

[162] Spellman, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

[163] Gascoigne, *A Brief History of Christianity*, London: Robinson, 2003, pp. 116-117.

societies of believers which submit, by means of a voluntary agreement with God, to the dominion of God the Saviour, and keep the Divine law in sacred communion."

Christ had told the Essenes, who rejected Roman power, that they must give to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's. But the Calvinists, following in the steps of the Jewish revolutionaries, declared that everything was God's and nothing belonged to Caesar. And since they alone were God's heirs and understood His will, all power on earth ultimately belonged to them…

Thus the Englishman Henry Barrow wrote: "The true planted and rightly established Church of Christ is a company of faithful people, separated from the unbelievers and heathen of the land, gathered in the name of Christ, Whom they truly worship and readily obey as their only King, Priest, and Prophet, and joined together as members of one body, ordered and governed by such offices and laws as Christ, in His last will and testament, hath thereunto ordained…"

The Calvinists went under different names in different countries. In England they were called Independents or Congregationalists or Puritans. Each community was completely independent: in faith, in worship, in the election of clergy. They were united by faith and friendship alone. Since the clergy had no sacramental functions and were elected by laymen, they had no real authority over their congregations. Thus it is not surprising that the leading democratic countries – Holland, England, Scotland, America – would be those in which Calvinism let down the deepest roots…

13. THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

All the main Protestant churches were founded in the century after Wittenberg and Worms: the Lutheran, the Anglican (1534), the Calvinist (1555), the Presbyterian (1560), the Congregationalist (1582), and the Baptist (1609).

The Anglican Church was founded by King Henry VIII, being a schism from a schism: first from the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, which was itself an eleventh-century schism from the Orthodox Church. In his early years, paradoxical as it may seem, King Henry VIII was an ardent Catholic. He composed church music, and according to the Venetian ambassador, Sebastian Giustini, "he went to mass three times a day when hunting, and five times a day when not."[164] In 1521 he wrote (with Thomas More's help) a work against the Lutheran theory of the sacraments, for which he received the title "Defender of the Faith" from the pope – a title which he continued to be proud of. He by no means wanted to allow the anti-authoritarian views of the Protestants into his kingdom. For he had no time for the not-so-veiled threats of the Scottish Calvinist John Knox: "Jehu killed two Kings at God's command…" He was at first a firm opponent of the English Bible – which is why Tyndale had to print his translation abroad.[165] Moreover, he was the Catholic monarch of a fervently Catholic nation, for the English people remained strongly attached to their Catholic beliefs, cults and ceremonies.[166]

But, as well as being a fervent Catholic, Henry was also a Renaissance man. In this passion for the semi-pagan culture of early modern Europe, and of the Renaissance idea of a strong monarch in a strong Christian state, he was matched by his fellow monarch, Francis I of France. "The two were of much the same age – Henry was just three years older – and of much the same character: they shared the same boisterous energy, the same love of the arts. A degree of jealousy was inevitable; but of mistrust too, because Henry had already shown, with a brief invasion in 1513, that he had not renounced any of his French ambitions. Clearly a meeting between the two could not be long delayed, and so, from 7 to 24 June 1520 they met – at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

"It was a magnificent name and the occasion was more magnificent still, with each of the two protagonists determined to outdo the other in splendour. Henry brought with him a suite of well over five thousand, and employed some six thousand artisans and craftsmen to transform the modest little castle of Guînes and to surround it with temporary structures so elaborate and fantastical they seemed to have come straight out of a fairy tale. At dawn on the appointed day, a great gong was sounded as the two kings spurred on their

---

[164] M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 348.

[165] In 1529 Thomas More wrote a refutation of Tyndale's translation, calling it heretical. And In 1535 Tyndale was burned at the stake by the imperial authorities, having been tracked down by Henry's agents.

[166] Dominic Selwood, "How a Protestant Spin Machine Hid the Truth about the English Reformation", *History,* May 23, 2014.

horses and rode at full gallop towards each other. At the last moment they reined in, embraced, dismounted and walked arm in arm to a sumptuously decorated tent where toasts were drunk and various presentations made. There were no political discussions: that was not the point. The Field of the Cloth of Gold was planned simply so that the two kings should become acquainted with each other; it was the most extravagant getting-to-know-you party in history. Presents were exchanged, in a quantity and of a quality that neither side could afford; there was seemingly endless jousting, banqueting, dancing and mutual embracing. It was all great fun, but when Henry and Francis separated at last, the old suspicions lingered: they got on well enough together, but neither monarch trusted the other an inch…"[167]

There was another political purpose to the Field of the Cloth of Gold: as Simon Schama writes, it was meant "to demonstrate to the new Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, whose vast territories dominated Europe, that if need be the two old cross-Channel foes could stand together against Habsburg intimidation. So instead of the usual war, there was a wondrous demonstration of amity between [the two kings]…"[168]

However, Henry and the Holy Roman Emperor were soon to be at war – but not on a physical battlefield. Their war was over canon law and the laws governing divorce. This war would lead to the first "Brexit", the first political and spiritual break of England from the continent (if we exclude the departure of the Roman legions from Britain in 410), with vast consequences for the English-speaking countries and therefore for the world…

*

The English Reformation had a less principled character, at least at the beginning, than the continental Reformations. Its main product, the Anglican Church, was conceived in adultery – King Henry VIII's discarding of his lawful wife, Catherine of Aragon, in 1534 - and was born in murder – the murder of his new wife, Anne Boleyn, in 1536. This was its sordid essence, and its sordidness has befouled the Anglican Church for the rest of its existence.

Henry demanded a divorce from his wife on the excuse that she had not produced any male heirs. And he thought (or pretended to think) he knew why: before marrying him, Catherine had been married to Henry's elder brother Arthur, who had died prematurely. But Scripture declared: "Whosoever marrieth his brother's wife doth a thing that is unlawful, he shall be without sons or male heirs" (Leviticus 21.20). So, he decided, he was not legally married, and was free to divorce Catherine and marry again. Now this would not normally be a great problem. As long ago as 1054 the Pope had "regulated" the unlawful marriage of William of Normandy to his cousin Mathilda; and the wife of the French King Louis XII had been allowed to go to

---

[167] Norwich, op. cit., pp. 122-13.

[168] Schama, op. cit., p. 243.

a convent. But Catherine had no intention of becoming a nun; and Pope Clement VII, who alone could permit the divorce, defended Catherine. Moreover, she had a powerful ally – her nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the world's most powerful Catholic monarch. So the Pope refused.

Henry entrusted his chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, a renowned "fixer", with the task of persuading the pope to see reason. When he failed, Henry sacked him. "Getting rid of Wolsey, though, did not solve the problem. His successor was Thomas More, who would not touch the poisoned chalice of the divorce. [The Bishop of Rochester, John] Fisher, annoyingly, kept referring to a passage in Deuteronomy that actually *urged* the taking of a dead brother's wife as an act of compassion. Henry's own confidence in a satisfactory solution failed him enough to renew his suggestion to Anne that perhaps she would reconsider the possibility of becoming his mistress, a suggestion she treated as so offensive that it must have been made 'in mirth' to test her. At some point in 1530 it was Anne herself who decided that she must take matters in hand and solve the whole business in a radically new direction. She put into Henry's hands a copy of William Tyndale's work *On the Obedience of a Christian Man and how Christian Rulers Ought to Govern*, published at the end of 1528 and, in the eyes of the Church, very much a banned book. Although Tyndale, like Luther, was against the divorce, his little book was dynamite, for it flatly rejected any notion of an authority divided between Church and state, instead insisting that 'one king, one law is God's ordinance in every realm.' A true Christian prince, in other words, was governor of *both* Church and state and need not defer to the illegitimately usurped power of the 'Bishop of Rome'. A non-papal solution to Henry's divorce suddenly presented itself. Henry would, in effect, act as his own pope, the governor of the English Church, and award himself the divorce – with, of course, the blessing of the bishops and the parliament in England. The matter had been personal and dynastic. Now it would be national and political.

"An air of peculiar unreality" writes Simon Schama, "hung over the business of Church and state in the spring of 1530. Thomas More was busy burning heretics and their infamous literature, but it was the Roman Church in England that was about to go up in smoke. With a characteristic combination of conviction and self-interest, Anne Boleyn and her family had recruited a think-tank of well-disposed theologians, including the Cambridge scholar Thomas Cranmer, to come up with historical evidence for the royal supremacy. They duly beavered away in the archives and produced a collection of writings, the *Collectanea satis copiosa* (Sufficiently Copious Collection), which asserted that in the earliest days of the Church each 'province' (England, for example) had had its own jurisdiction that was quite apart from and free of Rome, and that God had always intended kings to be rulers of those Churches, accountable only to the Almighty. Beneath the deceptive antiquarianism, the implications of the 'Collection' were as radical as Tyndale's book.

"Henry had still not resolved finally to break with Rome. Teams of his lawyers and theologians were sweeping through the universities of Europe

with instructions to produce opinions that might still sway the pope. But there were times when the decidedly finite reserves of royal patience were exhausted and Henry began to act and sound like both chief prince and priest. To a startled Church assembly, summoned so that Henry could denounce heresy, he also added that he might personally have to take in hand a translation of the Bible, which would then be given to the laity when he judged it fit and proper. To the imperial ambassador he let it be known that some of the things that Luther said seemed to him to have merit. In fact, the more Henry learned about the royal supremacy the better he liked it. It may have begun as a tactic to intimidate the pope and the English bishops into seeing the divorce his way, but after a while Henry began to internalize the idea as a self-evident truth. One can almost hear him clapping a hand to the bullish brow and exclaiming, 'How can I have been so dull as to have missed this?'

"The royal ego, never a small part of his personality, ballooned to imperial proportions and it got the palaces to house it – fifty of them before the reign was done. Some of the greatest and grandest had been Wolsey's and were now transferred to the king. York Place in London was renamed Whitehall and personally inspected by Anna to see if its accommodation were suitable, and Hampton Court became the stage for the swaggering theatre of Henrician court life. Nothing measures the imperial scale of the court better than the size of the space needed to feed it. Some 230 people were employed to service the thousands who were, every day, entitled to eat at the king's expense. There were three vast larders for meat alone; a specially designed wet larder to hold fish, supplied by water drawn from the fountains outside; spiceries, fruiteries, six immense fireplaces; three gargantuan cellars capable of holding the 300 casks of wine and 600,000 gallons of ale downed each year. And at the centre of it all, carefully protected by the Privy Chamber from undue exhibition, was England's new Caesar, the forty-year-old king, colossal and autocratic, bestriding the realm, his pose deliberately meant to recall the power of the Roman emperors.

"Not surprisingly, then, in the summer of 1530, the word 'imperial' began to show up with some calculated regularity in Henry's remarks. Emperors of course, acknowledge no superior on earth. To the papal nuncio Anne's brother, George Boleyn, and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, Henry said: 'England cares nothing for popes, not even if St. Peter should come to life again, for the king is absolute emperor and pope in his kingdom.' The formula would be repeated in 1533 in the preamble to the statute designed to suppress appeals to Rome where the declaration was made that: 'The realm of England is an empire.' [169] With every month that passed without a decision from Rome, Henry became more aggressive. He would not take orders from a pope, he told

---

[169] "This realm of England is an empire... governed by one supreme head and king, having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people divided in terms and by names of spirituality and temporality, be bounden and owe to bear, next to God, a natural and humble obedience."

his envoys, who was himself a well-known bastard. By November 1530 he was insisting out loud that he was 'chief' of the 'spiritual men'.

"It may be that the spiritual men supposed that this would all go away – their predecessor had been there before with Henry II and with John, after all – but they were in for a very nasty shock. At the end of 1530 writs of praemunire, the lesser treason of infringing the king's laws (but for which the penalties were imprisonment and confiscation of property) were issued. William Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was the first named, then a broader group of bishops and, finally, through its insistence in Church courts, the *entire* Church was held to be complicit in this 'lesser treason'. At first, they bought off Henry with a grant of £100,000, but with the scent of their fear in his nostrils, Henry pounced on the quarry, demanding recognition of the title of Supreme Head. By encouraging parliament to issue a long and bitter attack on familiar grievances – the Church courts, tithes, the alleged worldliness of the clergy – Henry also made it clear that he was prepared to leave no propaganda unexploited. In the spring of 1532 he moved in for the kill. The oath the clergy took to the pope and the money they paid him each year revealed, he said, just where *their* true loyalty lay. 'Well-beloved subjects,' he thundered to a specially summoned delegation, 'we thought that the clergy of the realm had been our subjects wholly but now we have well perceived that they be but half our subjects, yea and scarce our subjects.'

"Faced with these very big sticks, the Church cracked wide open. There were still some brave souls, like John Fisher, who remained an impassioned defender 'of Queen Catherine and who believed that any erosion of papal authority was tantamount to the destruction of the unity of Christendom. But there were some other clerics who were beginning to think the unthinkable: that a king not a pope could be Supreme Head and they themselves might be something called the 'Church of England'. In May 1532 the heat melted the resistance. Thomas More resigned as chancellor and Bishop Fisher continued to lecture the king, but the majority of his colleagues delivered their grovelling Submission of the Clergy which caved in to all Henry's demands: future Church convocations could be summoned by royal writ; no new canon law could be passed without the king's consent; and existing law would be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Crown. It was a momentous surrender. It was now unarguable that the Church in England had but one master, and he certainly did not reside in St. Peter's…"[170]

In 1534, just two months after the death of Pope Clement, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy that declared the king to be "the only supreme head on Earth of the Church of England" in place of the Pope, and in November of the same year - the Act of Succession which declared his marriage to Catherine void and made Elizabeth, his daughter from Anne, the heir presumptive. The preamble to the Act of Succession affirmed royal supremacy and renounced

---

[170] Schama, op. cit., pp. 251-254.

papal authority. This Act was followed by the Treason Act, which declared rejection of royal supremacy to be a treasonable act…

However, in most other respects Henry remained a Catholic. So, in spite of the strong increase in Protestant influences within the kingdom (Henry's new "fixer", Thomas Cromwell, was a secret Protestant), the English Reformation at this point was not a real Reformation insofar as, in the words of Ralf Dahrendorf, "a falling out with the Pope is not the same as a true Reformation".[171]

Nevertheless, English monarchs' quarrels with the Pope had always had important consequences. We think of the quarrel of King Harold with Pope Alexander II that led to the Norman Conquest in 1066, and King John's quarrel with Pope Innocent III that led to the excommunication of the whole land and Magna Carta. And the consequences of the quarrel between King Henry and Pope Clement VII were certainly to be important now…

As Robert Tombs writes, "Cranmer [the new archbishop of Canterbury] and Cromwell [the new chancellor] have usually been seen as trying to push Henry further towards reform than he wished to go, with intervals in which the king swung back towards conservatism. But Henry was broadly determined to steer a middle course between tradition and reform: between 'the usurped power of the bishop of Rome' and radical evangelists who 'wrest and interpret' the Bible 'to subvert and overturn as well the sacraments of Holy Church as the power and authority of princes'. Religion was too important to be left to the clergy: the political and social order was at risk.

"This had been luridly demonstrated in the midst of Henry's reformation. In October 1534, France was swept by panic when posters were put up asserting that secret groups of heretics were planning to massacre the orthodox. Worse, in Münster, armed 'Anabaptist' radicals had carried out a prototypical act of violent revolution, driving out the 'godless' in February 1534 and setting up a terrorist Utopia under a messianic king, with all property in common, compulsory polygamy, all books banned save the Bible, and the death penalty for disobedience. In June 1535, after a terrible siege, an imperial army stormed the town and massacred the defenders; the 'king' was torn apart with red-hot pincers. In England, Henry did his bit by having a dozen Dutch Anabaptist immigrants burned.

"Henry kept a close eye on doctrine. He insisted above all on 'transubstantiation': that the bread and wine of the Mass were miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ in a mystical participation in his sacrifice. This was the core of the idea of the [Roman Catholic] Church and its priesthood as sacred and apart, unlike the radical belief that 'the Lord's supper' was a commemoration ceremony performed by a group of believers. Henry

---

[171] Dahrendorf, in Jeremy Paxman, *The English*, London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 98.

insisted too that salvation came from good works, and not from faith alone – he thought it dangerous (as indeed it was) if people believed that they were 'saved' however they behaved. So his convictions, which were apparently sincere, were also useful: they supported order and hierarchy and enhanced his own status as a divinely instituted monarch. Henry saw himself as a moderate. Those less moderate than himself – even those close to him – risked the stake or the block."[172]

One of those "less moderate" ones who went to the block was Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor from 1529 until his resignation in 1532, who refused to obey the king when his commands went against the pope. He rejected not only the king's adulterous marriage to Anne Boleyn, but also the king's claim to be "the supreme head on earth of the Church in England". He was charged and convicted on the basis of the Treason Act.

The following dialogue with his wife has been preserved:

"O my husband," she said to him, "do obey the command of the King as others have done, and your life will be spared."

"And how long, my dear wife," he answered, "how long do you think I shall live if I do what you ask me?"

"For at least twenty years," she said.

"Well, if you had said twenty thousand years, that would have been something; but it would, indeed, be a very poor thing to live even that number of years, and run the risk of losing my God in eternity! Oh no, dear wife, I thought you would have spoken more wisely to me than that. I will never consent to disobey my God in that way; I promised Him over and over again that I would serve Him faithfully all my days, and love Him with my whole heart, and by His grace I will do it."[173]

More was beheaded on July 6, 1535. The Brazilian philosopher Olavo Carvalho writes: "With Sir Thomas' head rolling on the floor, the doors of time swung around the hinges, closing an era: the project of unifying Europe under one and the same Catholic Empire died with its last martyr. The founding of the first national church[174] marks a radical metamorphosis of the idea of "empire" and signals the true start of the modern age. Stealing the keys of the Kingdom [of Heaven] from the Pope, the chief of state self-anoints himself as the direct representative of God. With Henry VIII, it is Caesar who comes back

---

[172] Tombs, op. cit., p. 168.

[173] See the superb film based on these events, *A Man for All Seasons* (1966). (Almost as good was *Anne of the Thousand* Days (1969), exploring the same events, with Richard Burton as the king.) More's famous last words, to his unwilling executioner, were: "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office. My neck is very short."

[174] For the Church was now no longer the Church *in* England, but "the Church *of* England", as the Act of Supremacy put it. (V.M.)

to the throne, draped around priestly prerogatives. The age-old dualism [of military and divinity] is solved through the absorption of the Church within the Empire."[175]

Henry's despotic usurpation of the spiritual power of the Church was fatal for the future of European politics, according to Carvalho: "Henry is the true founder of the idea of a self-sacralized state, an idea that will inspire, later, Hegel and Robespierre, Napoleon and Comte."[176] This judgement may be disputed if we remember the iconoclast emperors or the papal states. But it is certainly true that England became the first West European state to renounce the suzerainty of both empire and papacy.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

In May, 1536, having failed to produce a male heir, and having been accused of fornication with almost every man she knew, even her brother, Anne Boleyn followed More and Fisher to the block.[177] A just come-uppance, one might say, for the woman who may be called the world's first female theologian and a *femme fatale* hardly less damaging than Cleopatra.

"After the news of Anne Boleyn's death reached Dover, it was said that church tapers spontaneously re-lit. For the vast majority of the country, which despite the break with Rome still regarded itself as Catholic, her death seemed a long overdue judgement on those they called heretics and twopenny bookmen. With the king now so thoroughly undeceived, they assumed her would put matters back the way they had been. And when this failed to happen right away, they took it on themselves to rescue him from the evil counselors who were obviously obstructing his true will. Marching under the banner of the Five Wounds of Christ, an army of 10,000 in the north and east demanded a restoration of the old ways. Or rather, petitioned, for their leader, Robert Aske (as so many insurgents before and after him), adopted a posture of loyal supplication. His anthem-chanting host was, he believed, not a rebellion but a pilgrimage, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and it asked the king to do only what they truly believed he wished to do, once free of the wicked Cromwell and Cranmer: restore the monasteries [whose dissolution had begun in 1535], legitimize Mary, prosecute heretics with the ardour shown by Wolsey and More, and preserve the old ceremonies.

"The crusade, as it imagined itself, caught fire. By December 1536 there may have been as many as 40,000 mustered beneath the banner of the Five Wounds. By now, not only country gentlemen like Aske, but also leading northern aristocrats, like the Percys, were involved. It was, in effect, the first act of the English wars of religion that mapped itself – as it would for centuries – as a

---

[175] Carvalho, *O Jardim das aflições*, 3rd edition, Campinas, Brazil: VIDE Editorial, 2015, p. 286.

[176] Carvalho, op. cit., p. 287.

[177] Like More, she was comforted by the size of her neck. "I hear the executioner is very good," she said, putting her hands around her throat, "and I have a little neck".

Catholic north and west against a more reform-minded, or at least more heavily governed, southeast. For the moment, however, since it could not yet mobilize a force strong enough to confront and defeat the rebels, the government had no alternative but to pretend that it would at least listen to their demand for a general amnesty and a Catholic restoration. The Duke of Norfolk, who was known to be hostile to the evangelicals and had just sent his niece Anne, to the execution block, was dispatched to do the dirty work at Doncaster and did so with aplomb, agreeing on the king's behalf to most of the demands, the restoration of the monasteries excepted. Robert Aske pulled off his badge of the Five Wounds, proclaiming, 'we will wear no badge but the badge of our sovereign lord', and the pilgrims went home ecstatic, believing the king, in his goodness, had granted their wishes.

"But it was, of course, a replay of the tactics of 1381, when the king had temporized by appeasing the Peasants' Revolt. Once the immediate threat had passed, Henry outdid Richard II at his most autocratic, swearing retribution on the rebels. 'Our pleasure,' the king wrote to the Duke of Norfolk, '[is] that you shall cause such dreadful execution to be done upon a good number of every town, village and hamlet that have offended as may be a fearful spectacle to all others hereafter that would practice any like matter.' And we can be sure that he complied…"[178]

*

The English Reformation, while supposedly "moderate" in its theology, was anything but moderate in its effects, and could be called such only by comparison with the much bloodier persecutions that took place on the continent in the next one hundred years.

It was the work, writes Schama, of "one of the most remarkable working partnerships in all British history: Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell. Take either or them away and the English Reformation would not have happened, or at least not the way it did. Their agenda was always more daring than the king's and they both had strong personal as well as religious motives for adopting the cause of reform. In Cromwell's case it would bring him such power and authority that the son of a Putney cloth-worker would die (though not in his bed) the Earl of Essex. And although his convictions were deep, Cranmer was playing an even more dangerous game since just before he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury he had secretly married a German woman, Margarethe, thereby committing himself to one of Luther's most shocking innovations [the marriage of the clergy]. Cranmer was also wedded to the old Lollard idea of an English Bible for the laity, although he certainly did not believe that this gave licence to anyone to produce their own version for public consumption. That way lay religious anarchy. Cranmer, like Cromwell, was wedded to the Renaissance idea of a strong prince in a strong

[178] Schama, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

Christian state. The people were to be given their officially authorized Bible from on high; no other edition would be tolerated.

"The picture of an orderly, even authoritarian, Church of England is exactly what can be seen on the frontispiece of the Great Bible, commissioned by Cromwell and published in 1539. At the top the king-emperor, prince and high priest receives the *Verbum Dei* (Word of God) directly from the Father on High, just like a Solomon, and then passes this to his two trusty lieutenants, Cranmer, on the left, the lord of the spiritual realms, and Cromwell, on the right, the lord of the temporal realm, each of whom in their turn passes it along to grateful throngs of clergy and laity."[179]

In 1530 the king had banned Tyndale's Bible, but after the Catholic Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, which the king attributed in part to Catholic superstition, he agreed to the publication of Miles Coverdale's "Great Bible", based on Tyndale's Bible but with alterations, and with a preface by Cranmer. Henry liked it, and ordered one copy for every parish in England, ordering, through Cromwell, "that ye shall discourage no man… from the reading or hearing of said Bible."[180] Wycliffe had been avenged…

Cromwell was the main executor of the other great work of the English Reformation, the Dissolution of the Monasteries… Similar dissolutions took place in several parts of the Protestant world. For, as Niall Ferguson writes, "Two thirds of monasteries were closed in the Protestant territories of Germany, the lands and other assets mostly appropriated by secular rulers and sold to wealthy subjects, as also happened in England. A rising share of university students gave up thoughts of the monastic life, turning their attention to more worldly vocations. As has been justly observed, the Reformation had wholly unintended consequences, in that it was 'a religious movement that contributed to Europe's secularization'."[181]

"Beginning in 1535, Cromwell rapidly organized 'visitations' and inventories of religious houses, and began to close them down and confiscate their wealth – their land, their libraries, the jewels of their shrines and their sacred vessels. Henry accumulated chests of gold stored at the back of his bedchamber in Whitehall. There was vast looting, and embezzlement: the reformers could profit from religion at least as well as the sellers of indulgences. The cultural losses are incalculable, including art, building and historical records. Tens of thousands of objects and works of art great and small were melted down, torn up, painted over or smashed. Matthew Parker, Master of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, saved ancient documents he thought proved the ancient autonomy of the English Church, and in doing so rescued swathes of England's early history from oblivion. Queen Anne campaigned for some of the proceeds to go to education and poor relief. Vast sums went on building or

---

[179] Schama, op. cit., p. 255.

[180] John Barton, *A History of the Bible,* London: Allen Lane, 2019, p. 450.

[181] Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower,* London: Penguin, 2018, p. 93.

adorning palaces (including Richmond, Hampton Court and Nonsuch in Surrey) and on creating a navy; or it was squandered on an expensive and futile war with France in 1544."[182]

However, the Dissolution was not without its strictly religious aspect. As David Starkey and Katie Greening write: "The principal motive of the Dissolution had been fiscal. Henry VIII's extravagance in peace and war had long since exhausted the treasures left him by his careful father. Parliament, as usual, was reluctant to grant taxation. To bridge the gap, the king's new minister, Thomas Cromwell,… persuaded Henry to re-endow the crown with the former wealth of the monasteries. This was mere expediency. But Cromwell, Cranmer, and even Henry himself, were also concerned with the principles at stake. The vast endowments of the monasteries were justified by the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. Purgatory was conceived of as an intermediate state between Heaven and Hell. The passage of the souls of the dead through Purgatory – providing they had not been irretrievably wicked in life – could be aided by the prayers and offerings of the living. These invoked the merits of Christ, His Mother and the saints, which were entrusted to the Church and dispensed by it – for a price. And the price, to cut a long story short, was the endowment of the monasteries, which paid for prayers, masses and a perpetual cycle of invocation and intercession – and for the professional musicians who sung it.

"But where was Purgatory in the Bible? The new approaches to Christianity, called the New Learning by contemporaries and 'Evangelical' by historians, made the Bible – especially the Bible in English – the measure of all things. And Purgatory was to be found nowhere in the Bible. Nor were prayers, intercessions and sung masses for the dead. Instead, salvation depended wholly on the Christian's relationship with God and his fellow men in *this* world, not the next.

"At a stroke, the Dissolution was transformed from a fiscal expedient into a necessary step of religious reform. But how far would reform go? The great religious changes in England had begun for the narrowest and most self-interested of motives: Henry's urgent desire for divorce and remarriage. But the coincided with the great European-wide movement of religious reform known as the Reformation. Henry's relationship with the Reformation was an uncertain one. He had been one of Luther's earliest and most prominent opponents, winning his papal title of Defender of the Faith for his anti-Lutheran text, *Assertio septem sacramentorum*, and the two were never reconciled. Cranmer's theology, on the other hand, moved more and more into the mainstream of European reformed thought, even going beyond Luther towards the more thorough-going Zwingli and the other Swiss reformers."[183]

---

[182] Tombs, op. cit., p. 169.

[183] Starkey and Greening, *Music & Monarchy,* London: BBC Books, 2013, pp. 16-17.

So did Cromwell's. And the two men agreed with Zwingli in rejecting Transubstantiation. But such radicalism was a bridge too far in the direction of the Reformation for both the King and his leading nobles. At the instigation of the Duke of Norfolk, whose family's monastery at Thetford had been dissolved by Cromwell, the great fixer was accused of heresy and treason and beheaded in 1540… Cranmer would follow him sixteen years later…

In 1537 Cromwell's commissioners came to Durham to destroy the shrine and relics of perhaps the most famous of the English saints, Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (+March 20, 687).. "After the spoil of his ornaments and jewels, they approached near to his body, expecting nothing but dust and ashes; but… they found him lying whole, incorrupt, with his face bare, and his beard as of a fortnight's growth, and all the vestments about him, as he was accustomed to say Mass… When the goldsmith perceived he had broken one of his legs, in breaking open the chest, he was sore troubled at it, and cried: 'Alas! I have broken one of his legs'; which Dr. Henley hearing, called to him, and bade him cast down his bones: the other answered he could not them asunder, for the sinews and skin held them so that they would not separate. Then Dr. Lee stept up to see if they were so, and, turning about, spake in Latin to Dr. Henley that he was entire, though Dr. Henley, not believing his words, called again to have his bones cast down: Dr. Lee answered, 'If you will not believe me, come up yourself and see him': then Dr. Henley stept up to him, and handled him, and found he lay whole; then he commanded them to take him down; and so it happened, contrary to their expectation, that not only was his body whole and uncorrupted, but the vestments wherein his body lay, and wherein he was accustomed to say Mass, were fresh, safe, and not consumed. Whereupon the visitors commanded him to be carried into the vestry, till the King's pleasure concerning him was further known; and, upon receipt thereof, the prior and monks buried him in the ground under the place where his shrine was exalted."[184]

In 1539 the commissioners came to the venerable monastery of Glastonbury, England's oldest and one of its richest. Not content with stealing all its wealth (and destroying the icon of the Mother of God brought by St. Joseph of Arimathaea to England), they interrogated the abbot, Richard Whiting. On their finding a book of his attacking Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon, he was sent to the Tower of London. Cromwell condemned him to death, and then sent him back to Glastonbury, where he was hung, drawn and quartered on Tor Hill, before his head was stuck on the monastery's abbey gate and his body parts sent to four Somerset churches.[185] The brutality of this act in England's holiest shrine demonstrated as nothing else the impiety of the whole Dissolution enterprise.

---

[184] Charles, Archbishop of Glasgow, *The History of St. Cuthbert,* London: Burns & Oates, 1887, pp. 117-118.

[185] Gaye Mack, "The Brutal Execution of Glastonbury's Last Abbot, Richard Whiting, under Cromwell", http://gayemack.com/the-brutal-execution-of-glastonbury-abbeys-last-abbot-richard-whiting-under-cromwell.

One of the most important consequences of Dissolution of the monasteries was that the poor lost their main support. This necessitated the passing of the Poor Law Act of 1552, which "placed responsibility for dealing with poverty on parishes which raised money through voluntary contributions. Towards the end of the sixteenth century authorities began to focus on the deservedly needy – orphans, the elderly and those with mental or physical disabilities, and, in 1601, the Elizabethan Poor Law was passed…"[186]

In contemporary Russia, in the debate between the Possessors and the Non-Possessors, the Possessors argued that large monasteries should be maintained for the support of the poor. They won the argument. In the absolutis England of Henry VIII there was no debate – only robbery…

*

"With Henry's death [in 1547, of syphilis]," continue Starkey and Greening, "[Cranmer's] position was transformed. Under the old king, who prided himself on forging a lonely middle way between the extremes of the Old and New Learning, Cranmer had been one counsellor among many. With the accession of Henry's nine-year-old son Edward VI, a regency government was set up in which Cranmer was one of the two principal voices: the king's maternal uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, exercised supreme power in mattes of state, while Cranmer determined the pace and extent of religious change."[187]

In 1549 Cranmer introduced a new Prayer Book that was Zwinglian in its Eucharistic theology, transforming the Latin Mass into a purely commemorative service, "the Lord's Supper". There were widespread protests and thousands died in clashes with government forces. Thus "at Helston on 6 April 1547 William Body, who was overseeing the destruction of images in Cornwall, was beaten to death in front of the church. Two years later the forcible introduction of the Book of Common Prayer triggered a massive rebellion in the southwest, culminating in a thirty-five day siege of Exeter and a pitched battle at Samford Courtenay in which 4000 Devonians and Cornishmen were killed."[188] 900 died on August 4, 1549 in the village of Clyst St. Mary in Cornwall. As Peter Marshall writes, "the rebels of Devon and Cornwall mocked the new service as a 'Christmas game'. It reminded them of entertainments performed locally at Yuletide in places like Ashburton, where, in carefree pre-Reformation days, payments were made to actors from Exeter for 'playing a Christmas game in the church'."[189]

---

[186] Gordon Kerr, *Short History of the Victorian Era,* Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, 2019, p. 27.

[187] Starkey and Greening, op. cit., p. 18.

[188] Schama, op. cit., pp. 267-268.

[189] Marshall, "The Savage Reformation", *BBC History Magazine,* May, 2017, p. 30.

The Catholics heartened by the death of Edward VI died in 1553. He was succeeded by his half-sister Mary, who married King Philip of Spain the next year. A fervent Catholic, she was determined to stamp out Calvinism. A persecution of Calvinists got under way whose goriness was vividly described by John Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs*; he called it "the third Testament of the English Church".[190]

As Chadwick writes: "The steadfastness of the victims, from Ridley and Latimer downwards, baptized the English Reformation in blood and drove into English minds the fatal association of ecclesiastical tyranny with the See of Rome... Five years before, the Protestant cause was identified with church robbery, destruction, irreverence, religious anarchy. It was now beginning to be identified with virtue, honesty, and loyal English resistance to a half-foreign government."[191]

Cranmer no longer hid his Zwinglian sympathies and was burned at the stake for treason and heresy. Then Mary restored everything that the Protestants had tried to destroy. The Catholic Mass was again sung with all its "smells and bells" and all the old-style musical and ceremonial splendour, and prayers for the dead and belief in Purgatory were re-established. There was even the beginnings of a restoration of the monasteries, so closely linked with prayers for the dead. Westminster Abbey, for example, became a monastic community again, and St. Edward the Confessor's body was restored to its tomb.[192]

Perhaps the last major manifestation of Catholic England took place in 1557, at the funeral of Anne of Cleaves, Henry VIII's penultimate wife, who had converted to Catholicism.

---

[190] Paxman, op. cit., p. 89.

[191] Chadwick, op. cit., p. 128; quoted in Paxman, op. cit., p. 91.

[192] It should be pointed out, however, that Edward the Confessor was an Orthodox, not a Catholic saint, and died out of communion with the Pope! It should be also be pointed out that the Orthodox Church rejects Purgatory. St. Mark of Ephesus, for example, spoke against it at the council of Florence in 1438-39. However, in its prayers for the dead and general attitude to the after-life, Orthodoxy is much closer to Catholicism than Protestantism...

14. ELIZABETH I AND THE ANGLICAN *VIA MEDIA*

Queen Mary died in 1558 and was succeeded by her half-sister, Anne Boleyn's Protestant daughter, Elizabeth. In the same year Parliament passed an Act of Supremacy making her Governor (as opposed to Head) of the Church and an Oath of Supremacy making it an act of treason to reject her supremacy in both church and state. This was a Henrician restoration, showing that Elizabeth was the true daughter and successor of her father…

As Eliot Wilson writes, "During the last months of 1558 and the beginning of 1559, she negotiated a settlement for the Church of England that revived most of Henry VIII's religious changes. Catholicism as a state religion in England became a thing of the past. The Church of England's 39 Articles of 1563 reinforced what the interim 11 Articles of 1561 had stated, which was that Purgatory, that *doctrina Romanensium,* was to be condemned. This time the reformation of religion imposed on the long-suffering English people would endure.

"The death of Catholic England took place, therefore, in 1558. The final assertion of Protestant supremacy was not merely a matter for politicians and theologians, but had profound implications for the way in which ordinary men and women viewed this life and the next. Purgatory was not simply abolished by the Act of 39 Articles: Parliament could do many things but it could not tell people what to think or what to believe. But Catholic notions of death required action as well as belief. The proscription of intercessory prayers, of the ringing of bells on Halloween and the dissolution anew of the monasteries and chantry chapels which Mary had restored chipped away at the foundations of Purgatory, until, eventually it withered on the vine (though Anglican theologians and churchmen remained vigilant for signs of Roman doctrine until well into the 17th century).

"The never-ending morality tale which Catholic dogma had offered was replaced by a vision of death and salvation that was in some ways much starker and more uncompromising. The afterlife for Protestants became strikingly bipolar, with Heaven and Hell the only possible destinations. Calvinist dogma, which was so influential in the Elizabethan Church of England, taught that souls were predestined for one or the other, regardless of their earthly conduct, and had been since before the creation of the world. The intimate relationship between the living and the dead, which Catholicism had expounded, and the interdependence which existed between them, gave way to a more distant system of commemoration. A duty to the dead remained and could be fulfilled by the erection of monuments and commissioning of laudatory sermons, but these were essentially for the benefit of the living. The dead either had no need of them, or were beyond redemption…"[193]

---

[193] Wilson, "The Last Death of Catholic England", *History Today,* January, 2018, p. 59.

In bringing about the final death of Catholic England, Elizabeth made the English Reformation permanent and steadied the ship of state; she introduced a long period of peace that compared well with the increasing chaos on the continent and lasted until the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642.

However, the price was high. For she achieved this peace-making feat by perfecting her father's technique of *deliberate ambiguity*, which from now on became the central characteristic of the Anglican religion.

For "at first glance," writes G.W. Bernard, "Henry's policies seem confused and uncertain; on closer examination they are better described as deliberately ambiguous. For Henry knew what he wanted well enough and was sufficient of a politician to know when and how and when to compromise. He grasped that among churchmen and, increasingly, among the educated laity, religious convictions were polarising. If he were to win acceptance for the break with Rome and the royal supremacy, the pope would have to be denounced, but if radical religious changes were to be enforced, or even if they were simply to be advocated from the pulpits, he risked provoking serious rebellions like the Pilgrimage of Grace. For all the extravagant claims of the Act of Six Articles that it would abolish diversity of opinions, Henry more realistically aimed at steering a path between the extremes."[194]

"Nor was the Elizabethan religious settlement [the Act of Uniformity in 1559 and the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1571] unequivocally protestant. Elizabeth would have preferred something closer to her father's catholicism, without the pope and without egregious superstition… Henry VIII and Elizabeth… saw the monarch as in control of the church, appointing bishops, determining doctrine and liturgy, and capable even of suspending an archbishop from exercising his power, a view perhaps symbolised by the placing of royal arms inside parish churches. At the heart of this monarchical view of the church lay a desire that was essentially political…, a desire for comprehensiveness, for a church that would embrace all their subjects. Religious uniformity was natural in itself; religious dissensions wrecked social harmony and political peace. Continental experiences – from the peasants' war of 1525 through the French wars of religion to the Thirty Years' War – reinforced English rulers' fears of the disastrous consequences of religious divisions, and their success, until 1642, in sparing their realm from such horrors further strengthened their conviction of the efficacy of the policy…"[195]

Tombs writes: "Elizabeth had no sympathy with hardliners in either camp, and considered 'what they disputed about but trifles'. Heresy trials were stopped and surviving prisoners released. She did not seek to 'make windows into men's hearts', as the philosopher-politician Francis Bacon famously put it; and her judges were instructed that the queen wanted no 'examination or inquisition of their secret opinions in their consciences for matters of faith'.

---

[194] Bernard, "The Church of England *c*.1529-*c*.1642", *History*, vol. 75, no. 244, June, 1990, p. 185.
[195] Bernard, op. cit., p. 187.

Victims of over-zealous Church authorities were confident enough to appeal to Magna Carta. But the queen did insist that people should obey the law by at least a minimum of outward conformity, so as not to disturb 'the common quiet of the realm'. Given her own impatience with dogma, she could not understand why some refused, whether traditionalists who refused to attend church occasionally or evangelicals who refused to wear ecclesiastical vestments. Gradually Elizabeth's religion entered the minds and hearts of most people, as a generation grew up which thought of the Pope as Antichrist, the Mass as a mummery, and their Catholic past not as their own, but as 'another country, another world'."[196]

"Outward conformity" was the key to the new spirituality.

Bernard continues: "Henry VIII, Elizabeth, James I and Charles I placed secular and political considerations of order above purely ecclesiastical and theological considerations…, from the start, from the 1530s, rulers faced limitations because some of their subjects were papists and some of their subjects wanted further reformation. Given the fact of religious difference, given that rulers knew that their subjects, especially the more educated, were divided, sometimes in response to theological debates European rather than just national in scope, a measure of compromise and ambiguity, particularly on points of doctrine or of local liturgical practice, was deliberately fostered."[197]

"Larger cracks can be papered over than one might supposed. But in extraordinary circumstances, if contradictions with which men have long deliberately or unconsciously lived can no longer be accommodated or overlooked, if a monarchical church is faced by urgent demands for unambiguous, uncompromising decisions of divisive questions, then the ensuing collapse can be violent. When Englishmen ultimately turned to war in 1642, those differences of religion that the monarchical church had striven to contain but to which it was always vulnerable proved to be the most embittering determinant of men's allegiance."[198]

Under Elizabeth the English acquired, and made a virtue of, the habit of compromise, "the middle way", allowing individual variations in faith that would not have been permissible in earlier ages. This habit was not unique to Anglicanism. We find it also in the German Reformer, Kaspar Schwenkfeld, who asserted, in Barzun's words, that "if each soul has a unique destiny, then each man and woman may frame his or her creed within the common Christian religion. They deserve to have faith custom-tailored to their needs."[199]

But from an Orthodox point of view, such individualism and ability to compromise, while useful in political situations, is extremely harmful in

---

[196] Tombs, op. cit., pp.183-184.

[197] Bernard, op. cit., p. 188.

[198] Bernard, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

[199] Barzun, op. cit., p. 33.

questions of religious truth, where, as St. Mark of Ephesus pointed out, there can be no middle way between truth and falsehood. The *via media* was imposed upon the Church because it had been chosen by the monarch, who, for political and personal reasons, wanted a compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. It meant that henceforth the Anglican Church represented not one faith, but an uneasy ecumenist compromise between two, with the king as the arbiter and supreme judge over both of them, the despotic ruler of both Church and State.

Now "if the State, as law and authority," writes Tikhomirov, "departs from its connection with a definite confession, that is, comes out from under the influence of the religious confession on religious politics, it becomes the general judge of all confessions and submits religion to itself. All relations between various confessions, and their rights, must evidently be decided by the State that is outside them, being governed exclusively by its own ideas about justice and the good of society and the State. In this connection it obviously has the complete right and every opportunity to be repressive in all cases in which, in its opinion, the interests of the confession contradict civil and political interests. Thus the situation emerges in which the State can influence the confessions, but cannot and must not be influenced by them. Such a State is already unable to be governed in relation to the confessions by any religious considerations, for not one of the confessions constitutes for it a lawful authority, whereas the opinions of financiers, economists, medics, administrators, colonels, etc. constitute its lawful consultants, so that in all spheres of the construction of the people's life the State will be governed by considerations drawn precisely from these sources.

"In such an order there can be no religious freedom for anyone. Perhaps – and this is doubtful – there can be equal rights for the confessions. But freedom and equality of rights are not the same thing. Equality of rights can also consist of a general lack of rights. The State can, [for example,] on the basis of cultural and medical considerations, take measures against circumcision and forbid fasting; to avoid disorders or on the basis of sanitary considerations it can forbid pilgrimages to holy places or to venerate relics; on the basis of military demands it can forbid all forms of monasticism among Christians, Buddhists, Muslims. The services themselves can be found to be harmful hypnotizations of the people not only in public, but also in private prayer. In general, there are no bounds to the State's prohibitive measures in relation to religions if it is placed outside them, as their general judge…"[200]

The consequences of this were summed up by Christopher Hill: "The long-term outcome of the Reformation was the opposite of that intended by the Machiavellians who introduced it. Charles I's Secretary of State, the near-papist Windebanke, pointed out to the representative of the Pope in England the historical irony of the situation. 'Henry VIII committed such sacrilege by

---

[200] Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-filosofkie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 269.

profaning so many ecclesiastical benefices in order to give their goods to those who, being so rewarded, might stand firmly for the king in the lower house; and now the king's greatest enemies are those who are enriched by these benefices… O the great judgements of God!' The overthrow of papal authority by Henry VIII thus looks forward to the civil war and the execution of Charles I. The royal supremacy yielded place to the sovereignty of Parliament and then to demands for the sovereignty of the people. The plunder of the Church by the landed ruling class stimulated the development of capitalism in England. The attack on Church property by the rich led to a questioning of property rights in general…"[201]

And so "men learnt that church property was not sacrosanct, that traditional ecclesiastical institutions could disappear without the world coming to an end; that laymen could remodel not only the economic and political structures of the Church but also its doctrine – if they possessed political power. Protestant theology undermined the uniquely sacred character of the priest, and elevated the self-respect of the congregation. This helped men to question a divine right to tithes, the more so when tithes were paid to lay impropriators. Preaching became more important than the sacraments; and so men came to wonder what right non-preaching ministers, or absentees, had to be paid by their congregations. It took a long time to follow out these new lines of thought to their logical conclusions; but ultimately they led men very far indeed. By spreading ideas of sectarian voluntarism they prepared the way for the Revolution of 1640, and trained its more radical leaders.

"In the Revolution episcopacy was abolished, bishops' and cathedral lands confiscated, the payment of tithes challenged. The radicals rejected not only Henry VIII's episcopal hierarchy but the whole idea of a state church. 'O the great judgements of God!' Windebanke had exclaimed when contemplating the paradoxical outcome of the Henrician Reformation. Henry VIII had denied the supremacy of the Pope; he had confiscated church property; and he had allowed the Scriptures to be translated into English. These challenges to the authoritarianism, to the wealth and to the propaganda monopoly of the Church opened doors wider than was perhaps intended. A century later the authority first of King, then of Parliament, was challenged in the name of the people; the social justification of all private property was called into question; and speculation about the nature of the state and the rights of the people went to lengths which ultimately terrified the victorious Parliamentarians into recalling King, House of Lords, and bishops to help them to maintain law and order…"[202]

---

[201] Hill, "Social and Economic Consequences of the Henrician Revolution", in *Puritanism and Revolution*, London: Penguin books, 1958, p. 47.
[202] Hill, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

15. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT AND NATURAL LAW

"A religious middle way of this [Anglican] kind," writes Tombs, "had become rare in Europe, and was running against the tide. The 1550s was a time of polarization across Europe, with the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' for the first time becoming current. Until then, most people saw the situation as one of fluid schismatical and heretical turbulence within one Christian Church, and hoped that unity might be restored, perhaps by a General Council. But the Council of Trent, which met periodically between 1545 and 1563, deepened the divisions by defining Catholic doctrines (on faith, scripture, authority, the sacraments and papal supremacy) in a way that evangelicals would never accept, and instituted a 'Counter-Reformation'…"[203]

*

Pope Paul III had become convinced that the only way to contain the surge in Protestantism was to convene a General Council in order to reform the abuses in the Church that nobody could deny and that the Protestants were seizing upon to their advantage. "Objections, inevitably, were raised on all sides. The cardinals saw any reform as a threat to their own comfortable lifestyles; the Emperor, terrified that the proposed Council might take so rigid a stand on doctrine as to make a compromise with his Protestant subjects impossible, preferred that it should leave aside all theological questions and confine itself to measures of reform; the Lutherans demanded a totally uncommitted meeting of all Christians, and immediately refused to attend any assembly held on Italian soil or one presided over by the Pope.

"Charles himself, who never felt particularly strongly about doctrine, would happily have accepted any compromise proposed or agreed to by Rome; all he wanted was unity. As for the King of France, he was only too pleased to see the Emperor enmeshed in his religious problems, and had no wish at all to have them resolved. But Pope Paul persisted, and meanwhile summoned a special commission; this was instructed to report on all the ills of the Church and to recommend measures that should be taken to remedy them. In due course the commissioners submitted their report. They did not pull their punches. They listed the current abuses and laid the blame for all of them – the sale of indulgences and Church benefits, the sinecures, the stockpiling of bishoprics and countless others – squarely on the Papacy. The result of all this, they pointed out, had been the Protestant Reformation, and no wonder: had the Church kept its house in order, the Reformation would never have occurred. The horrified Curia – which had been deliberately banned from the commission – did all it could to sweep the report under the carpet; but a copy was leaked, and before long a German translation was going the rounds of the jubilant Lutheran churches.

---

[203] Tombs, op. cit., p. 184.

"Now, at last, reform – serious reform – was in the air, and Pope Paul did everything he could to encourage it. He gave an enthusiastic reception to the young Filippo Neri, whose mission was concentrated on the seedy inns and whorehouses of the Roman underworld; and a year or two later he accorded a similar welcome to the rather older Ignatius Loyola, a Basque who had arrived with half a dozen like-minded colleagues from Spain, grouped together in what they called the Society of Jesus. In 1540 the Pope issued a Bull giving the Society his official approval. The Jesuits, with no distinctive dress for their Order, no fixed headquarters and no choral prayer, were bound together by two things only: strict discipline and unconditional obedience. They were to have a chequered history[204], but they were the spearhead of the Counter-Reformation.

"Finally, on 13 December 1545, the long-delayed Council opened at Trent, a city recommended by the Emperor because it lay safely in imperial territory. It got off to a shaky start, its first sessions being attended by only a single cardinal, four archbishops and thirty-one bishops; but it was gradually to gain momentum and to continue at intervals, in Trent and later in Bologna, for the next eighteen years. It was overwhelmingly weighted in favour of the Italians; even when best attended, with more than 270 bishops, the Germans never numbered more than thirteen. But the important thing about the Council was that – in the teeth of all opposition to it – it actually happened; moreover, it showed itself ready to defy the Emperor and fearlessly to debate the hoary old questions of doctrine: justification by faith, transubstantiation, purgatory and many more.

"It was never more than a partial success. When it was at last dissolved, the Protestants, who understandably saw it as little more than a Roman puppet-show, naturally remained unsatisfied; even for the Catholics its reforms were less radical and comprehensive than many had hoped for. Not a word was said, for example, about the reform of the Papacy itself, which was far more necessary than anything else. Owing largely to the undiminished hostility of the Emperor and the King of France the Council sat only intermittently, often without the French contingent. It never came near to being the ecumenical council of union for the whole of western Christendom that had been so long hope and prayed for; it was simply the confessional council of the Counter-Reformation, formed for the purpose of re-catholicising the continent, if necessary by force. The results were to be all too evident: in France no fewer than eight civil wars against the Huguenots (more than three thousand of whom perished in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew in Paris during the late summer of 1572); a war between Spain and the Netherlands that lasted for more than eighty years; and the nightmare Thirty Years War (1618-48), which was to cause untold devastation through northern Europe…"[205]

---

[204] Which still continues. The present pope, Francis I, is a Jesuit… (V.M.)
[205] Norwich, *Four Princes,* pp. 190-192.

*

At Trent the unashamed sensuality of the Early Renaissance popes was abandoned[206]; a new age of discipline and asceticism (in the Catholic mode, of course) began. Not that the sensuality had really disappeared. It was simply "sublimated" into the sensual pseudo-mysticism of such "saints" as Teresa of Avila, or the art of such sculptors employed by the Church as Bernini.

But, as Gombrich writes, "noblemen stopped wearing bright and ample robes and now looked more like monks in severe, black, close-cut gowns and white ruffs, over which their sombre, unsmiling faces tapered away into little pointed beards. Every nobleman wore a sword on his belt and challenged anyone who insulted his honour to a duel.

"These men, with their careful, measured gestures and their rigid formality, were mostly seasoned warriors, and never more implacable than when fighting for their beliefs…."[207]

The Counter-Reformation sought to re-establish the full power of the papacy over secular rulers that the Reformation had undermined. Thus the Council of Trent, as Gilbert Dagron writes, "tried to unite that which Luther had tried to separate. Both in the Council and around it attempts were made rather to bring the two powers into union with each other than to separate them. The politics of the concordats aimed to find a difficult compromise between religious universalism and the national churches. But the Jesuits supported the thesis of the pope's 'indirect authority' in political affairs."[208]

And so, with the powerful aid of the Spanish kings, the Spanish-led Jesuit order and the Inquisition, the papacy expanded swiftly and ruthlessly eastwards and westwards – eastwards into Orthodox Eastern Europe, India and the Far East, and westwards into the New World of the Americas.

The power of the popes in political affairs may have been "indirect", but it was undoubted - and theoretically unlimited. For as Pope Paul IV said in *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio*, while the papacy may err in the faith (papal infallibility was proclaimed only later, in 1870), he still has unlimited power over all men: "In assessing Our duty and the situation now prevailing, We have been weighed upon by the thought that a matter of this kind [i.e. error in respect of the Faith] is so grave and so dangerous that the Roman Pontiff, who is the representative upon earth of God and our God and Lord Jesus Christ, who holds the fullness of power over peoples and kingdoms, who may judge all and

---

[206] Paul III himself had been one of those in his sexual behaviour, worldliness and artistic preferences. By the age of twenty-five he had fathered four illegitimate children; he reintroduced balls and banquets into the Vatican; and he sponsored Michelangelo's painting of the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel.

[207] Gombrich, op. cit., p. 189.

[208] Dagron, *Vostochnij tsezaropapizm (istoria i kritika odnoj kontseptsii)* (Eastern Caesaropapism (the history and critique of a concept)), http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=177.

be judged by none in this world, may nonetheless be contradicted if he be found to have deviated from the Faith."[209]

*

However, it was precisely at this time, the height of the Counter-Reformation, that the idea of natural law, which had been introduced into Catholic thought by Thomas Aquinas, began to be influential among Catholics. Thus the Dominican Las Casas wrote: "Among the infidels who have distant kingdoms that have never heard the tidings of Christ or received the faith, there are true kings and princes. Their sovereignty, dignity, and royal pre-eminence derive from natural law and the law of nations… Therefore, with the coming of Jesus Christ to such domains, their honours, royal pre-eminence, and so on, do not disappear either in fact or in right. The opinion contrary to that of the preceding proposition is erroneous and most pernicious. He who persistently defends it will fall into formal heresy…"[210]

This was a very dangerous proposition, not only for papal sovereignty, but also for European imperialism in general… Taken a little further, it might even encourage the idea that the quasi-democratic kinds of societies found in some parts of the Americas might have some legitimacy… In this context, it is significant that Sir Thomas More should have located his Utopia on an imaginary island modelled, in part, on the Spanish West Indies. In the first part of this work, More outlines the corruption of early sixteenth century England, whose fundamental cause, in his opinion, was the misuse of private property. In the second part he presents the opposite, an ideal (but distinctly communist) society in which "tyranny and luxury have been abolished, private property is unknown, and manual labour is looked upon as the sole occupation profitable to the state."[211]

If natural law, in the interpretation of Las Casas, decreed that the pagan kings of the Indies were true kings, in the interpretation of the Jesuit Juan de Mariana, it was the justification for rebellion against corrupt Christian kings. Thus for him the assassination of the French King Henry III was "an eternal honour to France". However, such seditious thinking could not be tolerated; the Jesuits forced Mariana to remove this phrase from his book, and after the assassination of Henry IV in 1610, copies of it were publicly burned in Paris.

Mariana's thoughts were indeed dangerous for absolute monarchs. Thus he wrote: "How will respect for princes (and what is government without this?) remain constant, if the people are persuaded that it is right for the subjects to punish the sins of the rulers? The tranquillity of the commonwealth will often be disturbed with pretended as well as real reasons. And when a revolt takes place every sort of calamity strikes, with one section of the populace armed

---

[209] *Apostolic Constitution of Pope Paul IV*, 15 Feb 1559 (*Roman Bullarium* IV, I, 354-357).

[210] Las Casas, *Aqui se contienen treinta proposiciones muy juridicas*, Proposition XI.

[211] John Warrington, introduction to More's *Utopia*, London: Dent, 1974, p. xi.

against another part. If anyone does not think these evils must be avoided by every means, he would be heartless, wanting in the universal common-sense of mankind. Thus they argue who protect the interests of the tyrant.

"The protectors of the people have no fewer and lesser arguments. Assuredly the republic, whence the regal power has its source, can call a king into court, when circumstances require and, if he persists in senseless conduct, it can strip him of his principate.

"For the commonwealth did not transfer the rights to rule into the hands of a prince to such a degree that it has not reserved a greater power to itself; for we see that in the matters of laying taxes and making permanent laws the state has made the reservation that except with its consent no change can be made. We do not here discuss how this agreement ought to be effected. But nevertheless, only with the desire of the people are new imposts ordered and new laws made; and, what is more, the rights to rule, though hereditary, are settled by the agreement of the people on a successor..."[212]

Another Jesuit "free thinker" was Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), who wrote in *De Laicis*, a treatise on civil government: "All men are equal, not in wisdom or grace, but in the essence and nature of mankind" (Chapter Seven). Considering the origins of political power, Bellarmine taught, "Political power emanates from God. Government was introduced by divine law, but the divine law has given this power to no particular man. ... Men must be governed by someone, lest they be willing to perish. It is impossible for men to live together without someone to care for the common good. Society must have power to protect and preserve itself. It depends upon the consent of the multitude to constitute over itself a king, consul, or other magistrate. ... For legitimate reasons the people can change the government to an aristocracy or a democracy or vice versa" (Chapter Six).[213]

De Mariana and Bellarmine were not the only Catholics to think such heretical thoughts. It is the Spanish Jesuit priest Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), according to Belloc, who "stands at the origin of that political theory which has coloured all modern times. He it was who, completing the work of his contemporary and fellow Jesuit, Bellarmine, restated in the most lucid and conclusive fashion the fundamental doctrine that Governments derive their authority, under God, from the community."[214]

But "under God", for Suarez, meant "under the Pope". And so it was for the Pope to decide if and when a prince, having derived his authority from the people, should lose it because of his bad behaviour. Thus in his *Defense of the*

---

[212] De Mariana, *The King and the Education of the King*, in Englander, op. cit., p. 265.

[213] Matthew E. Bunson, "Bellarmine, Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence", *National Catholic Register*, July 4, 2017, http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/bellarmine- jefferson-and-the-declaration-of-independence

[214] Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened*, p. 233, footnote.

Faith against the Errors of the Anglican Sect (1613), "In the course of arguing that the pope possesses powers that include the right to put a heretic king to death in order to protect the Catholic faith, Suarez offered a novel argument: because political power arises from the sociability of man and therefore resides originally in the people, it must be delegated to the prince by 'human law'; if the prince turns out to be a tyrant, the pope may assert the rights of the people. Because the source of the pope's power is divine and does not come from the people, this theory gives papal authority to a certain supremacy over lay rulers."[215]

Although these ideas of natural law and the popular origin of princely authority were expressed by Catholic writers who remained loyal to the papal supremacy over all secular rulers, they nevertheless undermined the bases of that supremacy in the longer term – as well as those of secular monarchs such as the Holy Roman Emperors.

---

[215] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 492.

16. THE VIRGIN QUEEN

As we have seen, Elizabeth I's achievement, if it really was an achievement, was to find a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism that preserved peace – just – until the English revolution nearly a century later.

And she did that very skilfully, preserving what she considered to be best in the two traditions. Thus, preserving the Protestant respect for the Word of God, and the necessity that the services should be comprehensible to all, she adopted Cranmer's 1552 prayerbook, with its clarity and English language. At the same time, preserving the Catholic tradition of melismatic polyphony, which both she and her father loved, she kept Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, Catholic composers both, as directors of her private Chapel Royal, and gave place for something of the richness of that musical tradition at the beginning and end of Anglican Evensong.[216]

But her immediate problem was somewhat different, and more directly political. As a woman, she had to hold on to power in a society that did not believe that women should rule. Thus John Knox, the Scottish reformer, had published *A First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* on her accession in 1558.

Still more problematically, as a woman she had to marry a man in order to produce an heir – but without surrendering her power to her husband. This had been a major problem also for her sister Mary, who had solved it by marrying her co-religionist Philip of Spain, but then making sure that this powerful king did not remain long in England. Elizabeth could not marry an Englishman because he would necessarily be lower to her in status, and this might tempt him to seize power from her if he did not agree – as was very possible – to be a mere consort of her Majesty. Moreover, to marry a foreign prince more or less equal in status would have subjected the nation to the danger of falling under the power of foreigners. So Elizabeth chose the clever device of saying that she would not marry, while remaining unattached, until she had passed child-bearing age, at which point the necessity of marriage was no longer so urgent. She was to be "the virgin queen", who nevertheless had a child and heir – the nation as a whole. Therefore Elizabeth's "doings", as Anna Whitelock writes, "– the state of her health, her actions and behavior – were the subject of international speculation. Her private life was of public concern. Her body was held to be one and the same as England. The stability of the state depended on the queen's wellbeing, chastity and fertility."[217]

---

[216] See Lucy Worsley's BBC4 documentary, "Elizabeth I's Battle for God's Music".

[217] Whitelock, "Elizabeth I: The Monarch Behind the Mask", *Royal Women, BBC History Magazine,* Spring, 2016, p. 26.

She pulled off this act – for it was indeed an "act", a pretence - with remarkable skill and considerable success, becoming, as J.M. Roberts writes, "an incomparable producer of the royal spectacle"[218]...

And yet, while some theatricality was perhaps inevitable and necessary for political reasons, the cult of the Queen, which she herself strongly encouraged, was a gross affectation, a theatrical performance with idolatrous overtones that hid the reality of a vain woman desperately holding on to power in the face of powerful foreign and domestic rivals. Thus "Elizabeth's unmarried status inspired a cult of virginity. In poetry and portraiture, she was depicted as a virgin or a goddess or both, not as a normal woman. At first, only Elizabeth made a virtue of her virginity: in 1559, she told the Commons, 'And, in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin'. Later on, poets and writers took up the theme and turned it into an iconography that exalted Elizabeth. Public tributes to the Virgin by 1578 acted as a coded assertion of opposition to the queen's marriage negotiations with the Duke of Alençon.

"Ultimately, Elizabeth would insist she was married to her kingdom and subjects, under divine protection. In 1559, she spoke of 'all my husbands, my good people'."[219]

Through this virginal but "multigamous" marriage, as Jonathan Bolt writes, Elizabeth "set about unifying her people, encouraging a rhetoric in which she was empress of a new international power of independence and future greatness…"[220]

*

Meanwhile, the Calvinists found themselves, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, with both money (from the dissolution of the monasteries) and national sentiment (from the fact that they had been persecuted during the reign of "Bloody Mary") on their side. Moreover, it was a Calvinist, William Cecil, who was Elizabeth's chief counsellor…

For Calvinism was on the crest of a wave after the death of Calvin himself in 1564. "In London, where more editions of his works were published than anywhere else, printers struggled to keep pace with demand. One enterprising editor had even commissioned a compilation of his greatest hits. Nor was it only in England that Calvin had become, almost overnight, a best-seller. The reverberations of his influence had reached as far afield as Scotland – a land freely acknowledged by its own nobility to be 'almost beyond the limits of the human race'. In 1559, the preaching of John Knox, an exile returned from Geneva, had inspired an eruption of godly vandalism around the kingdom.

---

[218] Roberts, *History of the World,* Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 466.

[219] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_I_of_England.

[220] Bolt, *Soul of the Age,* London: Penguin, 2008, p. 21.

One congregation, after listening to Knox inveigh against idolatry, had promptly set to dismantling the local cathedral. Other bands of enthusiasts had incinerated abbeys, chopped down the orchards of friaries, and pulled up flowers in monastery gardens. A year later – after a short but vicious civil war, and a vote by the Scottish parliament for a reformation of the country's Church that was unmistakably Calvinist in flavor – the ambition to rout idolatry had been set on an official footing. There was now no relic of papist superstition in Britain so remote that it might not be liable for legal destruction. Whether to islands lashed by Atlantic gales, where the Irish monks, back in the age of Columbanus, had raised crosses amid the heather and the rock, or to the wildest reaches of Wales, where moss-covered chapels stood guard over gushing springs, workmen armed with sledge-hammers made their way, and did their work. The reach of magistrates inspired by Calvin had become a long one indeed.

"… Across the Channel, the forces of darkness, hell-bound and predacious, were drowning famous Christian cities in the blood of the elect. In 1572, on the feast-day of Saint Bartholomew, thousands of Protestants had been butchered on the streets of Paris. In other cities, too, throughout Calvin's native France, there had been a general slaughter of his followers. New martyrs had been made in Lyon. Meanwhile, in the Low countries, an even more murderous conflict was being fought. Its cities, brilliant and rich, had long been inculcators of every shade of Protestant. As early as 1523, Charles V had hanged two monks in Antwerp on a charge of heresy, and leveled their monastery. The king of Münster, John of Leiden, had been Dutch. Over the course of the succeeding decades, more Protestants had been put to death in the Low Countries than anywhere else. Yet still the ranks of the godly there had continued to grow. Insurgents against a monarchy with all the wealth of the New World at its back, many had found in Calvin's teachings a life-altering reassurance: that to be outnumbered did not mean being wrong. To take up arms against tyranny was no sin, but rather a duty. God would look after his own…

"… Elizabeth's Protestantism was of a distinctly wilful kind. Her taste for the trappings of popery – bishops, choirs, crucifixes – appalled the godly. The more that she dismissed their calls for further reform, the more they fretted over whether the Church of England over which she presided as its first Supreme Governor could be reckoned truly Protestant at all. The name first given them by a Catholic exile in 1565 – 'Puritans' [essentially the same word as the 'Cathars' of thirteenth-century Provence] – seemed less an insult than a fair description. Knowing as they did that only a small number were destined to be saved, they saw in the obduracy of the queen and her ministers all the confirmation they needed of their own status as an inner core of the elect. It was not just their right to shoulder the responsibility for reform, but their duty. What were all the titles of bishops if not mere vanities, 'drawn out of the Pope's shop'? What the affectations of monarchy if not tyranny? True authority lay instead with the fellowship of the godly, led by its elected pastors and presbyters. Their charge it was to continue the great labour of cleansing the world of delusion, and of scraping away from the ark of Christianity all the

accumulated barnacles and seaweed of human invention. Before the urgency of such a mission, all the raging of the traditional guardians of church and state, of archbishops and kings, were as nothing The task was nothing less than to right the disorder of the cosmos. To join God with man…"[221]

<div align="center">*</div>

The threat to Elizabeth's *via media* from the Puritan "left" was considerable… But then Divine Providence provided her with an opportunity to rally the nation behind her… And it came from the Pope himself…

For Pope Pius V, who had so nearly seen England go Catholic under Queen Mary, was not satisfied with this situation. It was his Bull *Regnans in Caelis* (1570), together with the failed Spanish Armada he sponsored in 1588, that finally ensured the victory of the English Reformation. For he declared: "He that reigns in the highest, to Whom has been given all power in heaven and earth, entrusted the government of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (outside which there is no salvation) to one man alone on the earth, namely to Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and to Peter's successor, the Roman pontiff, in fullness of power. This one man He set up as chief over all nations, and all kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, dispose, plant and build…We declare … Elizabeth to be a heretic and an abettor of heretics, and those that cleave to her in the aforesaid matters to have incurred the sentence of anathema, and to be cut off from the unity of Christ's body.… We declare her to be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid realm, and from every dominion, dignity and privilege whatsoever. And the nobles, subjects and peoples of the said realm, and all others who have taken an oath of any kind to her we declare to be absolved forever from such an oath and from all dues of dominion, fidelity and obedience… And we enjoin and forbid all… to obey her and her admonitions, commands, and laws. All who disobey our command we involve in the same sentence of anathema."[222]

By deposing Elizabeth, the pope was imitating his predecessor, Gregory VII, whose deposition of the German Emperor Henry IV had initiated the Investiture Conflict, which lasted for centuries. Still more important, by forbidding English Catholics to obey Elizabeth, he immediately placed all English Catholics who recognized the Pope's authority into the category of political traitors as well as ecclesiastical heretics. Catholics were asked under torture whether, in the event of a Catholic invasion of England, they would be loyal to the Queen or the Pope. If they could not place the Queen above the Pope, they paid with their lives.

Bill Bryson writes: "Tensions between Protestants and Catholics came to a head in 1586 when Mary, Queen of Scots, was implicated in a plot to overthrow

---

[221] Holland, *Dominion*, pp. 317-319.

[222] Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, third edition, 1999, pp. 267-268.

the Queen." With Elizabeth's agreement, "she was executed in February 1587. Killing a fellow monarch, however threatening, was a grave act, and it provoked a response. In the spring of the following year, Spain dispatched a mighty navy to capture the English throne and replace Elizabeth.

"The greatest fleet that 'ever swam upon the sea', the Spanish Armada looked invincible. In battle formation it spread over seven miles of sea and carried ferocious firepower: 123,000 cannonballs and nearly three thousand cannons, plus every manner of musket and small arms, divided between thirty thousand men. The Spanish confidently expected the swiftest of triumphs – one literally for the glory of God. Once England fell, and with the English fleet in Spanish hands, the very real prospect arose of the whole of Protestant Europe being toppled.

"Things didn't go to plan, to put it mildly. England's ships were nimbler and sat lower in the water, making them awkward targets. They could dart about doing damage here and there while the Spanish guns, standing on high decks, mostly fired above them. The English ships were better commanded, too (or so all the English history books tell us). It is only fair to note that most of the Spanish fleet were not battleships but overloaded troop carriers, making plump and lumbering targets. The English also enjoyed a crucial territorial edge: they could exploit their intimate knowledge of local tides and currents, and could dart back to the warm comfort of home ports for refreshment and repairs. Above all they had a decisive technological advantage: cast-iron cannons, an English invention that other nations had not yet perfected, which fired straighter and were vastly sturdier than the Spanish bronze guns, which were poorly bored and inaccurate and had to be allowed to cool after every two or three rounds. Crews that failed to heed this – and in the heat of battle it was easy to lose track – often blew themselves up. In any case the Spanish barely trained their gun crews. Their strategy was to come alongside and board enemy ships, capturing them in hand-to-hand combat.

"The rout was spectacular. It took the English just three weeks to pick the opponent's navy to pieces. In a single day the Spanish suffered eight thousand casualties. Dismayed and confused, the tattered fleet fled up the east coast of England and around Scotland into the Irish Sea, where fate dealt it further cruel blows in the form of lashing gales, which wrecked at least two dozen ships. A thousand Spanish bodies, it was recorded, washed up on Irish beaches. Those who struggled ashore were often slaughtered for their baubles. By the time the remnants of the Armada limped home, it had lost seventeen thousand men out of the thirty thousand who had set off. England lost no ships at all.

"The Spanish Armada changed the course of history. It induced a rush of patriotism in England that Shakespeare exploited in his history plays (nearly all written in the following decade), and it gave England a confidence and power to command the sea and build a global empire, beginning almost immediately with North America. Above all it secured Protestantism for England. Had the Armada prevailed it would have brought with it the Spanish

Inquisition, with goodness knows what consequences for Elizabethan England – and the young man from Warwickshire who was just about to transform its theatre…"[223]

During the Spanish Armada, when, "full of princely resolution and more than feminine courage, [Elizabeth] passed like some Amazonian Empress through all her army", and uttered the famous words: "I am come… to live or die amongst you all, and to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and I think foul scorn that… Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm."

The effect was electric, and the political consequences profound. For "the failure of the Armada," as Tombs writes, "appeared to both sides to be a divine judgement: '*Fluit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt*', proclaimed an English celebratory medal – 'God blew and they were scattered'. For Protestants it vindicated their rejection of Romish superstition. For Catholics, and especially Philip and his people, it was proof of their sinfulness and unworthiness to fight in God's cause: 'Almost the entire country went into mourning,' wrote a Spanish friar. 'People talked about nothing else.' In France, Henri III felt strong enough to have Philip's ally, the Duc de Guise, murdered, but this began a new round of civil war, and Henri himself was assassinated by a Dominican friar seven months later. His successor was the Protestant leader Henri of Navarre, as Henri IV, and despite converting to Catholicism he was soon involved in war with Spain with England as his ally. So France became the new focus of European conflict, diverting Spanish armies, relieving the pressure on the Dutch and English, and perhaps saving both from future defeat – for if the Dutch had been defeated, England would have been far more vulnerable to another invasion…"[224]

*

The victory over the Armada had been made possible by heavy investment in the Royal Navy. And "the capture four years later," writes Peter Frankopan, "of the *Madre de Deus*, a Portuguese carevel, off the Azores as it returned from the East Indies laden with pepper, cloves, nutmeg, ebony, tapestries, silks, textiles, pearls and precious metal, made the point about seapower even more emphatically. The haul from this single ship, which was towed into Dartmouth harbor on the south coast, was reckoned to be worth half of England's regular annual imports. Its seizure prompted agonized discussions about how the booty should be shared out between the crown and those responsible for the success – something that was not made easier when high value portable items quickly went missing.

---

[223] Bryson, *Shakespeare,* London: William Collins, 2016, pp. 61-63.
[224] Tombs, op. cit., pp. 193-195.

"Successes like these were good for confidence and encouraged increasingly disruptive behaviour in the Atlantic and elsewhere. England began to build ties with anyone who was an enemy of Catholic rulers in Europe. In the 1590s, for example, Queen Elizabeth made a point of releasing Muslims from North Africa who had been serving as 'gally-slaves' on captured Spanish ships, providing them with clothes, money 'and other necessities', before sending them home safely. The English, moreover, had support from the Muslims of North Africa in an attack on Cadiz in 1596 – an incident that is referred to at the very start of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Such was the alignment of interests in this period that one modern commentator talks of the English and the Moors participating in a 'jihad' against Catholic Spain.

"As a result of England's attempt to challenge the new Spanish and Portuguese routes to the Americas and to Asia, considerable effort was devoted to forging close relations with the Ottoman Turks. At a time when most of Europe looked with horror as Turkish forces were all but knocking at the gates of Vienna, the English backed a different horse. They were conspicuous by their absence when other Christian states assembled to form a 'Holy League', a coalition that gathered to attack the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto in the Gulf of Corinth in 1571. The Holy League prompted scenes of jubiliation across Europe, where poetry, music, art and monuments were created to commemorate the triumph. In England, it was met with silence.

"After this, the Sultan in Constantinople was assiduously courted with warm letters of friendship and the dispatch of gifts from the court ot Queen Elizabeth – with the result that 'sincere greetings and abundant salutations, rose perfumed, which emanate from pure mutual confidence and the abundance of amity' were sent back to London..."[225]

*

Elizabeth's prestige and power were now at their height. "She had deliberately created an imposing image both majestic and popular, through pictures, propaganda, lavish spectacles and progresses round the country, in which she appeared as defender of the nation and preserver of peace... Parliament functioned as a connector of Crown and country, and the Church reiterated the moral basis of government: 'Such subjects as are disobedient or rebellious against their princes disobey God and procure their own damnation. Religious violence had not, unlike in much of Europe, destroyed social and political cohesion. Elizabeth's willingness to allow some latitude in religious sentiment, her dislike of doctrinal meddling and inquisition (she did not believe in creating windows to spy into men's souls, as she put it), and above all the national perception that she protected the country from invasion and turmoil gave her a unique popularity..."[226]

---

[225] Frankopan, op. cit., pp. 246-247.
[226] Tombs, op. cit., p. 196.

But the failure of the Armada also destroyed the English Catholics' last chance of political redemption. For Queen Elizabeth did not have the power to resist her Calvinist advisers, especially the Cecils, father and son. From this time the decatholicization of the country proceeded apace...

Amidst the religious turmoil of the time, the Tudors achieved a certain stability by exalting the sovereign to the status of supreme judge of religious disputes. Queen Elizabeth I's position as head of both Church and State was necessitated, supposedly, by the constant threat of civil war between Catholics and Calvinists. In this respect her dilemma was similar to that of the contemporary Henry IV of France, who, as we have seen, though a Calvinist by upbringing, converted to Catholicism in order to bring his country's religious wars to an end. For "Paris is worth a mass", he said: the important thing was that "we are all French and fellow-citizens of the same country". Elizabeth similarly did not want to "make windows into men's souls"; so long as they obeyed her and were not "extremists" in religion, she would not pry too deeply into their beliefs. The result was a nation united around "a Calvinist creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy."[227]

Elizabeth believed in the Divine right of kings and in the supremacy of the sovereign over all other estates of the realm, including the Church. Thus in her letters to James VI of Scotland (later James I of England), she lashes out "against Presbyterians and Jesuits alike for their separate attacks on royal authority and power." According to Susan Doran, Elizabeth's views had their roots in a Christian Platonism according to which earthly rule was a reflection of the Divine harmony and order, and that consequently "diversity, variety, contention and vain love of singularity, either in our ministers or in the people, must provoke the displeasure of Almighty God."[228]

*

It is instructive to compare the position of Elizabeth I with that of the contemporary Moghul Emperor Akbar, whose empire included most of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Muslim-Hindu relations were not good. And so he adopted ecumenism to create peace: "Finding himself ruling a multi-faith, multinational, polyglot realm, he brilliantly adapted Islam to create a faith for all, consulting Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsis and Hindus. The result borrowed from all these faiths and built around Akbar's authority, recognised by Islam jurists as 'infallible'. His creed was centred on the formula: 'There is One God and his Caliph is Akbar'."[229]

---

[227] The words of William Pitt the Elder in 1760 (Barzun, op. cit., p. 33). The Arminians separated from the Dutch Calvinists in the early seventeenth century, ascribing a greater role to free will than was acceptable to Calvinist orthodoxy.

[228] Doran, "Elizabeth I's Religion: The Evidence of Her Letters", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 51, no. 4.

[229] Montefiore, op. cit., p. 228.

Sir A.C. Lyall writes that Akbar "instituted a kind of metaphysical society, over which he presided in person, and in which he delighted in pitting against each other Persian mystics, Hindu pantheists, Christian missionaries and orthodox Mohammedans. He even assumed by public edict the spiritual headship of his empire, and declared himself the first appellate judge of ecclesiastical questions. 'Any opposition,' said the edict, 'on the part of subjects to such orders passed by His Majesty shall involve damnation in the world to come, and loss of religion and property in this life.'… Akbar's political object was to provide some common ground upon which Hindus and Mohammedans might be brought nearer to religious unity; though it is hardly necessary to add that no such modus vivendi has at any time been discovered."[230]

Just as Akbar tried to unite his subjects through inter-religious ecumenism, so Elizabeth tried to unite her subjects through a kind of inter-denominational ecumenism. For both sovereigns had to be above the religious fray, just as God was above all religions.

Elizabeth's task was hardly less difficult than Akbar's, and the attempt to contain the pressures of conflicting religions under an absolutist monarch collapsed within forty years of her death. However, she made a valiant attempt, clothing and obscuring the Calvinist, and therefore anti-monarchical, creed of the State in a purely Catholic monarchical pomp and ritualism. Thus while the 39 articles of the Anglican Creed admitted only two sacraments, baptism and the eucharist (the latter interpreted in a distinctly Protestant sense), and rejected the sacrament of the priesthood, room was somehow found for a sacramental mystique of the monarchy.

This mystique was superbly expressed by Shakespeare in *Richard II:*

> *Not all the water in the rough rude sea*
> *Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;*
> *The breath of worldly men cannot depose*
> *The deputy elected by the Lord.* (III, ii, 54-7)

and *Hamlet:*

> *There's such a divinity doth hedge a king*
> *That treason can but peep to what it would…*(IV, v, 123-4):

As queen, Elizabeth was the capstone of the whole social order, founded on the hierarchical principle.

"According to this conception," writes C.S. Lewis, "degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The

---

[230] Lyall, "India. (1) The Mogul Empire", in *The Cambridge Modern History,* vol. VI: The Eighteenth Century, pp. 514-515.

goodness, happiness and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails in either part of the twofold task we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected. One of the other it will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in the system (whether it step up like a rebellious angel or down like an uxorious husband) it has made the very nature of things its enemy. It cannot succeed.

"Aristotle tells us that to rule and to be ruled are things according to Nature. The soul is the natural ruler of the body, the male of the female, reason of passion. Slavery is justified because some men are to other men as souls are to bodies (*Politics* I, 5). We must not, however, suppose that the rule of master over slave or soul over body is the only kind of rule: there are as many kinds of rule as there are kinds of superiority or inferiority. Thus a man should rule his slaves despotically, his children monarchically, and wife politically; soul should be the despot of the body, but reason the constitutional king of passion (*Politics* I, 5, 12). The justice or injustice of any given instance of rule depends wholly on the nature of the parties, not in the least on any social contract. Where the citizens are really equal then they ought to live in a republic where all rule in turn (*Politics* I, 12; II, 2). If they are not really equal then the republican form becomes unjust (*Politics* III, 13). The difference between a king and a tyrant does not turn exclusively on the fact that one rules mildly and the other harshly. A king is one who rules over his real, natural inferiors. He who rules permanently, without successor, over his natural equals is a tyrant – even (presumably) if he rules well. He is inordinate (*Politics* III, 16, 17; IV, 10). Justice means equality for equals, and inequality for unequals (*Politics* III, 9). The sort of questions we now ask – whether democracy or dictatorship is the better constitution – would be senseless to Aristotle. He would ask 'Democracy *for whom?*' 'Dictatorships *for whom?*'

"Aristotle was thinking mainly of civil society. The applications of the Hierarchical conception to private, as to cosmic, life are to be sought in other writers…

"The greatest statement of the Hierarchical conception in its double reference to civil and cosmic life is, perhaps, the speech of Ulysses in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (I, 3, 109)*:*

> *Take but degree away, untune that string,*
> *And hark what discord follows! Each thing melts*
> *In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters*
> *Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,*
> *And make a sop of all this solid globe;*
> *Strength should be lord of imbecility,*
> *And the rude son should strike his father dead;*
> *Force should be right; or, rather, right and wrong –*
> *Between whose endless jar justice resides –*
> *Should lose their names, and so should justice too.*

Its special importance lies in its clear statement of the alternative to Hierarchy. If you take 'Degree' away 'each thing meets in mere oppugnancy,' 'strength' will be lord, everything will 'include itself in power'. In other words, the modern idea that we can choose between Hierarchy and equality is, for Shakespeare's Ulysses, mere moonshine. The real alternative is tyranny: if you will not have authority you will find yourself obeying brute force.

"It is worth pondering why the monarchy continued to exert such a mystical attraction in a nation that was well on the way at that time to ejecting all mysticism from its political and ecclesiastical life. Part of the answer must lie in the upsurge of patriotism that accompanied the defeat of the Spanish Armada, whose focus became the virgin Queen Elizabeth. Another part must lie in the continuing nostalgia for the past that was being destroyed, a past in which the figure of the anointed king played such an important role.

"'Authoritarianism' is a dirty word according to the fashionable ideology of democracy, and the source of all legitimacy is seen to come from below, not above. It is as if the English people subconsciously feel that they have lost something vitally important, and cling to the holy corpse of monarchy with despairing tenacity, refusing to believe that the soul has finally departed. Monarchism appears to be something deeply rooted in the human psyche which we attempt to destroy at our peril…"[231]

Sir Roger Scruton has spoken of the English monarchy as "the light above politics, which shines down on the human bustle from a calmer and more exalted sphere. Not being elected by popular vote, the monarch cannot be understood as representing the views only of the present generation. He or she is born into the position, and also passes it on to a legally defined successor. The monarch is in a real sense the voice of history, and the very accidental [sic] way in which the office is acquired emphasises the grounds of the monarch's legitimacy, in the history of a place and a culture. This is not to say that kings and queens cannot be mad, irrational, self-interested or unwise. It is to say, rather, that they owe their authority and their influence precisely to the fact that they speak for something other than the present desires of present voters, something vital to the continuity and community which the act of voting assumes. Hence, if they are heard at all, they are head as limiting the democratic process, in just the way that it must be limited if it is to issue in reasonable legislation. It was in such a way that the English conceived their Queen, in the sunset days of Queen Victoria. The sovereign was an ordinary person, transfigured by a peculiar enchantment which represented not political power but the mysterious authority of an ancient 'law of the land'. When the monarch betrays that law – as, in the opinion of many, the Stuarts betrayed it – a great social and spiritual unrest seizes the common conscience, unrest of a kind that

---

[231] Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost,* New Delhi: Atlantic, 2012, pp. 71-72.

could never attend the misdemeanours of an elected president, or even the betrayal of trust by a political party."[232]

"Something about an English king distinguished him from the godly prince of Germany or Sweden. While everyone agreed that a lawful ruler was called of God, and that obedience was a Christian duty, it would not have been so natural for a Lutheran to write that a divinity doth hedge a king. Offspring of an ancient line, crowned with the anointing of medieval ritual, he retained an aura of mystique which neither Renaissance nor Reformation at once dispelled. It is curious to find the Catholic king of France touching the scrofulous to heal them until a few years before the French Revolution. It is much more curious to find the Protestant sovereigns of England, from Elizabeth to James II, continuing to perform the same ritual cures, and to note that the last reigning sovereign to touch was Queen Anne in 1714... The supernatural aura of the anointed head was long in dying..."[233]

We must remember that the Elizabethan monarchy was not like the Anglo-Saxon autocracy that fell in 1066, a true symphony between Church and State. Nor was it like the Roman Catholic monarchy of late medieval times from William the Conqueror to the early reign of Henry VIII. Elizabeth's rule was a *Protestant despotism* that executed the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, together with many thousands of Catholic Irish "rebels", and carried out thorough burnings of any books that even obliquely hinted at the ideas of sedition or republicanism. In the course of the sixteenth century it destroyed most of what was left of traditional English Christian practice and belief – especially the worship of the Body and Blood of Christ and the veneration of saints and relics, - blasphemously placing itself at the head of both Church and State. Even the anointing oil that the monarchs received was a fake. For how could it be genuinely sacramental when the 39 Articles, the official statement of Anglican belief, recognized only two sacraments, but not the sacramental priesthood that alone could produce the "balm" of a truly anointed king?

In spite of this, from a purely cultural point of view England reached a truly exalted peak in the Elizabethan period. This was the age of Shakespeare and Spenser, Byrd and Tallis. The Queen, as the pivot of the nation's spiritual and cultural life, and the quasi-chivalric object of the devotion of so many of the leading men of the realm, acquired much reflected glory from these real and undoubted achievements.

However, the defeat of the Armada in 1588 owed more to Divine Providence and the skill and bravery of her sailors than her own leadership. Stinginess was a notorious trait in her: she never created a standing army or hired mercenaries or instituted a half-decent recruiting system (Shakespeare satirized it in *Henry V*). Even at the point of greatest danger during the Armada, she showed herself unwilling to spend money on the army. "She only half-heartedly supported a

---

[232] Scruton, *England: An Elegy*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2000, p. 188.
[233] Chadwick, op. cit., p. 222.

number of ineffective, poorly resourced military campaigns in the Netherlands, France, and Ireland."[234]

<div align="center">*</div>

It was Elizabeth's policy in Ireland that constituted her most long-term and poisonous legacy. In 1172 the Anglo-Norman King Henry II of England, the great-grandson of William the Conqueror, had conquered the south-east of Ireland as far north as Dublin (with the blessing of an English pope, Adrian IV[235]), making Ireland the first British colony; and Professor Robert Bartlett has argued that the contemptuous attitude of the conquerors towards the native Irish is the first manifestation of the European colonialist spirit. Rebellions were frequent, and were put down with cruelty and heavy loss of life. Thus during a revolt in Munster in 1582 30,000 Irishmen were starved to death. In 1597 the Earl of Tyrone and his allies O'Donnell and Maguire rebelled again and defeated the English at Blackwater.

"The root causes of the disaster," writes James Shapiro, "can be traced back as far as the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, after which the Kings of England declared themselves Lords of Ireland. The English presence in Ireland over the following centuries had never really displaced the power of local Gaelic lords. Irish politics remained decentralized: clans and their feuding chieftains- who ruled over people, not territory – remained the dominant political force. The influence of the Old English, as the Anglo-Norman rulers were called, didn't extend much further than the major ports, towns, and the area around Dublin, known as the Pale, where the English administration was concentrated. The English made few inroads in the north and west. Successive English kings were content to let surrogate feudal lords, to whom lesser lords paid tribute in exchange for protection, manage things in their absence. This often anarchic state of affairs took a turn for the worse under the Tudors, when Henry VIII decided to declare himself King of Ireland, and also, for good measure, supreme head of the Church. Hereafter the Irish would speak English and abandon their Catholic faith. The Tudor fantasy of imposing English religion, law, language, primogeniture, dress and civility failed to have the desired effect. To the bewilderment of English observers, the rude Irish clung to their strange and barbarous customs. And, to their consternation, many of the Old English settlers had, over the course of several centuries, gone native, adopting Irish customs and marrying into local families, vastly complicating loyalties and alliances between Gaelic, Old English and New English inhabitants – and unnerving those committed to preserving a pure and unsullied Englishness.

---

[234] James Shapiro, *1599. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare,* London: Faber and Faber, 2005, chapter 7.

[235] In his *Metalogicus* of 1156 John of Salisbury writes of Adrian: "At my solicitation he granted Ireland to Henry II, the illustrious King of England, to hold by hereditary right, as his letter to this day testifies. For all Ireland of ancient right, according to the Donation of Constantine, was said to belong to the Roman Church which he founded."

"Elizabeth's Irish policies were characterized by incoherence and neglect. The Queen was too miserly to pay the huge price to subdue Ireland and too distracted by other concerns to acknowledge the weaknesses of her colonial policies. The impression left on the visiting French diplomat, André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, was that the 'English and the Queen herself would wish Ireland drowned in the sea, for she cannot get any profit from it, and meanwhile the expense and trouble is very great, and she cannot put any trust in that people'. The Elizabethan policy of appropriating huge swathes of Irish land and inviting Englishmen to settle on these 'plantations' provided local resentment. Irish rebels looked to Spain for support and rallied followers around their threatened Catholic identity. Meanwhile, each short-lived English viceroy – suspected back at the English court, lacking support for ambitious reforms, bewildered by Ireland's complex political landscape, and often corrupt and brutal – failed in turn to establish either peace or stability. Elizabeth's muddled and half-hearted strategies were penny wise and pound foolish: in the last two decades of her reign she would spend £2,000,000 and the lives of many English conscripts in ongoing efforts to pacify Ireland."[236]

Elizabeth sent her former favourite, the foolish and vainglorious Earl of Essex, to subdue the Irish. He failed miserably, and after returning from Ireland against her express command, "burst into the Queen's bedchamber, where he discovered Elizabeth 'newly up, her hair about her face'. 'Tis much wondered at,' Whyte writes with considerable understatement, 'that he went so boldly to her Majesty's presence, she not being ready, and he so full of dirt and mire, that his very face was full of it.' No man had ever entered into her bedchamber in her presence, had seen Elizabeth beside her famous walnut bed, hung with cloth of silver, fringed with gold and silver lace and crowned with ostrich plumes. For the Queen and her women-in-waiting it must have come as an unbelievable shock. It's next to impossible today to grasp how great a taboo Essex had violated. This was England's virgin Queen and her bedchamber was sacrosanct…"[237]

The mystique had been destroyed, the mask ripped away (almost literally – the Queen was always heavily made up, but not when Essex entered). The Queen received Essex calmly. However, she turned against him; and "from that moment, at least in England, it's fair to say that chivalry was dead"; for Essex was the foremost champion of the old chivalric values in the country.[238]

Having been placed under house arrest, Essex rose in rebellion immediately after watching a performance of Shakespeare's *Richard II*. He failed, and was beheaded… This was also the last of the baronial revolts against monarchical power. For, "as the historian Mervyn James has shown, the Essex rising existed at a crossroads of political rebellion against the monarchy. The next generation

---

[236] Shapiro, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

[237] Shapiro, op. cit., p. 300.

[238] Shapiro, op. cit., p. 302.

would see something very different: discontent coming from the House of Commons rather than the earls, talk of the sovereignty of the law as opposed to that of the King."[239]

But the Queen was never the same again (in spite of her motto, *Semper Eadem*, "always the same"); from this time the monarchy seemed to lose its unifying mystique, the illusion had been destroyed together with her make-up. Indeed, "Elizabeth did not long outlive Essex. The report ran that she 'sleepeth not so much by day as she used, neither taketh rest by night. Her delight is to sit in the dark and sometimes with shedding tears to bewail Essex.' The King of Scots' accession to the English throne in March, 1603, carefully orchestrated by Cecil, went flawlessly, and for the first time in a half-century England was ruled by a king – and one with sons…"[240]

---

[239] Bolt, *Soul of the Age,* London: Penguin, 2008, p. 266.
[240] Shapiro, op. cit., p. 372.

17. SHAKESPEARE'S UNIVERSE

Like his contemporaries, the playwrights Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Kyd and Ben Jonson, writes Tombs, "Shakespeare was formed (in his case from Stratford Grammar School onwards) by humanism, inspired by classical literature, particularly Ovid and Virgil, and concerned with rhetorical forms (of which 'To be or not to be…' is a textbook example). The stories of his plays reflect many of the cultural and political concerns of his day, including treason, conspiracy, royal succession, war and the exotic. But at deeper levels he is astonishingly not the product of his times, which is an evident reason for the continuing power of his work. Most obviously, he is not dogmatic; he displays a wide variety of cultural and religious influences, but is not defined by the religious conflict that shaped his time – hence continuing modern debate about his personal beliefs. He pays little respect to social and gender hierarchy. He writes of a 'deep England', beyond London and the court. Women were always important and often dominant in his plays, and women came in large numbers to see them, scandalizing foreign visitors. It is often said that he conceals his opinions; it seems rather that the ideas he explores transcend the limits of contemporary politics."[241]

Although Shakepeare's personal beliefs were indeed not dominated by the religious conflict that shaped his time, they could not fail to be influenced by it… By the time he reached his peak as a writer, England had undergone over sixty years of profound change – the transition, in essence, from the medieval to the modern world-view. But the transition was incomplete; people were confused; and in Shakespeare there arose the perfect recorder of this critical turning-point in European history. For, as Jonathan Bate writes, "his mind and world were poised between Catholicism and Protestantism, old feudal ways and new bourgeois ambitions, rational thinking and visceral instinct, faith and scepticism." [242]The transition from Catholicism to Protestantism profoundly influenced his work. For "he lived between the two great cataclysms in English history: the break from the universal Roman Catholic church and the execution of King Charles I."[243]

The transition caused Shakespeare, like many of his fellow countrymen, to question the basis of their beliefs; and this questioning necessitated a change in the very literary form of his plays. "For centuries," writes Bolt, "the staple of English drama had been the cycles of 'miracle' plays, dramatizations of biblical stories organized by the gilds of tradesmen in the major towns and cities around the country. They were destroyed by the Protestant Reformation… By the time he began writing plays himself, the old religious drama was dead and buried…

---

[241] Tombs, op. cit., p. 203.

[242] Bolt, op. cit., p. 18.

[243] Bolt, op. cit., p. 18.

"… The old religious drama had offered to audiences a constant reminder that that they were under the watchful eye of God. The new Elizabethan drama concentrated instead on people in relationship with each other and with society."[244]

It was a momentous change in the culture of Western Europe; and in this change Shakespeare both imitated life and influenced it. Thus in *Hamlet* (1600), perhaps the most famous literary work in history, Shakespeare found a new technique – the device of the soliloquy – to express the interior conflicts and confusions, not only of his hero, but also of the new, semi-secularized humanity that was coming into existence.

"With *Hamlet*," writes James Shapiro, "a play poised midway between a religious past and a secular future, Shakespeare finally found a dramatically compelling way to internalize contesting forces: the essay-like soliloquy proved to be the perfect vehicle for Hamlet's efforts to confront issues that, like Brutus', defied easy resolution. And he further complicated Hamlet's struggle by placing it in a large world of unresolved post-Reformation social, religious and political conflicts, which is why the play is so often taken as the ultimate expression of its age…

"… The soliloquies restlessly return to these conflicts, which climax in 'To be or not to be': in a world that feels so 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable', is it better to live or die? And is the fear of what awaits him in the next world enough to offset the urge to commit suicide? Is the Ghost come from Purgatory to warn him or should he see this visitation in a Protestant light (for Protestants didn't believe in Purgatory), as a devil who will exploit his melancholy and who 'Abuses me to damn me' (II, ii, 603). Is revenge a human or a divine prerogative? Is it right to kill Claudius at his prayers, even if this means sending his shriven soul to heaven? When, if ever, is killing a tyrant justified – and does the failure to do so invite damnation?"[245]

It was this last, political question that especially exercised Shakespeare, as it did his countrymen at this time. Of course, he had touched upon the question of the nature of political authority, its rights and limitations, in several of the history plays of the previous decade, when he had been able, with his usual skill, to present both sides of the argument in a convincing manner. *Henry V* and *Richard II* are especially interesting for Orthodox readers because of their profound exploration of the nature of sacred kingship, and its responsibility before God and man. The parallels with the life of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas, who like Richard, was forced to abdicate from his throne, are numerous, as in *Richard II:*

---

[244] Bolt, op. cit., pp. 18, 19, 20.

[245] Shapiro, *1599. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare,* London: Faber and Faber, 2005, pp. 337-338.

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed King.

As for *Julius Caesar,* it is probably the profoundest study of the morality of revolution and revolutionaries in the English language.

Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, *Othello* and *Timon of Athens* continue the themes of loyalty and betrayal that are so central to the whole of Shakespeare's oeuvre. We may suppose that Shakespeare was fairly conservative, even monarchist in his political views. Thus in *Troilus and Cressida* we find the famous speech on "degree", i.e. hierarchy, as the binding principle of the whole universe. Nevertheless, we may also suppose that Shakespeare felt the tug of revolutionary tendencies and to some extent sympathized with them. Thus there is real passion in Hamlet's attempt to expose the evil deeds of the false King Claudius in the "play within the play":

<u>Ophelia</u>. *The King rises.*
<u>Hamlet</u>. *What, frighted with false fire!*
<u>Queen</u>. *How fares my lord?*
<u>Polonius</u>. *Give o'er the play.*
<u>King</u>. *Give me some light. Away!*
<u>Polonius</u>. *Lights, lights, lights!*

But this was dangerous territory in Jacobean England, where the monarchy so jealously guarded its privileges. In any case, even if he sympathized to some extent with the rebels against the monarchists, Shakespeare was perfectly well aware where revolution ended – in hell, where the ghost of Hamlet's father came from. Thus Hamlet exposes the false king - but at the same time destroys both himself and all those whom he loves.

Up to this point, in spite of the political content of his plays, Shakespeare had managed, unlike several of his dramatist colleagues, to escape censorship (carried out in that age by bishops) and stay out of prison. But the Gunpowder Plot of November, 1605, when a Catholic conspiracy to blow up the Houses of Parliament was foiled by the authorities, raised the political temperature in the country, inducing spy-mania, paranoia and suspicions of treason to an unparalleled degree. Shakespeare had the choice: to play safe and not allude to recent events or the controversies surrounding them, or to follow Hamlet's own advice to dramatists and "hold the mirror up to nature" and give "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure". He chose the latter, riskier course, and the result was one of his greatest plays, *Macbeth*, which was performed at court in front of King James sometime in 1606.

No less great is *King Lear*, Shakespeare's Great Friday allegory, whose imagery reflects the theme: wood, earth, blood and instruments of torture abound. But the real victim is Lear's Christ-like daughter Cordelia. The scene of her sacrificial, all-forgiving death, and Lear's repentance as a result of it, is perhaps the most unbearably poignant in English literature.

If *King Lear* is Shakespeare's allegory of the Crucifixion, then *Macbeth* is his allegory of the Descent into hell. Everything is darkness, demons, damnation, despair. Macbeth's final loss of all faith and hope is ferocious in the cold, cruel clarity of its vision, as even the rhythm of the verse slows down almost to a halt to echo the everlastingness of his damnation:

> *To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,*
> *Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,*
> *To the last syllable of recorded time;*
> *And all our yesterdays have lighted fools*
> *The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!*
> *Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,*
> *That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,*
> *And then is heard no more. It is a tale*
> *Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,*
> *Signifying nothing…*

As for the third great play of these peak years of Shakespeare's creativity, *Antony and Cleopatra,* its imagery is full of light and fire, as befits an allegory of the Resurrection. For this play is much more than a love story. It is also a story about how a fallen woman sheds her corrupt past and rises incorruptible in a kind of literary Resurrection of the body, her illicit lover Antony becoming after his death an honourable husband in her imagination, even a type of Christ the Bridegroom:

> *Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have Immortal longings in me…*
> *Husband, I come.*
> *Now to that name my courage prove my title!*
> *I am fire and air; my other elements*
> *I give to baser life.*

Of course, we cannot know whether Shakespeare considered his three greatest dramas to be an allegory of the central mysteries of the Christian faith. But the greatness of a writer does not reside in his consciousness of the depth of his art. The test is whether he makes *us* respond deeply and truly. By that criterion Shakespeare was a supremely Christian writer.

*

Shakespeare can be bawdy; but there is always a profound seriousness underlying even the roughest of the comedies. Thus *The Taming of the Shrew* contains profound thoughts on the nature of the relationship between men and women. Again, he delights in little spiritual epigrams which clearly point to a man who has thought deeply about life from a definitely religious viewpoint. Thus in his very earliest extant work, *Venus and Adonis,* we see his Christian morality clearly expressed:

Love surfeits not: Lust like a glutton dies.
Love is all truth: Lust full of forged lies.

A deeper meditation on the same theme is found in *Sonnet 129:*

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me prov'd.
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

The spiritual struggle between good and evil, angels and demons, is well known to Shakespeare. Thus in *Sonnet 144*, we read:

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
Which like two angels do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

Again, in the midst of the superficially pagan and highly sensuous drama of *Antony and Cleopatra* we are given a good spiritual tip: that our prayers are not always answered because it would not be good for us:

We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good; so find we profit
By losing of our prayers.

Again, in *Richard II* we are exhorted to humility:

> *whate'er I be,*
> *Nor I, nor any man that but man is,*
> *With nothing shall be pleased till he be eas'd*
> *With being nothing.*

And in *Hamlet* we see a passionate desire for passionlessness:

> *Give me that man*
> *That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him*
> *In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart.*

Even the foolish Polonius is allowed a wise, if slightly trite aphorism:

> *To thine own self be true,*
> *And it must follow, as the night the day,*
> *Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

Nations also must be true to themselves, opines Shakespeare in *King John* (V, 7); otherwise they will fall to foreign despotisms:

> *This England never did, nor never shall,*
> *Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror*
> *But when it first did help to wound itself:*
> *Now these her princes are come home again,*
> *Come the three corners of the world in arms,*
> *And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue*
> *If England to itself do rest but true.*

Shakespeare mocked and undermined the medieval concepts of chivalric honour and military glory, as in *Henry IV, part 1*:

> *By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap*
> *To pluck bright honor from the pale-fac'd moon . . .*

He did the same in *Hamlet*:

> *Rightly to be great*
> *Is not to stir without great argument,*
> *But greatly to find quarrel in a straw*
> *When honor's at stake…*
> *Witness this army, of such mass and charge,*
> *Led by a delicate and tender prince;*
> *Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,*
> *Makes mouths at the invisible event;*
> *Exposing what is mortal, and unsure,*
> *To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,*
> *Even for an egg-shell…*

Again, there is no sharper exposure of Christian Pharisaism than that in *Measure for Measure*:

> *But man, proud man,*
> *Dress'd in a little brief authority,*
> *Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd —*
> *His glassy essence — like an angry ape*
> *Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven*
> *As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,*
> *Would all themselves laugh mortal.*

Similar in its imagery, but still more powerful, is this passage from *Macbeth*:

> *Besides, this Duncan*
> *Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been*
> *So clear in his great office, that his virtues*
> *Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against*
> *The deep damnation of his taking-off,*
> *And pity, like a naked new-born babe,*
> *Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed*
> *Upon the sightless couriers of the air,*
> *Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye*
> *That tears shall drown the wind.*

Again, what profounder exposure of the hypocrisy of Christian anti-semitism can we find than in Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

At the same time, Shylock's greed and vengefulness is not spared, and mercy, the crown of Christian virtues, is portrayed with consummate grace:

> *The quality of mercy is not strain'd,*
> *It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven*
> *Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;*
> *It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:*
> *'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes*
> *The throned monarch better than his crown;*
> *His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,*

The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

However, we cannot leave the theme of Shakespeare and Christianity without considering the last work of his creative life, *The Tempest.* Like Beethoven, who saved his greatest and most religious work to the end of his life when he could no longer even hear, so Shakespeare left his most religious work to the end, when Puritan censors placed a ban on any reference to God or Christ in the theatre, which meant that the word "God" appears no longer in Shakespeare from *Antony and Cleopatra* onwards.[246] For just as *The Winter's Tale* is another – but much more explicit – allegory of the Resurrection, so *The Tempest* is an allegory of the end of the world.

The main character of the play, who controls the whole action, is Prospero. He is a sorcerer, which is, of course, an evil occupation for a Christian. And yet if we judge by the fruits of his actions, he is more like God Himself than a servant of demons. In fact, he is a type both of God the Creator and of Shakespeare the creator (with a small 'c'). And when he has finally brought everything to a happy conclusion through a truly divine providence, reuniting lovers, correcting injustice and putting evil spirits in their place, he renounces everything:

I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,

---

[246] James Shapiro, *1606. William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear,* London: Faber and Faber, 2015, p. 252. Shakespeare took the hint and "retired" a few years later – he was not alive to witness the final closing down of the theatre by the Puritans in 1642.

To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

Like Prospero, Shakespeare now renounces his "so potent art" and drowns the book of his plays in oblivion, taking early retirement.[247] What he needs now is not human recognition, but Divine Grace, "heavenly music".

For he does not over-estimate the reality or value of his creations, whose "fabric" is "baseless" - only God is truly creative and supremely real. And so in true humility Prospero hands back the gift he received to the true Creator Who gave it him. But he goes further. Not only will his art now come to an end, but the theatre itself and the whole of present-day reality outside the theatre will come to an end. The whole of this solid globe will disappear: just as Shakespeare's Globe theatre, where *The Tempest* was staged, was destroyed by fire in 1613, so the globe in the sense of the whole world will be destroyed by the Divine Fire, and in retrospect will seem like mere stagecraft and stage-props and play-acting in comparison with the incomparably greater and eternally substantial new creation that we will wake up to on the other side of the "sleep" that is death. Indeed, compared to what God has in store for us in the next life, our present temporal life is but an "insubstantial pageant", a dream:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

It remained only for Shakespeare, a conscious Christian to the end (whether Catholic or Protestant we shall never know), to ask forgiveness of his readers and spectators if his "rough magic" had caused anyone any harm:

Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,

---

[247] And they would have remained such but for the heroism of the editors of the First Folio in 1623 (Bryson, op. cit., p. 154).

Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

18. THE SPANISH AMERICAS

Of enormous importance to Spain and its long-term destiny were its conquest of most of Central and South America. The claims to universality of the Spanish-ruled Holy Roman Empire were demonstrated above all in these conquests. Moreover, they were of great importance for the economy of the whole of Europe. Adam Smith even went so far as to write in 1776: "The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind."[248] Gold and silver from South America, slaves from Africa and spices from India and the Far East transformed the economies of Spain and Portugal – and the whole world.

It all began in 1492 when, after Ferdinand and Isabella entered Granada in triumph, the Italian Christopher Columbus was presented to them. He claimed that he could find a route to Jerusalem from the east. The monarchs were impressed and gave him the authority of viceroy over all territories he conquered. He duly discovered America (or rather, the West Indies)[249] and claimed it in the name of the Holy Roman Empire of his patrons. He first landed on the Bahamas, thinking they were Indonesian islands. In 1493, writes David Childs, "Columbus founded the city of La Isabella at a poorly chosen site on the northernmost coast of Hispaniola. Five years later the disillusioned survivors moved over to the southern shore and founded a new and lasting capital, Santo Domingo."[250]

In 1498 Columbus became the first European to set foot in South America... Meanwhile, other European powers had not been idle. John Cabot claimed Newfoundland for the English crown in 1497, the Portuguese Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal to India and back in 1499, and Pedro Alvares Cabral landed in Brazil in 1500. In 1517, King Charles I of Spain, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, sponsored the first circumnavigation of the world by five ships led by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan.

"The European invasion of America," writes Andrew Marr, "was one in which wooden ships, using the Chinese inventions of the compass and gunpowder, Muslim navigational mathematics and European Atlantic sailing skills, acted the part that horses and chariots played on land. It is remembered by Europeans and their modern American cousins as 'the discovery' only because the invaded peoples were so militarily weak and succumbed so quickly to disease. Also, after centuries of deforesting and draining, mass

---

[248] Smith, in Frankopan, op. cit., p. 242.

[249] In fact, archaeologists have now discovered the remains of a Viking settlement in Newfoundland over 500 years before Columbus, in about 1020 (https://gizmodo.com/confirmed-vikings-reached-the-americas-long-before-col-1847899401?utm_campaign=Gizmodo&utm_content=&utm_medium=SocialMarketing&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR1bYtt6MQ0i2eAuM4WqAFnhmHapsPqvmJlNO62xhdGNeoVKPNuqQeIP1jA)

[250] Childs, "America by Accident", *BBC History Magazine,* October, 2012, p. 53.

hunting and overfishing, Europe was so obviously barren in natural resources that the Americas seemed to many Europeans a rich, ripe, unplucked wilderness, another paradise. Preachers, sailors, entrepreneurs and friendly heathens announced the discovery of a land of empty forests and friendly heathens just waiting for the bounties of proper farming, property rights and the Gospel…"[251]

"The discovery of America," according to Yuval Noah Harari, "was the foundational event of the Scientific Revolution. It not only taught Europeans to favour present observations over past traditions, but the desire to conquer America also obliged Europeans to search for a new knowledge at breakneck speed. If they really wanted to control the vast new territories, they had to gather enormous amounts of new data about the geography, climate, fauna, languages, cultures and history of the new continent. Christian Scriptures, old geography books and ancient oral traditions were of little help.

"Henceforth not only European geographers, but European scholars in almost all other fields of knowledge began to draw maps with spaces left in them. They began to admit that their theories were not perfect and that there were important things that they did not know.

"The Europeans were drawn to the blank spots on the map as if they were magnets, and promptly started filling them in. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European expeditions circumnavigated Africa, explored America, crossed the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and created a network of bases and colonies all over the world. They established the first truly global empires and knitted together the first global trade network. The European imperial expeditions transformed the history of the world: from being a series of histories of isolated peoples and cultures, it became the history of a single integrated human society.

"These European explore-and-conquer expeditions are so familiar to us that we tend to overlook just how extraordinary they were. Nothing like them had ever happened before. Long-distance campaigns of conquest are not a natural undertaking. Throughout history most human societies were so busy with local conflicts and neighbourhood quarrels that they never considered exploring and conquering distant lands. Most great empires extended their control only over their immediate neighbourhood – they reached far-flung lands simply because their neighbourhood kept expanding. Thus the Romans conquered Etruria in order to defend Rome (c.350-300 BC). They then conquered the Po Valley in order to defend Etruria (c.200 BC). They subsequently conquered Provence to defend the Po Valley (c.120 BC), Gaul to defend Provence (c.50 BC), and Britain in order to defend Gaul (c.50 BC). It took them 400 years to get from Rome to London. In 350 BC, no Roman would have conceived of sailing directly to Britain and conquering it….

---

[251] Marr, *A History of the World,* London: Pan, 2012, p. 253.

"What made Europeans exceptional was their unparalleled and insatiable ambition to explore and conquer. Although they might have had the ability, the Romans never attempted to conquer India or Scandinavia, the Persians never attempted to conquer Madagascar or Spain, and the Chinese never attempted to conquer Indonesia or Africa. Most Chinese rulers left even nearby Japan to its own devices. There was nothing peculiar about that. The oddity is that early modern Europeans caught a fever that drove them to sail to distant and completely unknown lands, full of alien cultures, take one step on to their beaches, and immediately declare, 'I claim all these territories for my king!'"[252]

In America, that was usually the king of Spain. And yet his dominions, according to the papist theory, were merely as it were leased to him by the pope, who was recognized by all the Catholic kings as their true lord and master. Thus in 1493 the Borgia Pope Alexander VI gave the Indies to the Crown of Castile and Leon in perpetuity.

In 1494 he arbitrated in a dispute between Spain and Portugal resulting in "the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided half the world longitudinally between them. The line ran through the two poles and west of the Cape Verde islands off Africa, which were already Portuguese, giving the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola, claimed by Columbus, to Spain. A revision of the first agreement would give the Portuguese most of Brazil; later, in 1529, the Iberian carve-up was extended to the other side of the world, with another line being drawn through the Far East in the Treaty of Zaragoza."[253]

This theory of geopolitical sovereignty was elaborated by the New World missionary (and Jewish *converso*) Bartolomé de las Casas, who wrote in 1552: "The Roman pontiff, vicar of Jesus Christ, whose divine authority extends over all the kingdoms of heaven and earth[254], could justly invest the kings of Castile and Leon with the supreme and sovereign empire and dominion over the entire realm of the Indies, making them emperors over many kings… If the vicar of Christ were to see that this was not advantageous for the spiritual well-being of Christianity, he could without doubt, by the same divine authority, annul or abolish the office of emperor of the Indies, or he could transfer it to another place, as one Pope did when he transferred the imperial crown from the Greeks to the Germans [at the coronation of Charlemagne in 800]. With the same authority, the Apostolic See could prohibit, under penalty of excommunication, all other Christian kings from going to the Indies without the permission and authorisation of the kings of Castile. If they do the contrary, they sin mortally and incur excommunication.

---

[252] Harari, *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind,* London: Vintage, 2011, pp. 322-323, 324-325.

[253] Marr, op. cit., p. 259

[254] We may note that here the Pope is supposedly king even of heaven! It is hard to deny that the Counter-Reformation papacy, no less than its medieval predecessor, usurped the power of God and became, in the strict definition of the word, idolatrous. (V.M.)

"The kings of Castile and León are true princes, sovereign and universal lords and emperors over many kings. The rights over all that great empire and the universal jurisdiction over all the Indies belong to them by the authority, concession and donation of the said Holy Apostolic See and thus by divine authority. This and no other is the juridical basis upon which all their title is founded and established…"[255]

Las Casas became famous for his protection of the rights of the native Indians against the cruelties of the Spanish colonialists… For "the cruelty of the Spaniards [in the New World], writes Henry Kamen, "was incontrovertible; it was pitiless, barbaric and never brought under control by the colonial regime".[256] "On the island of Cuba in 1513, villagers who arrived to present the Spanish with gifts of food, fish and bread 'to the limit of their larder' were massacred 'without the slightest provocation', in the words of one dismayed observer. This was just one atrocity among many."[257]

In 1519, Cortes with an army of 550 men conquered the Mexican empire of the Aztecs, kidnapping the ruler Montezuma and then enlisting the captive peoples of the empire against the Aztecs. [258] In the same year he entered the Aztec city of Cholula, and killed thousands of unarmed civilians.[259] By 1600 "a population estimated at 25 million in 1492 had been reduced to a mere one million."[260] And if most of the victims fell to diseases such as smallpox introduced by the conquerors rather than to war and execution, the cruelty of the so-called Christians was nevertheless exceptional. [261]

Ten years later, Francisco Pizarro with an even smaller army of 168 men invaded the South-American empire of the Incas, defeating the Inca emperor Atahualpa at Cajamarca in 1532. "Pizarro plagiarised Cortes. He declared himself a peaceful emissary of the king of Spain, invited the Inca ruler, Atahualpa, to a diplomatic interview, and then kidnapped him. Pizarro proceeded to conquer the paralysed empire with the help of local allies. If the subject peoples of the Inca Empire had known the fate of the inhabitants of Mexico, they would not have thrown in their lot with the invaders. But they did not know."[262]

---

[255] Las Casas, *Aqui se contienen treinta proposiciones muy juridicas*, Propositions XVI, XVII.

[256] Kamen, *Spain's Road to Empire: the Making of a World Power*, London: Allen Lane, 2002.

[257] Frankopan, op. cit. p. 212.

[258] Amy Fuller, "When Cortes's Conquistadors were Forced to Flee the Aztec Capital", *BBC History Magazine,* June, 2020, p. 15.

[259] Montefiore, op. cit., p. 210.

[260] Spellman, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

[261] As regards disease, however, the damage was two-way. As Niall Ferguson writes, there was "the so-called Columbian Exchange: pathogens brought by Europeans devastated indigenous American populations; Europeans then brought back syphilis from the New World; and by shipping enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and the Americas, Europeans also brought malaria and yellow fever to those places." (*Doom. The Politics of Catastrophe,* London: Allen Lane, 2021, p. 12).

[262] Harari, op. cit., p. 330.

Niall Ferguson writes; "As the architecture of Pachacamac, Cuzco and Machu Picchu shows to this day, the Inca emperors ruled over a substantial and sophisticated civilization, which they called *Tahuantinsuyo.* For a century, they had held sway over 14,000 square miles of Andean territory, with a population we now estimate at between 5 and 10 million. Their mountainous kingdom was held together by a network of roads, stairways and bridges, many of which can still be used. Their agriculture, based on the cultivation of llama wool and maize, was efficient. Theirs was a relatively wealthy society, though they used gold and silver for ornamentation, not money, preferring to use *quipucamayoc* (made of string and beads) for accounting and administrative purposes. The ethos of Inca rule was cruelly hierarchical. A cult of sun worship went along with human sacrifice and draconian punishment."[263]

The cruelty of the Spanish conquest of Latin America may be seen as Divine justice for the child-sacrifice (and, in the Aztec case, cannibalism) practiced over centuries by the pagan empires. Thus on one occasion in 1487, the Aztecs sacrificed 84,000 men, women and children prisoners at the re-consecration of the Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan.[264] There is ample evidence from history that God particularly abhors nations that kill their own children, and allows their extermination. Thus the child-sacrificing Canaanites were slaughtered by the Israelites, the related peoples of Tyre and Sidon were similarly maltreated by Alexander the Great, and the Tyrian colony of Carthage was exterminated by the Romans…

So even if the Spaniards were not, as Fray Juan de Salazar claimed in 1619, "His chosen people in the New Dispensation, just as the Hebrews were in the time of the written Law,"[265] they did serve God's just wrath on the Incas and child-eating Aztecs.

"For the subjugated natives," writes Harari, "these colonies were hell on earth. They were ruled with an iron fist by greedy and unscrupulous colonists who enslaved them and set to work in mines and plantations, killing anyone who offered the slightest resistance. Most of the native population soon died, either because of the harsh working conditions or the virulence of the diseases that hitch-hiked to America on the conquerors' sailing ships. Within twenty years, almost the entire native Caribbean population was wiped out. The Spanish colonists began importing African slaves to fill the vacuum…"[266]

"No people in antiquity," writes Holland, "would ever have succeeded in winning an empire for themselves had they doubted their licence to slaughter and enslave the vanquished, but Christians could not so readily be innocent in their cruelty. When scholars in Europe sought to justify, the Spanish conquest

---

[263] Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower,* London: Penguin, 2018, p. 78.

[264] Montefiore, op. cit., p. 210.

[265] Salazar, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 334.

[266] Harari, op. cit., p. 326.

of the New World, they reached not for the Church Fathers, but for Aristotle.' As the Philosopher says, it is clear that some men are slaves by nature, and others free by nature. Even in the Indies, though, there were Spaniards who worried whether this was truly so. 'Tell me,' demanded a Dominican of his fellow settlers, eight years before Cortes took the road to Tenochtitlan, 'by what right or justice you keep these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people, who dwelt quietly and peacefully in their own land?' Most of the friar's congregation, too angered to reflect on his questions, contented themselves with issuing voluble complaints to the local governor, and agitating for his removal; but there were some colonists who did find their consciences pricked. Increasingly, adventurers in the New World had to reckon with condemnation of their exploits as cruelty, oppression, greed. Some, on occasion, might even come to this realization themselves. The most dramatic example occurred in 1514, when a colonist in the West Indies had his life upended by a sudden, heart-stopping insight: that his enslavement of Indians was a mortal sin. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, like Augustine in the garden, Bartolomé de las Casas found himself born again. Freeing his slaves, he devoted himself from that moment on to defending the Indians from tyranny. Only the cause of bringing them to God, he argued, could possibly justify Spain's rule of the New World; and only by means of persuasion might they legitimately be brought to God. 'For they are our brothers, and Christ gave his life for them.'

"Las Casas, whether on one side of the Atlantic, pleading his case at the royal court, or on the other, in straw-thatched colonial settlements, never doubted that his convictions derived from the mainstream of Christian teaching. Formulating his objections to Spanish imperialism, he drew on the work of Aquinas. 'Jesus Christ, the king of kings, was sent to win the world, not with armies, but with holy preachers, as sheep among wolves.' Such was the judgement of Thomas Cajetan, an Italian friar whose commentary on Aquinas was the great labour of his life. Appointed head of the Dominicans in 1508, and a cardinal in 1517, he spoke with a rare authority. News of the sufferings inflicted on the Indians filled him with a particular anger. 'Do you doubt that your king is in hell?' he demanded of one Spanish visitor to Rome. Here, in his shock that a Christian ruler should think to justify conquest and savagery in the name of the crucified Christ, was the expression of a scholarly tradition that reached all the way back to Alcuin. Cajetan, in his efforts to provide the Indians with a legal recourse against their oppressors, never imagined that he was breaking new ground. The discovery of continents and peoples unimagined by Aquinas did not render the great Dominican any the less qualified to serve as a guide as to how they should be treated. The teachings of the Church were universal in their reach. That the kingdoms of the Indians were legitimate states; that Christianity should be imposed, not by force, but solely by means of persuasion; that neither kings, nor emperors, nor the Church itself had any right to ordain their conquest: here, in Cajetan's opinion, were the principles fit to govern a globalized age."[267]

---

[267] Holland, *Dominion*, pp. 291-293.

However, the oppression continued: "I saw… cruelty on a scale no living human being has ever seen or expects to see," Las Casas wrote. In a debate at Valladolid in 1550 he pressed the case for the full humanity of the Indians as against Sepulveda, who argued, following Aristotle, that they were so inferior as to be intended by God to be slaves. Las Casas won his case – but to no avail…

*

The Spanish were not the only sinners. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese began importing African slaves to work in their fields. Then, "from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the European conquerors imported millions of African slaves to work the mines and plantations of America. They chose to import slaves from Africa rather than from Europe or East Asia due to three circumstantial factors. Firstly, Africa was closer, so it was cheaper to import slaves from Senegal than from Vietnam.

"Secondly, in Africa there already existed a well-developed slave trade (exporting slaves mainly to the Middle East), whereas in Europe slavery was very rare. It was obviously far easier to buy slaves in an existing market than to create a new one from scratch.

"Thirdly and most importantly, American plantations in places such as Virginia, Haiti and Brazil were plagued by malaria and yellow fever, which had originated in Africa. Africans had acquired over the generations a partial genetic immunity to these diseases, whereas Europeans were totally defenceless and died in droves. It was consequently wiser for a plantation owner to invest his money in an African slave than in a European slave or indentured labourer. Paradoxically, genetic superiority (in terms of immunity) translated into social inferiority: precisely because Africans were fitter in tropical climates than Europeans, they ended up as the slaves of European masters! Due to these circumstantial factors, the burgeoning new societies of America were to be divided into a ruling caste of white Europeans and a subjugated caste of black Africans."[268]

European butchery, colonialism and slave-trading witnessed to the dehumanizing effect of centuries of papal propaganda justifying the extermination of heretics and pagans. True, Orthodox Christianity had changed morality by teaching men to see in every man the image of God and therefore an object of love and respect. But the pseudo-Christianity of Roman Catholicism turned the clock back to paganism. For the Pope was like a sun-god to whom many thousands were brought in sacrifice during the Inquisition, the conquest of Latin America and the bloody religious wars of early modern Europe… The only real difference was that the Pope and his followers carried out their blood-sacrifices "in the name of Christ" and with huge red crosses on the sails of their ships.

---

[268] Harari, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

But there was a price to pay… Silver and gold were so plentiful in the Inca empire, that the Spanish made the Incas into slave-labourers in the great silver mines, such as Potosi in Bolivia. As a result, writes Marr, "the Spanish bought all manner of fabrics, foods and exotic goods from their rivals. They exulted in the good fortune that allowed them to enjoy a consumer, or consumption economy without increased productivity… It is hard to imagine a more complete programme for national decline than that. In the New World, Spain would build a dozy, already decaying empire of aristocrats, priests and large landowners, and would never experience the jolt into modernity that animated her [West European] rivals."[269]

---

[269] Marr, op. cit., p.269.

19. THE DECLINE OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE

In the second half of the sixteenth century the Turks continued to press forward in the Eastern Mediterranean. They nearly captured Malta in 1565, captured Cyprus in 1571, and made advances into Hungary. However, the Spanish (with strong Italian support) crushed the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto in 1571[270], and with the signing of the Peace of Zalva in 1606 the Ottoman threat could be said to have receded for the time being.

Charles' son and successor, Philip II of Spain "took control of Portugal and her overseas empire, colonized the Philippines, greatly increased the extraction of bullion from the New World, and was even the King-Consort of England for a while. Puffed up by his success, Philip began to speak more and more openly about his European and global ambitions. The back of a medal commemorating the union of crowns with Portugal was inscribed with the words '*Non sufficit orbis*' – 'the world is not enough'. A Spanish triumphal arch carried a legend suggesting that the king was 'lord of the world' and 'lord of everything in east and west'. Like his father, Philip ultimately failed, worn out by the battle against Dutch rebels in the Low Countries and winded by the disastrous Armada expedition against England. The Habsburg ambition to control Europe was by no means over, however. During the Thirty Years War in the early and mid-seventeenth century, it required the combined efforts of France, Sweden, the German princes and ultimately England to see off an Austrian-Spanish attempt to dominate the continent…."[271]

However, in spite of its impressive façade, fanatical religiosity, patriotism, and formidable army, the Habsburg Empire had a bewilderingly complex constitution, especially in Germany, and its ethnic and religious divisions were a major weakness.

Another major problem was the Empire's financial state. As we have seen, its acquisition of vast quantities of gold and silver, and its reliance on slave-labour, blunted the entrepreneurial instincts of the Spanish. As Martin Gonzales de Collerigo said in 1600, "Spain is poor because she is rich…"[272]

Moreover, in spite of vast revenues in silver and gold from the New World, their continuous wars meant that they were always in need of more money. The fact that most of their lands were acquired through dynastic alliances meant that Charles V and Philip II could rely only on Castile as a tax base. This produced a rebellion known as the *communero* revolt, which was crushed by

---

[270] It is believed that the prayers of St. Gerasimos, who lived on the nearby island of Cephalonia, was instrumental in securing this victory through his prayers. See https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2021/08/the-intervention-of-saint-gerasimos-of.html?fbclid=IwAR1x6HyHtBuKlflwCzZTWEbwTZtftoYLfbSbHpIYhvZ5pVZN6qTHeXm4ROg.

[271] Simms, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

[272] De Collerigo, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., pp. 341-342.

the military. However, this did not solve the fiscal problem, and the State defaulted on its debts many times. Municipal offices were sold on a grand scale; and Genoese financiers took control of the provisioning of the armed forces.

"As in other western European countries," writes Francis Fukuyama, "the rule of law played an important role in limiting the authority of the Spanish king to simply do as he pleased with property rights and communal liberties. In Spain, the tradition of Roman law had not been extinguished as completely as in northern Europe, and after the recovery of the Justinian code in the eleventh century it developed a strong civil law tradition. The civil law was seen as a codification of divine and natural law. Although the king could make positive law the Recompilacion made clear that he was subject to existing legal precedents and that edicts contradicting those laws had no force. The Catholic church remained the custodian of ecclesiastical law and often challenged royal prerogatives. Royal commands that were contrary to customary rights or privileges were resisted under the rubric, ''*Obédezcase, pero se cumpla*' (obey, but do not put into effect), which was often invoked by the conquistadores in the New World when they received an order they didn't like from an imperial viceroy. Individuals who disagreed with royal commands had the right to appeal to the Royal Council, which like its English counterpart constituted the highest judicial authority in the land. According to the historian I.A.A. Thompson, 'The Council of Castile stood for legalism and due process against arbitrariness, and for a judicialist as against an administrative or executive mode of government, actively resisting any recourse to extraordinary or irregular procedures and consistently defending established rights and contractual obligation.'

"The impact of this legal tradition can be seen in the way that Spanish kings dealt with domestic enemies and with the property rights of their subjects. There was no Spanish counterpart of Qin Shi Huangdi or Ivan the Terrible, who would arbitrarily execute members of their own courts together with their entire families. Like the French kings of the period, Spanish monarchs chipped away at property rights incessantly in their search for cash, but they did so within the framework of existing law. Rather than arbitrarily expropriate assets, they renegotiated interest rates and principal repayment schedules. Rather than risk confrontation over higher levels of direct taxes, they debased the currency and accepted a higher rate of inflation. Inflation via loose monetary policy is in effect a tax, but one that not have to be legislated and that tends to hurt ordinary people more than elites with real rather than monetary assets."[273]

So the Spanish monarchy was more absolute in theory than in practice. "What is surprising in Spain," wrote Jacob Sobieski in 1611, "is that, although their government is absolute, their kings do nothing without the councils, they sign nothing without them; and even the most minor questions of public policy,

---

[273] Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order,* London: Profile, 2012, pp. 364-365.

they do not resolve alone."[274] In fact, according to the Luccan ambassador, Lorenzo Cenami, writing in 1674, "the government has come to be, and continues to be, more like a Republic, than a Monarchy"[275]; while Alexander Stanhope, English ambassador in Madrid writing in 1691, says: "Though this be a great monarchy, yet it has at present much aristocracy in it, where every Grandee is a sort of prince."[276]

Spaniards tended to be very vainglorious and jealous of their reputation, a trait that was satirized in Cervantes' famous novel, *Don Quixote.* This made the first powerful despotism of modern European history less strong than it appeared to be if one looked only at its territorial conquests. Moreover, as Diego de Saavedra wrote in 1640, "the greater a prince's power, the less the freedom of the dominant nation, and the greater the burdens to sustain his conquests."[277] And yet in spite of that "there was a strong sense within the Spanish court that it was necessary to act as the Almighty's policeman, delivering his will on earth – by force if necessary."[278]

The real problem for Spain was not that its government was absolutist (for it was less absolutist than it seemed) but that it didn't work efficiently, and squandered the vast resources it had acquired. The Venetian ambassador Simon Contarini summed it up in 1605; "The best kind of war is to let them ruin themselves with their bad government… with good government [this king] would be master of the world."[279] One of the reasons for this bad government was mental incapacity caused by the high proportion of incest in Habsburg marriages. "In the 57 marriages contracted by the members of the dynasty between c. 1450 and c. 1650, 51 spouses came from the same seven families, and 24 came from just three…"[280] This goes some way to explaining why the Spanish half of the Holy Roman Empire began to decline steeply after the failed Armada of 1588 and the Dutch war of liberation, as Catholic France began to oust Catholic Spain as the major European despotism. And yet, in spite of these various problems, the Empire as a whole took a long time to die; after formally expiring at the hands of Napoleon in 1806, it rose again and could be said to have survived in one form or another until the fall of Austria-Hungary in 1918. This witnesses to the continued potency of the idea of Universal Monarchy among Catholics...

The greatest rivals of the Spanish were the Calvinist nations of England and the Netherlands; it was the pirate ships of the English, and the merchants and bankers of the Dutch, who were the real beneficiaries of the opening up of the

---

[274] Sobieski, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 336.

[275] Cenami, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 337.

[276] Cenami, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 337.

[277] De Saavedra, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 337.

[278] Frankopan, op. cit., p. 251.

[279] Contarini, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 340.

[280] P.S. Fichtner, Dynastic Marriage in 16th-century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft", in Cohen and Major, p. cit., p. 451.

New World by the Portuguese and Spanish. And so, these smaller, "tiger economies" of the sixteenth century began to overtake the older, but less competitive economies of the Iberian peninsula.

"Portugal and Spain," writes R.H. Tawney, "held the keys of the treasure house of the east and the west. But it was neither Portugal with her tiny population, and her empire that was little more than a line of forts and factories 10,000 miles long, nor Spain, for centuries an army on the march and now staggering beneath the responsibilities of her vast and scattered empire, devout to [the point of] fanaticism, and with an incapacity for economic affairs which seemed almost inspired, which reaped the material harvest of the empires into which they had stepped, the one by patient toil, the other by luck. Gathering spoils which they could not retain, and amassing wealth which slipped through their fingers, they were little more than the political agents of minds more astute and characters better versed in the arts of peace… The economic capital of the new civilization was Antwerp… its typical figure, the paymaster of princes, was the international financier."[281]

Other kinds of corruption followed… From the seventeenth century the patrimonialization of Spain's political system was exported to the New World; "and it was inevitable," writes Fukuyama, "that institutions like venal office would be transferred to the Americas. The basic dynamic driving this process was, however, initiative on the part of local actors in the colonies seeking to increase their rents and privileges, and the fact that the central government back in Madrid was too weak and too far away to prevent them from doing so."[282]

Madrid had anticipated such a development, and had originally rewarded the conquistadores, not with *land*, but with *people*. These grants were the *encomiendas*, and were conditional and noninheritable. However, writes Fukuyama, "the iron law of the large estate or latifundia – the rich tend to get richer, in the absence of state intervention – applied in Latin America much as in other agrarian societies like China and Turkey. The one-generation encomiendas were strongly resisted by the settler class, who not surprisingly wanted to be able to pass on their entitlements to their children and who in the 1540s revolted against a law mandating their automatic reversion to the Crown. Title over people enabled certain encomenderos to get rich by commanding their labor, and they began to purchase large tracts of land. Unlike the encomienda, land was heritable. By the late sixteenth century, the Americas were facing a depopulation crisis of the indigenous populations; Mexico went from 20 million to 1.6 million inhabitants in the period. This meant that a lot of lightly populated land suddenly became available.

"This new creole elite tended to live in cities, and they exploited their land as absentee landlords using hired labor. Customary land tenure in Latin

---

[281] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 1937; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 323
[282] Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 368.

America was not essentially different from what existed in other tribal societies, being communal and tied to extended kinship groups. The remaining Indians were tricked into selling their lands, or else simply forced off them. Communal lands were turned into private estates, and the environment was dramatically changed as native crops like maize and manioc were replaced by European cash crops. A lot of agricultural land was given over to cattle ranching, with often devastating effects on soil fertility. The government back in Madrid was committed to protecting the rights the indigenous owners, but was far away and unable to control things on the ground. Oftentimes local Spanish authorities worked hand in hand with the new class of landowners to help them evade regulation. This was the origin of the Latin American latifundia, the hacienda, which in later generations would become the source of inequality and persistent civil strife.

"The concentration of land in the hands of a small elite was promoted by the Spanish practice of *mayorazgo*, a system of primogeniture that prevented large haciendas from being broken up and sold piecemeal. The seventeenth century saw the accumulation of large landholdings, including entire towns and villages, by wealthy individuals, who then introduced the mayorazgo to prevent land from slipping out of family control through endless division to children. This practice was introduced into the New World as well. The Spanish authorities tired to limit the number of licenses for mayorazgos under the same theory that led them to take back encomiendas. The local creole or settler population responded by making use of the *mejora*, by which parents could favour one child over another in order to maintain the power and status of the family's lineage.

"A class of powerful landed families emerged, but they failed to operate as a coherent political factor. As in ancient regime France, the tax system helped to bind individual settlers to the state and to break up the solidarity they might have felt with any of their non-European fellow citizens. The large numbers of single men who constituted early waves of settlers ended up marrying or having children with indigenous women, producing a class of mestizos. The mulatto offspring of whites and the black slaves that were being transported to the New World in increasing numbers constituted yet another separate caste. Against these groups, the creole offspring of Hispanic settlers claimed tax exemptions for themselves, a status enjoyed in Spain only by nobles and hidalgos (lower gentry). As in North America, the simple fact of being white conferred status on people and marked them off from tribute-paying Indians and blacks…"[283]

For, as Gregory Jay writes: "Before the age of exploration, group differences were largely based on language, religion, and geography. … the European had always reacted a bit hysterically to the differences of skin color and facial structure between themselves and the populations encountered in Africa, Asia, and the Americas (see, for example, Shakespeare's dramatization of racial

---

[283] Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 368-369.

conflict in *Othello* and *The Tempest*). Beginning in the 1500s, Europeans began to develop what became known as 'scientific racism,' the attempt to construct a biological rather than cultural definition of race … Whiteness, then, emerged as what we now call a 'pan-ethnic' category, as a way of merging a variety of European ethnic populations into a single 'race'."[284]

---

[284] Jay, *"Who Invented White People?"*

II. EAST: THE MUSCOVITE AUTOCRACY

20. THE ORTHODOX UNDER THE OTTOMAN YOKE

"On Tuesday, 29 May, 1453," writes Sir Steven Runciman, "an old story was ended. The last heir of Constantine the Great lay dead on the battlefield; and an infidel Sultan had entered in triumph into the city which Constantine had founded to be the capital of the Christian Empire. There was no longer an Emperor reigning in the Sacred Palace to symbolize to the Faithful of the East the majesty and authority of Almighty God. The Church of Constantinople, for more than a thousand years the partner of the Orthodox State, became the Church of a subject people, dependent on the whims of a Muslim master. Its operation, its outlook and its whole way of life had abruptly to be changed.

"It was a fundamental change; and yet it was not quite as complete as it might seem at first sight. For centuries past the historic Patriarchates of the East, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, had been, but for brief interludes, under the political sway of Muslim authorities. Ever since the Turks had first occupied parts of Asia Minor in the eleventh century congregations belonging to the Patriarchate of Constantinople had been living under Muslim rule. In recent decades the rapid spread of the Ottoman Empire, in Europe as well as in Asia, had added to their number, till by 1453 the majority of the Patriarch's flock dwelt in the Sultan's dominion. There were also many Greek islands which had been for some time under Latin masters and which were to remain under them for some time to come. Though the Genoese were to lose the greater part of their Greek colonies immediately after 1453, they retained the island of Chios till 1566. The Venetians held fortresses in the Peloponnese and a number of Aegean islands till well into the sixteenth century; they held Crete till 1669 and Tinos till 1715. Cyprus, still an independent kingdom at the time of the fall of Constantinople, was in Venetian hands from 1487 to 1570. The Italian Duchy of the Archipelago lasted till 1500, when the Turks imposed a Jewish vassal Duke. The Knight of St. John held Rhodes till 1522. The Ionian islands off the west coast of Greece never passed under Turkish rule. They remained in Venetian hands until the end of the eighteenth century, when they were taken over by the French and then passed to the British, who ceded them to the Kingdom of Greece in 1864. Thus there were a few provinces where the Patriarch's authority could not always be implemented. Nevertheless, from the narrow viewpoint of ecclesiastical control and discipline the Patriarchate gained from the conquest because the vast bulk of its territory was reunited under one lay power.

"But the lay power was infidel. So long as the Christian Empire lasted on at Constantinople, Church and State were still integrated there in one holy realm. The Emperor might in fact be politically feeble, but in theory he was still the transcendent head of the Christian Oecumene, the representative of God before the people and the people before God. Now the Church was divorced from the State. It became an association of second-class citizens. Here again, as the only association that these second-class citizens were permitted to organize, its powers of discipline over its congregations were enhanced. But it lacked the ultimate sanction of freedom.

"The Conquering Sultan was well aware of the problems that faced the Church; and he was not hostile to its well-being. He had been a truculent enemy until Constantinople was conquered; and the conquest had been achieved by bloodthirsty and destructive violence. But, having conquered, he was not ungenerous. He had Greek blood in his veins. He was well read and deeply interested in Greek learning. He was proud to see himself as the heir of the Caesars and was ready to shoulder the religious responsibilities of his predecessors, so far as his own religion permitted. As a pious Muslim he could not allow the Christians any part in the higher council of his Empire. But he wished them to enjoy peace and prosperity and to be content with his government and an asset to it.

"His first duty to the Christians was to establish the new pattern for their administration. His solution followed lines traditional in Muslim dominions. Muslim rulers had long treated religious minorities within their dominions as *millets*, or nations, allowing them to govern their own affairs according to their own laws and customs, and making the religious head of the sect responsible for its administration and its good behaviour towards the paramount power. This was the manner according to which the Christians in the Caliphate had been ruled, amongst them the congregations of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates. The system was now extended to include the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. For practical purposes it had already been followed in the districts of the Patriarchate that were within the Turkish dominions. Where their lay officials had been ejected or had fled the Christians had naturally looked to their hierarchs to negotiate with the conquerors on their behalf; and it was the hierarchs who had carried out the day-to-day administration of their flocks as best they could. But hitherto for them, as also for the Orthodox Patriarchs of the East, there had been in Constantinople an Orthodox Emperor to whom they owed ultimate allegiance and whose duty it was to protect them, even if they could no longer administer them. In recent years the protection that he was able to provide, in his impotent and impoverished state, had been merely nominal; but nevertheless it gave them prestige; it raised them above the heretic Churches, such as the Copts and the Jacobites, who had no lay protector and were entirely the servants of the Muslim monarch. But now, with the Emperor gone, even this nominal protection disappeared. The Orthodox were reduced to the state of the heretic Churches, in theory at least. In practice they were better off; for they formed the largest, the richest and the best-educated Christian community in the Sultan's dominions; and Sultan Mehmet with his sense of history was inclined to pay them special attention.

"The Sultan was well aware, also, that the Greeks would be of value to his Empire. The Turks would provide him with his governors and his soldiers; but they were no adept at commerce or industry; few of them were good seamen; and even in the countryside they tended to prefer a pastoral to an agricultural life. For the economy of the Empire the co-operation of the Greeks was essential. The Sultan saw no reason why they should not live within his

dominions in amity with the Turks, so long as their own rights were assured and so long as they realized that he was their overlord.

"If the Greek *milet* was to be organized, the first task was to provide it with a head. Sultan Mehmet knew well of the difficulties that the attempt to force union with Rome had produced in the Greek Church; and, after the conquest, he soon satisfied himself that the average Greek considered the Patriarchal throne to be vacant. The Patriarch Gregory Mammas was held to have abdicated when he fled to Italy in 1451. A new Patriarch must be found. After making some inquiries Mehmet decided that he should be George Scholarius, now known as the monk Gennadius. Gennadius was not only the most eminent scholar living in Constantinople at the time of the conquest. He was everywhere respected for his unflinching probity; and he had been the leader of the anti-Unionist, anti-Western party within the Church. He could be relied upon not to intrigue with the West. Within a month of the conquest the Sultan sent officials to bring Gennadius to his presence. He could not at first be found. Eventually it was discovered that he had been taken prisoner at the time of the fall of the city and had passed into the possession of a rich Turk of Adrianople, who was deeply impressed by his learning and was treating him with honours seldom accorded to a slave. He was redeemed from his buyer and was conveyed honourably to Constantinople and led before the Sultan. Mehmet persuaded him to accept the Patriarchal throne; and together they worked out the terms for the constitution to be granted to the Orthodox. The main lines were probably arranged before the Sultan left the conquered city for Adrianople at the end of June, though six months elapsed before Gennadius actually assumed the Patriarchate.

"The enthronization took place in January 1454, when the Sultan returned to Constantinople. Mehmet was determined to play in so far as his religion permitted the role played in the past by the Christian Emperor. We know nothing about the necessary meeting of the Holy Synod; but presumably it was formed by such metropolitans as could be gathered together and it was their task to declare the Patriarchate vacant and, on the Sultan's recommendation, to elect Gennadius to fill it. Then, on 6 January, Gennadius was received in audience by the Sultan, who handed him the insignia of his office, the robes, the pastoral staff and the pectoral cross. The original cross was lost. Whether Gregory Mammas had taken it with him when he fled to Rome or whether it disappeared during the sack of the city is unknown. So Mehmet himself presented a new cross, made of silver-gilt. As he invested the Patriarch he uttered the formula: 'Be Patriarch, with good fortune, and be assured of our friendship, keeping all the privileges that the Patriarchs before you enjoyed.' As Santa Sophia had already been converted into a mosque, Gennadius was led to the Church of the Holy Apostles. There the Metropolitan of Heraclea, whose traditional duty it was to consecrate, performed the rite of consecration and enthronization. The Patriarch then emerged and, mounted on a magnificent horse which the Sultan had presented to him, rode in procession round the city before returning to take up his residence in the precincts of the Holy Apostles. He had also received from the Sultan a handsome gift of gold.

"It is unlikely that the new constitution was ever written down. The general lines along which a Christian *milet* in Muslim territory was administered were well enough known not to need a general restatement. The Imperial *berat* which gave the Sultan's approval of every appointment to episcopal office usually stated the duties of the incumbent, following the traditional customs. We only hear of two specific documents issued by the Conquering Sultan. According to the historian Phrantzes, who was at that time a captive of the Turks and was in a position to know about it, Mehmet handed to Gennadius a firman which he had signed, giving to the Patriarch personal inviolability, exemption from paying taxes, freedom of movement, security from deposition, and the right to transmit these privileges to his successors. There is no reason for doubting this. It is indeed probable that the Sultan would give to the Patriarch some written guarantee about his position. It should, however, be noted that the freedom from deposition was not held to interfere with the traditional right of the Holy Synod to depose a Patriarch if his election was held to have been uncanonical or if he were demonstrably unfitted for the office. Patriarchal chroniclers writing nearly a century later claimed that the Sultan had signed another document in which he promised that the customs of the Church with regard to marriage and burial should be legally sanctioned, that Easter should be celebrated as a feast and the Christians should have freedom of movement during the three Easter feast-days, and that no more churches should be converted into mosques. Unfortunately, when the last point was disregarded by later Sultans, the Church authorities could not produce the document, which they said, no doubt correctly, had been destroyed in a fire at the Patriarchate. But, as we shall see, they were able to produce evidence to substantiate their claim.

"Whatever might have been written down, it was generally accepted that the Patriarch, in conjunction with the Holy Synod, had complete control over the whole ecclesiastical organization, the bishops and all churches and monasteries and their possessions. Though the Sultan's government had to confirm episcopal appointments, no bishop could be appointed or dismissed except on the recommendation of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod. The Patriarchal law-courts alone had penal jurisdiction over the clergy; the Turkish authorities could not arrest or judge anyone of episcopal rank without the permission of the Patriarch. He also, in conjunction with the Holy Synod, had control over all matters of dogma. His control was almost as complete over the Orthodox laity. He was the Ethnarch, the ruler of the *milet* [or *milet-bashi*}. The Patriarchal courts had full jurisdiction over all affairs concerning the Orthodox which had a religious connotation, that is, marriages, divorce, the guardianship of minors, and testaments and successions. They were entitled to try any commercial case if both disputants were Orthodox. Though the Christian laity were heavily taxed, the clergy were free from paying the taxes, though on occasions they might of their own consent agree to pay special taxes; and it was difficult for the Sultan to exert pressure to secure this consent. The Patriarch could tax the Orthodox on his own authority to raise money for the needs of the Church. Complaints against the Patriarch could only be heard by the Holy

Synod, and only if it agreed unanimously to listen to them. The Patriarch could call in the Turkish authorities to see that his wishes were carried out by his flock. In return for all this, the Patriarch was responsible for the orderly and loyal behaviour of his flock towards the ruling authorities and for ensuring that the taxes of the head-man of the local commune, who was responsible for keeping the registers. But, if there was any difficulty over the collection, the Government could ask the Church to punish recalcitrant with a sentence of excommunication.

"The Patriarchal courts administered justice according to the canon law of the Byzantines and according to Byzantine civil and customary law. Customary law grew rapidly in volume, owing to changed circumstances for which the codified law did not allow, and which varied from place to place. In civil cases the judgement was in the nature of an arbitration award. If either party were dissatisfied with it he could have recourse to Turkish courts; and if either party insisted, the case could be brought before the Turkish courts in the first instance. This was seldom done, as the Turkish courts were slow, expensive and often corrupt, and heard cases according to Koranic law. The Patriarchal courts were considered to be remarkably free from corruption, though rich Greeks on whose financial support the Church depended could undoubtedly exercise some influence. A feature of the courts was that a statement taken on oath counted as valid evidence; and so seriously were oaths regarded that this was seldom abused. Criminal offences, such as treason, murder, theft or riot, were reserved to the Turkish courts, unless the accused was a priest...[285]

"In theory, the structure of the Great Church, as the Greeks called the Patriarchal organization, even though the Great Church itself, Saint Sophia, was no longer a Christian temple, was not altered by the conquest. The Patriarch was still officially elected by the Holy Synod consisting of the metropolitans, and the election was confirmed by the lay suzerain. As in Byzantine times the lay suzerain almost invariably indicated the candidate whom he wished to be elected; and the old custom of submitting three names to him, which had fallen into disuse in late Byzantine times, was formally abolished. But the increased administrative duties of the Patriarchate inevitably led to changes. The Holy Synod had originally consisted of the metropolitans alone, though the high officials of the Patriarchate seem sometimes to have attended its meetings. Soon after the conquest they were officially added to it; and there was a general enhancement of the constitutional importance of the Synod. The Patriarch became little more than its president. In theory this was a reaffirmation of the democratic principles of the Church. In practice it that, while a strong and popular Patriarch would meet with no difficulties, Patriarchal authority could always be undermined. Turkish

---

[285] "In effect," writes Norman Russell, "the patriarch was a minister for Christian affairs in the Ottoman scheme of things, invested with just sufficient power to ensure that the people paid the taxes to the Ottoman government. By the end of the eighteenth century it is estimated that he governed approximately one quarter of the population of the empire, some thirteen million Orthodox" ("Neomartyrs of the Greek Church", *Sobornost'*, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 37). (V.M.)

officials, without seeming openly to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church, could exercise what influence they desired through intrigues with individual members of the Synod…"[286]

<div align="center">*</div>

This weakness in the new system soon made itself felt, together with the increased influence of laymen recruited to help the Patriarch with his increased administrative burden.

The root of the problem was that each new patriarch had to pay for the *berat* authorizing him to carry out his office, and the Turks were constantly increasing the price, which meant that the patriarch had to ask his clergy for money, and they in turn asked the people…The only Christians who could pay these bribes were the Phanariots, loyal Greek Christian officials, rich merchants who had risen to power in the sixteenth century in Constantinople, who called themselves the "Archontes" of the Greek nation, and who were called by others "Phanariots" because they came from the Phanar, the Christian quarter of Constantinople where the Patriarchate was based.

"They obtained for their sons positions in the Patriarchal court; and one by one the high offices of the Great Church passed into lay hands. Their members did not enter the Church itself. That was considered to be beneath their dignity. The bishops and the Patriarch himself continued to be drawn mainly from bright boys of humbler classes who had risen through intelligence and merit. But by the end of the seventeenth century the Phanariot families, as they were usually called, dominated the central organization of the Church. They could not control it completely. Occasionally, as in the case of Patriarch Cyril V, they would be overridden by public opinion. But the Patriarchate could not do without them; for they were in a position both to pay its debts and to intrigue in its favour at the Sublime Porte…

"While they sought to increase their riches and through their riches to obtain influence at first the Patriarch's and then the Sultan's courts, they dreamed that the influence might ultimately be used to recreate the Empire of Byzantium…"[287]

The most famous of the Phanariots was Alexander Mavrocardato, who became Grand Dragoman of the Ottoman Empire at the age of thirty-one, remaining in that post for twenty-five years, "with a brief interval early in 1684, when he was cast into prison as one of the scapegoats for the Turkish failure before Vienna. His mother, who joined him in prison, died soon after their release, in August 1684. Alexander was soon reinstated. In 1688 he led an Ottoman embassy to Vienna. In 1698 a still higher post was created for him. He became Exaporite, Minister of the Secrets, Private Secretary to the Sultan, with

---

[286] Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 165-173.
[287] Runciman, op. cit., pp. 362, 363.

the title of Prince and Illustrious Highness. In 1698 he was the chief Turkish delegate at the peace conference of Carlowitz, where the Habsburg Emperor gave him the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. He died in 1709, honoured and immensely rich. His career had opened up new vistas for Greeks of ambition.

"Though none of the later Phanariots quite measured up to Alexander Mavrocordato's stature, he set the pattern for them. He was remarkably intelligent and highly educated, and always eager to maintain intellectual contacts with the West. The Jesuits believed him to be a secret Catholic; but his actions scarcely confirmed their belief. He took an active part in the affairs of the Orthodox Church, fighting for its rights. As Grand Dragoman he secured a relaxation of the rules restricting the building of new churches, and he arranged for the transference of many of the Holy Places at Jerusalem from Latin to Greek ownership, in co-operation with the great Patriarch Dositheus of Jerusalem. But he was far from fanatical. He gave strict orders to the Greeks at Jerusalem that they were to welcome and aid Christians of all sects who visited the shrines under their care; and he seems to have believed that it might be possible to reunite the Churches of Christendom on a new philosophical basis, resting on the foundation of the unity of the old Graeco-Roman world. His attitude revealed his Jesuit training. He was a philosopher and an intellectual, eager to be an up-to-date European, with little sympathy with the old apophatic tradition of Orthodoxy. He did much in practice for his Church; but the school of thought that he represented was to add to its problems..."[288]

"Above all," continues Runciman, "the Phanariots needed the support of the Church in the pursuit of their ultimate political aim. It was no mean aim. The Megali Idea, the Great Idea of the Greeks, can be traced back to days before the Turkish Conquest. It was the idea of the Imperial destiny of the Greek people. Michael VIII Palaeologus expressed it in the speech that he made when he heard that his troops had recaptured Constantinople from the Latins; though he called the Greeks the Romaioi. In later Paleologan times the word Hellene reappeared, but with the conscious intention of connecting Byzantine imperialism with the culture and traditions of ancient Greece. With the spread of the Renaissance a respect for the old Greek civilization had become general. It was natural that the Greeks, in the midst of their political disasters, should wish to benefit from it. They might be slaves now to the Turks, but they were of the great race that had civilized Europe. It must be their destiny to rise again. The Phanariots tried to combine the nationalistic force of Hellenism in a passionate if illogical alliance with the oecumenical traditions of Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. They worked for a restored Byzantium, a New Rome that should be Greek, a new centre of Greek civilization that should embrace the Orthodox world. The spirit behind the Great Idea was a mixture of neo-Byzantinism and an acute sense of race. But, with the trend of the modern world the nationalism began to dominate the oecumenicity. George Scholarius Gennadius had, perhaps unconsciously, foreseen the danger when

---

[288] Runciman, op. cit., pp. 368-369.

he answered a question about his nationality by saying that he would not call himself a Hellene though he was a Hellene by race, nor a Byzantine though he had been born at Byzantium, but, rather, a Christian, that is, an Orthodox. For, if the Orthodox Church was to retain its spiritual force, it must remain oecumenical. It must not become a purely Greek Church…."[289]

The question of Greek domination over the other Balkan Orthodox was indeed a major potential source of conflict. And yet a major advantage of the *milet* system for the Orthodox lay in the possibility it provided of making the different Orthodox peoples more united. For the main cause of the conflicts between the Balkan Orthodox nations, - the imperialist nationalism of the Byzantine State, on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist nationalism of the Slavic States, on the other – had been removed. No nation could now encroach on the sovereignty of any other nation, since they were all equally the miserable subjects of the Sultan. In theory, at any rate, this communion in suffering should have brought the Christians closer together.

But in one important respect the Sultan had preserved the status quo of Greek superiority, thereby sowing the seeds of future conflicts… "The Muslims," writes Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), "drew no distinction between religion and politics: from their point of view, if Christianity was to be recognized as an independent religious faith, it was necessary for Christians to be organized as an independent political unit, an Empire within the Empire. The ecclesiastical structure was taken over *in toto* as an instrument of secular administration. The bishops became government officials, the Patriarch was not only the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church, but the civil head of the Greek nation – the ethnarch or millet-bashi."[290]

An outward symbol of this change in the status of the Patriarch was his wearing a crown in the Divine services. Hieromonk Elia writes: "Until Ottoman times,… bishops did not wear crowns, or anything else upon their heads in church. When there was no longer an Emperor, the Patriarch began to wear a crown, and the 'sakkos', an imperial garment, indicating that he was now head of the millet or nation."[291]

So the non-Greek Orthodox were again under a Greek ruler who wore a crown, even if he in turn was ruled by the Sultan! And they knew that if the Sultan were removed, then the Greek Patriarch would again be in charge… The fact that the Orthodox of all nations were now one nation in law could have been seen as a message from God: "You – Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians – are one nation in My eyes. Cease your quarrelling, therefore, and love each other." But if that was the message, it was not heeded…

*

[289] Runciman, op. cit., pp. 378-379.

[290] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 89.

[291] Elia, "[paradosis] Re: Bareheaded", orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, May 9, 2006.

The Ottoman Conquest was cruel, humiliating and spiritually dangerous for the Orthodox. Besides losing their independence, most of their educational institutions and their greatest churches (Hagia Sophia was turned into a mosque), there was the threat of gradual islamization, a process that had begun in all the lands under the Ottoman yoke. For, although the Ottomans formally allowed freedom of Christian worship, in practice they suppressed it in various ways: in the greater taxes that the Christians had to pay, in the ban on missionary work, in the forcible enrolment and conversion of Christian young men, especially in Bosnia, into the military force of the Janissaries, and in the enslavement of Christian young women into the sultan's harem.

Nevertheless, there were advantages for the Balkan Orthodox Christians. First, the temptation to betray the faith to the Pope in order protect the State from the Sultan was removed; this allowed the Church under the anti-uniate Patriarch Gennadius to renounce the unia with Rome and return to Orthodoxy very soon after the Conquest. Moreover, Ottoman rule continued to give the Christians of the Balkans some protection against the inroads of western, mainly Jesuit, missionaries. And many Orthodox who had been forced to submit to Rome when the Venetians or Genoese were in control were able to return to Orthodoxy once their land was conquered by the Turks.

The Orthodox were comforted in their sorrows by a continuing miracle that demonstrated the truth of their faith as against that of infidels and heretics – the Descent of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem every Great Saturday.

In 1579, writes Protopresbyter James Thornton, "it happened that, by a subterfuge, the Turks who then controlled Jerusalem, allowed representatives of the Armenian Monophysites to conduct the ceremony, something that had never occurred before, while the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and the people of the Orthodox Faith remained outside. The Armenian Patriarch entered the church in the usual manner, and began to pray. Nothing happened, no light or fire appeared. The Armenian Patriarch began to weep, and redoubled his prayers. Again, nothing happened. Many minutes passed, and then a half hour – still nothing! Then, out of a clear blue sky without a trace of a cloud, a mighty thunderclap was heard and a stone column outside of the church, next to where the Greek Orthodox Patriarch stood, cracked open, and from the opening there burst a flame: the Holy Fire. (The cracked column, outside the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, remains in place even today.) The Patriarch lit his candle and passed the flames on to the Faithful, who cried, 'Thou art our one God, Jesus Christ: one is our True Faith, that of the Orthodox Christians!'"

A Turkish emir called Touman "witnessed this astonishing event and was dumbfounded. Never before had he seen anything like it. As a consequence, he resolved to convert at once to Orthodox Christianity, an act for which, under

Turkish law, he faced death. His former co-religionists beheaded him on the spot…"[292]

<center>*</center>

The Serbs had always seen themselves as the western outpost of Orthodoxy. As such, they suffered not only from eastern invaders, such as the Turks, but also from western heretics, such as the Austrians and Hungarians. The last remnants of Serbian independence against the Turks, centered on Smederovo, disappeared in 1459.[293]

Bosnia fell a little later, in 1463. "The king of Bosnia, Stephen Tomašević, was besieged by the army of the Ottoman ruler Mehmet II in the fortress of Ključ. Eventually the King surrendered under agreement of safe conduct. But once in Mehmet's hands Stephen and his entourage were killed and the surviving Bosnian nobility made into galley-slaves. The Ottoman view was that the entire Bosnian ruling class had lost its function and should be liquidated – Bosnia's new role as a small eyelet (province) in the Ottoman Empire was permanent and final. The safe conduct had been offered to a king, but now he had become a mere subject and could be disposed of at will…"[294]

Things were no better in other regions. "The devastation was terrible. According to early Turkish sources, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were ten to fourteen active places of Christian worship left in Kosovo and Metohija."[295]

In the time of Tsar Dushan the Serbs had numbered about 3.5 million people. 500 years later, their numbers were no greater, so great had been their losses through war and enslavement.[296]

<center>*</center>

Under Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66), the great-grandson of Mehmet II, the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power… Born in 1494 in Trebizond, he came to the throne, as John Julius Norwich writes, at the age of

---

[292] Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens,* Belmont, Mass.: Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, p. 405.

[293] According to Dr. Miodrag M. Petrović, there was no independent Bosnian Church, although there were Orthodox Christians served by clergy of the Serbian Church. The so-called "Bosnian Church" was not an organization with an ecclesiastical territory and jurisdiction, but a completely secular institution, a diplomatic, advisory, arbitration and intermediary body at the courts of Bosnian rulers. ("Kudugers-Bogomils in Byzantine and Serbian sources and the 'Bosnian Church'", Belgrade, 1998, pp. 90-97)

[294] Simon Winder, *Danubia,* London: Picador, 2013, p. 7.

[295] "Orthodox Kosovo", *Saint Herman Calendar 2009,* Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood.

[296] St. Nikolai Velimirovich, "Zhatvy Gospodny" (The Harvests of the Lord), in *Dusha Serbii* (The Soul of Serbia), Moscow, 2006, p. 83.

twenty-five, when "he was already an experienced ruler. At fifteen he had been appointed Governor of Caffa in the Crimea, a major trading post where he had remained for three years; subsequently his father, the aptly named Sultan Selim the Grim, had appointed him Governor of Istanbul. But it had been an unhappy time: eight years during which Selim had instituted a reign of terror. He had been intelligent and cultivated enough – some of his verses are, we are told, among the loveliest in all Ottoman poetry – but he seemed to conceive of government solely in terms of executions. When he had dethroned (and subsequently murdered) his own father, Bayezit II, in 1511, his first act on his accession had been to have his two young brothers and five orphan nephews strangled by the bowstring. Suleiman was the only male member of his entire family left alive.

"Nor were Selim's executions by any means confined to his family.[297] He had thought nothing, for example, of condemning to death four hundred Turkish merchants who had disobeyed his edict by trading with Persia. It was therefore hardly surprising that his son's accession was universally greeted as a new dawn. And so it was: unjustly held captives were released, trade with Persia re-established, corrupt or sadistic officials brought to justice and hanged. From the very beginning, however, the young Sultan made it clear that he was an autocrat through and through: his rule was to be just, but it would also be uncompromisingly firm. 'My sublime commandment,' he wrote to the Governor of Egypt, 'as inescapable and as binding as fate, is that rich and poor, town and country, subjects and payers of tribute – everyone must hasten to obey. If some of them are slow to do their duty, be they emirs or fakirs, do not hesitate to inflict on them the ultimate punishment.'

"Suleiman was, from the start, sublimely confident of his power to govern his vast Empire. He was, however, also constantly aware of the world beyond it. He had spent many hours studying the major powers of western Europe and their respective rulers, and he knew that the Emperor Charles, to whom he always referred as 'the King of Spain' – how, after all, could there be more than one empire? – was determined on a Crusade which, if successful, would drive him and his subjects back into the Asian steppe. He knew too that his own forces were comfortably stronger than those of any single European state, but a vast Christian alliance would be another matter – if it could ever be got together. Fortunately [for him] Christendom was at this moment bitterly divided, principally by the Christian religion itself, and religion, he also knew, was the most divisive force of all. At any time, however great or however negligible, opposition was the best defence; and the further he would advance the territories of Islam to the west, the safer the Empire would be.

"Above the central door of the great mosque in Istanbul that bears his name – the Suleimaniye – are inscribed the words 'Propagator of the Imperial Laws', and to the Turks he is known not as the Magnificent but always as *Kanuni*, 'the

---

[297] Selim "killed or imprisoned 40,000 Shiites in Anatolia in 1513" (Benson Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible,* Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, p. 344). (V.M.)

Lawgiver'. The title was well merited: Suleiman went a long towards a complete revision of the legal system of his Empire, instituting radical changes in society, education, taxation and criminal law. He collected all the judgements issued by the nine previous sultans and condensed them into a single clear code, while taking care every step of the way not to violate the *sharia*, the basic law of Islam – which… was to endure in his Empire for the next three hundred years. In the field of education, he founded fourteen large primary schools and eight *medreses* (colleges) in Istanbul alone, while countless other schools attached to mosques and funded by religious foundations provided a largely free education to boys, long before such a thing was known in the west.

"But Suleiman was also… in his own oriental way a son of the Renaissance, a man of wide culture, virtually bilingual in Turkish and Persian – in both of which languages he was a gifted poet – to which he added fluent Arabic, with serviceable Greek and Bulgar and a smattering of Hungarian. Himself an expert goldsmith, he was a hugely generous patron of the arts; under him the imperial potteries of Iznik (the ancient Nicaea) were at their most inspired, and the imperial architects – above all the celebrated Mimat Sinan – adorned the cities of the Empire with mosques and religious foundations, schools and caravanserais, many of which still stand today. He also established an institution known as the *Ehl-I Herif*, the Community of the Talented, which gave great artists and craftsmen official and professional status and attracted all the Empire's most talented artist, both oriental and European, to his court. Though a sincere and conscientious Muslim – his passionate prayer before the Battle of Mohacs has come down to us – he was not especially pious, as was, for example, Charles V. He was notably tolerant of his Christian and Jewish subjects – as long as they paid their taxes – and allowed them freedom of worship throughout his dominions. He showed, too, considerable sympathy, at least at the beginning of his reign, towards the few of his Shi'a subjects that his father had not massacred – though in his later years his attitude towards them was appreciably to harden."[298]

Suleiman was powerful enough to claim the title of universal empire. His empire did not extend as far east as that of the Abbasid Caliphate, writes Niall Ferguson, "but it had succeeded in spreading Islam into hitherto Christian territory – not only the old Byzantine realms on either side of the Black Sea Straits, but also Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary. Belgrade had fallen to the Ottomans in 1521, Buda in 1541.[299] Ottoman naval power had also brought Rhodes to its knees (1522). Vienna might have survived (as did Malta) but, having also extended Ottoman rule from Baghdad to Basra, from Van in the Caucasus to Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, and along the Barbary coast from Algiers to Tripoli, Suleiman… could… claim: 'I am the Sultan of Sultans, the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the distributor of crowns to the monarchs of the globe, the shadow of God upon Earth…'."[300]

---

[298] Norwich, *Four Princes,* London: John Murray, 2017, pp. 29-32.

[299] Hungarian power had been destroyed at the Battle of Mohacs in 1526. (V.M.)

[300] Ferguson, *Civilization,* London: Penguin, 2012, pp. 52, 53.

Suleiman set out to fight the Hungarians in 1521 with an army of one hundred thousand men and three hundred cannons. His first objective was "Belgrade, the mighty fortress standing at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, the effective gateway to Hungary and the Danube valley through which he could take his armies straight to Buda and Vienna. In 1456 John Hunyadi had successfully defended it against his great-grandfather Mehmet II, who had been seriously wounded in the fighting – a disaster that Suleiman was determined to avenge. The siege of Belgrade lasted for three weeks until the Turkish sappers managed to blow up the principal tower of the fortress. The garrison, part Serbian and part Hungarian, attempted to fight on, but the Orthodox Serbs hated the Catholic Hungarians and eventually concluded a separate peace on condition that their lives were spare. The Hungarians were massacred to a man; the Serbs were taken back to Istanbul and settled in a woodland site to the north-east of the city – still known today as the Forest of Belgrade. Then the Turks poured in, and before long Belgrade, now with a population of more than a hundred thousand, was the second largest city in the Empire, surpassed only by Istanbul itself…"[301]

Of particular significance in the history of Serbia under the Turkish yoke was the burning of the body of St. Sava, which had been placed in the monastery of Mileshevo.

"Mileshevo was plundered and destroyed," writes Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, "but happily not destroyed. The sarcophagus with Sava's incorruptible body was not removed or desecrated for one hundred and fifty years after the Turkish conquest. Ever since Sava's body was laid in it, and for over two hundred years of Serbian freedom and independence, Mileshevo had been a place of pilgrimages, equal to Zhicha and Studenica. It had been endowed and adorned by the Bans of Bosnia, the Princes of Herzegovina, the Zhupans of the seacoast and kings and tsars of Serbia. The petty lords wanted to make themselves great, and the great would make themselves still greater if they had some connection with Sava's tomb or Sava's name. So Tvrtko I chose Mileshevo in which to be crowned King of Bosnia at the tomb of St. Sava in 1277, although he was a protector of the Bogomils. Prince Stjepan Kossacha, an open Bogomil, adopted the title 'Duke of St. Sava'. Of course, the Orthodox rulers competed even more eagerly with each other to do something remarkable for that sanctuary in which the sacred body was preserved. In those bright days of freedom, Mileshevo was a true center of lofty piety, education and educational activity. For Sava's spirit ruled there and gave an example of strenuous labor and many accomplishments.

"In the dark days of Turkish tyranny, however, Mileshevo became to the Christian people a place of retreat, of deep repentance and of heavenly

---

[301] Norwich, *Four Princes,* p. 62.

consolation. It was at the mercy of the Muslims and yet, strange as it may seem, it was for a long time protected by the Muslims themselves and the Serbs who were converted by force to Islam. The Muslims also witnessed innumerable miracles at the tomb of Saint Sava. A large village of Muslim converts, Hissarjik, close to the monastery, surpassed all others in their devotion to and protection of Mileshevo. Some of the daring European travellers who came to Serbia under the Osmanlis saw in Mileshevo the sarcophagus of Saint Sava 'heaped with the gifts given by the Muslims'. Some of them mentioned that even Roman Catholics from Dalmatia and Jews made pilgrimages to the tomb of the saint.

"This situation lasted until the end of the sixteenth century. But in that century the Osmanli Turks became exasperated because of the ceaseless revolts and insurrections of the Serbs. The Serbs had never reconciled themselves to their cruel fate under the Turkish yoke, Guerrillas from forests inside the country on the one hand, and refugees from Srem, Slavonia and Banat, on the other, constantly disturbed the Ottoman government. The Turks thought the trouble makers and revolutionaries had been inspired by the ancient Serbian monasteries. The cult and veneration of Saint Sava was then as great as ever before, and even greater on account of increasingly accumulated wonders.

"Facing the growing danger of frequent insurrection, the Turkish sultans of that time were imprudent enough to use means contrary to wisdom. Instead of dousing fire by water, they intensified it by wood and straw. They sent more and more petty tyrants to suppress the revolts by torture, destruction and bloodshed.

"At the beginning of the year 1595, a change took place on the throne in Istanbul. The new sultan, Mohammed III, son of a weak father, cruelly ordered Sinan Pasha to quell the Serbian revolts forever by any means. This ruthless pasha was informed that the Serbian monasteries were inspirational centers for the revolts against the Turks. He was informed that Mileshevo was a place of pilgrimage, a new Kaba, even for Muslims, and that many of them had been converted to the Christian faith because of the healing of their sick relations, and other wonders at the tomb of Saint Sava. Sinan Pasha at once ordered that Sava's body be taken to Belgrade and burnt.

"A certain Ahmed beg Ochuse was assigned the commission to carry out the pasha's order. This brutal servant of the brutal lord, true to his nature, did it in a brutal way. He first placed a military cordon around the monastery of Mileshevo. Then he forced the monks to take the wooden coffin with the body of the saint out of the sarcophagus. The coffin was put on horses which were led by the monks themselves, because the Turks were afraid to touch it. And so the melancholy procession started. On the way the sobbing and crying monks were beaten and every Serbian man or women met on the way was killed or taken along, lest they should inform the outlaws in the forests. So in this way the procession swelled considerably by the time it reached Belgrade.

"In the outskirts of the city of Belgrade, at a place called Vrachar, a pyre was made. On that pyre the wooden coffin containing the sacred boy was laid. On April 27, 1595, Saint Sava's body was burnt to ashes. An unusually big flame soared heavenward, illuminated the city in the night and was seen from over the Danube River. And while the Turks were celebrating with satisfaction, and the enslaved Serbs in Belgrade were weeping and praying, the free Serbs beyond the Danube and the guerrillas on the mountains presented their swords in homage to their saint.

"So Sinan Pasha destroyed the body of Saint Sava, but increased his glory and influence. The triumph was only passing because it destroyed a cage from which the dove had fled long ago. The joy of the Turks was of short duration, for as the flame subsided, a sudden fear seized them, and they ran to their homes and shut the doors behind them. In Vrachar a few monks on their knees watched the fire from afar, waiting to take a handful of sacred ashes back to Mileshevo…"[302]

In the seventeenth century, the persecution against the Serbs intensified. Such great pillars of Orthodoxy as St. Basil of Ostrog (+1671) had to struggle against both the Jesuits and the Turks…

"A proliferation of Uniate propaganda," writes Fr. Daniel Rogich, "was disseminated by the Jesuits of Rome who hoped to convert the Serbs [in the Serbian territories of Primore, Hercegovina and Montenegro] to the Latin faith. Basil, then a priest at the diocesan residence of Metropolitan Mardarius in Cetinje, vehemently denounced this assault on the Orthodox faithful of these areas, all the while petitioning the Metropolitan to warn the people and to protect the faith. Mardarius, however, did nothing to combat these heretical propagandists. Furthermore, he ordered Basil back to the Monastery of the Dormition in Tvrdosh. Basil complied with this episcopal decree; yet, during his return to Tvrdosh, he secretly visited many Orthodox churches and families, exhorting them 'to guard the most precious deposit' – Orthodoxy – which had been entrusted to them by the great St. Sava. Thus Basil, although persecuted by his own bishop, was nevertheless considered by the pious Serbs of these areas as a glorious defender of Orthodoxy.

"Living in Tvrdosh, Basil resumed his ascetic labours as Archimandrite of the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos; and like St. Sava before him, he travelled to all parts of the diocese to strengthen the faithful. He began a great biblical, spiritual, and liturgical renewal movement based upon increased participation in the liturgical and ascetical life of the Church. He was often seen going from house to house in Hercegovina preaching the Gospel of Christ to the Serbs. News of his evangelical activities reached the Turks at this time. Called by the Turks the *Rajina Bogomolca* (the non-Muslim Christian slave dear to God), Basil was considered both a political and religious enemy to the

---

[302] Velimirovich, *The Life of St. Sava,* Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, pp. 157-160.

authorities, and thus his life was in constant danger. Hence, by the advice of his own people, Basil fled to the great Orthodox country of Russia.

"Basil spent a little more than a year in Russia, visiting many dignitaries as well as spending time in small towns and villages where he learned of an experienced the passionate Russian spirit and the common people's love for Orthodoxy. Upon his return to Tvrdosh, he brought with him many holy vessels, books, and money which he distributed to churches and families throughout Hercegovina. Venerable Basil was able to open and elementary school in Tvrdosh as well as build a new church next to it within the walls of the courtyard. Yet these apostolic works did not go unchecked, as his enemies – both the agents of the Latin unia and the vicious Turks – came with full force searching for this divine preacher and defender of the true Christian faith. Hence Basil fled again, this time not to Russia, but to the Holy Mountain of Athos.

"On his way to the Holy Mountain, our father Basil stopped at the monasteries of Moracha and Djurdjevi Stubofi (the 'Pillars of St. George') near Ivangrad, and finally arrived in Pech to receive the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Paisius Janjevac (1614-1647). Basil told him in detail of the difficulties the Serbs were now encountering with the Latins and Turks, and of his desire to flee to the Serbian bastion of spirituality, Hilandar Monastery on the Holy Mountain of Athos. The wise Patriarch granted venerable Basil his blessing to go to the Holy Mountain, but advised him not to stay there long; Patriarch Paisius, seeing the devout, evangelical, an pious character of Hieromonk Basil, had another thought in mind – to consecrate Basil as the Bishop of Zahumlje (Hercegovina).

"Basil spent a year on the Holy Mountain, residing in Hilandar Monastery. He also visited the many sketes and cells of the virtuous ascetics and hesychasts living throughout the Holy Mountain. He learned much concerning the spiritual life in Christ which strengthened him and later came to his aid in facing his new challenge in life. Upon his return, Basil visited the Patriarch, and this time Paisius had an honor to bestow on him. Basil was selected for consecration on the Feast of the Transfiguration as the Metropolitan of Trebinje, with his residence in Tvrdosh. He succeeded Metropolitan Simeon of Hercegovina on the episcopal throne in Tvrdosh. Basil was consecrated on August 6, 1638, when he was not yet thirty years old. Although young in age, he was nevertheless deemed most wise in spirit and character, one who would be able to stem the tide of the difficulties in the south-western territories of the Church of Serbia.

"From Pech, Basil travelled to Tvrdosh where he immediately assumed his episcopal duties. He fearlessly travelled to all parts of the Diocese of Trebinje, strengthening the people against the enemies of the Church. His spiritual flock came to love and venerate him as a Saint on earth, as many miracles were recorded as a result of his touch, words, or prayers. These were some of the most terrible times of persecution for the Serbian Orthodox Church. For

example Metropolitan Paisius Trebjeshanin of eastern Hercegovina, whose episcopal throne was in Nikchich, was murdered by the Turks: also, Patriarch Gabriel (Rajich) of Pech (1648-1656) was persecuted and martyred for the faith. As a result of this terrorizing and persecution…, venerable Bishop Basil had to take under his episcopal omphor the dioceses of Trebinje, eastern Hercegovina, Zahumlje, and Onogushk (Nikshich) – practically all of the southwestern Serbian lands. Furthermore, the fearless Archpastor had no place to lay his head, as his residence and monastery in Tvrdosh were completely destroyed only a few months after he assumed his episcopal duties… After much prayer, deliberation, and advice from elders in the faith [he] decided to transfer his episcopal seat to the Monastery of Ostrog"[303], which is where he died and is buried.

*

Meanwhile, the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija had a further scourge in the shape of the Albanians, who gradually came down from the mountains and settled in the plain, and were then given significant positions of power because of their conversion to Islam.

Now the Albanians had not always been enemies of the Serbs. Many of them had fought for Tsar Dushan, and some for St. Lazar at Kosovo. At the time of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, the Albanians were fighting on the Christian side under their famous ruler Skanderbeg.

Jason Tomes writes: "Born Gjergj Kastrioti around 1405, the legendary patriot was taken as a tribute child to be reared as a Muslim and trained for the Ottoman army. He covered himself with glory fighting for the Turks, and to his Islamic name Iskandar was added the honorific title *bey* (or *beg*). The Sultan appointed him Governor of Kruja, but in 1443 he mutinied, reverted to Catholicism, and declared himself ruler of Albania. Allied with Hungarians and Venetians, Skanderbeg resisted the Turks for twenty-five years, and his victories against tremendous odds won him an enduring place in European history. But, as so often with a military genius, his legacy proved unsustainable. Skanderbeg died of fever in 1468, and independence was lost within a decade …"[304]

Mark Mazower writes: "Albania was perhaps a special case from the point of view of religion. 'We Albanians have quite peculiar ideas,' one notable told Edith Durham. 'We will profess any form of religion which leaves us free to carry a gun. Therefore the majority of us are Moslems.'"[305]

---

[303] Rpgich, *Serbian Patericon,* Platina, Ca.: St. Paisios Abbey Press, 1994, vol. I, pp. 312-318.

[304] Tomes, *King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania,* Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007, p. 10. According to Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, Skanderbeg was Orthodox.

[305] Mazower, *The Balkans,* London: Phoenix, 2000, p. 73.

Srdja Trifković writes: "Wealth and material position were important factors affecting the decision of conquered peoples to convert to Islam. This contributed to the new stratification of the society under Ottoman rule, and a new power balance among national groups. The balance was shifting, and as far as the Albanians and Serbs were concerned, it was shifting drastically in favour of the Albanians, to the detriment of good relations between them. The emergence of a significant number of Islamized Albanians holding high Ottoman posts was reflected in Kosovo and Metohija. Albanians started appearing as officials and tax collectors in local administration, replacing Turks as the pillar of Ottoman authority. Local Serbs, who remained Christians, and Albanians, who were eager to convert, being divided by language and culture, and subsequently by religion, gradually became members of two fundamentally opposed social and political groups.

"The Albanians' readiness to come to terms with the conquerors gave them the upper hand. This was the beginning of a tragic division, of separate roads. The former became the rulers and the latter the ruled.

"The latent Serbian-Albanian conflict came into the open during the Holy League's war against the Ottoman Empire (1683-1690). Many Serbs joined the Habsburg troops as a separate Christian militia. The Albanians – with the exception of the gallant Roman Catholic Klimenti (Kelmendi) tribe – reacted in accordance with their recently acquired Islamic identity and took the side of the sultan's army against the Christians."[306]

In 1683 a combined Austrian and Polish army raised the Ottoman siege of Vienna. The Austrians then took control of southern Hungary and Transylvania. They advanced as far east as Kosovo, but then retreated, leaving the Serbs who had taken their side at the mercy of the vengeful Turks.

The Serbs then decided on a bold move. Under the leadership of Patriarch Arsenije III of Peć, they "abandoned their farms and villages to trek north, then crossed the Danube with the retreating Austrians into Habsburg-ruled Hungary. In what was thereafter called Vojvodina, from the Slavonic for 'duchy', the emperor gave the Serbs [in 1690] a charter to establish their own community. The Habsburgs used these exiles as the first line of defence against Ottoman incursions."[307]

According to Noel Malcolm, the document that the Austrian Emperor Leopold I issued to Patriarch Arsenije was not in fact "inviting the Patriarch to bring his people to Hungary; on the contrary, it was urging him and his people to rise up against the Ottomans, so that Austrian rule could be extended all the way to 'Albania'. For that purpose, it guaranteed (as Marsigli had suggested) that Habsburg dominion over their territory would not infringe their religious

[306] Trifković, "Kosovo: The Score Squaring the Circle in the Balkans", in *Kosovo and Metohija: arguments in favour of its future within Serbia,* Geopolitika, 2006, pp. 34-35.
[307] Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels,* London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 239.

freedom or their right to elect their own vojvods. The original manuscript of this document was endorsed: 'An exhortation to the Patriarch of the Rascians, to rouse his people to rebel against the Turks'; and a key passage in the text said: 'Do not desert your hearths, or the cultivation of your fields.' Some nineteenth-century historians of a romantic Serbian persuasion dealt with this passage in a wonderfully economical way: instead of printing the correct text, which says *non deserite* (do not desert), they simply omitted the 'non'.

"In the summer of 1690, however, all such plans for reconquest were abandoned. The Ottomans, under their competent Grand Vizier, had built up their forces, and the military tide had definitely turned. A massive Ottoman army advanced on Niš and besieged it; it surrendered on 6 September. The Imperial garrison was allowed to leave, but a large number of 'Rascian' soldiers (400 in one account, 4000 in another) were taken out and killed. In the last week of September, Belgrade was under siege; it held out for just twelve days, before an Ottoman shell hit the fort's main powder-store on the night of 8 October, blowing the whole citadel to smithereens.

"By September Belgrade had become the natural destination of a large number of refugees. One modern historian estimates that there were 40,000 there; many of these would have come from the Niš region, and the region between Niš and Belgrade – areas which had been under Austrian administration for a whole year. But among them also would have been some of the people who had fled from the Prishtina-Trepça area of Kosovo. Their Patriarch had reached Belgrade much earlier in the year. In June he had gathered a large assembly of Serbian religious and secular leaders there, to discuss further negotiations with the Emperor over the question of religious autonomy in the areas still under Austrian control…

"How – and exactly when – the Serb refugees escaped into Hungary is not clear… The conditions most of them had to live in, as they camped out in the central Hungarian region in the winter, were atrocious. Before the end of the year Patriarch Arsenije sent a petition to the Emperor Leopold begging for assistance for these people; he also gave an explicit estimate of their numbers.' There have come to Esztergom, Komárom and Buda men with their wives and children, completely destitute and bare, coming to a total of more than 30,000 souls.' Much later, in 1706, Arsenije made another estimate in a letter to Leopold's successor: he said he had come to Hungary with 'more than 40,000 souls'."[308]

Arsenije created a metropolitanate at Karlovtsy, while a new Patriarch was appointed at Peć. Meanwhile, the Church of Montenegro remained independent. So there were now three Serbian Churches…

<div align="center">*</div>

---

[308] Malcolm, *Kosovo,* London: Papermac Books, 1998, pp. 158-160, 161.

We must also not forget the repressive policies of the other great Muslim power, Shiite Persia, on Orthodox Georgia. Thus: "In the wilderness of David-Garejeli in Georgia, there were twelve monasteries in which many monks practiced and lived the ascetical life for centuries. In 1615 A.D., the great king of Persia, Shah Abbas I, attacked Georgia, devastated it and beheaded many Christians. Once while hunting early in the morning on the Feast of the Resurrection, Shah Abbas noticed many lights in the mountains. They were the monks from the twelve monasteries in procession around the Church of the Resurrection with lighted tapers in hand. When the Shah discovered that they were monks, he asked in amazement: 'Has not all of Georgia been given over to the sword?' He then ordered his solders to immediately go and behead all the monks. At that moment an angel of God appeared to Abbot Arsenius and informed him of impending death. Arsenius informed his brethren. They all received Communion of the All-Pure Mysteries and prepared themselves for death. Suddenly, the assailants arrived and hacked to pieces, first of all, the abbot, who came before the others and, after that, all the rest. They all suffered honorably and were crowned with incorruptible wreaths in the year 1615 A.D. Thus ended the history of these famous monasteries which, for more than a thousand years, served as the spiritual hearth of enlightenment for the Georgians. Only two of the monasteries exist today: St. David and St. John the Forerunner. The Georgian Emperor Archil gathered the relics of the monks and honorably interred them. Even today, these relics emit a sweet-smelling Chrism (oil) and heal the sick."[309]

---

[309] "The Suffering of the Six Hundred Holy Fathers Slain by the Persians at the Monastery of Saint David of Garesja", *Living Orthodoxy*, March-April, 1994, pp. 6-9. According to Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich (*The Prologue from Ochrid,* volume II, p. 38), there were 6000 holy martyrs.

21. ORTHODOXY AND PROTESTANTISM

An important new stage in the history of the relations between Orthodoxy and the West began with the Protestant Reformation.

At first, these relations were reasonably eirenic. The Orthodox and the Protestants agreed with each other in their anti-papism. However, their reasons were subtly different. Moreover, as the two sides got to know each other better, it became clear that they were too far apart dogmatically to work together. The Orthodox rejected the Protestant teaching on the nature of the Church, on the sacraments, on prayer to the saints, on predestination and justification, and on transubstantiation. They also rejected their iconoclast attitude to holy relics and icons.

In the sixteenth century a group of Lutheran theologians tried to open up a dialogue on the faith with Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople. As Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, "the initiative in the correspondence was taken by the Protestants. Stephen Gerlach, a young Lutheran theologian from Tübingen, was going in 1573 to Constantinople for a prolonged stay, as a chaplain to the new Imperial ambassador in Turkey, Baron David Ungnad con Sonnegk. He was carrying with him two private letters for the Patriarch, from Martin Crusius and Jacob Andreae, chancellor of Tübingen University. It might seem that Crusius had originally no ecclesiastical concerns: he was interested rather in getting some information on the present state of the Greek Church and nation, under the Turkish rule. But that was rather a diplomatic disguise. Probably from the very beginning Gerlach had some other commission as well. In any case, even in the first letters the unity and fellowship of faith had already been mentioned. In any case, only a few months late, a new letter was dispatched from Tübingen, under the joint signature of Crusius and Andreae, to which a copy of the Augsburg Confession in Greek had been appended. Gerlach was directed to submit it to the Patriarch for his consideration and comment. A hope was expressed that the Patriarch might see that there was a basic agreement in doctrine, in spite of a certain divergence in some rites, since the Protestants were not making any innovations, but kept loyally the sacred legacy of the Primitive Church, as it had been formulated, on the scriptural basis, by the Seven ecumenical Councils. At Constantinople Gerlach established personal contacts with various dignitaries of the Church and had several interviews with the Patriarch himself. Finally he succeeded in obtaining not only a polite acknowledgement, but a proper theological reply. It was very friendly, but rather disappointing. The Patriarch suggested that the Lutherans should join the Orthodox Church and unconditionally accept her tradition teaching. The Lutherans persisted in their convictions. The correspondence went on for some years and then broke off. In his last reply to Tübingen the Patriarch simply declined any further discussion."[310]

---

[310] Florovsky, "Patriarch Jeremiah II and the Lutheran Divines", in *Christianity and Culture,* Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974, p. 145.

As Ottoman power declined in the seventeenth century, western missionaries began to make inroads among the Orthodox. There was some intercommunion between Orthodox and Catholics on the Greek islands still occupied by the Venetians, and one of the Ecumenical patriarchs, Cyril Lucaris, even succumbed to Protestantism (he was murdered in 1638). This was a major shock to the Orthodox world and initiated a series of conciliar resolutions that defined the Church's attitude to the Protestant heresy, in particular its rejection of transubstantiation.

One of the major differences between the Catholics and the Protestants revolved around the doctrine of the Eucharist and in particular the question whether the bread and wine were really changed into the Body and Blood of Christ or not. The doctrine that it is changed was called transubstantiation (not an ideal term, but one that has been generally adopted to signify the doctrine that there is a real, substantial change from bread and wine to body and blood). Most Protestants rejected T*ransubstantiation* completely, believing that no substantial change in the elements took place; but some, such as the Lutherans and Anglicans, believed in *Consubstantiation*, "that is, that though the body and blood of Christ are really present at the Sacrifice, there is no material change in the elements".[311]

The Orthodox did not take part in this debate at the beginning. However, Patriarch Cyril Lukaris' open rejection of transubstantiation elicited his condemnation as a heretic and a series of conciliar decisions on the question. The first were the Councils of Kiev in 1640 and Jassy in 1642.

Thus "one of the most important Orthodox Christian Synods and Synodal Statements of the past 4 centuries, the Synod of Jerusalem (sometimes called the Synod of Bethlehem) was held in 1672, under the presidency of the renowned and learned Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheus. It condemns both the heresies of Papism ('Roman Catholicism') and Protestantism; but, also in the condemnations it does not neglect to present the positive Confession of the Orthodox Christian Faith on vital issues such as the Holy Mysteries, Prayer for the Dead, and many other important points.[312]

---

[311] Runciman, op. cit., p. 307.

[312] Thus in the eighth canon we read: "We believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be the only Mediator, and that in giving Himself a ransom for all He has through His own Blood made a reconciliation between God and man, and that Himself having a care for His own is advocate and propitiation for our sins. Notwithstanding, in [our] prayers and supplications unto Him, we say the Saints are intercessors, and, above all, the undefiled Mother of the very God the Word; likewise, the holy Angels — whom we know to be set over us — the Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Pure Ones, and all whom He hath glorified as having served Him faithfully. We also count with those the Bishops and Priests, as standing about the Altar of God, and righteous men eminent for virtue. We learn from the Sacred Oracle that we should pray one for another, and that the prayer of the righteous avails much, {James 5:16} and that God hears the Saints rather than those who are steeped in sins. And not only are the Saints while on their pilgrimage regarded as mediators and intercessors for us with God, but especially after their death, when all reflective vision being done away, they behold clearly the Holy Trinity in whose infinite light they know what concerns us. Just as we do not doubt that the Prophets while they were

"The Council was partially called to rebuke the heresies that had emanated, sadly, from the See of Constantinople, which had fallen previously under the sway of the heretical Patriarch, Cyril (Lucaris). Although some have disputed the authenticity of the statements attributed to Cyril, the Council's condemnations stand, nevertheless.

"Patriarch Dositheus, having been consecrated to the hierarchical order at a relatively young age (at the age of 23 years, which is far below the canonical age of ordination even for Deacon), there seemed few other options for the degeneration that Orthodox Christian Faithful and Clergy were being dragged into at this period. Few seminaries and theological schools of any note were in operation in these areas. Clergy and Faithful were apostatizing in a stream to the Papist Eastern Unia, and few seemed to be able to stem the tide. Into this situation the young Patriarch Dositheus came, and, with his great learning and piety, prevented the loss of countless more souls to apostasy.

"His work culminated in the Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem. He also composed his famous *Three Tomes (On Faith, On Hope and On Love)*, where he rebuked the Papist heresies and others, as well as completing his famous *Twelve Books on the History of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem*."[313]

Also in 1672, came *A Synodical Answer to the Question, What are the Sentiments of the Oriental Church of the Grecian Orthodox: sent to the Lovers of the Church in Britain in the Year of Our Lord 1672*, which was signed by Patriarch Dionysius IV of Constantinople, four ex-Patriarchs of Constantinople and the Patriarch of Jerusalem and thirty-one other metropolitans. This "contained a clear statement of belief in the Real Presence in a full material sense, as well as insisting on the infallibility of the Church, the mediation of saints and seven Sacraments".[314]

This *Synodical Answer* was directed to Britain (to a Dr. Covel of Cambridge) because an interest in the question was evinced by some Anglicans, and especially by the British Non-Jurors, the first substantial group of potential converts to the Orthodox faith, who had separated from the Anglican Church because it rejected the English revolution and the new post-revolutionary order in the Church. They considered themselves to be the remnant of the Old Catholic (i.e. Orthodox) Church of the British Isles. Thus "Thomas Ken, former Bishop of Bath and Wells and last survivor of the Non-Juring bishops of the seventeenth century, who died in 1711, wrote in his will: 'I die in the holy and apostolic faith professed in the whole Church before the division of East and

---

in a body with the perceptions of the senses knew what was done in heaven, and so foretold what was future; so also that the Angels, and the Saints become as Angels, know in the infinite light of God what concerns us, we do not doubt, but rather unhesitatingly believe and confess."

[313] Hieromonk Enoch, *Facebook*.

[314] Runciman, op. cit., p. 308.

West.' To his followers it was therefore almost a sacred duty to try to achieve union with the Orthodox."[315]

The opportunity for an ecumenical union came in 1716 when Arsenius, Metropolitan of the Thebaid in Egypt was sent to England to plead for help for the almost bankrupt Patriarchate of Alexandria. He now served as intermediary between the Non-Jurors and the Orthodox. Unfortunately, however, the Non-Jurers' overtures, first to the Greek Church, and then to the Russian, could not agree with the Orthodox on five points of disagreement, especially on prayers to the saints, on the veneration of holy relics and icons – and on transubstantiation, all of which they rejected.

"On the five points of disagreement the Patriarchs were unyielding. The Oecumenical Councils must be regarded as being fully inspired, they said. They were glad to hear that the British were willing to insert the Epiklesis into the Communion service, but they insisted on the full doctrine of transubstantiation. As for the honour paid to the Mother of God and the saints, they quoted the Psalmist: 'Then were they in great fear where no fear was.' The glory given to the Mother of God is 'hyperdulia', not 'latreia', which is given to God alone. After all, we are told to honour the king, which is, to five him 'dulia'. As for mediation, do we not ask the faithful to pray for us? Even Saint Paul did so. Is it not better, then, to ask the saints to pray for us? Again, the worship of icons is not 'latreia' but relative worship. As Basil says, the honour paid to the image ascends to the prototype.

"The Patriarchs then referred the Non-Jurors to the *Synodical Answer* given by the Patriarch Dionysius IV to Dr. Covel. They added a short encyclical statement signed in 1691 by Callinicus II of Constantinople and Dositheus of Jerusalem, explaining that the elements of the eucharist are 'truly the very Body and Blood of Christ under the visible symbols of bread and wine', there having been a material change: which is what is meant by transubstantiation."[316]

This debate is significant as showing how the centre of gravity of the debate between the Orthodox and the westerners had shifted from the *Filioque*, papal supremacy and unleavened bread to transubstantiation, largely as a result of the appearance of the new group of heresies that we call Protestantism. And once again, tragically, the western heretics proved unequal to the challenge: while prepared to make concessions on some of the issues in the earlier debates with the Catholics, such as the *Filioque* and papal supremacy, they dug their heels in on issues that had not been a problem for the Catholics, such as the veneration of icons and transubstantiation. Unable, because of pride, to abandon their heretical past, the Non-Jurors tragically refused to unite themselves to the True Church of Christ.

---

[315] Runciman, op. cit., p. 310.
[316] Runciman, op. cit., p. 316.

22. ROMANIA: STEPHEN THE GREAT TO MICHAEL THE BRAVE

"It is interesting to note," writes Alexander Dvorkin, "how long the peoples did not want to part with the myth of the Empire, to become the centre of which became the dream of practically every European state both in the East and in the West, from Bulgaria to Castilia. In the course of the 13th-14th centuries the canonists of many countries independently of each other developed the principle of *the translatio imperii* (translation of the empire). The process touched Russia a little later – in the 15th century, in the form of the theory of the Third Rome, which Moscow became..."[317]

The idea of the universal empire survived into the modern period because it was *necessary* – necessary for each of the major religions and civilizations of the time – the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the Muslim. It was necessary for Islam because the Muslims needed to hide their own disunities and proclaim their power and superiority over "the people of the Book". As Sultan Mehmet II said to the Italian city-states: "You are 20. There must be only one empire, one faith, and one sovereignty in the world."[318] It was necessary for Roman Catholicism because it affirmed the existence of only one Church, the Roman Catholic, and only one empire, the Holy Roman Empire, which needed to protect themselves against the Ottomans and destroy the contagion of Protestantism. It was necessary for Orthodoxy because the quasi-universal empires of Islam in the East and the Papacy in the West were preparing to divide up the Orthodox lands between them, while the Orthodox themselves showed little unity amongst themselves. They had to learn the lesson that the Serbian Prince Lazar had taught his people: *Samo Slogo Srbina Spasava*, "Only Unity Saves the Serbs"; and while that unity had to be religious and spiritual first of all, it also needed a political dimension.

The idea of the translation of the empire was not new. St. Constantine's moving the capital of the empire from Old Rome to New Rome had been a bold step - but that step, though radical and fraught with enormous consequences, had not involved going beyond the bounds of the existing empire, and had been undertaken by the legitimate emperor himself. The Serbs and Bulgarians had each in their time sought to capture New Rome and make it the capital of a Slavic-Greek kingdom – but this, again, had not involved moving the empire itself, as opposed to changing its dominant nation. The Frankish idea of the *translatio imperii* from New Rome to Aachen had involved both changing the dominant nation and taking the capital beyond the bounds of the existing empire – and had been rejected by the Greeks as heretical, largely on the grounds that it involved setting up a second, rival empire, where there could only be one true one.

---

[317] Dvorkin, *Ocherki po istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 716.
[318] Mehmet, II, in Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, London: Penguin, 2015, p. 5.

There was another important question that presented itself to the Orthodox after the fall of Byzantium: Did not the prophecies link the fall of Rome with the coming of the Antichrist? If so, then the only way to avoid his coming was to revive the empire.

Or perhaps the empire was not yet dead… Perhaps, thought some, the Ottoman empire could be construed as a continuation of Rome. After all, there had been pagans and heretics and persecutors of the Church on the throne, so why not a Muslim? Unlikely as it may sound, some Greeks embraced the idea of Istanbul being Rome, and the Sultan – the Roman emperor. Thus in 1466 the Cretan historian George Trapezuntios said to the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmet II: "Nobody doubts that you are the Roman emperor. He who is the lawful ruler in the capital of the empire and in Constantinople is the emperor, while Constantinople is the capital of the Roman empire. And he who remains as emperor of the Romans is also the emperor of the whole world."[319]

However, it was precisely his combination of all political and religious power in one man – the definition of despotism - that prevented the Sultan from being a true Autocrat or *Basileus.* Besides, the Sultans made no pretense at being Orthodox (which even the heretical Byzantine emperors did), and consequently there could be no genuine "symphony of powers" with the Orthodox Church (even if they treated it better than some of the emperors). Therefore at most they could be considered analogous in authority to the pagan emperors of Old Rome, legitimate authorities to whom obedience was due as long as, and to the degree that, they did not compel Christians to commit impiety - but no more.

So had the clock been turned back? Had the Christian Roman Empire returned to its pre-Christian, pre-Constantinian origins? No, the clock of Christian history never goes back. The world could never be the same again after Constantine and the Christian empire of New Rome, which had so profoundly changed the consciousness of all the peoples of Europe. So if the Antichrist had not yet come, there was only one alternative: the one, true empire had indeed been translated somewhere - but not unlawfully, to some heretical capital such as Aachen or Old Rome, but lawfully, to some Orthodox nation capable of bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom.

That nation had to be one that was independent of the Ottomans. The last remaining Free Greeks showed little sign of being able to do this. The last Byzantine outpost of Morea in the Peloponnese fell in 1461, and in the same year the Comnenian "empire" of Trebizond on the south coast of the Black Sea also fell, after a siege of forty-two days.[320]

---

[319] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin,* London: Phoenix, 2001, p. 215.

[320] Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea,* London: Vintage, 1996, pp. 180-181.

Another possibility was the land we now call Romania, which then comprised the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. These lands, writes Runciman, "were inhabited by an indigenous race speaking a Latin language with Illyrian forms and Slavonic intrusions, with a Church that was Slavonic-speaking and had earlier been under the Serbian Church but now depended upon Constantinople. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century the reigning princes of both Principalities, who succeeded one another with startling rapidity, had been connected by birth, often illegitimate, or by marriage to the family Bassarabia, which gave its name to Bessarabia."[321]

Wallachia had accepted Turkish overlordship in the fourteenth century, but after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, Prince Vlad "the Impaler" of Wallachia conducted a courageous, albeit famously cruel, rearguard action against the Ottomans north of the Danube. According to Catherine Curzon, during his reign Vlad impaled at least 20,000 people (Romanians as well as Turks), beheaded 5000, burned alive 10,000, nailed 10 turbans to their wearers' head and boiled alive and cannibalized 1 person.

Stronger still was the resistance of the northern Romanian principality of Moldavia, under its great Prince Stephen (1457-1504), who was Prince Vlad's cousin and conquered his Principality of Wallachia. On coming to the throne, Stephen had often visited St. Daniel the Hesychast, "confessed his sins, asked him for a profitable word, and did nothing without his prayer and blessing. The Saint encouraged him and exhorted him to defend the country and Christianity against the pagans. Saint Daniel assured him that if he would build a church to the glory of Christ after each battle, he would be victorious in all his wars.

"Stephen the Great obeyed him and defended the Church of Christ and the Moldavian land with great courage for nearly half a century after the fall of Byzantium. He won forty-seven battles and built forty-eight churches. Thus Saint Daniel the Hesychast was shown to be a great defender of Romanian Orthodoxy and the spiritual founder of those monasteries that were built at his exhortation…

"After Stephen the Great lost the battle of Razboieni in the summer of 1476, he went to the cell of his good spiritual father, Saint Daniel the Hesychast, at Voroneț. Then, when 'Stephen Voda knocked on the hesychast's door for him to open it, the hesychast replied that Stephen Voda should wait outside until he had finished praying. And after the hesychast had finished praying, he called Stephen Voda into his cell. And Stephen Voda confessed to him. And Stephen Voda asked the hesychast what he should do now, since he was no longer able to fight the Turks. Should the country surrender to the Turks or not? And the hesychast told him not to surrender it, for he would win the war;

---

[321] Runciman, op. cit., p. 365.

but that after saving the country he should build a monastery there in the name of Saint George.'

"Believing Saint Daniel's prophecy that he would defeat the Turks, the Prince of Moldavia took his prayer and blessing and immediately assembled the army and drove the Turks from the country. Thus the Saint helped deliver Moldavia and the Christian countries from enslavement to the infidels by his ardent prayers to God."[322]

St. Stephen's successors, however, were not able to continue his resistance to the Ottomans. "They submitted voluntarily to the Sultan and were permitted to reign on autonomously as his vassals. The two provinces were divided again, under princes of the dynasty who were nominally elected by the boyars, the heads of the local noble families, and whose elections were subject to the Sultan's confirmation. Vassals though they were, the Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia were the only lay Christian rulers left within the sphere of the old Byzantine world. They saw themselves as being in some way the heirs of the Byzantine Caesars. Some of the more ambitious even took the title of *Basileus*; and all of them modelled their courts on the lines of the old Imperial court."[323]

*

Transylvania, meanwhile, remained a Hungarian province, with the aristocratic leaders Hungarian, the bourgeoisie German and the peasantry Romanian. "Transylvania has been dominated by several different peoples and countries throughout its history. It was once the nucleus of the Kingdom of Dacia (82 BC – 106 AD). In 106 AD the Roman Empire conquered the territory, systematically exploiting its resources. After the Roman legions withdrew in 271 AD, it was overrun by a succession of various tribes, bringing it under the control of the Carpi, Visigoths, Huns, Gepids, Avars, and Slavs. From 9th to 11th century Bulgarians ruled Transylvania. It is a subject of dispute whether elements of the mixed Daco–Roman population survived in Transylvania through the post-classical era (becoming the ancestors of modern Romanians) or the first Vlachs/Romanians appeared in the area in the 13th century after a northward migration from the Balkan Peninsula. There is an ongoing scholarly debate over the ethnicity of Transylvania's population before the Hungarian conquest....

"The Magyars conquered much of Central Europe at the end of the 9th century. According to Gesta Hungarorum, the Vlach voivode Gelou ruled Transylvania before the Hungarians arrived. The Kingdom of Hungary established partial control over Transylvania in 1003, when

---

[322] Archimandrite Ioanichie Balan, *Romanian Patericon,* Forestville, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, volume I, 1996, pp. 189, 191. So free from vainglory was Stephen that after his victory over the Turks at Vasilui on January 10, 1475, he forbade any celebrations but instituted a 40-day fast, insisting that the glory should be given to God alone.

[323] Runciman, op. cit., p. 365.

king Stephen I, according to legend, defeated the prince named *Gyula*. Some historians assert Transylvania was settled by Hungarians in several stages between the 10th and 13th centuries, while others claim that it was already settled, since the earliest Hungarian artifacts found in the region are dated to the first half of the 10th century. After the Battle of Kosovo [in 1389] and Ottoman arrival at the Hungarian border, thousands of Vlach and Serbian refugees came to Transylvania.

"Between 1003[and 1526, Transylvania was a voivodeship in the Kingdom of Hungary, led by a voivode appointed by the King of Hungary. After the Battle of Mohács in 1526, Transylvania became part of the Kingdom of János Szapolyai. Later, in 1570, the kingdom transformed into the Principality of Transylvania, which was ruled primarily by Calvinist Hungarian princes."[324]

The most famous of the Hungarian princes of Transylvania was Stefan Batory, who was Voivode of Transylvania from 1571 to 1576, Prince of Transylvania from 1576–1586, and King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1576 to 1586. He was renowned for defeating Ivan the Terrible in a series of battles, taking Polotsk in 1579 and Velikie Luki in 1580.

"The year 1600," writes Lucian Boia, "is the glittering moment of Romanian history. In 1599, Michael the Brave (1593-1601), the Prince of Wallachia, conquered Transylvania, and a year later Moldavia. For a short time, he ruled all three. But his triumph was followed closely by disaster. The Transylvanian nobility rebelled, the Poles invaded Moldavia and Wallachia, and the Turks crossed the Danube. Forced into exile, Michael went to Prague, to the court of Emperor Rudolf, whose lieutenant in Transylvania he considered himself to be. He returned with Habsburg assistance and defeated the army of the Transylvanian nobles, only to fall victim a few days later to a plot engineered by the imperial general Basta. The bone of contention was Transylvania, which was desired equally by Michael, the Habsburgs and, of course, the Hungarian nobles..

"Michael the Brave did not unite the Romanians in 1600; what he did was to bring together the three lands in a short-lived political construction, lands which were in similar situations and among whom relations had become very close anyway. However, he did unite the Romanians later, long after his death, when he became the great symbol of Romanian aspirations towards unity. It was under the sign of Michael the Brave that Romania was made in 1859 and 1918…"[325]

---

[324] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transylvania#History.

[325] Boia, *Romania,* London: Reaktion Books, 2006, pp. 72-73, 74.

23. GRAND DUKES IVAN III AND BASIL III OF MOSCOW

However, it was not to the Romania of Michael the Brave that the honour - and the cross - of being the protector and restorer of the fortunes of all the Orthodox Christians fell to a nation far to the north – Russia… The idea of Moscow the Third Rome was not explicitly developed until Elder Philotheus of Pskov in the early sixteenth century. Even then, as Nancy Shields Kollmann writes, it "was a minor theme encountered in only a few ecclesiastical writers; it was originally used only to exhort the tsars to be just and humble, not to justify overweening power."[326] Nevertheless, the fall of Byzantium and speculation about what power, if any, could replace it, made the idea a real factor in the thought of the age, especially in the seventeenth century. And the fact is that Russia, in accordance with Divine Providence, did come to occupy the place of Byzantium as the leading Orthodox power with responsibility for defending Orthodoxy throughout the world.

As we have seen, the Russians retained their loyalty to the Byzantine Church and Empire until the very last moment that was possible while remaining faithful to God – that is, until they betrayed the Orthodox faith at the Council of Florence in 1438-39. The Russian metropolitan see occupied a lowly 61st place in the hierarchy of metropolias of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Even after the betrayal at Florence, the Russians did not immediately break their canonical dependence on the patriarch. And even after the election of St. Jonah to the metropolitanate without Constantinople's blessing, the Great Prince's letter to the patriarch shows great restraint and humility, speaking only of a "disagreement" between the two Churches. "We have done this," he said, "from necessity, not from pride or insolence. Until the end of time we shall abide in the Orthodoxy that was given to us; our Church will always seek the blessing of the Church of Tsargrad and will be obedient in all things to the ancient piety."

Since the Russian Great Prince was now the only major independent Orthodox ruler[327], and was supported by an independent Church, he had a better claim than any other to inherit the throne of the Roman Emperors and therefore call himself "Tsar" (from "Caesar", the equivalent of the Greek "Basileus"). The title had been floated already before the fall of Constantinople: in 1447-48 Simeon of Suzdal had called Great Prince Basil II Vasilievich "faithful and Christ-loving and truly Orthodox… White Tsar". And St. Jonah wrote to Prince Alexander of Kiev that Basil was imitating his "ancestors" – the holy Emperor Constantine and the Great-Prince Vladimir.

---

[326] Kollmann, "Muscovite Russia 1450-1598", in Gregory L. Frazee, *Russia. A History*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 59.

[327] With the exception of Georgia, which later entered the Russian empire. The metropolitan of Georgia had been among the very few, with St. Mark of Ephesus, who refused to sign the unia in Florence. Romania, as we have seen, was also independent for a time, but soon came under the suzerainty of the Ottomans. Technically, even Moscow was not completely independent until 1480, when it stopped paying tribute to the Tatars.

The Church, writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "was eager for the grand prince to use the titles *samoderzhets* (autocrat) and *tsar* (*basileus*, emperor) to signal his assumption of both the religious and imperial heritage of Byzantium, but the grand princes were hesitant about following this advice. They first claimed the title *tsar*… in documents guaranteeing safe passage across Rus territory… Thereafter they broadened their use of the term cautiously, and interspersed it with the title *gosudar vseia Rusi* (sovereign of all Rus), which implied parallelism with the metropolitan's title and rejection of Lithuania's claim to the heritage of Kiev."[328]

The Muscovite Great Princes' claim was further strengthened by the marriage of Ivan III to the last surviving heir of the Imperial Palaeologan line, Sophia, in 1472. Sophia was born in 1455, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI. She was brought up in Rome as a Catholic under the guardianship of the Pope. Ekaterina Astafieva writes: "The negotiations [between Moscow and Rome] went on for three years, and finally in 1472 Sophia with her dowry were sent to Muscovy. On the way feasts were laid out in her honour in various towns. In front of the carriage there went a representative of the Pope with a big Catholic cross. The pontifex was hoping that the Greek princess would bring Catholicism with her to Rus'.

"But the Papacy's plans were not destined to be fulfilled: the news of this stirred up a veritable scandal in Moscow. Metropolitan Philip declared that he would immediately leave the city if the Catholic cross were brought into the capital. To avoid conflicts, Ivan III sent his ambassador to meet the carriage fifteen versts from Moscow. He, without hesitating long, forcibly removed the cross from the papal priest. Finally the foreign bride arrived in the city, accepted the Orthodox faith and on November 22 was married in the Dormition cathedral."[329]

It was on the basis of this marriage that the Venetian Senate accorded Ivan the imperial title. This is ironic in view of Venice's historic enmity towards the Orthodox Autocracy (we think of the leading role played by Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, in the sacking of Constantinople in 1204). But since the Fall of the City in 1453 Venice had become the main centre of Greek learning, and the only place where the printing of Greek texts was undertaken on a large scale; and the Venetians even protected their valued Greek immigrants from the Inquisition.[330]

Ivan himself indicated that in marrying Sophia he had united Muscovite Russia with Byzantium by uniting two coats of arms – the two-headed eagle of Byzantium with the image of St. George impaling the dragon. From now on the

---

[328] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians,* London: Penguin, 2012, p. 85.

[329] Astafieva, "Prikliuchenia vizantijskoj printsessy v Moskovii" (The adventures of a Byzantine Princess in Muscovy), *Diletant,* October, 2016.

[330] Runciman, op. cit., pp. 211, 212.

two-headed eagle became the Russian coat of arms with the image of St. George in the centre of it, as it were in its breast.[331] Ivan "established a sumptuous court, attended by magnificent ceremonial, on the Byzantine pattern. Ivan put about the story that Constantine Monomakh (Byzantine Emperor 1042-1055) had conferred the insignia and imperial crown on Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev, so that Kiev was retrospectively promoted to an imperial status, and through Kiev Moscow claimed itself the heir to an imperial succession which went right back to Augustus…"[332]

If the Muscovites made no compromise between Orthodoxy and the Latin heresy, in the cultural sphere it was a different matter. In the same train that brought Sophia Palaeologus to Moscow to marry Ivan III, there also came Aristotle Fioravanti, the master-architect from Bologna, who was commissioned by the Great Prince to rebuild the Dormition cathedral in the Kremlin. Many other Italian artisans of all kinds followed, and by his reconstruction of the Kremlin under the direction of Italian masters he could be said to have "opened a window to Europe" over two hundred years before Peter the Great... In 1479 the rebuilt cathedral was reconsecrated by Metropolitan Geronty. "The effect was definitely Russian, but it had a distinctly European twist."[333] It was a parable for Russian culture until the revolution of 1917: always Russian and Orthodox, but with a distinctly European twist that became more pronounced with time…

*

Muscovy made another large step towards full independence and true autocracy in 1480, when, as Wil van den Bercken writes, the Great Prince "definitively rid Moscow of the Tatars, thus successfully completing what Dmitrij Donskoj had begun in 1380. He was urged on powerfully to settle things with the Tatars by archbishop Vassian of Rostov, who wrote a letter to the vacillating Ivan III. … Ivan must 'liberate the new Israel, the people named after Christ, from the accursed, ostentatious new Pharaoh, the pagan Achmen.' Twice the Russian people is referred to as *novij Izrail*, but it is also called on to do penance for its sins like the old Israel.

"Victory over the Tatars was finally achieved without a struggle: the armies retreated, making Russia on balance master in its own land. But during the week-long confrontation at the river Ugra there was the same tension in Russia as there had been in 1380."[334]

That the Russians should have "definitively rid" themselves of the Tatars is something of an exaggeration. For the four main khanates of the Tatars – Sibir, east of the Urals, Kazan in the Middle Volga, Astrakhan near its mouth, and

[331] Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 44.

[332] Hosking, *Russia. People and Empire 1552-1917,* London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 5.

[333] Catherine Merridale, *Red Fortress,* New York: Picador, 2013, p. 56.

[334] Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe,* London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 140.

(especially) the Crimea, north of the Black Sea – remained the principal military rivals of the Russians for another two-and-a-half centuries. "They were a foe of many faces, occupied a vast territory (comparable in size to Muscovy itself) south and east of the kingdom, and their very diversity made them both hard to attack and impossible to contain – in the sense that Muscovy could work out a coherent, long-term border strategy with regard to her antagonists to the west. While there were conflicts among the Tartars which Kremlin diplomacy could exploit, conversely no durable peace could be made with them as if they were one. Yet at times they coalesced. And behind them stood the Ottoman Empire…"[335]

<center>*</center>

In 1492, Metropolitan Zosimus wrote: "The Emperor Constantine built a New Rome, Tsarigrad; but the sovereign and autocrat (*samoderzhets*) of All the Russias, Ivan Vassilievich, the new Constantine, has laid the foundation for a new city of Constantine, Moscow."[336] Then, in 1498 Ivan had himself crowned by Metropolitan Simon as "Tsar, Great Prince and Autocrat of All the Russias". "In the coronation ceremony, which was a rough copy of the Byzantine, the metropolitan charged the Tsar 'to care for all souls and for all Orthodox Christendom'. The title of Tsar had now become the official title[337] and brought with it the implication that the Russian monarch was, before God, the head of the Orthodox, that is, of the true Christian world."[338]

However, there were problems associated with the assumption of this title at this time – that is, in the fifteenth century. First, there were other Russian princes with claims to be "the new Constantine", "the saviour of Orthodoxy" – "for instance," writes Fr. John Meyendorff, "the prince Boris of Tver, who had also sent a representative to the council [of Florence] and now, after rejecting the Latin faith, was said by one polemicist to deserve an imperial diadem. Furthermore, in Novgorod, under Archbishop Gennady (1484-1509), there appeared a curious Russian variation on the Donation of Constantine, the Legend of the White Cowl. According to the Legend, the white cowl (klobuk; Gr. επικαλιμαυκον) was donated by Constantine the Great to pope Sylvester following his baptism; the last Orthodox pope, foreseeing Rome's fall into heresy, sent the cowl for safe-keeping to patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, who eventually (also foreseeing the betrayal of Florence), sent

---

[335] Benson Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible,* Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, p. 109.

[336] Zosimus, in Runciman, op. cit., p. 323. Ya.S. Lourié writes: "The idea of 'Moscow – the new city of Constantine' was put forward by Zosimus, who was linked with the heretical movement [of the Judaizers] at the end of the 15th century; Zosimus boldly referred the New Testament prophecy, 'the first shall be last, and the last first' to the Greeks and the Russians..." ("Perepiska Groznogo s Kurbskim v Obshchestvennoj Mysli Drevnej Rusi" ("The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Kurbsky in the Political Thought of Ancient Rus'"), in Ya.S. Lourié and Yu.D. Rykov, *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem* Kurbskim (The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Andrew Kurbsky), Moscow: "Nauka", 1993, p. 230).

[337] Patriarch Theoleptus I used it when writing to Great Prince Basil in 1516. (V.M.)

[338] Runciman, op. cit., pp. 323-324.

<center>200</center>

the precious relic to the archbishop of Novgorod. Thus, not only Moscow, but also Tver and Novgorod, were somehow claiming to be the heirs of 'Rome', the center of the true Christian faith…"[339]

This problem would resolve itself as Moscow gradually absorbed the other Russian princedoms. More serious, however, was a second problem associated with the fact that the Muscovite Russian Church was now not the only Russian Church. For in 1451 the uniate Patriarch Gregory Mammas of Constantinople had fled to Rome, where in 1458 he consecrated Gregory Bolgarin as metropolitan of Kiev in opposition to St. Jonah. This was justified by the Latins and uniates not only on the grounds that there was no communion between themselves and the Orthodox of Muscovy, - the Pope had called St. Jonah "the schismatic monk Jonah, son of iniquity", - but also because a large part of the Russian population was now living within the domain of King Casimir of Poland-Lithuania, who was a Roman Catholic. This division was to have important long-term consequences in the creation of a separate Ukrainian national identity…[340]

Thus the fall of the Greek Church into uniatism led directly to a schism in the Orthodox Russian Church, which had the consequence that the Russian Great Prince could no longer count on the obedience even of all the Russian people – hardly a strong position from which to be proclaimed emperor of all the Orthodox Christians! This point can be better appreciated if it is remembered that when the Emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, he was already the undisputed ruler of the whole of the Roman Empire, in which the great majority of Orthodox Christians lived. Ivan III, by contrast, while claiming by virtue of his descent from the Rurikids, to be the prince of "all Rus", ruled none of the traditional territories of the Roman empire, and not even "the mother of Russian cities", Kiev.

In 1487 Moscow conquered Novgorod. From now on Moscow had no real rival among the Russian principalities. But there were still large numbers of Russian speakers living beyond her boundaries.

These developments also complicated relations with Constantinople. Thus after the death of St. Jonah (who still retained the title of metropolitan of Kiev) in 1461, the Muscovite metropolia was formally declared to be schismatic by Constantinople. The Muscovites' old excuse for not returning into obedience to Constantinople – the latter's departure from "the ancient piety" of Orthodoxy into uniatism, - no longer held water since the enthronement of St. Gennadius

---

[339] Meyendorff, "Was There Ever a 'Third Rome'? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia", in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p. 135.

[340] Riasonovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 121. "The Russian church was split, and the two parts of the Russian nation were alienated from each other. Now there came into being a distinctive Ukrainian identity which was not done away with by the incorporation of the territory in 1654 into the kingdom of Moscow and in the twentieth century was again to lead to a break with Moscow" (van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 118).

Scholarius, an anti-uniate disciple of St. Mark of Ephesus, to the see of the former imperial City and the patriarchate's official renunciation of uniatism in 1484. Moreover, having returned to Orthodoxy in 1466, Gregory Bolgarin was officially recognized as the sole canonical Russian metropolitan by Constantinople.

Now in the consciousness of the Russian people the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch was required for such a major step as the assumption of the role of Orthodox emperor by the Russian Great Prince. But this was out of the question so long as the Russians were in schism from the Greeks… At the same time, the Muscovites felt, with some reason, that it made no sense to subject their own free Russian Church living under a free, Orthodox and increasingly powerful sovereign to a metropolitan living under a hostile Roman Catholic king and a patriarch living under a hostile Muslim sultan!

Thus it was the long reign of Great Prince Ivan III (1462-1505) that really laid the foundations both of the kingdom of Muscovy and of the empire of Moscow the Third Rome. By freeing himself from the suzerainty of the Tatars in the East, by bringing under his rule the principalities of Yaroslavl, Rostov, Tver and Riazan, and above all by annexing Novgorod and taking its *veche* bell to Moscow in 1478, Ivan had established the real independence of his kingdom and abolished aristocratic oligarchy in the Russian lands. "One option for the development of Rus, as a federation of self-governing oligarchies, had been closed off…" [341]

But Kiev and Polotsk – in what is now Ukraine and Belarus – remained under the suzerainty of the Catholic Grand Duke of Lithuania. And this could not be allowed to continue, because it undermined Moscow's claims to be the heirs of the Great Princes of Kiev and rulers of "all Rus'", keeping many millions of Orthodox Russians under a heterodox yoke.

*

It was Ivan III's son, Great Prince Basil III, who completed the unification of the North Russian lands when he "humbled Pskov in the same way [as Novgorod], abolishing its traditional citizens' assembly – again the *veche* bell was carted away – and exiling many of its leading citizens. He awarded their lands to his own servitors and brought in Moscow merchants to dominate the city's trade."[342]

It was not so much the great princes who pushed the idea of Moscow the Third Rome – they were conscious of the great obligations the concept involved and the inability of the state to fulfil them – as the holy elders. Thus in 1511 Elder Philotheus of Pskov wrote to Basil III: "I would like to say a few words about the existing Orthodox empire of our most illustrious, exalted ruler. He is

---

[341] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians,* p. 87.

[342] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians,* p. 87.

the only emperor on all the earth over the Christians, the governor of the holy, divine throne of the holy, ecumenical, apostolic Church which in place of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople is in the city of Moscow, protected by God, in the holy and glorious Dormition church of the most pure Mother of God. It alone shines over the whole earth more radiantly than the sun. For know well, those who love Christ and those who love God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the books of the prophet [Daniel 7.14], which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth…"[343]

Again, in 1540 Elder Philotheus wrote to Tsar Ivan, who was not yet of age, that the "woman clothed with the sun" of Revelation chapter 12 was the Church, which fled from the Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, and thence, after the fall of Constantinople, to the third Rome "in the new, great Russia". And the master of the third Rome, in both its political and ecclesiastical spheres, was the tsar: "Alone on earth the Orthodox, great Russian tsar steers the Church of Christ as Noah in the ark was saved from the flood, and he establishes the Orthodox faith."

According to the eschatological idea on which the idea of the *translatio imperii* rested, Rome in its various reincarnations will exist to the end of the world – or at least, to the time of the Antichrist. As Michael Nazarov writes: "This conviction is often reflected in the patristic tradition (it was shared by Saints: Hippolytus of Rome, John Chrysostom, Blessed Theodoret, Blessed Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem and others). On this basis Elder Philotheus wrote: 'the Roman [*Romejskoe*] kingdom is indestructible, for the Lord was enrolled into the Roman [*Rimskuiu*] power' (that is, he was enrolled among the inhabitants at the census in the time of the Emperor Augustus). Here Philotheus distinguishes between the indestructible 'Roman kingdom', whose successor was now Rus', and Roman power, which had gone into the past."[344]

By the early sixteenth century it was becoming clear that the only real candidate for the role of leadership in the Orthodox world, the role of the Third Rome, was Muscovite Russia. Only the Russians could be that "third God-chosen people" of the Byzantine prophecy.[345] Only they were able to re-express the Christian ideal of the symphony of powers on a stronger, more popular

---

[343] Philotheus, *Letter against the Astronomers and the Latins*, in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999.

[344] Nazarov, *Taina Rossii* (The Mystery of Russia), Moscow, 1999, p. 538.

[345] An 8th or 9th century Greek prophecy found in St. Sabbas' monastery in Jerusalem, declared: "The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, *since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State.* Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks." (Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii" ("The Destinies of Russia"), *Pravoslavnij Vestnik* (Orthodox Messenger), N 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7; translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996)

base – as a symphony, in effect, of three powers – Church, State and People - rather than two. For the Russians had the advantage over the Romans and the Greeks that they were converted to the faith as a single people, with their existing social organization intact, and not, as in Rome, as an amalgam of different peoples whose indigenous social structures had already been smashed by the pagan imperial power. Thus whereas in Rome, as Lev Tikhomirov writes, "the Christians did not constitute a social body", and "their only organization was the Church"[346], in the sense that it was not whole peoples or classes but individuals from many different peoples and classes that joined the Church, in Russia the whole of the richly layered and variegated, but at the same time socially and politically coherent society came to the Church at one time and was baptized together. Moreover, Russia remained a nation-state with a predominantly Russian or Russian-Ukrainian-Belorussian population throughout its extraordinary expansion from the core principality of Muscovy, whose territory in 1462 was 24,000 square kilometres, to the multi-national empire of Petersburg Russia, whose territory in 1914 was 13.5 million square kilometres.[347]

However, the task facing the Russians in fulfilling their perceived destiny was enormous. It still remained to them, first of all, to reunify the Russian lands in the south and west – Kiev, Polotsk and Galicia. This could be said to have been accomplished only in 1915, when Tsar Nicholas II reconquered Galicia from the Catholic Austrians…

As for reuniting all the other Orthodox lands, including the Balkans and the Greek and Semitic lands of the Eastern Mediterranean, this remained for the distant future. The Muscovite State first turned its attention seriously to this aim under the Grecophile Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century.

At that moment, however, the Muscovite autocracy suffered its most severe crisis and was transformed into the "Orthodox absolutism" of Peter the Great, whose ideal was the First Rome of Italy rather than the Second or Third Romes of Constantinople and Moscow…

---

[346] Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 164.

[347] Dominic Lieven, *Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 262, 278.

24. JUDAIZERS, POSSESSORS AND NON-POSSESSORS

Russia had known no serious outbreak of heresy since her baptism by St. Vladimir. However, towards the end of the fourteenth century there appeared the heresy of the Judaizers, when "the whole Russian Church," as Nechvolodov writes, "had at her head a Judaizer, and the immediate entourage of the sovereign… were also Judaizers."[348]

The roots of the heresy, writes a publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, "go deeper than is usually imagined. The part played by national elements in the heresy, which exploded like epidemics onto medieval Europe, has not yet been sufficiently clarified. The acts of the inquisition demonstrate that most of the sects were Judeo-Christian in character with a more or less pronounced Manichaean colouring. The flourishing of the Albigensian heresy in France has been directly linked by historians with the rise of Jewish influence in that country. The heresy of the Templars, 'the knights of the Temple', who were condemned in 1314, was linked with esoterical Judaism and blasphemy against Christ...

"Judaizers were also known in the Orthodox East. In Salonica in the first third of the 14th century 'there existed a heretical Judaizing society in the heart of the Greek population' which had an influence on 'the Bulgarian Judaizers of the 40s and 50s of the same century'. In 1354 a debate took place in Gallipoli between the famous theologian and hierarch of the Eastern Church Gregory Palamas, on the one hand, and the Turks and the Chionians, i.e the Judaizers, on the other. In 1360 a council meeting in Trnovo, the then capital of the Bulgarian patriarchate, condemned both the opponents of Hesychasm (the Barlaamites) and those who philosophise from the Jewish heresies.

"The successes of the heresy in Russia could be attributed to the same cause as its success in France in the 14th century. Jews streamed into the young state of the Ottomans from the whole of Western Europe. Thereafter they were able to penetrate without hindrance into the Genoan colonies of the Crimea and the Azov sea, and into the region of what had been Khazaria, where the Jewish sect of the Karaites had a large influence; for they had many adherents in the Crimea and Lithuania and were closely linked with Palestine. As the inscriptions on the Jewish cemetery of Chuft-Kale show, colonies of Karaites existed in the Crimea from the 2nd to the 18th centuries. The Karaites were brought to Lithuania by Prince Vitovt, the hero of the battle of Grunwald (1410) and great-grandfather of Ivan III Vasilievich. From there they spread throughout Western Russia.

"... One has to admit that the beginning of the polemic between the Orthodox and the heretics was made, not in Byzantium, but in Russia. Besides, the polemic began... in the time of Metropolitan Peter (+1326), the founder of the

---

[348] Nechvolodov, A. *L'Empereur Nicolas II et les Juifs* (The Emperor Nicholas II and the Jews), Paris, 1924, p. 183.

Muscovite ecclesiastical centre. In the life of St. Peter it is mentioned among his other exploits for the good of the Russian Church that he 'overcame the heretic Seit in debate and anathematised him.' The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaizers' allows us to see in Seit a Karaite preacher.

"... The heresy did not disappear but smouldered under a facade of church life in certain circles of the Orthodox urban population, and the Russian church, under the leadership of her hierarchs, raised herself to an unceasing battle with the false teachings. The landmarks of this battle were: Metropolitan Peter's victory over Seit in debate (between 1312 and 1326), the unmasking and condemnation of the *strigolniki* [literally: 'the shaven ones'] in Novgorod in the time of Metropolitan Alexis (1370s), the overcoming of this heresy in the time of Metropolitan Photius (+1431), and of the heresy of the Judaizers - in the time of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515).

"'From the time of the holy Prince Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus', who rejected the solicitations of the Khazar Rabbis, wrote St. Joseph of Volotsk, 'the great Russian land has for 500 years remained in the Orthodox Faith, until the enemy of salvation, the devil, introduced the foul Jew to Great Novgorod. On St. Michael's day, 1470, there arrived from Kiev in the suite of Prince Michael Olelkovich, who had been invited by the *veche* [the Novgorodian parliament], 'the Jew Scharia' and 'Zachariah, prince of Taman. Later the Lithuanian Rabbis Joseph Smoilo Skaryavei and Moses Khanush also arrived.

"The heresy began to spread quickly. However, 'in the strict sense of the word this was not merely heresy, but complete apostasy from the Christian faith and the acceptance of the Jewish faith. Using the weaknesses of certain clerics, Scharia and his assistants began to instil distrust of the Church hierarchy into the faint-hearted, inclining them to rebellion against spiritual authority, tempting them with 'self-rule', the personal choice of each person in the spheres of faith and salvation, inciting the deceived to renounce their Mother-Church, blaspheme against the holy icons and reject veneration of the saints - the foundations of popular morality - and, finally, to a complete denial of the saving Sacraments and dogmas of Orthodoxy concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. So they went so far as to conduct a Jewish war against God and the substitution of Christ the Saviour by the false messiah and antichrist.

"The false teaching spread in secret. Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod first heard about the heresy in 1487; four members of a secret society, while abusing each other in a drunken frenzy, revealed the existence of the heresy in front of some Orthodox. The zealous archpastor quickly conducted an investigation and with sorrow became convinced that not only Novgorod, but also the very capital of Russian Orthodoxy, Moscow, was threatened. In September 1487 he sent Metropolitan Geronty in Moscow the records of the whole investigation in the original. Igumen Joseph (Sanin) of the Dormition monastery of Volokolamsk, who had an unassailable reputation in Russian society at the end

of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, also spoke out against the heresy.

"But the battle with the heresy turned out to be no simple matter, for the heretics had enlisted the support of powerful people in Moscow. Great Prince Ivan III, who had been deceived by the Judaizers, invited them to Moscow, and made the two leading heretics protopriests - one in the Dormition, and the other in the Archangels cathedrals in the Kremlin. Some of those close to the Tsar, such as Theodore Kurytsyn, who headed the government, and whose brother became the heretics' leader, were co-opted into the heresy. The Great Prince's bride, Helen Voloshanka, was converted to Judaism. In 1483 a correspondence between Ivan III and the heresiarch Scharia himself was established through diplomatic channels between Moscow and Bakhchisarai."[349]

The Judaizers gained from the mistaken belief of many Orthodox that the world would end in 1492. "Basing their own calculations on an astronomical work called the *Shestokryl*, the Judaizers confidently predicted the world's survival, and of course they were right. And because they were right many of their ideas gained immeasurably in prestige. Jospeh of Volokolamsk wrote to the Bishop of Suzdal: 'Now in homes, along the road, and in the market places, monks and laymen are all in doubt and anguish concerning the faith.'"[350]

In order to combat the heresy, Archbishop Gennady "founded a circle of writers and translators, who produced an up-to-date Slavonic translation of the Bible, and he sent an agent, Dmitrii Gerasimov, previously an ambassador in the Muscovite service, to the West to acquire the latest ecclesiastical learning. He also commissioned a long report from an envoy of the Holy Roman Empire, Jörg von Thurn, on the way in which the Catholic Church dealt with heresy. Gennadii was especially impressed by what he learned of the Spanish Inquisition, and he took the initiative in convening a church council to discuss the current heresy and to establish a permanent state-supported inquisition. The council was held in 1490, but Ivan III opposed the full implementation of Gennadii's program: no inquisition was set up, and the worst he was allowed to do to the heretics was to seat them backward on horses, with their clothes turned back-to-front and an inscription on their caps reading: 'Behold the Army of Satan'."[351]

In the meantime, in 1492, the Judaizers won two victories. First, they were proved right about 1492 and the end of the world. And secondly, the Judaizer Zosima was raised to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow. The faith was clearly in great danger, but Archbishop Gennady and St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, were untiring in their efforts to crush it. Thus Gennady wrote to Bishop Niphon of

[349] *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'* (The Russian Orthodox Church), Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 25-26.
[350] Benson Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible,* Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, p. 97.
[351] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians,* p. 102.

Suzdal: "You go to the Metropolitan and ask him to intercede with his majesty the Great Prince, that he cleanse the Church of God from heresy".

Eventually, the Great Prince returned to the truth. Summoning St. Joseph, he said: "Forgive me, Father. I knew about the Novgorodian heretics, but thought that they were mainly occupied in astrology." "Is it for me to forgive you?" asked the saint. "No, father, please, forgive me!" said the Great Prince.[352]

At Councils convened by the Great Prince in 1503 and 1505 the heresy was crushed… The Councils were notable for their decreeing capital punishment for the leading heretics. Perhaps the influence of the Spanish Inquisition played a part in this unprecedented measure: "Ivan Maximov, Mikhail Konoplev and Ivan Volk were burnt in Moscow, while Nekras Rukavov was executed in Novgorod after his tongue had been cut off. The spiritual inquisitors also insisted on the burning of the Yuriev Archimandrite Kassian, while the destiny of Theodore Kuritsyn is not known by us for certain."[353]

*

The immediate result of the Judaizing heresy was a major increase in the Great Prince's power and in the Church's reliance on the State. For churchmen now saw in the monarchical power the major bulwark against heresy, more important even than the metropolitanate, which, for the second time in little more than fifty years (the first time was at the council of Florence) had betrayed the Orthodox faith.

Thus St. Joseph, who, as we have seen, had played a major part in crushing the heresy, considered that the Tsar had power also in the spiritual sphere: "The Tsar is by nature like all men, but in power he is similar to the Supreme God. And just as God wishes to save all people, so the Tsar must preserve everything that is subject to his power from all harm, both spiritual and bodily". According to St. Joseph, the defence of the truth "is placed on the tsar alone, for in his eyes it is in the monarchical power that the will of God is reflected; he is God's deputy. The tsar is not only the servant of God, chosen by God and placed by Him on his throne, but he is also the representative of God, immeasurably exalted above [ordinary] people: he is like them only in accordance with his human nature, but in his power he is like God. From the point of view of the aim, the manifestations of monarchical power are analogous to those of Divine power. Just as the All-Highest wishes that all men be saved, so the tsar must keep those entrusted to his care from spiritual and bodily harm. For his fulfilment and non-fulfilment of his duty the tsar is responsible only before God. His power cannot be placed beside any other power on earth. And Joseph applies the words of Chrysostom to the tsars: 'Hear, O kings and princes, your

---

[352] Lebedev, op. cit., p. 50.

[353] Taras Repin, "Zhidovstvuiushchie: sud'ba pervoj oppozitsii na Rusi" (The Judaizers: the destiny of Russia's first opposition), *Russkaia Semerka*, http://russian7.ru/2014/09/zhidovstvuyushhie-sudba-pervojj-oppozic.

dominion is given you from God, you are the servants of God; it is for this reason that He placed you as pastor and guard over His people to protect His flock unharmed from wolves...' The tsar must revenge Christ on the heretics, otherwise he will have to give an account at the terrible judgement. He must send them to prison or tortures and submit them to death. Heretical agreements are for Joseph worse than robbery and theft, than murder or fornication or adultery. Those who pretended to repent of their Judaism after the Council of 1490 deceived many, and the tsar was responsible for that before God. The spread and fall of heresy is the cause of the fall and destruction of a great kingdom; it is analogous to state disturbances and coups. 'The great kingdoms of the Armenians, Ethiopians and Romans, who fell away from the Catholic and Apostolic Church and from the Orthodox Christian faith perished evilly because of the negligence of the Orthodox kings and hierarchs of those times, and these kings and hierarchs will be condemned at the terrible judgement of Christ for this negligence.' In 1511 Joseph persuaded Basil III to apply his power against the heretics in the same way that he had previously spoken with the father against the Novgorod Judaizers, so that they should not destroy the whole of Orthodox Christianity. It was on the soil of the struggle with heresy that the duty of the Russian Great Prince to defend the faith was revealed. If in Byzantium the kings' encroachment on the teaching authority of the Church stands to the fore, in Rus' we encounter first of all the striving to ascribe to the tsar Archpastoral rights in the realisation of Christianity in life.

"Joseph gave a very broad interpretation to the range of the tsar's rights, extending them to all spheres of life, to everything ecclesiastical and monastic. He did not think twice about bringing Archbishop Serapion of Novgorod to trial before the tsar for banning him for leaving his jurisdiction, although the tsar had permitted it.[354] For Joseph the tsar's power was unlimited already by virtue of its origin alone. For him the tsar was not only the head of the state, but also the supreme protector of the Church. He had, besides, a leadership role in relation to all ecclesiastical institutions; not one side of ecclesiastical life was exempt from it; the circle of his concerns included Church rites and Church discipline, and the whole ecclesiastical-juridical order. The tsar establishes the rules of ecclesiastical order and entrusts to bishops and nobles the task of seeing to their fulfilment, threatening the disobedient with hierarchical bans and punishments. One can have resort to the tsar's court, according to Joseph, against all ecclesiastics and monastics. This theory would have been the exact restoration of ancient caesaropapism in Russian colours if Joseph had not limited the king in principle by the observance of the Church canons. In this exaltation of the tsar we see a reflection of the Byzantine theory of the 14th

---

[354] At the very moment that Joseph passed into eternal life, Serapion stood up and said to those around him: "Our brother Joseph has died. May God forgive him: such things happen even with righteous people" (*Moskovskij Paterik* (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: "Stolitsa", 1991, p. 46). (V.M.)

century, which, while recognizing the priority of the canon over the law, nevertheless exalted the emperor to the first place even in Church affairs."[355]

Although St. Joseph's theory of Church-State relations saw the tsar as the representative of God on earth, and laid little emphasis on the bishop's duty to reprove an erring tsar, he was far from ascribing absolute power to the tsar: "The holy apostles speak as follows about kings and hierarchs who do not care for, and worry about, their subjects: a dishonourable king who does not care for his subjects is not a king, but a torturer; while an evil bishop who does not care for his flock is not a pastor, but a wolf."[356] "Such a tsar, because of his guile, our Lord Jesus Christ did not all a king, but a fox (Luke 13.32)… And you must not obey such a tsar or prince, who will lead you into impiety or guile, even if they torture you or threaten you with death."[357]

At the Council of 1503, the debate on the Judaizers led naturally to the problem of the monasteries' landed estates; for one of the reasons for the popularity of the heretics was the perceived justice of their criticisms of monasticism, and in particular of the wealth of the monasteries. St. Joseph defended this wealth, writing: "If the monasteries are deprived of the villages they own, how will it be possible for an honourable and noble man to take orders? And if there are no honourable monks, where will we find candidates for the metropolitanate, the archbishopric, the bishopric and other offices? And if there are no honourable and noble monks, the faith itself will be undermined." He claimed the monastic estates were necessary in order to support the poor and the Great Prince and the education of the clergy – and there can be no doubt that the role of the monasteries in these matters was very important. However, Monk-Prince Bassian and St. Nilus of Sora, preached the monastic ideal of non-possessiveness.

The Great Princes tended to be in favour of non-possessiveness, hoping to gain many of the monastic estates for themselves. However, the non-possessors, by opposing capital punishment for the heretics, had acquired the

---

[355] Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon* (Patriarch Nikon), Warsaw, 1931, part I, pp. 153-154. Hieromonk Ioann (Kologrivov) writes: "Although Joseph considered the power of the Church to be higher than that of the sovereign in theory, in practice he extended the latter over the Church also. For him the Tsar was the head both of the State and of the Church – the supreme preserver and defender of the faith and the Church. The sovereign's concern for the Church was revealed particularly in the fact that he was always "Christ's avenger on the heretics. Lack of zeal for the good of the Church constituted, in the eyes of Joseph, one of the most serious crimes the sovereign could be guilty of, and it brought the wrath of God upon the whole country. In the single person of the sovereign Joseph thereby united both spiritual and secular power. He, and not Peter the Great, must be considered to be the founder of 'State Orthodoxy' in Russia. A little later Ivan the Terrible, basing himself on the teaching of the abbot of Volokolamsk, acquired the opportunity to declare that the Tsar was 'called to save the souls of his subjects'". (*Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Sviatosti* (Sketches on the History of Russian Sanctity), Brussels, 1961, p. 204). Cf. Mikhail Suslov, "The Genealogy of the Idea of Monarchy in the Post-Soviet Political Discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church", *State, Religion and Church* (2 0 1 6) 3 (1), p. 38.

[356] St. Joseph, *Prosvetitel'* (The Enlightener), Word 16.

[357] St. Joseph, *Poslanie Ikonopistsu* (Letter to an Iconographer), Moscow, 1994, p. 287.

reputation of being "soft" on heresy. Not wishing to be tarred with that brush, the Great Princes abandoned the cause of the secularization of the monastic estates.[358]

"The Non-Possessors," writes Runciman, "derived their tradition from Mount Athos, not from the Athos of rich monasteries with wide mainland estates and with splendid churches and refectories and well-stocked libraries, but from the sterner Athos of the ascetes and eremites, of the Hesychasts and Arsenites. Their spiritual ancestor was Gregory of Sinai, who had left the Holy Mountain because it was too sociable, preferring to live a life of greater solitude in the Balkan hills. Gregory's leading pupil had been the Bulgarian Euthymius, an erudite scholar who had become the last Patriarch of Trnovo, but who had used his authority to enforce poverty and asceticism on the Bulgarian Church. After the Turks occupied Bulgaria many of his disciples migrated to Russia, bringing with them not only a knowledge of Greek mystical and hesychastic literature but also a close connection between the ascetic elements on Mount Athos and the Russian Church. The tradition that they introduced was akin to that of the Arsenites of Byzantium and the old tradition which had always opposed state control. Its first great exponent in Russia was Nil, Abbot of Sora…"[359]

St. Nilus and his disciples wanted the dissolution of the vast land holdings not only because they contradicted the monastic vows, but also because this would liberate the clergy, as Zyzykin writes, "from dependence on the secular government and would raise the Hierarchy to the position of being the completely independent religious-moral power of the people, before which the despotic tendencies of the tsars would bow." [360] On the other side it was argued that no violation of monastic vows was involved insofar as the ownership of the monastery's lands and its authority over peasants and townsfolk living on those lands was collective, while individual monks did not own property.[361] The debate between the Possessors and Non-Possessors was therefore also a debate about the relationship between the Church and the State; and insofar as the Non-Possessors favoured greater independence for the Church, they also argued that the Church, and not the State, should punish the Judaizer heretics – which would mean less severe sentences for them in accordance with the Orthodox tradition of non-violence in the treatment of heretics.

It was the Possessors' opinion that prevailed at the Council… Perhaps not coincidentally, the triumph of the Possessors coincided with a growth of violence against monks. Thus Sergius Bolshakoff writes that "with the growth of monastic wealth, the attitude of the peasants towards the monks changes. The monks are now considered exploiters and hated as slave-owners. The appearance of a hermit often suggested the possible foundation of a new

---

[358] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 88.

[359] Runciman, op. cit., p. 326.

[360] Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 151.

[361] Hosking, op. cit., p. 105.

monastery with the reduction to serfdom of the neighboring peasants. St. Adrian of Andrushov was murdered in 1549 by peasants suspicious of his intentions. Likewise Adrian of Poshekhon was murdered in 1550, Agapetus Markushevsky in 1572, Simon Volomsky in 1613 and Job Ushelsky in 1628, all of them for the same reason. Others, like St. Nilus Stolbensky, Arsenius Komelsky and Diodore Yuriegorsky barely escaped violent death."[362]

The Non-Possessors' attitude to tsarist power was quite different from St. Joseph's. "They drew attention to the conditions under which the tsar's will in the administration of the kingdom could be considered as the expression of the will of God. They drew attention not only to the necessity of counsellors to make up the inevitable deficiencies of limited human nature, but also to the necessity of 'spiritual correctness'. Thus Prince Bassian did not exalt the personality of the tsar like Joseph. He did not compare the tsar to God, he did not liken him to the Highest King, but dwelt on the faults inherent in the bearers of royal power which caused misfortunes to the State."[363]

The boldness of St. Nilus and Monk Bassian in relation to the secular powers was firmly in the tradition, not only of the fourth-century Fathers, but also of the early Trans-Volga monks, such as St. Cyril of Beloozersk. Thus in 1427 St. Cyril wrote to Prince Andrew of Mozhaisk that he "should abstain from drunkenness and give alms according to your means; for, my lord, you are unable to fast and are lax in praying, and thus, alms, in their place, will make up for your deficiency". He even gave political advice to Grand Prince Vasily I: "We have heard, my lord great prince, that there is trouble between you and your friends, the princes of Suzdal. You, my lord, insist on your right and they on theirs; for this reason great bloodshed in inflicted on Christians. But consider closely, my lord, what are their rightful claims against you, and then humbly make concessions; and insofar as you are right toward them for that stand firm, my lord, as justice says. And if they begin to ask pardon, my lord, you should, my lord, grant them what they deserve, for I have heard, my lord, that until today they have been oppressed by you and that is, my lord, why they went to war. And you, my lord, for God's sake show your love and grace that they should not perish in error amid the Tatar realms and should not die there. For, my lord, no kingdom or principality, nor any other power can rescue us from God's impartial judgement."[364]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

---

[362] Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, p. 54.

[363] Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 158.

[364] St Cyril, in G. Fedotov, *The Russian Mind*, Harvard University Press, volume II, 1966, pp. 168, 255.

After the death of St. Nilus in 1508, the tradition of the Non-Possessors was continued in Russia by an Athonite monk, St. Maximus the Greek.[365] He was sent, writes Runciman, "by the Patriarch Theoleptus I to Russia in response to Vassily III's request for a skilled librarian. Maximus, whose original name was Michael Trivolis, had been born in Epirus, at Arta, in 1480. During his travels through France and Italy in search of education he had arrived in Florence when it was under the influence of Savonarola, whom he greatly admired and in whose memory he joined the Dominican Order. But he was not happy in Renaissance Italy. After a short time he returned to Greece and settled on Athos, where he occupied himself principally with the libraries of the Holy Mountain. When he came to Russia the Great Prince employed him not only to build up libraries for the Russian Church but also to translate Greek religious works into Slavonic."[366]

St. Maximus believed in the lofty calling of the Muscovite Great Princes to lead the Orthodox world. In a letter to Basil III he wrote that he "could measure himself by the emperors Constantine the Great and Theodosius the Great, whose successor your majesty is". But he was worried by the Muscovite state's tendency to absolutism and caesaropapism, which had played an important role in the Fall of Byzantium.

Moreover, he "complained that among the pastors of his time there was 'no Samuel', 'a Priest of the Most High who stood up boldly in opposition to the criminal Saul', that there were 'no zealots like Elijah and Elisha who were not ashamed in the face of the most lawlessly violent kings of Samaria; there is no Ambrose the wonderful, the Hierarch of God, who did not fear the loftiness of the kingdom of Theodosius the Great; no Basil the Great, whose most wise teachings caused the persecutor Valens to fear; no Great John of the golden tongue, who reproached the money-loving usurer Empress Eudocia'. In accordance with Byzantine conceptions, Maximus the Greek looked on the priesthood and the kingdom as the two greatest gifts given by the most High Divine Goodness to man, as two powers on whose agreement in action depended the happiness of mankind. Among the duties laid upon the representatives of the Church, he mentioned that they must by their most wise advice and stratagems of every kind… always correct the royal sceptres for the better, so that they should be alien to any fawning before secular power and should exert a restraining, moderating influence upon it. Maximus spoke of the superiority of the spiritual power over the secular…"[367]

St. Maximus ruffled the feathers of some leading Russians by his correction of the errors in the Slavonic service books, which his enemies took to mean that he rejected the Russian saints who had used these books. This was the first

---

[365] One important difference between St. Maximus and the non-possessors should be mentioned: St. Maximus had been in favour of the execution of the Judaizing heretics, whereas St. Nilus and his disciples had been against it.

[366] Runciman, op. cit., p. 327.

[367] Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 152.

salvo in the war that would lead to the Old Ritualist schism… Also, he criticized the Russian Church's refusal to be in communion with Constantinople – he said that the Greeks had long since abandoned the uniatism of the council of Florence, so there was no longer any reason to refuse communion. As long as Metropolitan Barlaam, a follower of St. Nilus of Sora, was in power, Maximus' criticisms were tolerated; but when Barlaam was uncanonically removed by the Great Prince Basil III and replaced by Metropolitan Daniel, a disciple of St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, his woes began…

For a while the Great Prince continued to protect him, even when he rebuked the vices of the nobility, the clergy and the people and supported the position of the non-possessors against the metropolitan. However, his enemies found the excuse they were looking for when the Great Prince, with the blessing of Metropolitan Daniel, put away his wife, the beautiful Solomonia Saburova, because of her barrenness and married Elena Glinskaya Solomonia objected strongly, but was forcibly tonsured in Suzdal and was later canonized under her monastic name of Sophia.

St. Maximus immediately rebuked the Great Prince. He wrote him an extensive work: *Instructive chapters for right-believing rulers*, which began as follows: "O most devout Tsar, he is honoured as a true ruler who seeks to establish the life of his subjects in righteousness and justice, and endeavours always to overcome the lusts and dumb passions of his soul. For he who is overcome by them is not the living image of the Heavenly Master, but only an anthropomorphic likeness of dumb nature."[368]

The saint was to suffer many years in prison because of his boldness. He used that time to write a well-known canon to the Holy Spirit. And he continued to have admirers and supporters both within and outside Russia.

One of these was Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem, who wrote prophetically to the Great Prince: "If you do this wicked thing [marry Elena Glinskaya], you will have an evil son. Your estate will become prey to terrors and tears. Rivers of blood will flow; the heads of the mighty will fall; your cities will be devoured by flames."[369] The prophecy was fulfilled with exactitude in the reign of his son, Ivan IV, better known as "the Terrible"…

The sufferings of St. Maximus for the sake of the truth show that all was not well in the Russian Church, and that its alienation from the Great Church of Constantinople was beginning adversely to affect its spiritual health.

Indeed, V.M. Lourié dates the beginning of the fall of the Russian Church into "Sergianism", that is, captivity to the State, to the time of Metropolitan Daniel and Great Prince Basil: "Still earlier they should have excommunicated

---

[368] "Our Father among the Saints Maxim the Greek", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, N 1, January-February, 1991, p. 11.

[369] Francis Carr, *Ivan the Terrible*, London: David & Charles, 1981, pp. 61-62.

– not even Ivan IV, but his father Basil III for his adulterous 'marriage', which gave Russia Ivan the Terrible. Then we wouldn't have had Peter I. That's what they did in such cases in Byzantium…"[370]

However, it should be noted that St. Maximus never broke communion with Daniel. Nor did he dispute the absolute authority of the great princes in the secular realm. Moreover, as we have seen and will see in more detail later, the captivity of church leaders to the state, or caesaropapism, was by no means the rule in the Russian Church, even in the reign of Ivan the Terrible.

The persecution of St. Maximus must therefore be considered unfortunate, but not "the beginning of the end"…

---

[370] Lourié, "Sergianstvo: parasinagoga, pereshedshaia v raskol" ("Sergianism: a parasynagogue turning into a schism"), http://web.referent.ru/nvc/forum/0/co/BC415C9E/179.

25. IVAN THE TERRIBLE: (1) THE PIOUS AUTOCRAT

Ivan's childhood was very troubled. As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, he "was only three years old in 1533 when his father, Basil III, died, leaving the government of Russia to his wife… and the boyar duma. The new regent acted in a haughty and arbitrary manner, disregarding the boyars and relying first on her uncle, the experienced Prince Michael Glinsky, and after his death on her lover, the youthful Prince Telepnev-Obolensky. In 1538 she died suddenly, possibly of poison. Boyar rule – if this phrase can be used to characterize the strife and misrule which ensued – followed her demise…

"All evidence suggests that Ivan IV was a sensitive, intelligent, and precocious boy. He learned to read early and read everything that he could find, especially Muscovite Church literature. He became of necessity painfully aware of the struggle and intrigues around him and also of the ambivalence of his own position. The same boyars who formally paid obeisance to him as autocrat and treated him with utmost respect on ceremonial occasions, neglected, insulted, and injured him in private life. In fact, they deprived him at will of his favourite servants and companions and ran the palace, as well as Russia, as they pleased. Bitterness and cruelty, expressed, for instance, in his torture of animals, became fundamental traits of the young ruler's character."[371]

"Much about Ivan's upbringing is profoundly obscure," writes Benson Bobrick, "except that it was continually beset by catastrophe. His father died when he was three; his mother by poison when he was eight; his nurse, Agafena, was abruptly deported; and in the repeated defeat of his affections, everyone to whom he subsequently drew close was wrenched away from him by envious magnates. No sense of security could grow in him; what grew was a certain hopelessness that it could ever be achieved. As one boyar faction after another toppled from power, his life had never been out of danger, and rebels had not hesitated even to invade his room. It has been said – and surely it is true – that long before he was Ivan the Terrible, he was Ivan the Terrified…"

In public, Ivan presided over court and church functions with great majesty, as the magnates of the realm scurried around him like servile lackeys. But in private it was a completely different attitude, as they treated him as the servant. The schism in his environment entered his soul…

"Thus Ivan grew up morbid and excitable, mutely raving at the discrepancy between his title and his power. His natural timidity was warped and exaggerated into nervous terror by the revolting lawlessness around him, and the instinct of self-preservation began to dominate his conscious life…"[372]

---

[371] Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 143-144, 145.
[372] Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible,* Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990, pp. 71, 72.

In the opinion of some, Ivan's later cruelties can be explained and excused, at least in part, by the mental illness induced by the extreme insecurity of his upbringing. However that may be, there is evidence that Ivan was both cruel and debauched from an early age...[373]

Ivan grew up a tall, strong man, well-read and skilled in rhetoric. His literary proclivities were reinforced in 1542 with the arrival of Archbishop Makary of Novgorod as the new metropolitan of Moscow. "A bibiliophile and archivist-compiler of unmoderated zeal, early on he had resolved to gather into one collection 'all the books for reading in the Russian land'. With a gifted editorial staff and a battery of scribes, he had compiled in 1531 the first edition of *The Great Menology*, an encyclopedia of Christian literature in Slavic that filled 27,000 folio pages of script. Divided into twelve volumes according to a calendrical cycle of monthly readings subdivided for daily devotion, it contained hundreds of saints' lives, sermons, Biblical commentaries, paraphrases of whole books of Scripture, copious selections from the church fathers, the *Areopagitica*..., apocrypha, the works of Flavius Josephus, monastic statutes, and four translated Byzantine collections of sermons, maxims, laws, and homilies called the *Pearl*, the *Emerald*, the *Bee*, and the *Golden Chain*, Makary's compendium also included every anti-Catholic work translated into Slavic or composed in Russia up to that time, such as the sermons of Basil the Great against the Arian heresy and the famous legend of how Aleksander Nevsky once dazzled ambassadors from the pope with his knowledge of theology. The whole Byzantine Greek inheritance was thereby shuffled together with Russian religious literature, while many new saints' lives were composed for the compilation, which was meant 'to catalogue, exhibit and define' Moscow's cultural heritage."[374]

Works from earlier reigns supporting the theory of Moscow the Third Rome were also included, such as the *Tale of the White Cowl*. This "traced the progressive transfer of a sacred vestment from Rome to Constantinople, the 'Second Rome' to 'radiant Russia', the Third. Its transfer or migration was symbolically understood as the migration of the true faith – from Rome to Constantinople to Russia – where 'all the kingdoms will be united into one.'"[375]

As if foreseeing the despotic tendencies of Ivan's reign, Makary also emphasized the theory of the "symphony of powers", "and took care in *The Great Menology* to include many texts that stressed not only the sovereign's high calling but his heavy responsibilities, and his obligations to respect the authority of the great Synods, Fathers, and traditions of the Church."[376]

*

---

[373] Henri Troyat, *Ivan the Terrible,* Sevenoaks: New English Library, 1985, pp. 16-18.
[374] Bobrick, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
[375] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 76.
[376] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 77.

It was in the reign of Ivan the Terrible that the closely related issues of the schism between the Russian and the Greek Churches, on the one hand, and the status – imperial or otherwise – of the Russian kingdom came to a head. The question was not fully resolved until 1589…

As we have seen, the title "the Third Rome" meant little if the Russian tsar was not in communion with the first see of Orthodoxy, the Second Rome. St. Maximus the Greek and Metropolitan Joasaph of Moscow (1539-42), non-possessors both, had tried unsuccessfully to bridge the gap between Moscow and Constantinople, and were both imprisoned for their pains, dying in the same year. However, in 1546 the Ecumenical Patriarchate thought up a cunning stratagem that finally, some years later, achieved the desired effect…[377] In June of that year, a Council of over 50 bishops enthroned the new patriarch, Dionysius II, and sent an epistle to the tsar announcing the fact. In the same epistle they did two things that were meant to be seen together. On the one hand, an appeal was made to release St. Maximus the Greek. And on the other, the tsar himself was addressed as "tsar and great prince". And this even before Ivan was formally anointed and crowned with the Cap of Monomakh by Metropolitan Makary of Moscow.

In diplomatic language the Ecumenical Patriarch was saying: we are willing to recognize you as tsar, if you return the Muscovite Church into submission to us. And as a sign of your good intent, release St. Maximus…

St. Maximus himself appealed to Ivan to release him from prison, saying that he was placed by God "in His place, as tsar, sovereign and master on earth, in order to govern His inheritance, Orthodox people, with all righteousness and God-pleasing forethought for them" – including Maximus The tsar released the saint, but he continued his bold preaching. Thus he refused to bless a pilgrimage of Tsar Ivan, saying that he should look after the widows and orphans of those killed at Kazan instead. And he threatened that if he did not, his newborn son Demetrius would die. Ivan ignored his advice, and Demetrius died…

Now the word "tsar" in Russian was roughly equivalent to the word "basileus" in Greek, but it was not equivalent to "emperor of the Romans". The Greeks had accorded the title, grudgingly, to both Charlemagne and the ruler of Bulgaria, as indicating that they were independent and lawful Christian sovereigns; and the Russians had similarly accorded it to the Mongol khans. "Not inappropriately, Ivan III had occasionally called himself 'Tsar' after repudiating the Tatar yoke; for as one contemporary defined it, it means 'a king that giveth not tribute to any man.'"[378]

---

[377] V.M. Lourié, "Prekrashchenie moskovskogo tserkovnogo raskola 1467-1560 godov: final istorii v dokumentakh".
[378] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 79.

However, the title "tsar" fell short of according its bearer the dignity of the ruler and protector of all Orthodox Christians, which had belonged to the Byzantine emperors. In his crowning by Metropolitan Makary, the tsar's genealogy had been read, going back (supposedly) to a brother of the Emperor Augustus, which implied that he was the successor of the Roman and Byzantine emperors. Moreover, the ceremony took place on January 15, 1547, the same day as that on which Augustus had been given the title "Imperator", "Emperor", in 27 BC.[379] But the Greeks did not respond to this hint. Nor was it really fitting for them to do so. For the Ecumenical Patriarch was meant to be in "symphony" with the Roman emperor as his secular partner, whereas his real secular "partner" was not Ivan or any Christian ruler, but the infidel Ottoman Sultan! Nevertheless, the limited recognition that the tsar was being offered constituted an important step forward in the Russian tsars' campaign for recognition in the wider Orthodox world, and would be something that the tsar would not want to reject out of hand.

"In the autumn of 1550 Ivan commissioned a broad inventory of Muscovy's resources, including the registration of all classes of landholders and types of property, an in two articles of the new Law Code he sought to revoke all permanent tax immunity charters, and to regulate the alienation of ancestral estates so that monasteries could not acquire them with such ease. A third article restricted the establishment of new Church suburbs.

"Makary [a Posessor] dissented from these provisions and mustered his forces to thwart their enactment…"[380]

---

[379] In the 1520s," writes Serhii Plokhy, "Muscovite intellectuals produced a new genealogical tract, the *Tale of the Princes of Vladimir,* which associated the rulers in the Kremlin, the former grand princes of Vladimir, with Emperor Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire. The link was established through a legendary personality called Prus, allegedly the brother of Augustus. Thus the founder of the Roman Empire and the rulers of Moscow had the same forefather. But how were the grand princes of Vladimir (and later Moscow) related to Prus? The solution proposed by the Muscovite authors was quite simple: the missing link was another legendary [*sic*] figure, Prince Rurik, the founder of the Kyivan ruling clan. According to the Rus' chronicles, Rurik had come from the north, the part of the world allegedly assigned by Augustus to Prus.

"Should that lineage be found wanting, the authors provided another connection to Rome with a much more solid historical foundation. It led to the eternal city through Byzantium. The princes of Vladimir and Moscow were heirs of Prince Volodymyr (Vladimir) Monomakh, the twelfth-century ruler of Kyiv who had received his name through his mother, a relative of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomachos, who in turn was related to Augustus. One way or another, all roads of the Muscovite imagination led to Roma. According to the *Tale,* Constantine had passed on his emperor's regalia to Volodymyr, and they had subsequently been inherited by the princes of Moscow. Among them was Monomakh's Cap, an Eastern equivalent of an emperor's crown. It was in fact a fourteenth-century gold filigree skullcap from Central Asia, possibly a gift from the khan of the Golden Horde, intended to symbolize the vassal status of the Muscovite princes. The Mongol gift was now reimagined as a symbol of imperial power" (*Lost Kingdom,* London: Allen Lane, 2017, pp. 14-15).

[380] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 100.

Ivan followed the example of his predecessors in convening great "Land Councils" (*Zemnie Sobory*) bringing together the leaders of both Church and State. As Metropolitan Makary (Bulgakov) writes: "At most of the Councils there were present, besides the hierarchs, the superiors of the monasteries – archimandrites, igumens, builders, also protopriests, priests, monks and the lower clergy generally. Often his Majesty himself was present, sometimes with his children, brothers and all the boyars… It goes without saying that the right to vote at the Councils belonged first of all to the metropolitan and the other hierarchs… But it was offered to other clergy present at the Councils to express their opinions. Their voice could even have a dominant significance at the Council, as, for example, the voice of St. Joseph of Volokolamsk at the Councils of 1503-1504… The conciliar decisions and decrees were signed only by the hierarchs, others – by lower clergy: archimandrites and igumens. And they were confirmed by the agreement of his Majesty…"[381]

In 1551 Ivan convened the *Stoglav* council, so called because its decisions were framed in the form of 100 (*sto*) answers to questions. Politely but firmly, he requested the Church's approval of his new Law Code (which he obtained), and addressed issues of Church reform.

"In his opening address Ivan managed to place the Church on the defensive while sounding a conciliatory note. He quoted Genesis concerning the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah and told the hierarchy to set its own house in order (as the state was trying to do), and announced that in response to his appeal two years before, outstanding litigation connected with *kormlenie* abuses had been peacefully resolved. As in 1549, he spoke of his youth with a mixture of confession and accusation – how he was 'orphaned' and 'grew up neglected and without guidance, accustomed to the boyars' evil ways', committed 'sins and iniquities beyond number', and even when he attempted revenge on his enemies 'nothing turned out right'. 'I even tormented hapless Christians,' he admitted, 'until God unleashed the dreadful fires [of 1547], my bones trembled and fear entered my soul. I grew humble and acknowledged my transgressions. I begged forgiveness and pardoned all.'

"On controversial matters before the council, he also left himself room for an honorable and pious retreat: 'In your deliberations, reason out and confirm so that everything in our Tsardom conforms to divine law… If I do not agree with you [in your righteous decisions], admonish me; if I fail to obey you, interdict me without fear, for the sake of my soul and the preservation of the faith.'"[382]

Ivan's humility in relation to the Church – at this stage of his reign, at any rate - is strikingly different from that of his contemporary, King Henry VIII of England, whom he otherwise resembles in so many ways… The Englishman Anthony Jenkinson and his companions heard him declare Metropolitan

---

[381] Metropolitan Makary, *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 1996, vol. 4, part 2, pp. 91, 93.
[382] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 101.

Makary "to be of higher dignitie than himself; for that, saith he, he is God spiritual officer, and I his temporall".[383]

Ivan's respect for the Church prevented him – at this stage - from becoming an absolutist ruler in the sense of one recognizing no power higher than his own. Thus he displayed a reverent attitude towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as also towards the fathers of the *Stoglav* Council, which was conducted by the Tsar putting forward questions to which the hierarchy replied. The hierarchy, for its part, was quite happy to support the tsar in extirpating certain abuses within the Church. But when he raised the question of the sequestration of Church lands for the sake of the strengthening of the State, they refused. The tsar sufficiently respected their independence to yield to their will on this matter, and in general the sixteenth-century Councils were true images of *sobornost'* (conciliarity, the opposite of tyranny).

However, the *Stoglav* council was notable for its Russocentric, even nationalist character. Thus it was emphasized that, in all cases where Russian Church ritual differed from Greek, the Russian version was correct. "This unilateral decision shocked many of the Orthodox. The monks of Athos protested and the Russian monks there regarded the decisions of the synod as invalid."[384]

It is in the context of this Russocentrism that we must understand the Council's citation of Canon 9 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which ascribed to the Ecumenical Patriarch the final judgement of internal church quarrels, and of the Emperor Justinian's *Novella 6* on Church-State "symphony". As V.M. Lourié has argued, these citations in no way implied that the Russian Church was not fully autocephalous. The implication was rather that while the Ecumenical Patriarch was accorded all the power granted him by the holy canons, his "partner", with whom he should remain in harmony, was the Russian tsar…

In accordance with this conception, in 1557 the tsar sent Archimandrite Theodorit to Constantinople with the purpose of receiving the patriarch's blessing to crown Ivan with the full ceremonial accorded to the Byzantine emperors. By the time of this embassy, Ivan's reputation had been enormously enhanced by his conquest of the Kazan khanate in 1552 (which was soon followed by the conquest of the Astrakhan khanate). He certainly seemed to have had the power and authority of the Byzantine emperors..

The reply from Constantinople was not everything that the tsar was hoping for: the patriarch's blessing was obtained – but only on the tsar's earlier crowning by Metropolitan Makary. This constituted, however, only a *de facto* rather than a *de jure* recognition; it could not be otherwise, since Makary was still formally a schismatic in the Greeks' eyes.

---

[383] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 166.

[384] Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 329.

In 1561 the tsar finally received a fuller, less ambiguous response to his request in the form of an account of a conciliar decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate dating to December, 1560. But the conciliar decision's reasoning was unexpectedly roundabout, even devious. First, there was no mention of Ivan's descent from Augustus, but only from Anna, the Byzantine princess who married St. Vladimir the Saint. In other words, Ivan's pretensions to be "emperor of the Romans" were rejected: he was the lawful "God-crowned" ruler or emperor only of Russia. Secondly, Ivan is said to have sought to be crowned by the patriarch because his crowning by Makary "has no validity, since not only does a Metropolitan not have the right to crown, but not even every Patriarch, but only the two Patriarchs: the Roman and Constantinopolitan". In actual fact, Ivan had made no request for a repetition of the coronation. But the patriarch then proposed a way out of the impasse which he himself had created: he said that he himself, in the conciliar decision of December, 1560, had joined his own hand to the crowning carried out by Makary in 1547, thereby making it valid "in hindsight", as it were. And that was why Ivan's coronation was in fact "God-crowned".

Another important feature of the conciliar decision was that Makary was called "metropolitan of Moscow and the whole of Great Russia", a much more precise designation than the previous "metropolitan of Russia", and implying that Makary was a fully canonical metropolitan having a territorial jurisdiction distinct from that of the metropolitan of Kiev. Moreover, in another *gramota*, the patriarch suggested that while it might be rational to carry out a second crowning of Ivan by the patriarch insofar as the first one was invalid, it would be "useful and salutary" to consider this as already done, insofar as Metropolitan Makary was the "catholic patriarchal exarch" able to carry out all hierarchical acts without hindrance, so that the crowning he carried out in 1547 was mystically carried out also by the patriarch. "And so," concludes V.M. Lourié, "the abolition of the Muscovite autocephaly was achieved, while no recognition of the Moscow tsar as emperor of the Romans was given in exchange. The Moscow authorities could not dispute this, since the rejection of the autocephaly was now bound up with the recognition of the tsar's coronation."[385]

*

Ivan did not only seek recognition as ruler of the Third Rome: he also worked out an ideology for the Third Rome, and a programme of reforms. This was partly his own work[386], and partly the work of advisors such as Protopriest Sylvester, the Privy Councillors Adashev and Viskovaty and, especially, Ivan Semenovich Peresvetov, a minor nobleman from Lithuania who had served in

---

[385] Lourié, op. cit.

[386] M.V. Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm, pp. 17-96.

the Ottoman empire. The tsar started enacting his reforms in the decade 1547-1556, when he convened his *Zemskie Sobory*, or "Land Councils"…

At the base of this programme there lay the idea, as Ya.S. Lourié, "that Russia was the only country in the world that had kept the true faith was very majestic, but also very responsible. If the truth was concentrated with us, and the whole of the surrounding world had spiritually 'collapsed', then in constructing their State the Russians had to go along a completely individual path, and rely on the experience of others only to a very limited degree – and rely on it as negative experience.

"… Turning to the history of the fall of Constantinople and the victory of Mehmet the Sultan over the Greeks, Peresvetov explained these events in terms of the 'meekness' of the Greek Emperor Constantine: 'It is not possible to be an emperor without being threatening; as a horse without a bridle, so is an empire without threatenings'.[387] And he foretold to the young tsar: 'You are a threatening and wise sovereign; you will bring the sinful to repentance and install justice and truth in your kingdom.' It is important to note that 'justice' in this programme was no less important than 'threatening'; the 'meekness' of the Greek Emperor consisted in the fact that he ceded power to the 'nobles', and they had enslaved the people."[388]

"Peresvetov," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "was almost certainly right. The Ottomans owed the creation of their empire at least in large part to reforms which weakened the native Turkish nobles who had previously formed the backbone of its tribal confederacies. Those nobles had been supplanted at the Ottoman court by Christian youths recruited from the Balkans and converted to Islam under the devshirme system. They furnished both the Janissaries, the elite corps of the army, and the principal civilian advisors. The Sultan required all his military and governmental leaders, whatever their provenance, to accept the status of his personal slaves, in order to separate them forcibly from their kinship loyalties. The conquered city of Constantinople was used for the same purpose: to give his new elite a power base remote from the native grazing lands of the Turkish nobles.

"Such a system had obvious attractions for a Muscovite ruler also building an empire on vulnerable territories on the frontier between Christianity and Islam, and also struggling to free himself from aristocratic clans. Peresvetov did not go as far as his Ottoman model, and refrained from recommending slavery; but he did propose that the army should be recruited and trained by the state and paid for directly out of the treasury. This would ensure that

---

[387] The word *groznij,* which is translated "terrible" in the title "Ivan the Terrible", should better be translated as "threatening" or "awesome".

[388] Ya.S. Lourié, "Perepiska Groznogo s Kurbskim v Obshchestvennoj Mysli Drevnej Rusi" ("The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Kurbsky in the Political Thought of Ancient Rus'"), in Ya.S. Lourié and Yu.D. Rykov, *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim* (The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Andrew Kurbsky), Moscow: "Nauka", 1993, pp. 230-231.

individual regiments could not become instruments of baronial feuding. He favoured a service nobility promoted on the basis of merit and achievement, but he did not envisage serfdom as a means of providing them with their livelihood: in so far as he considered the matter at all, he assumed they would be salaried out of tax revenues.

"Peresvetov's importance was that he offered a vision of a state able to mobilize the resources of its peoples and lands equitably and efficiently. He was one of the first European theorists of monarchical absolutism resting on the rule of law. He believed that a consistent law code should be published, and that its provisions should be guided by the concept of *pravda* (which in Russian means both truth and justice): it would be the task of the 'wise and severe monarch' to discern and uphold this principle, without favour to the privileged and powerful.

"In the early years of his reign we can see Ivan endeavouring to implement, in his own way, some of Peresvetov's ideas, especially where they would enhance the strength and efficiency of the monarchy. At the same time he was trying to reach out beyond the fractious boyars and courtiers to make contact with the local elites of town and countryside and bind them into a more cohesive system of rule. Together with his Chosen Council, an ad hoc grouping of boyars, clergymen and service nobles personally chosen by him, he tried to make a start towards removing the 'sovereign's affairs' (*gosudarevo delo*) from the private whims of the boyars and their agents, and bringing them under the control of himself in alliance with the 'land' (*zemlia*)."[389]

As Francis Fukuyama explains: "The power of the Muscovite state was built around the middle service class, made up of cavalrymen who were paid not in cash but in grants of land known as *pomest'ia*. Each *pomest'ia* was supported by the labor of five or six peasant households. Since land was so abundant, control over people was more important than control over land. The cavalry did not constitute a standing army but were called into service by the prince and had to return home to their lands after the end of the campaigning season. The similarities between the Russian *pomest'ia* and the Ottoman timar are striking and likely not accidental, since the Russians came increasingly into contact with the Turks in this period. Like the Ottoman sipahis, the core of the Russian army was made up of a class of what would elsewhere in Europe be labelled lower gentry, soldiers who were dependant on the state for access to land and resources. The Russian cavalry army even resembled the Ottoman cavalry in their relatively light equipment and dependence on manoeuver, both differing substantially from the heavily armed knight of Western Europe. The Moscow regime's motive for building this kind of army was similar to that of the Ottomans. It created a military organization dependent on it alone for status, which nevertheless did not have to be paid in cash. This force could be used to

---

[389] Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: Harper Collins, 1997, pp. 48-49.

offset the power of the princes and boyars who held their own land and resources…"[390]

Having reorganized the army, Ivan, working together with his Council, set about making a single cohesive whole out of Russian society, uniting it from top to bottom by the hierarchical principle. He began with the Church, whose clergy constituted probably the freest class in sixteenth-century Russia. Ivan respected the Church, and did not in general try to impose his will on her. And yet he liked to emphasize that the Church had no business interfering in affairs of State, constantly bringing the argument round to the quasi-absolute power of the tsar – and the insubordination of the boyars.

"Remember," he said, "when God delivered the Jews from slavery, did he place above them a priest or many rulers? No, he placed above them a single tsar – Moses, while the affairs of the priesthood he ordered should be conducted, not by him, but by his brother Aaron, forbidding Aaron to be occupied with worldly matters. But when Aaron occupied himself with worldly affairs, he drew the people away from God. Do you see that it is not fitting for priests to do the work of tsars! Also, when Dathan and Abiron wanted to seize power, remember how they were punished for this by their destruction, to which destruction they led many sons of Israel? You, boyars, are worthy of the same!"[391]

Henri Troyat writes: "Throughout the country the parish priests would be placed under the supervision of their hierarchical superiors. Each town would have a school run by educated priests and *diaki* [educated officials], who would teach reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, religion, morality, and the abomination of 'infamous sodomy'. However, when Ivan put forward the notion that monks, who were theoretically dead to the world, could not own land [the non-Possessor principle] and that their holdings should revert to the crown, [Metropolitan] Macarius, supported by the entire clergy, rejected the blasphemous suggestion. The Czar had to be satisfied with a half-measure. In future, it was decided, the bishops and monasteries could make no acquisition of land without the consent of the sovereign. (In fact, this decision was never observed and business went on as usual.) Also, the monasteries were forbidden to lend money at usurious rates. Such measures were designed to put a stop to the Church's staggering accumulation of wealth.

"At the same time Ivan was bringing the priests and monks to heel, he was permanently reorganizing the nobility of the country. Below the chief officers of the crown and the members of the Council of Boyars came the boyars known as 'service men', the thousand young noblemen who were the highest born and most capable. Listed in the *Book of the Thousand* (though actually they numbered 1,078), they supplied the officers for the Czar's Regiment and were sometimes given administrative or diplomatic missions. Lands were allotted to them to

---

[390] Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 389-391.
[391] Ivan IV, *Sochinenia* (Works), St. Petersburg: Azbuka, 2000, p. 49.

enable them to perform their service. Each spring when a 'mobilization' took place, the service men were required to report to appointed places, armed, on horseback, and accompanied by a number of peasants determined by the extent of their arable land (one peasant for every 135 acres), they were irrevocably bound by this obligation all their lives. A few of them, instead of joining the army, were appointed to high places in Moscow, but in general the military destiny of the men of the 'service' class was decreed from the time they were born.

"Similarly, workers and tradesmen were all catalogued and enrolled in guilds. In addition, they were divided into categories according to the amount of taxes they paid. The wealthiest merchants were called to Moscow, where they formed an upper class, the *gosh*. In exchange for certain privileges, they had to take personal responsibility for the city's supplies and finances.

"At the bottom of the social scale were the peasants. The majority of these worked six days out of seven for a landowner, paid very heavy taxes, and did not have the right to move away or change masters. Others were considered free farmers and, in theory, could leave when their lease ran out and they had carried out all the provisions of the contract. But in practice, most of them were unable to pay back the enormous debts that they had contracted in order to pursue their farming, so they remained attached to the soil in fact if not in law. Although serfdom was not officially proclaimed, it spread insidiously throughout Russia. In desperation many peasants fled to the forests. More and more lands were left uncultivated. Ivan did not care.

"There was a brilliant logic to Ivan's plan. To ensure the cooperation of the nobles, he had tied them permanently to their task. To enable them to perform that task free from other cares, he had given them estates. To cultivate those estates, he had forced the peasants who lived on them to work for the benefit of the nobles. Thus he had created a Russia subjugated from top to bottom, in which each man, according to his rank and capacities, contributed to the greatness and prosperity of the country. At the summit of this pyramid of slaves was the czar."[392]

In Russia, unlike most West European countries, the Great Prince or Tsar was not seen as simply the most powerful member of the noble class, but as standing above all the classes, including the nobility. Therefore the lower classes as often as not looked to the Great Prince or Tsar to protect them from the nobility, and often intervened to raise him to power or protect him from attempted coups by the nobility.

And in fact the tsars, when allowed to rule with truly autocratic authority, were usually much better for the peasants than the nobles, passing laws that surpassed contemporary European practice in their humaneness. Thus Ivan Solonevich points out that in Ivan's *Sudebnik*, "the administration did not have

---

[392] Troyat, *Ivan the Terrible,* Sevenoaks: New English Library, 1985, pp. 54-56.

the right to arrest a man without presenting him to the representatives of the local self-government…, otherwise the latter on the demand of the relatives could free the arrested man and exact from the representative of the administration a corresponding fine 'for dishonour'. But guarantees of security for person and possessions were not restricted to the habeas corpus act. Klyuchevsky writes about 'the old right of the ruled to complain to the highest authority against the lawless acts of the subject rulers'."[393]

<div align="center">*</div>

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that mid-sixteenth-century Russia was in many ways a less free State than in the 11th or 14th centuries. The reason lay in the task imposed by Divine Providence on Russia of defending the last independent outpost of Orthodoxy in the world, which required, in view of the threat posed by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, an ever-increasing centralization and militarization of society, and therefore great sacrifices from all classes of the population.

The peasants suffered particularly. Their problems were twofold: incipient serfdom and increasing taxation. Thus, as Kollmann writes, "taxes rose precipitously in the sixteenth century, exceeding the parallel inflationary rise of the century. It has been calculated that taxes rose 55 per cent from 1536 to 1545, another 286 per cent (with commutations to cash) from 1552 to 1556, another 60 per cent in the 1560s, and another 41 per cent in the 1570s before they began a steady decrease in the face of economic distress. At the same time in the 1560 and 1570s the north-west and centre experienced great disruptions from the *oprichnina*, the Livonian War, and natural disasters that included plague, crop failure, and famine. Petty landlords responded by squeezing their peasants for more income, while larger landholders lured peasants to their lands with loans and tax breaks. They also began to consolidate their holdings into demesnes and to extract labour services, two to three days per week by the end of the century. Trying to shelter the landed elite, the state ended taxation on landlord's demesnes in the 1580s, shifting the burden all to the more to peasants. In response the average peasant plot decreased: at the beginning of the century many peasant holdings were the equivalent of a man-sus (in Russian, *vyt*, that is, the unit of land considered sufficient to support a peasant family). But from the 1570s most holdings ranged between just one-half to one-eighth of a *vyt.*

"All this spelled disaster for peasants and petty gentry, especially in the north-west and centre. Thousands fled to new landlords in the centre or the relative freedom of the Volga and Kama basins, the Dvina land, or the southern border. Depopulation was acute: in the mid-1580s only 17 per cent of the land in the Moscow environs was being cultivated, while in the north-west 83 per cent of settlements were deserted. Towns suffered disproportionately: while the populations of urban communes had risen in the first half of the century,

---

[393] Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (The People's Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 340.

posad populations fell by 61 per cent in the 1550s-80s, and then another 45 per cent from the 1580s to the 1610s. In Novgorod in 1582, for example, a census recorded only 122 urban households as occupied and over 1,300 abandoned for such reasons as death of the family (in 76 per cent of the cases) and impoverishment (18 per cent). The economic situation stabilized in the late 1580s, but Russia plunged again into turmoil by the turn of the century: not only foreign invasion, but crop failure and pestilence accompanied the end of the dynasty in 1598."[394]

This was the context for the origins of serfdom. For "having no other way to support its cavalry, and unwilling to transform this privileged estate into less prestigious contract servitors, the state endeavoured to secure peasant labour for landlords. In 1580 it forbade some peasants to change landlords and in 1592-3 made the ban universal, capping a legislative process that had commenced with restrictions on the peasant's right to move in the law codes of 1497 and 1550. These 'forbidden years' were perceived as temporary but, with the exception of 1601-2, endured thereafter. This incremental enserfment affected most directly the peasants of landlords in the centre, north-west and steppe frontiers, but it also had an impact in the north and Siberia. Cadastres compiled throughout the realm in the 1580s and 1590s served as the basis for registering peasants in communes: they were then forbidden to leave, whether or not they were subject to landlords as well."[395]

And so in the century 1550-1650, the tsars gradually enserfed the peasants in order to prevent them from simply disappearing into the woods or fleeing to the steppes in the south. They were not technically slaves (slaves at any rate have the privilege of not paying taxes); but a combination of political and economic factors (e.g. peasant indebtedness to landlords, landlords' liability for collecting peasants' taxes, the enormous demand for manpower as the state's territory expanded) bonded them to the land.

And the hereditary nature of social status in Muscovite Russia meant that they had little hope of rising up the social ladder.

In view of the fearsome reputation Ivan IV has acquired because of the cruelties of the second half of his reign, it is worth reminding ourselves of the great achievements of the first half (until approximately 1560). Thus, as Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, in 1551 Ivan "presented to the [*Stoglav*, "Hundred Chapters"] Church council his new legal code, the *Sudebnik* of 1550, and the local government reform, and received its approval. Both measures became law. The institution of a novel scheme of local government deserves special attention as one of the more daring attempts in Russian history to resolve this perennially difficult problem. The new system aimed at the elimination of corruption and oppression on the part of centrally appointed officials by means of popular participation in local affairs. Various localities

---

[394] Kollmann, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

[395] Kollmann, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

had already received permission to elect their own judicial authorities to deal, drastically if need be, with crime. Now, in areas whose population guaranteed a certain amount of dues to the treasury, other locally elected officials replaced the centrally appointed governors. And even where the governors remained, the people could elect assessors to check closely on their activities and, indeed, impeach them when necessary…"[396]

Ivan also tried to open his kingdom to trade with the West, especially the England of Elizabeth I (to whom he proposed marriage); with the conquest of Kazan (in 1552) and Astrakhan (in 1562), and through Prince Vorotynsky's defeat of the Crimean Tatar invasion in 1572, he neutralized the Tatar threat, greatly increasing the boundaries of his kingdom and continuing the conversion of the trans-Volga region; he subdued the boyars who had nearly destroyed the monarchy in his childhood; he rejected the Jesuit Possevino's attempts to bring Russia into communion with Rome; he convened Church Councils that condemned heresies (e.g. the Arianism of Bashkin) and removed many abuses in ecclesiastical and monastic life. Even the Tsar's fiercest critic, Prince Andrei Kurbsky, had to admit that he had formerly been "radiant in Orthodoxy".

So Ivan in the first half of this reign was a true Orthodox autocrat, ruling in symphony with the Church and Orthodox tradition. On the debit side, de facto serfdom had begun, and the peasants were oppressed by very heavy taxes. Let us now turn to the tragedy of the second half of his reign, when autocracy degenerated into the most absolute despotism…

---

[396] Riasanovsky, op. cit., p. 146.

26. IVAN THE TERRIBLE: (2) THE ORIENTAL DESPOT

Although the peasants were the most oppressed class in Ivan's Russia, the main opposition to him came, not from the peasants, but from the boyars. For the boyars had lost much from the increasing power of the Muscovite great prince, who by 1550 was the only independent Russian Orthodox prince. Moreover, they now held their lands, or *votchiny*, on condition they served the Great Prince, otherwise they became theoretically forfeit.

"Some," writes Benson Bobrick, "had been in Moscow service for a long time; others, as various principalities were annexed, had more recently flocked to the capital along with the princely families they had formerly served. The latter and their direct descendants comprised the hereditary, titled aristocracy of Russia, and formed the upper crust of the boyar class. But their pedigree itself did not guarantee their power. 'Boyar' was the highest rank a grand prince could confer. It was therefore in his service to the monarch that a prince's authority tended to reside, and in his capacity as a boyar that his stature was affirmed. From the mid-fifteenth century on, more than one hundred and fifty princely families joined the Moscow court, and by and large their scions monopolized the highest civil and military offices in the state.

"Nevertheless they formed a restless caste, for their eminence served but to remind them of the higher and rank and dignity they had once enjoyed. Whereas the Muscovite grand prince was committed to strengthening the monarchy, they belonged to families that had once ruled elsewhere, and to some degree they lived in 'the recollection of glories past'.

"Occasionally those glories seemed rather near to hand. A prince's submission to Moscow did not invariably mean a complete revolution in his fortunes, and he often continued to reside in his appanage as an hereditary landowner on a large scale, with a considerable court and military entourage.

"The old nontitled Muscovite boyars, however, who had directly assisted in creating the new state, viewed their status in a different light. Whereas the former regarded themselves as the administrators of the realm 'by right of origin' the latter owed their rise to the monarchy, and strove to see it maintained. The division in the class was compounded by genealogical subdivisions among the princes, some of whom were descendants of Rurik, others of Gedymin (the founder of the original Lithuanian royal house)[397], while still others were direct or indirect descendants of lesser lines. A number of noble families were also of Tartar origin, and some of the Tartar princes were descendants of Genghis Khan. The descendants of Gedymin and Rurik were considered equal; those of Genghis Khan stood higher than all but the family

---

[397] Gedymin (c. 1275 – December 1341) "was Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1315 or 1316 until his death. He is credited with founding this political entity and expanding its territory which later spanned the area ranging from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea." (*Wikipedia*) (V.M.)

of the Muscovite grand prince himself. This reflected not only a kind of cultural infatuation with noble ruling houses, but long-term imperial policy: for Moscow laid claim to both Lithuanian and Tartar land. Indeed, after the dissolution of the Horde, 'thousands of baptized and unbaptized Tartars had merged with the ranks of men in service,' so that coincident with Russian emancipation from the yoke, the Tartar element ironically 'possessed the country's soul, not outwardly but from within, penetrating its flesh and blood.'

"What united this newly compounded but not blended aristocracy in general was its resentment against the compulsory character of state service…"[398]

However, the boyar class a whole did not want to abolish the autocracy; this was a monarchical age throughout Europe, and the western disease of republicanism had not yet penetrated Russia. Indeed, as Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, "Russia without the Tsar was inconceivable to it; the Tsar was even necessary to it (otherwise the princes would simple have fought against each other, as in the time of the appanage wars). The boyar opposition attained a relative independence, as it were autonomy, and, of course, it was not against ruling the Tsars, but this could never be fully realized because of the inevitable and constant quarrels within the princely boyar or court opposition itself, which consisted of various groupings around the most powerful families, which were doomed to an absence of unity because of the love of power and avarice of each of them. One can say that the princely-courtly opposition from time immemorial tried to weaken (and did weaken, did shake!) the Autocracy, while at the same time unfailingly wanting to preserve it! A shaky and inconsistent position."[399]

Now the boyars traditionally served in the army or the administration. But the administration, being historically simply an extension of the prince's private domain, was completely controlled by him. Moreover, his patrimony was greatly increased by his conquest of Novgorod in 1478, by his appropriation of all the land of the local aristocratic and merchant elites, and, especially, by his conquest of the vast lands of the former Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in the 1550s. This further weakened the power of the boyars.

*

Nevertheless, for Ivan the boyars with their clannish rivalries and habits of freedom continued to constitute a potential threat to his power. In 1553, Ivan "developed a fever which progressed so rapidly it was feared he would die. Within a few days 'he hardly recognized those around him.' During a lucid interval, his [trusted adviser] Viskovaty gently but firmly reminded him of his will, and Ivan amended it to designate the infant tsarevich, Dmitry, as his heir. Viskovaty authenticated the document with his signature, but advised the tsar

---

[398] Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible,* Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, pp. 42-43.
[399] Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 392.

to oblige the nobility, and especially his cousin Vladimir Staritsky (whose father… had died in prison under Elena), to swear allegiance to the child. To Ivan's anguished astonishment, a significant number refused. The result was turmoil.

"Some who demurred did so (as they thought) for the sake of the state, which they doubted could survive another long minority; others, because they detested the comparatively lowborn Zakharins, Ivan's in-laws, who would presumably emerge as regents; still others yearned to see the dynasty fall. Ivan's deaf-mute brother Yury was not considered a realistic candidate. But many regarded Ivan's cousin, Vladimir Staritsky, energetically promoted by his mother, Efrosinia, as acceptable, because he in part seemed incapable of authoritarian rule.

"Viskovaty, Adashev, and seven members of the Duma's Privy Council (including Prince Dmitry Paletsky, whose daughter was married to Ivan's brother, Yury) promptly swore allegiance to the tsarevich. Two other members of the Council pleaded indisposition, but were apparently in touch with Efrosinia, while Paletsky, despite his pledge, secretly indicated to Vladimir that he would not oppose his accession – provided his daughter and son-in-law were assured of an appanage estate. In the words of Viskovaty, whose handwritten interpolations in one of the Chronicles preserve an extraordinary record of the crisis, Paletsky had begun negotiating with Vladimir 'as with one who would be tsar'. Other powerful nobles joined the rebel camp, but the unseemly haste with which the Staritskys endeavoured to consolidate their advantage provoked a reaction. As they openly began to canvass for support, and even to distribute money to military servitors as a down payment for their loyalty, those devoted to Ivan – who were understandably convinced that a legitimate regency was preferable to a weak, illegitimate monarchy – began to close ranks. Literally constitution a bodyguard, they refused to allow Vladimir into the presence of the tsar.

"By a stunning development on March 11, [the powerful Protopriest] Sylvester intervened on Staritsky's behalf. 'Why do you not let Prince Vladimir go to the tsar?' he said to Ivan's protectors. 'He wishes more good to him than you do.' Though speaking as if to reconcile the different factions, he had reason to fear a regency, for his power over the tsar had incurred the antipathy and jealous resentment of Anastasia and the whole Zakharin camp.

"On the morning of March 12, the tsar rallied and insisted that each member of the Duma publicly repeat the loyalty oath before the Privy Council. Prince Ivan Shuisky (the son of the hated Vasily Shuisky of Ivan's minority) protested, and Adashev's father, Fyodor, recently promoted to boyar, complicated the situation further by declaring, 'We are ready to kiss the cross to thee, sovereign, and to thy son, Dmitry, but we refuse to serve the Zakharins… Thy son is still in his swaddling clothes… and we have already suffered much from the boyars during thy minority.' In other words he did not regard the Zakharins as strong enough to hold the boyar factions in check. At this point, in a reprise of the

deathbed scene of Vasily III, 'there was great trouble and noise and much debate among the boyars, for they did not wish to serve a babe.' As each party argued its cause, 'there was shouting and cursing'.

"Ivan now summoned all his remaining strength to take control. He told the dissidents: 'If you do not swear allegiance to my son, Dmitry, that means you have some other sovereign,' and told Fyodor Adashev and his adherents: 'I order you to serve my son, not the Zakharins, according to your conscience,' Next he urged those who had shown themselves unequivocal in their support to flee abroad if necessary with his wife and child to save them and finally, he reminded the Zakharins, who had been intimidated by the boyars and may have felt themselves somewhat denigrated by the tsar, that their interests coincided with his own. 'And you, why are you so downcast, or are you hoping that the boyars may spare you? The boyars will discard you first of all. You must die for my son and for his mother, and you must not allow the boyars to insult my wife.'

"Ivan's masterful performance crushed the incipient rebellion…"[400] However, relations between the tsar and the Staritsky clan were never the same again, and Vladimir Staritsky was one of the many boyars who would be murdered by Ivan in the following decades…

*

Things began to go wrong for the tsar from 1558, when he began a campaign against the Livonian Knights of the Baltic region that was to prove both expensive and unsuccessful. Then his beloved wife Anastasia died on August 7, 1560. By all accounts she was a beautiful and virtuous wife, and their marriage had been a happy one. Her death aroused dark paranoia in Ivan's soul. He believed she had been murdered.[401] Then he entered into a homosexual relationship with Fyodor Basmanov, and when Prince Dmitry Obolensky rebuked him for that he was assassinated. On December 31, 1563 Metropolitan Makary, who, together with others among Ivan's counsellors, had criticised his war in Livonia, died. Now Ivan abandoned all restraint.

Among the boyars exiled at this time was one of his main military commanders, Prince Andrei Kurbsky. In April, 1564 he escaped to Lithuania to the protection of King Sigismund. From there he wrote to Ivan, accusing him

---

[400] Bobrick, op. cit., pp. 126-128.

[401] Modern science has established the astonishing fact that Tsar Ivan, his mother, Great Princess Helena, his first wife Tsaritsa Anastasia, his daughter Maria, his son Ivan and his other son Tsar Theodore were all poisoned with mercury (V. Manyagin, *Apologia Groznogo Tsaria* (An Apology for the Awesome Tsar), St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 101-124). However, as Simon Sebag Montefiore points out, this does not necessarily mean that they were murdered. Other sixteenth-century bodies were found to have dangerous levels of mercury, and "mercury was often used as a medicine" (*The Romanovs,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017, p. 16).

of murdering his best generals ("the commanders given to you by God")[402], of witch-hunting ("falsely accusing the Orthodox of treachery and magic"), of torturing his subjects with "red-hot pincers, needles driven under the nails", white-hot pans and stoves, and of profaning his holy Orthodox churches with the blood of martyrs.[403]

Ivan replied with a 28,000-word epistle full of choice insults and quotations from the Holy Scriptures. Especially interesting was his defence of his autocratic rule. He claimed that his Chosen Council, which he had now dissolved, had wanted "that I be sovereign in name, but co-reign with the priests". And yet "it is not fitting for priests to assume the authority of tsars". He quoted <u>Romans</u> 13 in defence of his power, which had every right to be severe with evil-doers.

Ivan justified his cruelties on scriptural grounds: "See and understand: he who resists the power resists God; and he who resists God is called an apostate, and that is the worst sin. You know, this is said of every power, even of a power acquired by blood and war. But remember what was said above, that we have not seized the throne from anyone. He who resists such a power resists God even more!"[404]

His power, he said, came not from the people, but from God, by succession from the first Russian autocrat, St. Vladimir. "The beginning of our Autocracy is from St. Vladimir. We were born and nurtured in the office of Tsar, and do possess it, and have not stolen what is not ours. From the first the Russian autocrats have been lords of their own dominions, and not the boyar aristocrats… Hitherto the Russian masters were questioned by no man, and did not litigate with them before any judge."

He also claimed to be descended from the first Roman emperor, Augustus. From a genealogical point of view, this was, of course, nonsense, and was mocked by foreign rulers such as King Sigismund Augustus of Poland and the Hungarian Prince Stefan Bathory. But from Ivan's point of view, as the lawful autocrat and emperor of the Third Rome, he was answerable, not to the people, but to God. And the people, being "not godless", recognized this. Kurbsky, however, by his rebellion against the tsar had "destroyed his soul".

"As judge between us," he wrote to Kurbsky, "you place Christ our God, and I do not shrink from this judgement. For there is nothing hidden from the fire of the eyes of Him Who knows all things that are secret and concealed."

"What can one say of the godless peoples [among whom he included the heretical Poles]? There, you know, the kings do not have control of their

---

[402] This was not strictly true in 1564, but became true in 1568, when the officers in charge of Narva, Sviazhsk and Kazan were killed by Ivan.
[403] Bobrick, op, cit., p. 185.
[404] Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.

kingdoms, but rule as is indicated to them by their subjects. But from the beginning it is the Russian autocrats who have controlled their own state, and not their boyars and grandees!"[405]

On another occasion he wrote to King Sigismund whose power was severely limited by his nobles, that the autocratic power of the Russian tsars was "not like your pitiful kingdom. For nobody gives orders to the great Sovereigns, while your Pans [nobles] tell you what they want".

Ivan was not in the least swayed by the ideology of democracy, being, as he wrote, "humble Ioann, Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia, by God's will, and not by the multi-mutinous will of man…"

Kurbsky defended the boyars on the grounds of their personal valour; they were "the best of the mighty ones of Israel". In reply, Ivan pointed out that personal qualities do not help if there are no correct "structures": "As a tree cannot flower if its roots dry up, so here: if there are no good structures in the kingdom, courage will not be revealed in war. But you, without paying attention to structures, are glorified only with courage." The idea that there can be more than one power in the land is Manichaean, according to Ivan; for the Manichaeans taught that "Christ possesses only the heavens, while the earth is ruled independently by men, and the nether regions by the devil. But I believe that Christ possesses all: the heavens, the earth and the nether regions, and everything in the heavens, on the earth and in the nether regions subsists by His will, the counsel of the Father and the consent of the Holy Spirit." And since the tsar is anointed of God, he rules in God's place, and can concede no part of what is in fact God's power to anyone else.

Although Ivan's criticism of democracy is penetrating, his own actions made his rule closer to the despotism of the Tatar khans than to the symphony of powers between Church and State that was the Byzantine and Orthodox ideal. This distortion in thinking soon led to further deviancy in action…

*

"In autumn 1564," writes Hosking, "a Lithuanian offensive [against Muscovy], supported by Kurbskii, coincided with one mounted from the south by the Crimean Khan, Devlet-Girei. Muscovite forces managed to repel the double danger, but it nevertheless dramatized the country's vulnerability, and Ivan reacted to it in an abrupt and histrionic manner. In December 1564 he suddenly withdrew from Moscow along with his court and resettled in Aleksandrovskaia Sloboda, a minor princely residence to the north-east. From there he sent the bewildered boyars, prelates and officials a missive accusing them of treason and of plundering the treasury for their own selfish interests. If they wished him to return to the throne, he demanded that they must give

---

[405] Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 40.

235

him the right to set up his own separate and special realm (*oprichnina*)[406] , which would guarantee him the income he needed for his court and army, and they must leave him free to proceed against peculators, traitors and heretics as he saw fit.

"Ivan's expedition was an act of pure theatre, externalizing his crushing sense of lonely responsibility, isolation and rejection…, but also dramatizing the country's helplessness without a strong ruler. As he had anticipated, the boyars begged him to return and conceded to him what he was demanding. There followed another set-piece scene of mutual repentance and simulated forgiveness, after which Ivan put his design into effect.

"He divided his territory into two realms, in one of which, the *oprichnina*, he had complete and unrestricted power, while the other, the *zemshchina*, was governed by the boyar council (the Boyar Duma) according to existing customs. The *oprichnina* included extensive lands in the north and east which had originally belonged to Novgorod, as well as some towns and regions within the appanage principality of Moscow. Boyars living on it were exappropriated and assigned territory in the *zemshchina*, while their former lands were offered to Ivan's newly promoted servitors. This exchange of land uprooted many, though not all, of the leading boyar clans, including the Staritskiis, from their ancestral domains and their local power-bases, and eliminated the restraints on endowing the 'chosen thousand' servitors with land and peasants. The process was not a tidy one. Ivan rewarded individuals not for their social origin but for their loyalty and devotion to him. The general tendency was to strengthen the service nobility at the expense of the boyars, but the process was far from completed, and the boyars remained a considerable force in the land.

"Meanwhile the *oprichnina* lands provided the finances for a wholly new army and police force, charged both with defending the frontiers and with extirpating treason and heresy. The *oprichnina* was also a kind of grotesque court: Ivan referred to his *oprichniki* as 'brothers'. Their humble unadorned clothes and ascetic existence were intended to serve as a model of the Christian life Ivan intended his subjects to lead. The *oprichniki* were given special powers of investigation, arrest and emergency judicial procedure. Dressed in long black cloaks, resembling a monk's habit, they rode on black horses, each carrying a dog's head and a broom mounted on a long stick. 'This means that first of all they bite like dogs, and then they sweep away everything superfluous out of the land.'"[407]

"In a profane parody of monastic life, [Ivan] assumed the role of abbot over a community of *Oprichniki* brethren, with Viazemsky cast in the role of cellarer, and Malyuta Skuratin (a rising favourite married to Viazemsky's sister) sacristan. The brethren went about in dark cassock habits and cowls of rough

---

[406] The word means "separateness" (Montefiore, op. cit., p. 16). (V.M.)

[407] Hosking, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

black serge, and divided their time between exhausting church services and atrocities.

"The monastic 'rule' was strict. Everyone was awakened at three in the morning for Mattins, which lasted until dawn. During the service, Ivan sang, read or prayed – sometimes with such fervor that he bruised his brow from beating it on the ground. Occasionally he would confer with his advisers and 'often the bloodiest orders were dictated [during Mattins or the Liturgy], which followed at eight. At ten the brethren gathered for their first repast of the day. During the meal, Ivan stood and read occasionally from the lives of the saints or some other edifying work. Leftovers were distributed in the marketplace to the poor. The remainder of the afternoon Ivan spent on affairs of state, or in the company of a favourite, or in hunting forays in the woods. Not infrequently, however (and he 'was never so happy as then in countenance and speech'), he would descend into the dungeons to observe acts of torture. 'Blood often splashes his face,' goes one eyewitness account, 'but he does not mind: indeed he is delighted, and to indicate his joy he shouts, 'Hoyda, Hoyda' – a Turkish word resembling 'giddy-up' or 'let's go' used by Tartar horsemen to urge on their steeds. Invigorated by such excursions, he occasionally convened the brethren for an orgy, though on most days he 'liked to execute before the eight o'clock bell' which called the community to evening prayer…"[408]

The *oprichniki* invaded the boyars' lands, killing, raping and pillaging at will and terrorizing and torturing thousands of men, women and even children, and were duly rewarded with the expropriated lands of the men they had murdered.

"Initially about a thousand in number, their ranks grew in the next five years and ultimately comprised about six thousand mounted men, drawn from all classes and united by a common greed…"[409]

The common people, not unnaturally, were greatly distressed. As V.O. Kliuchevsky writes, "the Tsar's arbitrary rule, his groundless executions, bannings, and confiscations, gave rise to murmurs against him not only among the upper classes, but among the common people as well. 'Misery and hatred of the Tsar' were widespread."[410]

But this was only part of the story. By obeying him in his capacity as the anointed of God, many also believed that they were doing God's will, while by patiently enduring his demonic assaults on them they believed that they received the forgiveness of their sins and thereby escaped the torments of hell, so far exceeding the worst torments that any earthly ruler could subject them to. And truly, many simple people, submitting humbly to the tsar's unjust

---

[408] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 224.

[409] Merridale, op. cit., p. 92.

[410] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History. The Seventeenth Century,* Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 56.

decrees, and to the apostolic command: "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (I Peter 2.18), received the crown of life in an innocent death. There was no organized mass movement against his power in the Russian land. Even when he expressed a desire to resign his power, the people completely sincerely begged him to return.[411]

"Dying for the tsar," the historian Sergei Bogatyrev explains, "was represented as being akin to dying for Christ… [Ivan] subjected his counsellors to disgrace and execution in the belief that he would thereby purify himself and his subjects on the eve of judgement day."[412]

The tsar agreed that his victims were martyrs. As he wrote to Kurbsky: "If you are just and pious, why do you not permit yourself to accept suffering from me, your stubborn master, and so inherit the crown of life?..."[413]

Giles Fletcher, the English ambassador to Russia, described the people's attitude thus: "A great people, inert and silent, regarded with a mixture of love and terror this father of the great Russian family, this living law, this representative of God on earth, whose very crimes were accepted as a punishment sent by God to his people and to whose cruelty they must submit, for it created martyrs and opened the doors of heaven…"[414]

As Heidenstein said: "They consider all those who depart from them in matters of the faith to be barbarians… In accordance with the resolutions of their religion, they consider faithfulness to the sovereign to be as obligatory as faithfulness to God. They exalt with praises those who have fulfilled their vow to their prince to their last breath, and say that their souls, on parting from their bodies, immediately go to heaven."

*

What was the Church's reaction to these events?

The Church's position was particularly important, for it was the one institution which had not only the right but the duty to rebuke the Tsar for his crimes. Every hierarch had a sacred obligation, according to the Byzantine *Epanagoge,* "to speak the truth to the emperor and fearlessly defend the dogma of the faith against him." However, even if a ruler is unjust or cruel, he must be obeyed as long as he provides that freedom from anarchy, that minimum of law and order, that is the definition of God-established political authority

---

[411] See Merridale, op. cit., p. 91, and Peter Budzilovich, "O vozmozhnosti vosstanovlenia monarkhii v Rossii" ("On the Possibility of the Restoration of the Monarchy in Russia"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986, No 34, http://www.russia.talk.com/monarchy.htm.

[412] Bogatyrev, in Merridale, op. cit., p. 93.

[413] Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.

[414] Fletcher, in Troyat, *Ivan the Terrible,* p. 50.

(Romans 13.1-6). Thus St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "Some rulers are given by God with a view to the improvement and benefit of their subjects and the preservation of justice; others are given with a view to producing fear, punishment and reproof; yet others are given with a view to displaying mockery, insult and pride – in each case in accordance with the deserts of the subjects." [415] Again, St. Isidore of Pelusium writes that the evil ruler "has been allowed to spew out this evil, like Pharaoh, and, in such an instance, to carry out extreme punishment or to chastize those for whom great cruelty is required, as when the king of Babylon chastized the Jews."[416]

But there is line beyond which an evil ruler ceases to be a true ruler and becomes an anti-ruler, who should not be obeyed. Thus the Jews were commanded by God through the Prophet Jeremiah to submit to the king of Babylon, evil though he was; whereas they were commanded through another prophet, Moses, to resist and flee from the Egyptian Pharaoh. For in the one case the authority, though evil, was still an authority; whereas in the other case the authority was in fact an anti-authority, obedience to which would have taken the people further away from God. The Orthodox tradition of obedience to legitimate authorities goes together with the tradition of protest against the unrighteousness of those authorities.

But there were few such protests… In this respect there was truth in Prince Kurbsky's lament over the state of Russia in Ivan's reign: "The authority which comes from God devises unprecedented pains of death for the virtuous. The clergy – we will not judge them, far be that from us, but bewail their wretchedness – are ashamed to bear witness to God before the tsar; rather they endorse the sin. They do not make themselves advocates of widows and orphans, the poor, the oppressed and the prisoners, but grab villages and churches and riches for themselves. Where is Elijah, who was concerned for the blood of Naboth and confronted the king? Where are the host of prophets who gave the unjust kings proof of their guilt? Who speaks now without being embarrassed by the words of Holy Scripture and gives his soul as a ransom for his brothers? I do not know one. Who will extinguish the fire that is blazing in our land? No-one. Really, our hope is still only with God…"[417]

When Ivan abdicated, on December 3, 1564, and withdrew with his "Chosen Thousand" to the village of Kolomenskoye – the act marking the beginning of his descent into despotism – he specifically blamed not only the boyars, but also the Church for interceding on behalf of his enemies. The people were disturbed by the tsar's actions and accusations, and "to prevent an uprising, Pimen, archbishop of Novgorod, was dispatched at the head of a delegation to

---

[415] St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, v, 24, 3; translated in Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer, *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 226.
[416] St. Isidore, *Letter 6*, quoted in *Selected Letters of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava,* Liberty, TN: St. John of Kronstadt Press, 1989, p. 36.
[417] Kurbsky, letter to Monk Vassian of the Pskov Caves monastery; translated in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, pp. 157-158.

plead with Ivan for forgiveness, and to beg him to return to Moscow 'to govern as he pleased, and to punish traitors at his discretion'.

"'We are but poor and inconsolable sheep,' Pimen told him, 'We are now without a shepherd, and the wolves of our enemies, surround us… In the past nations have been conquered and left without rulers; but that a mighty sovereign and abandon his loyal subjects and his tsardom – such things are unheard of, and not to be read in books. Let the Tsar proclaim the names of those whom he knows to be traitors, and let him punish them as he likes.'

"*This momentous concession struck at the very heart of the Orthodox Church*, for it abolished what was most precious in its advisory role to the tsar: the voice of mercy."[418]

At this point it could be argued that Muscovy had ceased to be a "symphonic", traditionally Orthodox state, and had become a despotism – if Metropolitan Afanasy had not refused to have anything to do with Ivan's theatrical pantomime and adamantly remained in Moscow… And he preserved his oppositional stance, and thereby the honour of the Church, until May 19, 1566, when he resigned in protest and withdrew to the Chudov monastery. His successor, Archbishop German of Kazan, followed in the same noble and Orthodox tradition; he dared to rebuke Ivan for his sins and was therefore dismissed.

This was an absolutely critical moment in the history of the Russian Church. For the whole of the Kievan period, as well during the Mongol yoke, Church-State relations had been good. None of the Great Princes had ruled despotically; for the Church enjoyed spiritual strength and prestige, and its leaders continued to exert a powerful beneficial influence on the rulers.

This began to change in the early sixteenth century, as demonstrated when Metropolitan Daniel blessed Great Prince Basil's demand that he be allowed to put away his lawful wife and marry another – who became the mother of Ivan the Terrible. The unjust imprisonment of St. Maxim the Greek was another sign that the Great Princes were becoming despotic and the metropolitans servile.

This downward trend was to some extent checked by Metropolitan Makary, and, as we have seen, Metropolitans Afanasy and German resisted the tyrant. But fear stalked the land, and Archbishop Pimen's unacceptable compromise was a sign of worse things to come…

The next Metropolitan of Moscow, Philip, was from a boyar family. As a young man he had been deeply struck on hearing the words of the Saviour: "No man can serve two masters", and resolved to become a monk, which he did in the great northern monastery-fortress of Solovki. Promoted to abbot, he

---

[418]Bobrick, op. cit., p. 196. My italics. This right was known as *pechalovanie*, the right of sorrowful petition to the Tsar on behalf of those unjustly treated by him. (V.M.)

worked wonders for the monastery's prosperity, both spiritual and material, and was entrusted by Metropolitan Makary with custody of Protopriest Sylvester, the tsar's former adviser and tutor.[419]

As regards the nature and limits of tsarist power, Philip's beliefs did not differ substantially from those of his predecessors: the tsar was complete master in his kingdom, and deserved the obedience of all, including churchmen, as long as he confessed the Orthodox faith. But, like every Christian, the tsar was bound by the moral law, and could and should be rebuked by the metropolitan for his personal sins. St. Philip was notable for his combination, as it were, of the theories of St. Joseph with the practice of Saints Nilus and Maximus, recognizing the supremacy of the tsar in the political sphere while rebuking him for his personal sins and protecting the Church's supremacy in the spiritual sphere.

Arriving in Moscow from Solovki in 1566, Philip unwillingly accepted the appointment, which his fellow bishops also urged him to accept.

He lost no time in rebuking the tsar. "So be it," he said to the tsar. "I yield to your will. But appease my conscience by abolishing the *oprichnina.* Let there be but one Russia, for according to the words of the Almighty, an empire that is divided will become a desert. It is impossible for me to bless you sincerely when I see the motherland in mourning!" And again he said: "Ruling tsar, you have been vested by God with the highest rank, and for that reasons you should honour God above all. But the sceptre of earthly power was given to you so that you should foster justice among men and rule over them lawfully. By nature you are like every man, as by power you are like God. It is fitting for you, as a mortal, not to become arrogant, and as the image of God, not to become angry, for only he can justly be called a ruler who has control over himself and does not work for his shameful passions, but conquers them with the aid of his mind. Was it ever heard that the pious emperors disturbed their own dominion? Not only among your ancestors, but also among those of other races, nothing of the sort has ever been heard."[420]

When the tsar angrily asked what business he had interfering in royal affairs, Philip replied: "By the grace of God, the election of the Holy Synod and your will, I am a pastor of the Church of Christ. You and I must care for the piety and peace of the Orthodox Christian kingdom."

When the tsar told him to keep silence, Philip replied: "Silence is not fitting now; it would increase sin and destruction. If we carry out the will of men, what answer will we have on the day of Christ's Coming? The Lord said: 'Love one another. Greater love hath no man than that a man should lay down his

---

[419] "Sviatoj Filipp Mitropolit" ("The Holy Metropolitan Philip"), in *Troitsky Paterik* (Trinity Patericon), Holy Trinity-St. Sergei Lavra, 1896; reprinted in *Nadezhda*, 14, Frankfurt: Possev-Verlag, 1988, p. 66.

[420] *Zhitia Russkikh Sviatykh* (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tataev, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 695, 696.

life for his friends. If you abide in My love, you will be My disciples indeed.'"
And again he said: "Throughout the world, transgressors who ask for clemency
find it with the authorities, but in Russia there is not even clemency for the
innocent and the righteous… Fear the judgement of God, your Majesty. How
many innocent people are suffering! We, sovereign, offer to God the bloodless
Sacrifice, while behind the altar the innocent blood of Christians is flowing!
Robberies and murders are being carried out in the name of the Tsar…. What
is our faith for? I do not sorrow for those who, in shedding their innocent blood,
have been counted worthy of the lot of the saints; I suffer for your wretched
soul: although you are honoured as the image of God, nevertheless, you are a
man made of dust, and the Lord will require everything at your hands".

"On March 22, 1568, Philip publicly upbraided the tsar in the Cathedral of
the Assumption. As the metropolitan was celebrating the Eucharist, Ivan and a
troop of *Oprichniki* entered the cathedral in their black robes with high hoods
over their heads 'like Chaldean boors'. Three times the tsar approached Philip
to receive his blessing, but the hierarch refused to acknowledge him. Certain
boyars in the congregation exclaimed: 'Holy Metropolitan!' but Philip said: 'I
do not recognize the Orthodox tsar in this strange dress.' Fear swept the
cathedral. 'We are offering here the pure bloodless Sacrifice for the salvation of
men, the metropolitan continued. 'But outside this holy temple the blood of the
innocent is being shed, and there is no mercy in Russia for the righteous.'
Looking directly at Ivan, he added: 'Have you forgotten, O Tsar, that you too
are dust and will need forgiveness of your sins?' Ivan responded: 'It would be
better for you to be in accord with us,' to which Philip replied: 'Where is my
faith if I am silent?' Ivan struck his iron-tipped staff against the rostrum: 'We
shall see what your strength is.' Philip, who knew full well what the tsar would
do, showed what his faith was: 'I too am but a passing stranger on this earth.
But I must tell you the truth, even if I have to die for it. I am not grieving for
the innocent among your victims – they are God's martyrs. I am grieving for
your soul.' Ivan exclaimed: 'In the past I was humble before you. Now you shall
come to know me!' And on the following day, he began to execute members of
Philip's staff.

"Following Afanasy's example, Philip moved out of the metropolitan's
residence in the Kremlin to the monastery of St. Nicholas the Elder. But he
refused to resign his office. Ivan withdrew to Aleksandrova Sloboda to prepare
a case against him, and sent an investigative commission to the Solovetsky
Monastery to corroborate charges of alleged misconduct during Philip's tenure
as abbot. But the testimony extracted (through bribery and threats) was 'so
suspect that Bishop Pafnuty of Suzdal, its most influential member, refused to
sign the report. Pafnuty's opposition threatened to abort Philip's trial, leaving
the outcome in the hands of the boyar council, many of whose members
sympathized with the metropolitan…

"Ivan did everything to intimidate Philip before his arraignment, and on the
eve of his trial decapitated his cousin, Mikhail Kolychev, and sent him the head
sewn up in a leather bag.

"Nevertheless, Philip denied all the allegations, and once again reminded Ivan, in front of the assembled dignitaries: 'Your high earthly rank has no control over death, which sinks its invincible teeth into everything. And remember that each person must answer for his own life.'

"Sentence was passed against him in his absence on November 7. The tsar had wanted him burned at the stake as a heretic. But the clergy successfully united in pleading for his life. However, Ivan was determined to make his deposition as grotesque as possible – perhaps in revenge for the public embarrassment he had suffered at the trial. On the following day, as Philip stood at the altar of the Cathedral of the Annunciation preparing to celebrate his final liturgy, Aleksey Basmanov burst in with *Oprichniki* and loudly proclaimed the verdict from a scroll. Seizing him, they stripped him of his clerical vestments and roughly buttoning him up in a tattered sackcloth robe, dragged him out of the cathedral and threw him onto a sled. Over the next several days he was transferred from monastery to monastery ever farther from the capital, until he was finally sequestered in a dungeon at the Otroch Monastery in Tver, where Maksim the Greek had once languished for twenty years."[421]

Finally, Philip was about to resign the metropolitanate, and said to the tsar: "It is better to die as an innocent martyr than to tolerate horrors and lawlessnesses silently in the rank of metropolitan. I leave you my metropolitan's staff and mantia. But you all, hierarchs and servers of the altar, feed the flock of Christ faithfully; prepare to give your reply and fear the Heavenly King more than the earthly…"

However, the tsar refused to accept his resignation, and cast him into prison. After having escaped the appetite of a hungry bear that had been sent to devour him, on December 23, 1569 the holy metropolitan was strangled, thereby saving the honour of the Russian episcopate…

*

It was after killing Metropolitan Philip that Ivan embarked on his most notorious crime – his ravaging of Novgorod in 1570. "In the course of a few weeks, thousands of people were tortured and killed: a once prosperous city, model for an alternative *Rus'*, was left devastated, a mere shadow of its former self."[422] Archbishop Poemen, who had criminally abandoned the Church's right of rebuke and intercession, was among the victims.

"Ivan had every intention of carrying out a similar devastation of Pskov, but Nikola, a local 'fool for Christ' (*iurodivyi*), warned him that he should cease tormenting people and leave for Moscow: 'otherwise your horse will not bear

---

[421] Bobrick, op. cit., pp. 226-227, 228.
[422] Hosking, op. cit., p. 55.

you back.' When Ivan removed the bells from the Trinity Cathedral, his horse suddenly fell from under him. Horrified, he broke off the Pskov inquisition and hastened back to Moscow…"[423]

Before that, however, he had killed the revered abbot of the Pskov Caves monastery, Cornelius. "In the ancient manuscripts of the Trinity-Sergiev Lavra it was written that Igumen Cornelius came out from the monastery gates with a cross to meet the Tsar. Ivan the Terrible, angered by a false slander, beheaded him with his own hands, but then immediately repented of his deed, and carried the body to the monastery. The pathway made scarlet by the blood of St Cornelius, along which the Tsar carried his body to the Dormition church, became known as the "Bloody Path." Evidence of the Tsar's repentance was the generous recompense he made to the Pskov Caves monastery after the death of St Cornelius. The name of the igumen Cornelius was inscribed in the Tsar's *Synodikon*."[424]

The slaughter continued on his return to Moscow. Perhaps the most distinguished victim was Ivan Mikhailovich Viskovaty, who had been head of the Foreign Ministry until his retirement in 1562, was universally respected both by Russians and foreigners, and had been a favourite of Ivan himself. He was brought out onto Red Square for execution with hundreds of others as the crowd shouted: "Long live our glorious tsar! May his enemies perish!"

But the aged diplomat was made of sterner stuff. Denying all charges against him, he asserted that "he had faithfully served Russia and his sovereign throughout his long career. To Ivan's chagrin, he resolutely refused to beg for mercy, and looking around him at the instruments of torture littering the square, exclaimed for all to hear: 'A curse on you, you bloodsuckers! God will judge you too, in the next world, for the evil you have done.' *Oprichniki* rushed forward to gag him, and trussed him up to a transverse beam as Ivan declared, 'Let whomever is most loyal kill him.' Skuratov at once cut off his nose, another *Oprichnik* one of his ears, and so on, limb for limb, until he expired…"[425]

Supporters of the canonization of Ivan in contemporary Russia – there are such! - have tended to minimize the significance of this slaughter, and to justify it as a necessary measure to preserve the state against sedition. The murder of such great and loyal men as St. Philip and Viskovaty belie this explanation. Moreover, the foremost expert on the reign of Ivan, R.G. Skrynnikov, has cited data that decisively refute it.

Skrynnikov's edition of the *Synodicon of Those Disgraced by Ivan the Terrible* reveals a list of thousands of names of those executed by Ivan, mainly in the period 1567-1570, that the tsar sent to the monasteries for commemoration. "All the lists of the period 1567-1570 are inextricably linked with each other, since

---

[423] Hosking, op. cit., p. 55.
[424] Holy Cross Monastery, Virginia.
[425] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 254.

the court 'cases' of this period were parts of a single political process, the 'case' of the betrayal of the Staritskys, which lasted for several years, from 1567 to 1570. The 'case' was begun in the autumn of 1567 after the return of the Tsar from the Latvian expedition. In the course of it the boyars Fyodorov (1568) and Staritsky (1569) were executed, Novgorod was devastated (1570) and the leaders of the land offices in Moscow were killed (1570). 'The Staritsky Case' was the most important political trial in the reign of the Terrible one. The materials of this trial were preserved in the tsarist archives until the time of the composition of the *Synodicon* in relatively good order. On the basis of these materials the main part of the tsarist *Synodicon* was composed. This part comprises nine tenths of the whole volume of the *Synodicon*. In it are written about 3200 people disgraced by the tsar out of a combined total of about 3300 people…

"Among the victims of the Novgorod devastation, about one fifth (455 people) were called by their names in the tsarist *Synodicon*. In the main these were representatives of the higher classes: landowners and officials (250-260 people) and the members of their families (140 people). The people indicated in the *Synodicon* without names (1725) were mainly from the lower classes."[426]

These figures indicate that Ivan's terror was by no means exclusively directed against the boyars. Moreover, the fact that such large numbers could not have been given a fair trial in the period indicated, and the extraordinary cruelty of the methods employed - "Ribs were torn out, people burnt alive, impaled, beheaded, disembowelled, their genitals cut off"[427], - show that this was not justified repression of rebellion, but the manifestation of demonic psychopathology let loose by the collapse of the symphony of Church and State.

The Church remained supine and servile for the rest of Ivan's reign. Perhaps the most egregious and weird example was its cooperation in the enthronement of a Tatar prince, Sain-Bulat, who had been baptized Simeon Bekhulatovich in 1573 and successfully as a general in Ivan's armies. In 1575 Ivan abdicated (for the second time) and ordered Simeon to be anointed by the metropolitan in August of the same year.[428] For the metropolitan to take part in such a pantomime was sacrilegious, to say the least.

Here we find the key to the understanding of Ivan's behaviour. In the second half of his reign He knew, as a well-trained Orthodox, that the only limit on the tsar's power in an Orthodox state is not constitutional checks and balances, but the Church, and in particular the leader of the Church, the patriarch or metropolitan. In a truly religious people the voice of the patriarch is as the voice of God, and can be just as powerful a check and balance on the king's power as any laws or parliamentary institutions. We see this in the early Soviet period,

---

[426] Skrynnikov, *Tsarstvo Terrora* (The Kingdom of Terror), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 17, 104.

[427] Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercius, 2012, p. 222.

[428] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 282.

when the only really independent voice in Russia was that of Patriarch Tikhon, whom the believing people venerated and obeyed until the was murdered in 1925, after which the way was open for Stalin to destroy the Church's leadership. So in his pathological drive for supreme and absolute power, Ivan had to destroy the Church's power.

Now that drive could manifest itself in killing members of the Church en masse. But, as history proves – and Ivan knew his Church history well – the Church actually increases in strength when its members are tortured and martyred for the faith. Indeed, as the old saying from the early Church went: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church". What weakens the Church is when it is shown to violate its own principles and trample on its own holiness. That is why Ivan the Terrible – and after him Peter the Great – sought to *mock* the Church and force it to defile itself. The lily-livered metropolitans who flattered and obeyed him, and even created a pseudo-tsar for his pleasure, served that purpose well. For Ivan would attain supreme power, not when he tortured and subdued the bodies of his subjects, but when he poisoned their minds against their great hope and the other pillar of the symphony of powers – the Orthodox Church…

*

By the end of his reign the boyars' economic power had been in part destroyed, and a new class, the *dvoriane*, had taken their place. This term originally denoted domestic servitors, both freemen and slaves, who were employed by the appanage princes to administer their estates. Ivan now gave them titles previously reserved for the boyars, and lands in various parts of the country. However, these lands were *pomestia*, not *votchiny*. That is, they were not hereditary possessions and remained the legal property of the tsar, and could be taken back by him if he was dissatisfied with the servitors.

"All historians agree," writes Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "that the Terrible one left Russia after his death in an extremely sorry state: an economically ruined and devastated country, with its population reduced by one-and-a-half times, frightened and demoralized. But this does not exhaust the woes caused to Russia by the Terrible one. Perhaps the most tragic consequences of his reign consisted in the fact that he to a great extent prepared the ground for the Time of Troubles, which exploded 17 years after his death and placed the Russian state on the edge of complete annihilation. This was expressed concretely in the following.

"1. A dynastic crisis – the destruction by the Terrible one of his closest relatives, the representatives of the Moscow house of the Riuriks. First of all this concerned the assassination of his cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreevich Staritsky with his mother, wife and children, and also with almost all his servants and many people close to him (in 1569). This was not execution following an investigation and trial, but precisely the repression of innocent people (some were poisoned, others were suffocated with smoke), carried out

only out of suspicion and arbitrariness. Then it is necessary to note the killing of his son Ivan, the heir to the throne….

"Thus Ivan the Terrible undoubtedly hewed down the dynasty with his own hands, destroying his son, grandson and cousin with all his house, and thereby prepared a dynastic crisis, which made itself sharply felt during the Time of Troubles.

"2. The *oprichnina* and the consequent politics of 'the Sovereign's Court' greatly reduced the aristocracy and service class. Under the axe of repressions there fell the best people morally speaking, those who were honourable, principled and independent in their judgements and behaviour, who were distinguished by their abilities, and for that reason were seen as potentially dangerous. In their place intriguers, careerists and informants were promoted, unprincipled and dishonourable time-servers. It was the Terrible one who nourished such people in his nearest entourage, people like Boris Godunov, Basil Shuisky, Bogdan Belsky, Ivan Mstislavsky and other leaders in the Time of Troubles, who were sufficiently clever to indulge in behind-the-scenes intrigues and 'under the carpet struggle', but who absolutely did not want to serve God and the fatherland, and for that reason were incapable of uniting the national forces and earning the trust of the people.

"The moral rottenness of the boyars, their class and personal desires and their unscrupulousness are counted by historians as among the main causes of the Troubles. But the Moscow boyars had not always been like that. On the contrary, the Moscow boyars nourished by Kalita worked together with him to gather the Russian lands, perished in the ranks of the army of Demetrius Donskoj on Kulikovo polje, saved Basil the Dark in the troubles caused by Shemyaka, went on the expeditions of Ivan III and Basil III. It was the Terrible one who carried out a general purge in the ranks of the aristocracy, and the results of this purge could not fail to be felt in the Troubles.

"3. The Terrible one's repressions against honourable servers of the Church, especially Metropolitan Philip, weakened the Russian Church, drowned in its representatives the voice of truth and a moral evaluation of what was happening. After the holy hierarch Philip, none of the Moscow metropolitans dared to intercede for the persecuted. 'Sucking up' to unrighteousness on the part of the hierarchs of course lowered their authority in the eyes of the people, which gave the pretenders the opportunity to introduce their undermining propaganda more successfully in the people.

"We should note here that the defenders of the Terrible one deny his involvement in the killing of Metropolitan Philip in a rather naïve way: no written order, they say, has been discovered. Of course, the first hierarch of the Russian Church, who was beloved by the people for his righteous life, was not the kind of person whom even the Terrible tsar would dare to execute just like that on the square. But many of the Terrible one's victims were destroyed by him by means of secret assassinations (as, for example, the family of the same

Vladimir Andreyevich). It is reliably known that the holy hierarch Philip reproved the Terrible one for his cruelties not only in private, but also, finally, in public, and that the latter began to look for false witnesses against him. By means of bribes, threats and deceit he succeeded in involving Abbot Paisius of Solovki (a disciple of St. Philip) and some of the hierarchs in this. Materials have been preserved relating to this 'Council of 1568, the most shameful in the history of the Russian Church' (in the expression of Professor Kartashev), which condemned its own chief hierarch. The majority of the bishops did not decide to support the slanderers, but they also feared to defend the holy hierarch – and simply kept silent. During the Liturgy the *oprichniki* on the tsar's orders seized the holy confessor, tore off his vestments, beat him up and took him away to prison. At the same time almost all the numerous relatives of St. Philip, the Kolychev boyars, were killed. They cast the amputated head of the hierarch's favourite nephew into his cell. A year later, the legendary Maliuta came to the imprisoned Philip in the Otroch monastery, and the holy hierarch just died suddenly in his arms – the contemporary lovers of the *oprichnina* force us to believe in this fairy-tale!

"Detailed material on this subject was collected in the book of Professor Fedotov, *The Holy Hierarch Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow*. Those descendants who lived nearest to those times also well remembered who was the main perpetrator of the death of St. Philip. For that reason Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich transferred the relics of the hieromartyr to Moscow, and wrote a penitent letter to him as if he were alive, asking forgiveness for the sin of his predecessor Ivan the Terrible (in imitation of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, who repented for the sin of his mother, the Empress Eudoxia, against St. John Chrysostom). Therefore the apologists of the Terrible one, in denying his guilt against St. Philip, simply reject the tradition of the whole Russian Church as established in documents.

"Besides St. Philip, on the orders of the Terrible during the devastation of Novgorod, one of those who envied and slandered St. Philip, Archbishop Pimen, was killed. And if contemporary '*oprichniki*' consider it to the credit of the Terrible one that he dealt with the false witnesses in the affair of the holy hierarch, then let them remember that a timely 'clean-up' of witnesses and agents who have done their work is a common phenomenon in the course of large-scale repressions. Only it is not a work of God. The unknown author of *The Tale of the Devastation of Novgorod* tells us that on the orders of the Terrible one up to three hundred abbots, hieromonks, priests and deacons in Novgorod itself and its environs, monasteries and villages were killed. Several tens of Church servers were killed in each of the cities of Tver, Torzhok, Volokolamsk and other places. One can argue about the accuracy of the numbers of victims cited, but one cannot doubt that the clergy slaughtered during the reign of the Terrible one numbered at least in the tens, but more likely in the hundreds. There is every reason to speak about a persecution of the clergy and the Church on the part of the Terrible one. The holy hierarch Philip and St. Cornelius of Pskov-Pechersk are only the leaders of a whole host of hieromartyrs, passion-

bearers and confessors of that time. It is those whose glorification it is worth thinking about!

"4. Finally, the Terrible one's epoch shook the moral supports of the simple people, and undermined its healthy consciousness of right. Open theft and reprisals without trial or investigation, carried out in the name of the Sovereign on anyone who was suspect, gave a very bad example, unleashing the base passions of envy, revenge and baseness. Participation in denunciations and cooperation in false witnesses involved very many in the sins of the *oprichnina*. Constant refined tortures and public executions taught people cruelty and inured them to compassion and mercy. Everyday animal fear for one's life, a striving to survive at any cost, albeit at the cost of righteousness and conscience, at the cost of the good of one's neighbours, turned those who survived into pitiful slaves, ready for any baseness. The enmity stirred up between the *zemshchina* and the *oprichnina*, between 'the Sovereign's people' and 'the rebels', undermined the feeling of popular unity among Russian people, sowing resentment and mistrust. The incitement of hatred for the boyars, who were identified with traitors, kindled class war. Let us add to this that the reign of the Terrible one, having laid waste to the country, tore many people away from their roots, deprived them of their house and land and turned them into thieves, into what Marxist language would call 'declassified elements'. Robbed and embittered against the whole world, they were corrupted into robber bands and filled up the Cossack gangs on the border-lands of Russia. These were ready-made reserves for the armies of any pretenders and rebels.

"And so, if we compare all this with the Leninist teaching on the preparation of revolution, we see a striking resemblance. The Terrible one truly did everything in order that 'the uppers could not, and lowers would not' live in a human way. The ground for civil war and the great Trouble had thus been fully prepared…"[429]

It has been argued that the victims of Ivan's rule prefigure the Christian victims of Lenin and Stalin, while the *oprichnina* looks forward to Stalin's Russia, the NKVD-KGB, dekulakization and the great terror of the 1930s. Indeed, it is tempting to see in Stalin's terror simply the application of Ivan the Terrible's methods on a grander scale. This theory is supported by the fact that Stalin called Ivan "my teacher", and instructed Eisenstein, in his film, *Ivan the Terrible*, to emphasize the moral that cruelty is sometimes necessary to protect the State from its internal enemies.

Michael Cherniavksy has pointed to the tension, and ultimate incompatibility, between two images of the kingship in the reign of Ivan the

---

[429] Alferov, "Monarkhia i Khristianskoe Soznanie" ("The Monarchy and Christian Consciousness"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_11.htm, pp. 8-13. See also Georgij Korobyn, "Traktovka lichnosti Ioanna Groznogo v knige mitr. Ioanna (Snycheva), 'Samoderzhavie Dukha'" (The Interpretation of the Personality of Ivan the Terrible in the Book of Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), 'The Autocracy of the Spirit'), http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=1389.

Terrible: that of the basileus and that of the khan. "If the image of the basileus stood for the Orthodox and pious ruler, leading his Christian people towards salvation, then the image of the khan was perhaps preserved in the idea of the Russian ruler as the conqueror of Russia and of its people, responsible to no one. If the basileus signified the holy tsar, the 'most gentle' (*tishaishii*) tsar in spiritual union with his flock, then the khan, perhaps, stood for the absolutist secularised state, arbitrary through its separation from its subjects."[430]

*

While we have asserted that Ivan was a truly Orthodox ruler in the dogmatic sense, it must be admitted that that judgement could be disputed. Thus although he showed great skill in defending Orthodoxy before emissaries from the Vatican, at the very end of his life, he destroyed even his reputation as a defender of Orthodoxy by encroaching on Church lands and delving into astrology.[431]

When he was dying, writes Troyat, "Ivan turned to magicians. From every side astrologers, soothsayers, and sorcerers flocked to Moscow. They were shut up, some sixty of them, in a house near the palace. Never had there been such a concentration of learned men versed in the occult sciences. Their meals were brought to them. Every day Prince Bogdan Belsky, one of the Czar's close advisers, questioned them. They were pessimistic. All the signs of heaven were in agreement. The death of the sovereign would occur soon. Not wishing to frighten his master, Belsky concealed from him the conclusions of the fortune-tellers…"[432]

Moreover, Ivan's theory of government contained absolutist elements which were closer to the theories of Protestant Reformers such as Luther and contemporary Protestant monarchs such as Elizabeth I of England than to Orthodoxy.[433] In fact, the nineteenth-century Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky went so far as to call Ivan a heretic, and attributed to his heretical view of Church-State relations all the woes of the later part of his reign: "The terrible one acted in a restrictive manner because he was a heretic; this is proved… by his striving to place Byzantinism [i.e. the absolutist ideas of some Byzantines] in a position of equal dignity with Orthodoxy. From this there came the *oprichnina* as a striving towards state heresy and ecclesiastical power. And that this concept of

---

[430] Cherniavsky, "Khan or basileus: an aspect of Russian medieval political theory", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10, No. 4, October-December, 1950, p. 476; quoted in Hosking, op. cit., p. 7.

[431] Lebedev has even suggested that that the half-military, half-monastic nature of Ivan's *oprichnina* was modelled on the Templars, and that the terrible change in his appearance that took place after his return to Moscow from Alexandrov in 1564 was the result of "a terrible inner upheaval", his initiation into a satanic, masonic-like sect (op. cit., p. 97).

[432] Troyat, op. cit., p. 241.

[433] See Hierodeacon James (Tislenko), "Nekotorie zamechania na knigu V.G. Manyagina 'Apologia Groznogo Tsaria'" (Some Remarks on the Book of V.G. Manyagin, 'An Apology for the Awesome Tsar'), *Pravoslavnaia Moskva*, NN 13 -14 (295-296), July, 2003; in Manyagin, op. cit., pp. 228-242.

the limits or, more correctly, the lack of limits of his power and of its lack of connection with the people was not Christian, but heretical is witnessed publicly to this day by the holy relics of Metropolitan Philip."[434]

If there was indeed something of eastern absolutism as well as purely Orthodox autocracy in Ivan's rule, then this would be a partial explanation, not only of the cruelties of his own reign, but also why, only a few years after his death, Russia descended into civil war and the Time of Troubles, rebelling against the anointed Tsars Boris Godunov and Vasily Shuisky. For eastern absolutism, unlike Orthodox autocracy, is a system that can command the fear and obedience, but not the love of the people, and is therefore unstable in essence. If the people refrained from rising against Ivan out of respect for his anointed status, thirty years later it was a different matter, when the faith and morals of the people, undermined in part by the bad example of their rulers, was less strong to withstand temptation.

Absolutist tyranny does need to be resisted – but not out of considerations of democracy or the rights of man, but simply out of considerations of Christian love and justice, and by the only methods acceptable to an Orthodox Christian: patience, love and the confession of the faith. An Orthodox tsar has no authority higher than himself in the secular sphere – although God's law is, of course, above all rulers in all spheres. This enables him, without having to obtain the will of the people, who may be evil or corrupted or simply divided amongst themselves, to sweep away bad laws and evil traditions and create new ones (or restore old ones) that are concordant with the Law of God and the Sacred Tradition of Holy Orthodoxy. Of course, he can also use – or rather, abuse - his power to do exactly the opposite: there can be no guarantee of infallibility or consistency where fallen human beings are involved. Thus Ivan the Terrible was a true autocrat in the first half of his reign, but turned into an evil despot in the second half.

Some Russian nationalists argue that Ivan's despotism was no more terrible than that of Henry VIII of England, whom he resembled in many ways. In truth it was much worse. He not only killed and tortured far more people, including the head of the Church and his own son. He married even more wives (eight). And he drastically weakened the last right-believing sovereign state in the world (besides Georgia).

But the western critics are also wrong to see in Ivan's despotism something intrinsically Russian. Not only was it not typical of medieval or early modern Russia: Russia's Church and people, unlike England's, did not surrender its faith under pressure from a tyrant.

The Law of the Gospel is higher than all, and will judge everybody on the Day of Judgement. In reminding Ivan of this, both St. Philip and Kurbsky were

---

[434] Kireevsky, "Pis'mo k A.I. Koshelevu" ("Letter to A.I. Koshelev"), *Razum na puti k istine* (Reason on the Way to Truth), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 107.

doing both him and the State a true service by their non-violent resistance to evil… In rejecting their advice, Ivan became truly the Terrible one in his impiety. Indeed, Lebedev calls the latter part of his reign "not a struggle with rebellion, but the affirmation of his permission to do everything. So we are concerned here not with the affirmation of the Orthodox Autocracy of the Russian Tsars, but with a prefiguring of the authority of the Antichrist…"[435]

Simon Sebag Montefiore writes: "As the harsh internal repression took its toll on Russia's people, Ivan's fortunes went into steep decline. During the 1570s the Tartars of the Crimean khanate devastated large tracts of Russia with seeming impunity – even managing to set fire to Moscow on one occasion. At the same time the tsar's attempts at westward expansion across the Baltic Sea succeeded only in embroiling the country in the Livonian War against a coalition that included Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Lithuania. The conflict dragged on for almost a quarter of a century, with little tangible gain. And all the while the *oprichniki* continued to engage in their wild bouts of killing and destruction; their area of operation, once the richest region of Russia, was reduced to one of the poorest and most unstable.[436]

"In 1581 Ivan turned his destructive rage against his own family. Having previously assaulted his pregnant daughter-in-law, he got into an argument with his son and heir, also called Ivan, and killed him in a fit of blind rage. It was only after Ivan the Terrible's own death – possibly from poisoning – that Russia was finally put out of its long agony…"[437]

Ivan's death recalled that of Herod, and his resort to various superstitions, astrology and witchcraft further undermined his already shaken reputation as a right-believing tsar. "By January 1584, he had begun to show signs of internal putrefaction, to 'grievously swell in his coddes', wrote [the English ambassador] Horsey, 'with which he had most horriblie offended, boasting of a thousand virgins deflowered.' Carried each day from room to room in a chair, he doted often on his fabulous treasury, tormented at all he would have to leave behind.

"Sixty Lapland witches, 'sent forth owt of the North,' were brought in haste to Moscow where they were daily consulted by Bogdan Belsky, who conveyed their predictions to the tsar. Belsky dared not tell Ivan all, for the witches unanimously agreed that 'the signes constellaccions and strongest planets of heaven were against the Emperower,' and flatly predicted his death for March 18. Belsky warned them they had better be right…"[438]

---

[435] Lebedev, op. cit., p. 90.
[436] According to Skrynnikov's data, the population in the central Russian provinces dropped from 8 to 5 million.
[437] Montefiore, op. cit., p. 223.
[438] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 339.

They were. And so Ivan, wrapped in a monk's habit[439] (as a final insult to that Church he had betrayed so terribly), was buried in spiritual communion with witches and demons…

---

[439] According to Yevgeny Anisimov, his body even before death began to rot and give out a terrible smell. Thus "the Lord did not allow the Terrible one to escape hell: at the last minute they tried to tonsure him into monasticism – at that time they considered this a reliable method of saving the soul. But no! They laid the monastic vestments on the already stiffening corpse of the evil-doer." (*Live Journal*, http://ugroza-77.livejournal.com/379339.html?utm_source=fbsharing&utm_medium=social)

27. THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA

Although he failed to win a foothold on the Baltic in the west, the reign of Ivan the Terrible was a period of great expansion eastwards. This was also the decade of his great victories over the Tatars of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556). The expansion continued with the conquest of Western Siberia (1582), when the State began to spread from Europe into Asia, and change from a racially fairly homogeneous state into a multi-national empire.

As Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) pointed out in 1909, the conquest of Kazan "was great precisely because with it there began the gradual ascendancy of Christianity over Islam, which had already subjected the Eastern Churches and before that time had not yet been subdued by the Muscovite kingdom. Having now destroyed the wasps' nest of the Tatar God-fighting tribe, our forefathers understood that this event defined with all clarity the great calling of the Russian land gradually to unite at the foot of the Cross of Christ all the eastern peoples and all the eastern cultures under the leadership of the White Tsar. The great ascetics of piety Gurias, Barsanuphius and Herman were immediately sent to Kazan together with church valuables. There they built churches and monasteries and by the light of their inspired teaching and angelic holiness drew crowds upon crowds of various foreigners to holy baptism. The Russians understood that now – not in separate rivulets, but in a single broad wave – the life and faith of the Trans-Volgan region and Siberia would pour into the sea of the Church, and that the work of St. Stephen of Perm and the preachers of God in the first centuries that were like him would continue without hindrance. And then our ancestors decided, on the one hand, to cast off from themselves every shadow of exaltation in the glorious victory and conquest, and to ascribe all this to Divine Providence, and on the other hand to seal their radiant hope that Moscow, which was then ready to proclaim itself the Third and last Rome, would have to become the mediator of the coming universal and free union of people in the glorification of the Divine Redeemer. The tsar and people carried out their decision by building a beautiful cathedral on Red square, which has justly been recognized as the eighth wonder of the world. The pious inspiration of the Russian masters exceeded all expectation and amazed the beholders. Before them stands a church building whose parts represent a complete diversity, from the ground to the higher crosses, but which as a whole constitutes a wonderful unity – a single elegant wreath – a wreath to the glory of Christ that shone forth in the victory of the Russians over the Hagarenes [Muslims]. Many cupolas crown this church: there is a Mauritanian cupola, an Indian cupola, there are Byzantine elements, there are Chinese elements, while in the middle above them all there rises a Russian cupola uniting the whole building.

"The thought behind this work of genius is clear: Holy Rus' must unite all the eastern peoples and be their leader to heaven. This thought is a task recognized by our ancestors and given by God to our people; it has long become a leading principle of their state administration, both inwardly and outwardly: the reigns of the last Ruriks and the first Romanovs were marked

by the grace-filled enlightenment of the Muslims and pagans of the North and East, the support of the ancient Christians of the East and South and the defence of the Russian Christians of the West, oppressed by heretics. Rus' expanded and became stronger and broader, like the wings of an eagle; in the eyes of her sons the Russian cross on [the cathedral of] Basil the Blessed shone ever more brightly; her impious enemies in the South and West trembled; the hands of enslaved Christians – Greeks, Serbs and Arabs - were raised imploringly to her; at various times Moscow saw within her walls all four eastern patriarchs and heard the liturgy in her churches in many languages…"[440]

George Manayev writes: "At the beginning of the 13th century, the Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan subjugated the tribes that inhabited Siberia. To safeguard his life and the prosperity of his lands, one of the local rulers, Prince Taibuga, agreed to submit to Genghis Khan. Taibuga started collecting tribute from his territories for Genghis Khan and founded Chimgi-Tura, the capital of the first state in Siberia known to us, the Khanate of Tyumen (which later became the Khanate of Sibir).

"In 1224, not long before his death, Genghis Khan divided his possessions between his sons. The lands of the future Golden Horde, including the future Khanate of Tyumen, went as an ulus – i.e. a territorial inheritance from which tribute was exacted – to Genghis Khan's son Jochi and not long afterwards, following his death, to Genghis Khan's grandson Shayban [or Shiban]. The latter founded the Shaybanid dynasty, rulers of the Ulus of Shayban. When, at the end of the 13th century, powerful ruler Öz Beg became leader of the Golden Horde, he allowed the ulus, which was already known as the Tyumen Ulus, to keep its autonomy and self-government. Öz Beg reformed all the other uluses of the Golden Horde and subdued their princes. However, in the early 15th century, as a result of a political crisis in the Golden Horde, the Shaybanid dynasty ulus declared its independence, and in 1420 the Khanate of Tyumen came into existence. Its founder was the Shaybanid Khoja Muhammad. In 1495, a hostile khan, Taibuga, attacked the Khanate of Tyumen, killed the Shaybanid Ibak Khan and moved the khanate's capital from Chimgi-Tura to Kashlyk, which was also called Sibir. From then on the Taibugids became the rulers of the new khanate, which was by then known as the Khanate of Sibir.

"The Khanate of Sibir was a country of many nations and many beliefs, but the Turkic population dominated over the indigenous local tribes of Khanty, Mansi, and others. The head of state was the khan, who was elected by the Turkic aristocracy. The khan lived in a fortified palace built of mud bricks. For the construction of such buildings, architects from Central Asia who knew how to design characteristic decorative features were usually invited. But such palaces were short-lived because of the material they were made of, and not even their remains survive today.

---

[440] Khrapovitsky, in Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), New York, 1971, volume 1, pp. 14-15.

"The population engaged in cattle herding, hunting, and fishing. Little land was cultivated but crafts flourished: pottery, weaving, and metalworking. Inside the city, ordinary citizens lived in <u>yurts</u> [round tents], rows of which formed whole streets. The Khanate of Sibir was very much engaged in trade as it stood on the trade routes from Asia to Europe.

"In the 16th century the Tsardom of Muscovy conquered the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates, major "slivers" of the Golden Horde which had resisted the authority of the Russian Tsar. The seizure of Kazan was particularly fierce. Although the Khanate of Sibir was separated from Muscovy by the barely passable Ural Mountains, in 1555 the Taibugid khan, Edigei, recognized the authority of Moscow and even began to pay tribute."[441]

The great Novgorodian merchant family of the Stroganovs took advantage of Muscovy's suzerainty over Siberia and was given a kind of privatized hegemony over huge territories on either side of the Urals, with permission to build forts along the rivers and a monopoly over the lucrative fur trade.

"They became the first Russian oligarchs, fabulously rich, exploiting natural resources, protected by monopolies; and both dependent on, and vital to, Moscow's authoritarian ruler. With their own forts, a huge wooden family palace far from Moscow, and a private army of traders and trappers exploring ever further, the Stroganovs were something new in history, a huge capitalist enterprise and family dynasty all in one. They could be compared to the great Italian merchant-to-prince families of the Medici and the Borgias, except that the Italians never had the Stroganovs' imperial zeal for expansion."[442]

"The advancing Stroganov settlements provoked increasing native unrest. Russian suzerainty was one thing; Russian occupation of the land another. In 1572, there were massacres near Kankor and Keredan, and in 1573 a general uprising of the Cheremis, who struck at settlements along the Kama and Chusovaya all the way to Kazan."[443]

The disturbances seem to have been created by a new leader of the Siberian khanate, Khan Kuchum, who seized power in 1563. "In 1571 he sent a huge tribute of 1,000 sable furs to Moscow but, following this generous gesture, Kuchum broke off the tribute arrangements and a year later sent his nephew Makhmet-Kul on a 'reconnaissance' to the Russian lands. Makhmet-Kul harried the populations of villages belonging to the Stroganov merchant family, which extracted salt in the Perm salt mines - he plundered several villages and captured their inhabitants. Fearing that the Tatar hordes would

[441] Manayev, "How Siberia was once a Separate Country", *Russia Beyond*, February 11, 2020.
[442] Marr, *A History of the World,* London: Pan, 2012, pp. 287-288.
[443] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 332.

ruin their business, the Stroganovs began to look for protectors and hired the Cossack leader Ataman [Timofey] Yermak and his druzhina [private army]."[444]

"In 1582, Yermak with [840] heavily armed fighters set out from Oryol-Gorodok, the Stroganovs' fortified residence, crossed the mountains and captured the old capital of the Khanate of Tyumen, Chimgi-Tura. Soon afterwards the decisive Battle of Chuvash Cape took place. At the confluence of the rivers Tobol and Irtysh, Makhmet-Kul gathered 15,000 nomadic Tatar troops, but they were smashed by Yermak's druzhina, which was small but armed with arquebuses, an early type of shoulder-fired gun. Three weeks later Yermak seized Kashlyk, from which Khan Kuchum had already escaped into the steppes."[445]

"Küçüm Khan retreated into the steppes and over the next few years regrouped his forces. He suddenly attacked Yermak on 6 August 1584 in the dead of night and defeated most of his army. The details are disputed with Russian sources claiming Yermak was wounded and tried to escape by swimming across the Wagay River which is a tributary of the Irtysh River, but drowned under the weight of his own chainmail [a gift from Ivan the Terrible]. The remains of Yermak's forces under the command of Mescheryak retreated from Qashliq, destroying the city as they left. In 1586 the Russians returned, and after subduing the Khanty and Mansi people through the use of their artillery they established a fortress at Tyumen close to the ruins of Qashliq. The Tatar tribes that were submissive to Küçüm Khan suffered from several attacks by the Russians between 1584–1595; however, Küçüm Khan would not be caught. Finally, in August 1598 Küçüm Khan was defeated at the Battle of Urmin near the river Ob. In the course of the fight the Siberian royal family were captured by the Russians. However, Küçüm Khan escaped yet again. The Russians took the family members of Küçüm Khan to Moscow and there they remained as hostages. The descendants of the khan's family became known as the Princes Sibirsky and the family is known to have survived until at least the late 19th century.

"Despite his personal escape, the capture of his family ended the political and military activities of Küçüm Khan and he retreated to the territories of the Nogay Horde in southern Siberia. He had been in contact with the tsar and had requested that a small region on the banks of the Irtysh River would be granted as his dominion. This was rejected by the tsar who proposed to Küçüm Khan that he come to Moscow and 'comfort himself' in the service of the tsar. However, the old khan did not want to suffer from such contempt and preferred staying in his own lands to 'comforting himself' in Moscow. Küçüm Khan then went to Bokhara and as an old man became blind, dying in exile with distant relatives sometime around 1605.

---

[444] Manayev, op. cit. Yermak had formerly been an outlaw. That is why Bobrick calls him "enemy of the state, future hero of the empire." (p. 334).

[445] Manayev, op. cit.

"In order to subjugate the natives and collect yasak (fur tribute), a series of winter outposts (*zimovie*) and forts (*ostrogs*) were built at the confluences of major rivers and streams and important portages. The first among these were Tyumen and Tobolsk — the former built in 1586 by Vasilii Sukin and Ivan Miasnoi, and the latter the following year by Danilo Chulkov. Tobolsk would become the nerve center of the conquest. To the north Beryozov (1593) and Mangazeya (1600-01) were built to bring the Nenets under tribute, while to the east Surgut (1594) and Tara (1594) were established to protect Tobolsk and subdue the ruler of the Narym Ostiaks. Of these, Mangazeya was the most prominent, becoming a base for further exploration eastward.

"Advancing up the Ob and its tributaries, the ostrogs of Ketsk (1602) and Tomsk (1604) were built. Ketsk *sluzhilye liudi* ("servicemen") reached the Yenisei in 1605, descending it to the Sym; two years later Mangazeyan promyshlenniks and traders descended the Turukhan to its confluence with the Yenisei, where they established the *zimovie* Turukhansk. By 1610 men from Turukhansk had reached the mouth of the Yenisei and ascended it as far as the Sym, where they met rival tribute collectors from Ketsk. To ensure subjugation of the natives, the ostrogs of Yeniseysk (1619) and Krasnoyarsk (1628) were established.

"Following the khan's death and the dissolution of any organised Siberian resistance, the Russians advanced first towards Lake Baikal and then the Sea of Okhotsk and the Amur River. However, when they first reached the Chinese border they encountered people that were equipped with artillery pieces and here they halted.

"The Russians reached the Pacific Ocean in 1639. After the conquest of the Siberian Khanate (1598) the whole of Northern Asia - an area much larger than the old khanate - became known as Siberia and by 1640 the eastern borders of Russia had expanded more than several million square kilometres. In a sense, the khanate lived on in the subsidiary title 'Tsar of Siberia' which became part of the full imperial style of the Russian Autocrats.

"The conquest of Siberia also resulted in the spread of diseases. Historian John F. Richards wrote: '... it is doubtful that the total early modern Siberian population exceeded 300,000 persons. ... New diseases weakened and demoralized the indigenous peoples of Siberia. The worst of these was smallpox 'because of its swift spread, the high death rates, and the permanent disfigurement of survivors.' ... In the 1650s, it moved east of the Yenisey, where it carried away up to 80 percent of the Tungus and Yakut populations. In the 1690s, smallpox epidemics reduced Yukagir numbers by an estimated 44 percent. The disease moved rapidly from group to group across Siberia.'"[446]

---

[446] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_conquest_of_Siberia.

Thus did the Russian occupation of the vast landmass of Northern Asia mirror that of the West Europeans' occupation of North and South America: in both cases, the main killer of the native tribes was disease borne by the conquerors, and the main motive of the conquerors – commercial greed (mainly for furs).

*

The conquest of Western Siberia is significant as being the beginning of a Russian empire in a war that was neither defensive nor involved only the recovery of formerly Russian lands. And it was carried out with the blessing of the first truly despotic tsar… However, it was followed by the evangelization of the conquered population, the only truly Christian justification of territorial expansion into foreign lands. Thus St. Job, the first Patriarch of Moscow (+1607) "organized monasteries [in Siberia] with a missionary vocation, and many of the local people asked for Baptism. Thus the Christianization of Siberia could be attributed to Saint Job. He founded more than ten monasteries…"[447]

In 1708 Tobolsk, founded seventeen kilometres from Kashlyk (Qashliq), became the capital of Siberia province, the largest in Russia.

---

[447] Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra, *The Synaxarion,* Ormylia, 2005, vol. VI, p. 553.

28. TSAR THEODORE IVANOVICH

"After the horrors of the reign of Ivan IV," writes Lebedev, "a complete contrast is represented by the soft, kind rule of his son, Theodore Ivanovich. In Russia there suddenly came as it were complete silence… However, the silence of the reign of Theodore Ivanovich was external and deceptive; it could more accurately be called merely a lull before a new storm. For that which had taken place during the *oprichnina* could not simply disappear: it was bound to have the most terrible consequences."[448]

The Jesuit Possevino, writes Bodrick, "thought Fyodor 'quite unguilty' and hoped he might prove tolerant toward Catholics; a knowledgeable Polish diplomate suggested that he was, perhaps, 'not unlike the Emperor Claudius, pretending to be an idiot to escape a worse fate.'

"Be that as it may, the people adored him, preferring to be ruled by a gentle bellringer manipulated by able advisers than chastised by an arbitrary tyrant who would save their souls through fear. Everyone, says Horsey, held Fyodor's accession 'for their redemption – as a day of jubilee'. Corrupt officials were dismissed, many taxes cancelled or reduced, due process restored to the law, the prisons opened – 'all peaceably as bred great assistance and honor to the kingdom'."[449]

Before he died in March, 1584 Ivan appointed a four-man regency council, consisting of Princes Ivan Mstislavsky and Ivan Shuisky, Nikita Romanovich Zakharin and his ally, Boris Godunov, who was brought up in an *oprichnina* milieu married to the daughter of Ivan's most notorious henchman, Maliuta Skuratov, and whose sister Irina was married to Tsar Theodore himself.

Theodore was crowned on June 10, 1584 according to the full Byzantine rite. It was followed by his communion in both kinds in the altar. His sceptre was carried by Godunov, "for which he was rewarded with the title of master of the royal horse, *konyushii,* the most prestigious of the boyars".[450]

This coronation, as well as restoring some semblance of normality and stability to Muscovy, further enhanced the status of the Russian State, which now, as in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, was closely linked to the status of the Church of Moscow…

As Dobroklonsky writes, "the Moscow metropolitan see stood very tall. Its riches and the riches of the Moscow State stimulated the Eastern Patriarchs – not excluding the Patriarch of Constantinople himself – to appeal to it for alms. The boundaries of the Moscow metropolitanate were broader than the restricted boundaries of any of the Eastern Patriarchates (if we exclude from

---

[448] Lebedev, op. cit., p. 105.
[449] Bobrick, op. cit., p. 343.
[450] Merridale, op. cit., p. 105.

the Constantinopolitan the Russian metropolitan see, which was part of it); the court of the Moscow metropolitan was just as great as that of the sovereign. The Moscow metropolitan was freer in the manifestation of his ecclesiastical rights than the Patriarchs of the East, who were restricted at every step. Under the protection of the Orthodox sovereigns the metropolitan see in Moscow stood more firmly and securely than the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, which had become a plaything in the hands of the sultan or vizier. The power of the Moscow metropolitan was in reality not a whit less than that of the patriarchate: he ruled the bishops, called himself their 'father, pastor, comforter and head, under the power and in the will of whom they are the Vladykas of the whole Russian land'. Already in the 15th century, with the agreement of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, he had been elected in Rus' without the knowledge or blessing of the Patriarch; the Russian metropolia had already ceased hierarchical relations with the patriarchal see. If there remained any dependence of the Moscow metropolitan on the patriarch, it was only nominal, since the Russian metropolia was still counted as belonging to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate…"[451]

Not only was the Moscow metropolia a *de facto* patriarchate already: its exaltation would simultaneously raise the status of the Russian Autocracy, whose prosperity was vital for the survival, not only of Russian Orthodoxy, but of Greek, Balkan, Middle Eastern and Georgian Orthodoxy, too. For, as the patriarch of Alexandria said in 1592: "The four patriarchates of the Orthodox speak of your rule as that of another Constantine the Great… and say that if there were no help from your rule, then Orthodoxy would be in extreme danger."

In 1586 talks began with Patriarch Joachim of Antioch, who had arrived in Moscow. He promised to discuss the question of the status of the Russian Church with his fellow patriarchs. In 1588, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II (Trallas) came to Moscow on an alms-raising trip.[452] Then he went on an important tour of the beleaguered Orthodox in the Western Russian lands, ordaining bishops and blessing the lay brotherhoods.

It was the desperate situation of the Orthodox in Western Russia who were being persecuted by the Jesuits that made the exaltation of the Muscovite see particularly timely…

*

---

[451] Dobroklonsky, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

[452] See A.V. Kartashev, Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi (Sketches in the History of the Russian Church), Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, pp. 10-46, Vladimir Rusak, Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi (A History of the Russian Church), 1988, pp. 152-156, Dobroklonsky, op. cit., pp. 282-285; and the life of St. Job, first patriarch of Moscow, in Moskovskij Paterik (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: Stolitsa, 1991, pp. 110-113.

In 1582 the Pope had introduced the Gregorian calendar, whose aim was to divide the Orthodox liturgically[453] and, more generally, to show the global power of the Pope. Thus Pavel Kuzenkov writes: "The calendar reform of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 was politically motivated. By the end of the sixteenth century, when Protestant sentiments had spread across Europe, the popes were trying to prove that they were still able to control global processes related to all of humanity. The Roman Catholic Church was in a deep crisis that was mainly triggered by criticism from scientists. Criticizing papism, the Protestants relied on scientific methods. But papism suddenly took over the initiative. Closer relations between the Church and the state were established in the Catholic world: Universities and academies were opened, and the status of scientists rose significantly. Natural sciences appeared in the foreground, though it was not to last. In the following century, according to tradition, Galileo Galilei tried to justify himself before the Inquisition, whispering: 'And yet it moves.' And in the sixteenth century the popes were favourably disposed towards the Copernican heliocentric system (by the way, Copernicus was Doctor of Canon Law). And the calendar reform was based on the work of eminent astronomers. The invention of the new Gregorian calendar became an important symbol of the alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and science. And its adoption all over the world was visible evidence of the power of the papal authority.

"And if the new calendar had been adopted in the Protestant countries during the reign of Peter I, then Russia would surely have changed over to it as well. But Great Britain didn't adopt it until 1752, and Sweden not until 1753. And the calendar issue seemed to have been forgotten in Russia after that.

---

[453] It also divided Catholics and Protestants. James Shapiro writes: "Shakespeare came of age when time itself was out of joint: the Western calendar, fixed by Julius Caesar in 46 BC (a meddling with nature deemed tyrannical by some of his fellow Romans), had by the late sixteenth century drifted ten days off the celestial cycle. Something had to be done. In 1577 Pope Gregory XIII proposed skipping ten days and in 1582 Catholic Europe acted upon his recommendations: it was agreed that the day after 4 October would 15 October. [Queen] Elizabeth was ready to go along with this sensible change, but her bishops baulked, unwilling to follow the lead of the Pope on this issue or any other. Other Protestant countries also opposed the change and, as a result, began to keep different time. By 1599 Easter was celebrated a full five weeks apart in Catholic and Protestant lands.

"There's an odd moment in 'Julius Caesar' when Brutus, on the eve of Caesar's assassination, unsure of the date, asks his servant Lucius: 'Is not tomorrow, boy, the first of March?' (II, i, 40) and tells him to check 'the calendar' and let him know. Virtually all modern editions silently correct Brutus' 'blunder' (how could such an intelligent man be so wrong about the date?), changing his question to: 'Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?' Elizabethans, though, would have smiled knowingly at Brutus' confusion in being off by a couple of weeks - as well as at his blindness to the significance of the day that would resound through history. They also knew, watching the events in the play that culminate in the ides of March, that virtually all the political upheaval their own nation had experienced since the Reformation - from the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, to the Cornish Rebellion of 1549, to the Northern Rebellion of 1569, coincided with or had roots in feasts and holidays. As recently as 1596 the planners of the abortive Oxfordshire Rising had agreed that their armed insurrection, in which they would cut down gentlemen and head 'with all speed towards London' to foment a national rising, would begin shortly after Queen Elizabeth's Accession Day, 17 November. 'Is this a holiday?' was a question that touched a deep cultural nerve..." (*1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, London: Faber & Faber, 2005, pp. 169-170)

Though there is evidence that Catherine II decided to adopt 'the new style', the turbulent French Revolution and the burning of Moscow by Napoleon slowed down the process of rapprochement between Russia and the West for a long time. The question of the unification of the calendar was raised again under Nicholas II."[454]

The papist intrigues had their effect: in 1596 the Orthodox hierarchs in the West Russian land signed the unia of Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholics. It was now obvious that Divine Providence had singled out the Church and State in Muscovy, which remained faithful to Orthodoxy, rather than the Church and State in Poland-Lithuania, which had apostasized to Catholicism, as the centre and stronghold of Russian Orthodoxy as a whole, and this needed to be emphasized in the eyes of all the Orthodox.

Patriarch Jeremiah, a strong warrior for Ecumenical Orthodoxy, understood this well. So first, in 1583, he convened a Pan-Orthodox Council of the Eastern Patriarchs that anathematized the Gregorian calendar. The seventh point of the Council declared: "That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow, but in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion and Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by the Fathers, let him be anathema and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful…"

Then, in January, 1589 Patriarch Jeremiah and Tsar Theodore Ivanovich presided over a "Holy Synod of the Great Russian Empire and of the Greek Empire" (the combination of the two was significant) which sanctioned the creation of an autocephalous Russian patriarchate, a decision published in a *gramota* by the tsar in May of the same year. The act was confirmed in a highly unusual manner: the new Russian patriarch, Job, was given a second (or even a third) consecration by Patriarch Jeremiah.[455] Since Tsar Theodore had the title "King of Moscow and all Russia and of the territories of the extreme north", the

---

[454] Kuzenkov and Pushchaev, "The Rudiments of an Ultra-Ecumenical Project, or Why Constantinople Needed to Introduce the New Calendar", *Pravoslavie.ru,* February 20, 2019.

[455] Mureșan, "Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593", file://localhost/Users/anthonymoss/Documents/Rome%20he%CC%81re%CC%81tique%20%20%20Sur%20les%20de%CC%81cisions%20des%20conciles%20de%20Moscou%20et%20de%20Constantinople%20(1589,%201590%20et%201593).html.
V.M. Lourié writes: "The case of the raising to the patriarchy of Job, who was already Metropolitan of Moscow by that time, was strangely dual. The first Episcopal consecration was carried out on Job already in 1581, when he became Bishop of Kolomna, and the second in 1587, when he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow. Now, with his raising to the rank of Patriarch of Moscow, a third Episcopal ordination was carried out on him (Uspensky, 1998)." This uncanonical custom appears to have originated with Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, when he transferred St. Alexis from Vladimir to Moscow (http://hgr.livejournal.com/1099886.html, June 1, 2006).

new patriarchate was given the same boundaries, excluding the Metropolia of Kiev which remained under the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The decision was confirmed by two Pan-Orthodox Councils in Constantinople in 1590 and 1593, which also confirmed the anathema on the Gregorian calendar.[456]

In the 1593 Council the Russian Church was also assigned the fifth place among the patriarchates. As Dan Mureşan has argued, these two last acts were closely linked. Up to this period, Rome, though in heresy, was considered still belong to the pentarchy of patriarchs, without whose combined presence no Ecumenical Council could be convened. But the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 had so appalled the Orthodox that the pretence of a pentarchy including Rome was finally abandoned. So the Council of 1590 was called "ecumenical", although it was convened without Rome, and the Russian Church took the place of Rome, thereby recreating the pentarchy to reflect present realities.

In agreeing to the tsar's request for a patriarchate of Moscow, Patriarch Jeremiah showed that he understood that in having a Patriarch at his side, the status of the Tsar, too, would be exalted: "In truth, pious tsar, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and this thought is from God, and will be realized by you. For the Old Rome fell to the Apollinarian heresy, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, is in the possession of the grandsons of the Hagarenes, the godless Turks: but your great Russian kingdom, the Third Rome, has exceeded all in piety. And all the pious kingdoms have been gathered into your kingdom, and you alone under the heavens are named the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians."[457]

The Patriarch's language here is reminiscent of that of the famous prophecy of Elder Philotheus of Pskov in 1511. In particular, the Patriarch follows the elder in ascribing the fall of Old Rome to "the Apollinarian heresy". Now the Apollinarian heresy rarely, if ever, figures in lists of the western heresies. And yet the patriarch here indicates that it is the heresy as a result of which the First

---

[456] Metropolitan Cyprian of Orope, "'The Sigillion' of 1583 Against 'the Calendar Innovation of the Latins': Myth or Reality?", May 13, 2011, Monastery of SS. Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Attica. This article confirms the truth of the anathematizations of the Grigorian calendar in the sixteenth century while at the same time exposing a forgery by a Russian monk of St. Panteleimon's monastery in 1858 known as the "Sigillion".
On September 29, 1998, the True Orthodox (Old Calendar) Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiousis) of Athens confirmed these decisions, and declared "eternal memory" to the three signatories and all the signatories of the Councils, which "condemned the calendar innovation and severed from the Body of the Church those who accepted it" (https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6v2ynA_4iwNM25OUDlFUDdZYXM/view).

[457] Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 156. This thought was echoed by the patriarch of Alexandria, who wrote to the "most Orthodox" tsar in 1592: "The four patriarchates of the Orthodox speak of your rule as that of another, new Constantine the Great... and say that if there were no help from your rule, then Orthodoxy would be in extreme danger." (van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 160).

Rome fell. Some have understood it to mean the Latin practice of using wafers (unleavened bread) in the Eucharist. For the Orthodox criticised this practice as seeming to imply that Christian had no human soul (symbolized by leaven), as was the teaching of Apollinarius. As Patriarch Peter of Antioch said at the time of the schism between Rome and the East in the eleventh century: "Whoever partakes of wafers unwittingly runs the risk of falling into the heresy of Apollinarius. For the latter dared to say that the Son and Word of God received only a soul-less and mindless Body from the Holy Virgin, saying that the Godhead took the place of the mind and soul."[458]

Another interpretation suggests another parallel between Papism and Apollinarianism: just as the Divine Logos replaces the human mind in the heretical Apollinarian Christology, so a quasi-Divine, infallible Pope replaces the fully human, and therefore at all times fallible episcopate in the heretical papist ecclesiology. The root heresy of the West therefore consists in the unlawful exaltation of the mind of the Pope over the other minds of the Church, both clerical and lay, and its quasi-deification to a level equal to that of Christ Himself. From this root heresy proceed all the heresies of the West.

Thus the *Filioque* with its implicit demotion of the Holy Spirit to a level below that of the Father and the Son becomes necessary insofar as the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth Who constantly leads the Church into all truth has now become unnecessary - the Divine Mind of the Pope is quite capable of fulfilling His function. Similarly, the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts, is also unnecessary - if Christ, the Great High Priest, sanctified the Holy Gifts by His word alone, then His Divine Vicar on earth is surely able to do the same without invoking any other Divinity, especially a merely subordinate one such as the Holy Spirit.

The exaltation of the Russian Church and State to patriarchal and "Third Rome" status respectively shows that, not only in her own eyes, but in the eyes of the whole Orthodox world, Russia was now the chief bastion of the Truth of Christ against the heresies of the West. Russia had been born as a Christian state just as the West was falling away from grace into Papism in the eleventh century. Now, in the sixteenth century, as Western Papism received a bastard child in the Protestant Reformation, and a second wind in the Counter-Reformation, Russia was ready to take up leadership of the struggle against both heresies as a fully mature Orthodox nation.

However, as we have seen, at the Pan-Orthodox Council convened by Jeremiah on his return to Constantinople, the Eastern Patriarchs, while confirming the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate, made it only the fifth in seniority, after the four Greek patriarchates. This meant that the relationship between Church and State in the Third Rome still did not quite correspond to that between Church and State in the Second Rome. For whereas in the latter

---

[458] Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Mahlon Smith III, *And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyme Controversy*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, p. 58, note 80.

the Emperor's partner was the first see in Orthodoxy (at least after the fall of the papacy), the Emperor's partner in the Third Rome was only number five in the list of patriarchs. Nevertheless, this was probably in accordance with Divine Providence; for in the decades that immediately followed the prestige of the "Third Rome" was severely dented when the Poles briefly conquered Moscow during the "Time of Troubles", necessitating the continued supervision of the Western and Southern Russian Orthodox by Constantinople. And by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Russian patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great and replaced – with the blessing of the Eastern Patriarchs – by a "Holy Governing Synod".

On the other hand, the elevation of the Russian Church to the rank of patriarchate was to prove beneficial in the early seventeenth century, when the Autocracy in Russia was shaken to its foundations and the patriarchs took the place of the tsars as the leaders of the Russian nation. We witness a similar phenomenon in 1917, when the restoration of the Russian patriarchate to some degree compensated for the fall of the tsardom. In both cases, the patriarchate both filled the gap left by the fall of the autocracy (up to a point), and kept alive the ideals of true Orthodox statehood, waiting for the time when it could restore political power into the hands of the anointed tsars.

III. WEST: ABSOLUTISM AND REVOLUTION

29. JAMES I AND THE DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS

The early modern period in European history is full of paradoxes. Although an age of humanism, it was far from humane. Although an age of incipient secularism, it saw a dramatic increase in religious conflicts and wars. And although libertarian in its principles (at least in those European states influenced by the Renaissance), it also saw a strengthening of monarchism and the beginnings of overseas imperialism. It was as if, having abandoned the harmonious synthesis of Orthodoxy centuries before, Europeans were determined to explore the theses and antitheses however violent and bloody such explorations would turn out to be…

The English in Shakespeare's time saw their land as a kingdom with royalist and martial instincts. As the Bard put it in *Richard II:*

> *This royal throne of kings, this scept'red isle,*
> *This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars…*

But times were changing. The Reformation had triumphed, and had been consolidated by the victorious war against Spain. And the Reformation ultimately undermined monarchism; for there is a natural transition from rebellion against Popes and bishops to rebellion against kings and princes. If Luther had tried to resist this transition (for motives of self-preservation), it was nevertheless implicit in his teaching. The more consistent Calvinists were less afraid than Luther to cross this intellectual and moral Rubicon and ascribe all authority to the people. As Jacques Barzun writes, "if a purer religion, close to the one depicted in the gospel, was attainable by getting rid of superiors in the church, a better social and economic life, close to the life depicted in the gospels, would follow from getting rid of social and political superiors."[459]

Now we have seen that the first century or so of the Protestant Reformation witnessed a strengthening of monarchical power. This had happened for different reasons in different countries: on the continent because the Protestants had looked to the Princes to protect them against the Catholic powers, and because the rising class of the bourgeoisie wanted some protection against the anti-mercantile aristocracy; in England because the king himself had initiated the break with Rome for his own personal and political ends. However, this could not last…

Protestantism of both the Lutheran and Calvinist varieties contained within itself the seeds of the overthrow of all authority, both religious and political; it threatened bishops as well as Popes, kings as well as bishops. Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers directly attacked the special authority of bishops and priests; but indirectly it attacked the power of kings, too, insofar as they were perceived as receiving their authority from God via the priesthood

---

[459] Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, p. 265.

in the sacrament of royal anointing. Calvin's doctrine of the elects' absolute assurance of salvation, and of the supremacy of conscience over law, was as much a threat to the laws of kings as it was to the doctrines of bishops. Moreover, the Calvinist doctrine contained a frightening corollary which was rarely expressed in so many words but was about to be expressed in many actions: the conviction, namely, that just as the elect had absolute assurance of their own salvation, they had similar assurance of their opponents' damnation, and could therefore dispose of them with the ruthlessness that befitted the knowledge of their worthlessness. Transplanted into more secular soil and into a less godly age, this belief would justify the elimination of whole classes and peoples supposedly doomed to extinction by the ruthless and irresistible march of history…

However, these consequences were only dimly perceived in 1603, when King James VI of Scotland (the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, who had been executed by her cousin Elizabeth) became James I of England, and got embroiled with the English parliament, not over religion, but over money… During his long reign in Scotland, James had never encountered a body like the English parliament: what opposition he had had come from the Scottish Puritan bishops. In 1614 he said that he was surprised "that my ancestors should ever have permitted such an institution to come into existence".[460]

But he had to deal with it; for in England James needed money to support his extravagant life-style. Only the parliamentarians could give it him. And they refused… They also rejected James' plan to unite England and Scotland into one "Great Britain".

"When this met parliamentary and legal opposition," writes Tombs, " - 'Being English we cannot be Britaynes' – James unilaterally introduced a union flag and common coinage, including a twenty-two-shilling piece called the Unite, bearing a motto from the book of Ezekiel: *Faciam eos in gentem unam* (I will make them one nation).

"The Common Law, based on judicial independence and precedent, was now marshalled against the encroachment of Roman law, used in Scotland, which buttressed James's absolutist pretensions. Using the history of English law as the test of political legitimacy was an 'all but universal pursuit of educated men' during the seventeenth century. The Common Law was asserted to be purely and uniquely English."[461]

The leader of the opposition to the king's demands was Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634), who, writes Peter Ackroyd, "had been chief justice of the common pleas since 1605, and was an impassioned exponent of English common law. James had no real conception of common law, having been educated in the very different jurisprudence of Scotland. Coke believed, for example, that both

---

[460] James I, in Tombs, *The English and their History,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, p. 206.
[461] Tombs, op. cit., p. 207.

sovereign and subject were accountable to a body of ancient law that had been conceived in practice and clarified by usage; it represented immemorial general custom, but it was also a law of reason. This was not, however, the king's opinion. He had already firmly stated that 'the king is above the law, as both the author and the giver of strength thereto.' From this it could be construed that the king possessed an arbitrary authority. James alleged, for example, that he could decide cases in person. Coke demurred: a case could only be judged in a lawcourt…"[462]

Coke appealed to *Magna Carta* is his attempt to clip the wings of royal power. The Charter "limited the royal prerogative, insisted Coke and his supporters, and it could even strike down Acts of Parliament. The then largely forgotten Magna Carta was, Coke declared, in its 'great weightinesse and weightie greatnesse,' the very 'foundation of all the fundamentall laws of the realm' and a 'restitution of the common law'. Thus an idea of ancient English uniqueness was identified with a tradition of law and political freedom. Coke set out the argument in his *Institutes of the Laws of England* (which began appearing in 1628) and in a series of controversial judgements, including a decision that the king had no power to legislate by proclamation. Similarly, Parliament's *Petition of Right* (1628) asserted that imprisonment without trial by royal order was illegitimate."[463]

Francis Fukuyama writes: "When James I sought to shift certain cases from Common Law to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, Coke greatly offended him by saying that the king did not have sufficient authority to interpret the law as he chose. The king asserted that it was treasonable to maintain that he should be under the law, to which Coke responded by quoting Bracton to the effect that *'quod Rex non debet esse sub homine set sub deo et lege'* (the king should not be under man but under God and the law). For this and other confrontations with royal authority, Coke was eventually dismissed from his legal posts, whereupon he joined Parliament as a leader of the anti-Royalist side."[464]

The question: who has ultimate sovereignty, King or Parliament? was at the heart of many European political struggles, not only of the English Civil War (1642-49), but also of the first phase of the French revolution (1789-92) and of the Russian revolution (1905-1917).

James, like his predecessor Elizabeth, believed in "degree", hierarchy and the order of being, and considered that "equality is the mother of confusion and an enemy of the Unity which is the Mother of Order".[465] "The king is above the law," he said, "as both the author and the giver of strength thereto." "Kings are justly called gods," he said to parliament in 1610, "for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider

[462] Ackroyd, *The History of England,* vol. III. Civil War, London: Macmillan, 2014, pp. 23-24.

[463] Tombs, op. cit., p. 208.

[464] Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order,* London: Profile, 2012, p. 408.

[465] Harold Nicolson, *Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, p. 201.

the attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of the king. God hath power to create or destroy; make or unmake at His pleasure; to give life or send death; to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none; to raise low things and to make high things low at His pleasure. And the like power have kings."[466] And so kings, having their authority from God, and having no authority higher than themselves on earth, can be judged only by God, and not by men. As Shakespeare puts it in <u>Richard II</u>:

> *And shall the figure of God's majesty,*
> *His captain, steward, deputy elect,*
> *Anointed, crowned, planted many years,*
> *Be judged by subject and inferior breath?*

At the same time James – something of a philosopher king - admitted that there was an important distinction to be made between an autocrat, who "acknowledges himself ordained for his people", and a tyrant, who "thinks his people ordained for him, a prey to his passions and inordinate appetites." Although a king was "a little God to sit on this throne and rule over other men", he nevertheless had a duty to provide a good example to his subjects.

Having said that, James did not like to remind people that there were such things as "tyrants", kings who broke God's law. For that might give them ideas of rebellion… So he censored the Scriptures: "the word 'tyrant', used over 400 times in the Geneva Bible, was expunged from the 'King James' version."[467]

But while not free in relation to God, the king was free in relation to his subjects, according to James. Hence the title of his book, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*. However, while unlimited by any power on earth, a king should follow his own laws: "A king governing in a settled kingdom, leaves to be a king, and degenerates into a tyrant as soon as he leaves off to rule according to his laws. In which case the king's conscience may speak unto him, as the poor widow said to Philip of Macedon: either govern according to your own law, *aut ne rex sis* [or you are not a king]. And though no Christian man ought to allow rebellion of people against their prince, yet doth God never leave kings unpunished when they transgress these limits; for in that same psalm where God saith to kings, *Vos dii estis* [you are gods], he immediately thereafter concludes, But ye shall die like men."[468]

As we have seen, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was written at this time and can be seen as almost a commentary on contemporary events and debates. For, as Jonathan Bate writes, *Macbeth* "is steeped in King James's preoccupations: the rights of royal succession, the relationship between England and Scotland, witchcraft, the sacred powers of the monarch, anxiety about gunpowder,

---

[466] James I, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations,* London: Cassell, 2004, p. 419.

[467] Tombs, op. cit., p. 207.

[468] James I, in Brian Macarthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches,* London: Penguin, 1995, pp. 44-45.

treason and plot. A deeply learned man, the king had published a treatise explaining how monarchs were God's regents upon the earth and another arguing for the reality of witchcraft or 'demonology'. He considered himself something of an adept at distinguishing between true and false accusations of witchcraft. He took a deep interest in such customs as the tradition of the sacred power of the king's 'touch' to cure subjects afflicted with the disease of scrofula (known as 'the king's evil').

"Religion and politics were joined seamlessly together. The Bible said that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft: if the monarch was God's representative upon earth, then to conspire against him was to make a pact with the instrument of darkness – in the Gunpowder trials, Jesuits such as Father Garnet were described as male witches. Treason was regarded as more than a political act: it was, as one modern scholar puts it, 'a form of possession, an action contrary to and destructive of the very order of nature itself. The forces of the netherworld seek for their own uncreating purposes the killing of the legitimate king in order to restore the realm of tyranny and chaos.'

"In this world, killing the king is the ultimate crime against nature. 'O horror, horror, horror', says Macduff as he returns on stage having stared into the heart of darkness, seen how the gashed stabs on the king's body look like a breach in nature. 'Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee': the language here alludes to the famous passage in St. Paul about the inexpressible wonders that God has prepared in the kingdom of heaven for those who love Him. Macduff, by contrast, has momentarily entered the kingdom of hell, where a drunken porter keeps the gate. 'Confusion now hath replication of the order of divine creation'. But the art here is that of confusion and death: 'Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence / The life o' th' building.' The understanding of the play requires close attention to be paid to such words as 'sacrilegious', in which political violence is bound inextricably to articles of religious faith. 'Treason has done his worst,' says Macbeth in one of those moments when his conscience is pricked. *His* worst, not *its*: Treason is not a concept but a living thing. The devil's disciple, he stalks the stage of politics and brings sleepless nights through which the guilty man shakes and sweats with fear and terrible dreams, while the guilty woman descends into insanity…"[469]

Great tensions produce great art: 1606, the year after the Gunpowder Plot produced, besides *Macbeth*, also *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, a trilogy unequalled in the history of literature. But while great art can mirror great tensions, it cannot destroy them: from this time English society became increasingly polarized. Although the unity obtained by the Virgin Queen had been largely a clever stunt, it had worked. James, however, had a more difficult time of it, having to unify not only Catholics and Protestants, but also English and Scots. On the one hand, he had to keep his Catholic-at-heart English subjects, the "recusants", in line by spying on them, chasing up secret Jesuits

[469] Bate, *Soul of the Age,* London: Penguin, 2008, pp. 346-347.

and compelling all Englishmen to swear the Oath of Allegiance and receive communion in the Anglican church at least three times a year. On the other hand, as a Scot, he had to persuade his radical Protestant fellow-countrymen north of the border that he had not only a Divine right to rule, but could play a part in the life of the official church and even appoint bishops: as he famously put it, "no king, no bishop".

James' plan to unite England and Scotland into one country failed. But the superb language of his other beloved project, the King James Version of the Bible (1604-11), translated by a committee of Anglicans and moderate Puritans, has had a profoundly unifying effect on the English-speaking peoples to this day. As Bill Bryson writes, "It was the one literary production of the age that rivalled Shakespeare's for lasting glory – and, not incidentally, played a more influential role in encouraging a conformity of spelling and usage throughout Britain and its infant overseas dominions."[470]

The translation was commissioned, as the translators wrote in the preface, "that it may be understood even of the very vulgar". But this is not to say that there was anything "downmarket" or slipshod about the way they went about their work. As Adam Nicolson writes, "Each member of six subcommittees, on his own, translated an entire section of the Bible. He then brought that translation to a meeting of his subcommittee, where the different versions produced by each translator were compared and one was settled on. That version was then submitted to a general revising committee for the whole Bible, which met in Stationers' Hall in London. Here the revising scholars had the suggested versions read aloud - no text visible – while holding on their laps copies of previous translations in English and other languages. The ear and the mind were the only editorial tools. They wanted the Bible to sound right. If it didn't at first hearing, a spirited editorial discussion – extraordinarily, mostly in Latin and partly in Greek – followed. A revising committee presented a final version to two bishops, then to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and then, notionally at least, to the King…" [471]

James I prided himself on being a peacemaker. Nevertheless, there was no peace being made within the nation as his reign progressed; and he and his son and successor, the future Charles I, increasingly gravitated towards the political and religious "right", while their subjects on the whole went in the opposite direction. For, as Ackroyd writes, "this was an age of religious polemic… On the side of the [Anglican] bishops were those generally satisfied with the doctrines and ceremonies of the established Church; they were moderate; they espoused the union of Church and state. They put more trust in communal worship than in private prayer; they acknowledge the role of custom, experience and reason in spiritual matters. It may not have been a fully formed faith, but it served to bind together those of unclear or flexible belief. It also united those who simply wished to conform with their neighbours.

---

[470] Bryson, *Shakespeare,* London: William Collins, 2016, p. 133.

[471] Nicolson, "The Bible of King James", *National Geographic,* December, 2011, p. 45.

"On the side of the puritans were those more concerned with the exigencies of the private conscience. They believed in the natural depravity of man, unless the sinner be redeemed by grace. They abhorred the practice of confession and encouraged intensive self-discipline. They did not wish for a sacramental priesthood but a preaching ministry; they accepted the word of Scripture as the source of all divine truth. They took their compass from the stirrings of providence. Men and women of a puritan tradition were utterly obedient to God's absolute will from which no ritual or sacrament could avert them. This lent them zeal and energy in their attempt to purify the world or, as one puritan theologian put it, 'a holy violence in the performing of all duties'. Sometimes they spoke out as the spirit moved them. It was said, unfairly, that they loved God will all their soul and hated their neighbour with all their heart.

"They were not at this stage, however, rival creeds; they are perhaps better regarded as opposing tendencies within the same Church…"[472]

---

[472] Ackroyd, op. cit., p. 7.

30. THE DUTCH REVOLUTION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

It may be argued that the modern age began with a long-drawn-out struggle between the greatest monarchical power of the age, the Spanish Empire, and its colonial subjects in the Netherlands. This struggle both provided the critics of Divine Right monarchy with their first major cause, and laid the foundations for modern capitalism. In it, moreover, and in the subsequent fall from superpower status of the Spanish empire, was fulfilled the word of Machiavelli: "He who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it, for in rebellion it has always the watchword of liberty…"[473]

"In 1581," writes Mark Almond, "the states of the Union of Utrecht formally abjured their loyalty to [the Spanish King] Philip II. They denied his divine right to rule. He had betrayed his trust: 'It is well known to all that if a prince is appointed by God over the land, it is to protect them from harm, even as a shepherd to the guardianship of his flock. The subjects are not created by God for the sake of the prince but rather the prince is established for his subjects' sake for without them he would not be a prince. Should he violate the laws, he is to be forsaken by his meanest subjects, and to be no longer recognised as prince.' These were revolutionary sentiments in the sixteenth century, and for some time to come. Even their authors preferred to avoid becoming a republic and looked around for an alternative monarch who would satisfy their demands…"[474]

Nevertheless, the constitution of the new State "ensured that the governments of the seven provinces remained separated from a federal council of state at the Hague. The latter was chaired by an executive Stadholder, whose office was generally held, together with the offices of Captain-General and Admiral-General, by the House of Orange… Despite its peculiar, decentralised constitution, [the Netherlands] had every reason to regard itself as the first modern state."[475]

"The Dutch Republic of the 'United Provinces of the Netherlands' – misleadingly known to the English as Holland – was the wonder of seventeenth-century Europe. It succeeded for the same reasons that its would-be Spanish masters failed: throughout the eighty years of its painful birth, its disposable resources were actually growing. Having resisted the greatest military power of the day, it then became a major maritime power in its own right... Its engineers, bankers, and sailors were justly famed… The Dutch

---

[473] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter V.

[474] Almond, *Revolution*, London: De Agostini Editions, 1996, p. 44.

[475] Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1997, pp. 538-539.

Republic rapidly became a haven for religious dissidents, for capitalists, for philosophers, and for painters."[476]

On rebelling against the Spanish the seven northern provinces immediately proclaimed religious liberty – the first State to do so. Not only all Protestant sects, but also Jews, and even Roman Catholics were given freedom to practise their beliefs. All strictly religious faiths were given liberty alongside the newest and most important faith, Capitalism. As the English Catholic poet Andrew Marvell put it in his poem, "The Character of Holland" (1653):

> *Hence Amsterdam, Turk-Christian-Pagan-Jew,*
> *Staple of Sects and Mint of Schism grew;*
> *That Bank of Conscience, where not one so strange*
> *Opinion but finds Credit, and Exchange.*
> *In vain for Catholicks ourselves we bear;*
> *The universal church is onely there.*

The Dutch Republic was the first political creation of Calvinism. Its main weakness was that its root was "the root of all evil" – money. Already in 1599 eight Amsterdam ships had returned from Java with a huge cargo of spices and luxury goods, and had made a 400% profit, stimulating the English to found the East India Company. From now on, commercial profit became a driving force in Dutch society. "Holland is a country," wrote Claude de Saumaise, "where the demon gold is seated on a throne of cheese, and crowned with tobacco".

This commercial character of the new Dutch state was caused, writes Pieter Geyl, by the fact that it was "the urban lower middle classes" who were mainly inspired to act against the Spaniards, while the town oligarchies "felt themselves… the guardians of the privileges and welfare of town and country, rather than the champions of a particularly new religious faith. In other words, they regarded matters from a secular standpoint, and, while the new Church had in their scheme of things its indispensable place, they felt it incumbent on them carefully to circumscribe this place. From one point of view… the great European movement of the Reformation was a revolt of the lay community under the leadership of their rulers – a revolt, that is to say, of the State against priestly influence." And so the purpose of the Dutch Republic was not so much to protect or spread Calvinism as to protect and increase the material prosperity of its citizens. Their attitude to the state, therefore, was that it "had better stop trying to interfere with the serious business of making money." Although the Calvinist-Puritans did not make money their goal, and profit-making was encouraged only in order to be more effective in doing good, the decay of Puritan religion tended to leave mammon to take its place. As Cotton Mather said: "Religion begat prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother."[477]

---

[476] Davies, op. cit., pp. 538, 539.

[477] Shapiro, *1599,* p. 304.

*

According to Niall Ferguson, Holland's war of liberation against Spain "was a watershed in financial as well as political history. With their republican institutions, the United Provinces combined the advantages of the city-state with the scale of a nation-state. They were able to finance their wars by developing Amsterdam as the market for a whole range of new securities: not only life and perpetual annuities, but also lottery loans (whereby investors bought a small probability of a large return). By 1650 there were more than 65,000 Dutch *rentiers*, men who had invested their capital in one or other of these debt instruments and thereby helped finance the long Dutch struggle to preserve their independence. As the Dutch progressed from self-defence to imperial expansion, their debt mountain grew high indeed, from 50 million guilders in 1632 to 250 million in 1752. Yet the yield on Dutch bonds declined steadily, to a low of just 2.5 per cent in 1747 – a sign not only that capital was abundant in the United Provinces, but also that investors had little fear of an outright Dutch default.

"With the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which ousted the Catholic James II from the English throne in favour of the Dutch Protestant Prince of Orange, these and other innovations crossed the English Channel from Amsterdam to London…"[478]

"The secret of Dutch success," writes Yuval Noah Harari, "was credit. The Dutch burghers, who has little taste for combat on land, hired mercenary armies to fight the Spanish for them. The Dutch themselves meanwhile took to the sea in ever-larger fleets. Mercenary armies and cannon-brandishing fleets cost a fortune, but the Dutch were able to finance their military expeditions more easily than the mighty Spanish Empire because they secured the trust of the burgeoning European financial system at a time when the Spanish king was carelessly eroding its trust in him. Financiers extended the Dutch enough credit to set up armies and fleets, and these armies and fleets gave the Dutch control of world trade routes, which in turn yielded handsome profits. The profits allowed the Dutch to repay the loans, which strengthened the trust of the financiers. Amsterdam was fast becoming not only one of the most important ports of Europe, but also the continent's financial Mecca.

"How exactly did the Dutch win the trust of the financial system? Firstly, they were sticklers about repaying their loans on time and in full, making the extension of credit less risky for lenders. Secondly, their country's judicial system enjoyed independence and protected private rights – in particular private property rights. Capital trickles away from dictatorial states that fail to defend private individuals and their property. Instead, it flows into states upholding the rule of law and private property…

---

[478] Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money*, New York: Penguin Press, 2008, pp. 74-75.

"It was the Dutch merchants – not the Dutch state – who built the Dutch Empire. The king of Spain kept on trying to finance and maintain his conquests by raising unpopular taxes from a disgruntled populace. The Dutch merchants financed conquest by getting loans, and increasing also by selling shares in their companies that entitled their holders to receive a portion of the company's profits. Cautious investors who would never have thought twice before extending credit to the Dutch government, happily invested fortunes in the Dutch joint-stock companies that were the mainstay of the new empire.

"If you thought a company was going to make a big profit but it had already sold all its shares, you could buy some from people who owned them, probably for a higher price than they originally paid. If you bought shares and later discovered that the company was in dire straits, you could try to unload your stock for a lower price. The resulting trade in company shares led to the establishment in most major European cities of stock exchanges, places where the shares of companies were traded.

"The most famous Dutch joint-stock company, the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC for short, was chartered in 1602, just as the Dutch were throwing off Spanish rule and the boom of Spanish artillery could still be heard not far from Amsterdam's ramparts. VOC used the money it raised from selling shares to build ships, send them to Asia, and bring back Chinese, Indian and Indonesian goods. It also financed military actions taken by company ships against competitors and pirates. Eventually VOC money financed the conquest of Indonesia.

"Indonesia is the world's biggest archipelago. Its thousands upon thousands of islands were ruled in the early seventeenth century by hundreds of kingdoms, principalities, sultanates and tribes. When VOC merchants first arrived in Indonesia in 1603, their aims were strictly commercial. However, in order to secure their commercial interests and maximise the profits of the shareholders, VOC merchants began to fight against local potentates who charged inflated tariffs, as well as against European competitors. VOC armed its merchant ships with cannons; it recruited European, Japanese, Indian and Indonesian mercenaries; and it built forts and conducted full-scale battles and sieges. This enterprise may sound a little strange to us, but in the early modern age it was common for private companies to hire not only soldiers, but also generals and admirals, cannons and ships, and even entire off-the-shelf armies. The international community took this for granted and didn't raise an eyebrow when a private company established an empire.

"Island after island fell to VOC mercenaries and a large part of Indonesia became a VOC colony.[479] VOC ruled Indonesia for close to 200 years. Only in 1800 did the Dutch state assume control of Indonesia, making it a Dutch

---

[479] The decisive moment was the capture and burning down of Djakarta in 1619. The native residents were expelled. The new town that arose on the spot was renamed Batavia; it reverted to its ancient name of Djakarta in the twentieth century. (V.M.)

national colony for the following 150 years. Today some people warn that twenty-first-century corporations are accumulating too much power. Early modern history shows just how far that can go if businesses are allowed to pursue their self-interest unchecked.

"While VOC operated in the Indian Ocean, the Dutch West Indies Company, or WIC, plied the Atlantic. In order to control trade on the important Hudson River, WIC build a settlement called New Amsterdam on an island at the river's mouth. The colony was threatened by Indians and repeatedly attacked by the British, who eventually captured it in 1664. The British changed its name to New York. The remains of the wall built by WIC to defend its colony against Indians and British are today paved over by the world's most famous street – Wall Street…"[480]

*

Nevertheless, in the East as in the West Dutch capitalism was destined to be eclipsed by the British. Jesse Norman writes: "Founded by Royal Charter by Elizabeth I in the year 1600, the East India Company had exercised since then a monopoly of all trade between Britain and Asia. The Company started trading spices and pepper, but over time this expanded to include other high-value commodities such as cotton, silk, saltpetre (used to make gunpowder), tea and opium. So did its commercial reach, which extended to China by the early eighteenth century. By the 1770s it had built up an enormous presence in India, with major trading centres or 'factories' in Bombay and Surat in the west, Calcutta in the east and Madras in the south.

"There had been no plan of conquest, no grand strategy. After the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the rapid decline of the Mughal Empire had created a huge vacuum of power, which local princes and foreign trading houses had competed to fill. The East India Company had been eclipsed in trade during the seventeenth century by its Dutch counterpart, the VOC, which had beaten it to the Spice Islands (the modern Maluku Islands, now part of Indonesia). India had been, in effect, a consolation prize. But now the Company saw off the Dutch, as well as Portuguese, Danish and Austrian/Flemish trading competitors, settling into a protracted struggle for commercial military superiority in the Carnatic region of south-east India with the French Compagnie des Indes.

"Similar in name, the British and French companies were in fact rather different in nature. The Compagnie was originally funded by the monarch, its shares were narrowly held, and it was consequently short on capital and social connections within France. The East India Company, by contrast, had been capitalized by rich merchants and aristocrats, with no direct government ownership, control or supervision. It had nearly 2,000 shareholders, heavily drawn from the country's political and commercial elite, with more than a third

---

[480] Harari, *Homo Sapiens*, pp. 355-356, 358-360.

of them living in London or the Home Counties. These men used their significant political influence to defend the Company's commercial monopoly and defeat various attempts at regulation. Their efforts were assisted by the periodic tendency of British governments to get into debt, which in turn necessitated borrowing from the Company.

"Trade with the Indian sub-continent accounted for one-fifth of world trade in the early eighteenth century…"[481]

*

Was there a link between republicanism and Calvinism (both Dutch and English), on the one hand, and financial innovation and wealth-creation, on the other? Of course, an absolutist government is not necessarily opposed to the interests of capital; it may allow the capitalists to enrich themselves, while retaining political power for itself. But it would clearly be safer to install from the beginning a constitutional monarchy in which the real sovereign would be, not the monarch, but a capitalist landowning oligarchy meeting in parliament that could never threaten to deprive any oligarch of his land.

Thus, as Ian Buruma writes, "there is a link between business interests – or at least the freedom to trade – and liberal, even democratic, politics. Money tends to even things out, is egalitarian and blind to race or creed. As Voltaire said about the London stock exchange: Muslims, Christians and Jews trade as equals, and bankrupts are the only infidels. Trade can flourish if property is protected by laws. That means protection from the state, as well as from other individuals."[482]

A direct link between Capitalism and Calvinism was posited by the Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc: "If we ask what it was in Calvin's doctrine, apart from the opportunities of its moment and its effect against the clergy, which gave it so much power, the answer is, I think, that it provided an awful object of worship and that it appealed at the same time to a powerful human appetite which Catholicism opposes. The novel object of worship was an Implacable God: the appetite was the love of money…

"A Philosophy which denied good works and derided abnegation let it loose in all its violence."[483]

This thesis was developed by Max Weber; he saw a direct link between Protestantism and those habits that are conducive to capitalism. Weber's theory, writes Landes, postulates "that Protestantism – more specifically, its Calvinist branches – promoted the rise of modern capitalism… not by easing

---

[481] Norman, *Edmund Burke,* London: William Collins, 2013, pp. 105-106.

[482] Buruma, "China and Liberty", *Prospect*, May, 2000, p. 37.

[483] Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened*, pp. 126, 127.

or abolishing those aspects of the Roman faith that had deterred or hindered free economic activity (the prohibition of usury, for example); nor by encouraging, let alone inventing, the pursuit of wealth; but by defining and sanctioning an ethic of everyday behavior that conduced to business success.

"Calvinistic Protestantism, said Weber, did this initially by affirming the doctrine of predestination. This held that one could not gain salvation by faith or deeds; that question had been decided for everyone from the beginning of time, and nothing could alter one's fate.

"Such a belief could easily have encouraged a fatalistic attitude. If behavior and faith make no difference, why not live it up? Why be good? Because, according to Calvinism, goodness was a plausible sign of election. Anyone could be chosen, but it was only reasonable to suppose that most of those chosen would show by their character and ways the quality of their souls and the nature of their destiny. This implicit reassurance was a powerful incentive to proper thoughts and behavior. As the Englishwoman Elizabeth Walker wrote her grandson in 1689, alluding to one of the less important but more important signs of grace, 'All cleanly people are not good, but there are few good people but are cleanly.' And while hard belief in predestination did not last more than a generation or two (it is not the kind of dogma that has lasting appeal), it was eventually converted into a secular code of behavior: hard work, honesty, seriousness, the thrifty use of money and time (both lent us by God). 'Time is short,' admonished the Puritan divine Richard Baxter (1615-1691), 'and work is long'.

"… Europe did not have to wait for the Protestant Reformation to find people who wanted to be rich. Weber's point is that Protestantism produced a new kind of businessman, a different kind of person, one who aimed to live and work a certain way. It was the way that mattered, and riches were at best a by-product.

"A good Calvinist would say, that was what was wrong with Spain: easy riches, unearned wealth. Compare the Protestant and Catholic attitudes towards gambling in the early modern period. Both condemned it, but Catholics condemned it because one might (would) lose, and no responsible person would jeopardize his well-being and that of others in that manner. The Protestants, on the other hand, condemned it because one might win, and that would be bad for character. It was only much later that the Protestant ethic degenerated into a set of maxims for material success and smug, smarmy sermons on the virtues of wealth…"[484]

*

We have already noted the links between Capitalism, Calvinism and Judaism. The Jews expelled by the Spanish in 1492 had found a safe refuge in

---

[484] Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London: Abacus, 1999, pp. 174-176.

Calvinist Amsterdam, where they prospered exceedingly. And this was no accident.

For, as Norman Cantor notes, "the Calvinists were close readers of the Old Testament and taught a bleak image of a wrathful, judging, and omniscient and omnipotent God that accorded well with Jewish tradition. Calvinist societies were sympathetic to market capitalism as a sign of God's grace working in the world.

"There was a millenial fervor among the latter-day Calvinists, a sense of the coming end of time. These qualities did not necessarily lead to a more favorable attitude toward the Jews; theoretically it could have gone the other way. But shaped by a Calvinist elite that favored an ethic of hard work, rational application of communal standards to individual behavior, and postponed gratification, a comity of attitude emerged in the early seventeenth century between the ruling capitalist oligarchy in Amsterdam and the rabbinical-capitalist oligarchy that controlled power in the Jewish community. Not only did the Jews of Amsterdam prosper, but Calvinist England readmitted them in 1653, for the first time officially since the 1290s…

"Everywhere that Calvinism spread after 1600 – Holland, England, Scotland, and overseas to the United States, English-speaking parts of Canada, and South Africa (a Dutch colony until 1815, and British thereafter) – the Jews prospered in business. In the nineteenth century they were given the opportunity to enter the learned professions. The Calvinists were too Christian to regard the Jews as fully their equals. But they showed the Jews more than tolerance; they accorded them dignified respect. This was because of Calvinist inclination to the Old Testament literary text in its covenant theology; because the Calvinists and the Jews agreed that business success was a blessing from God and a sign of the worth of the entrepreneur in God's eyes; and because both religious groups admired the patriarchal family, hard work, social intelligence, rational calculations, and puritanical postponed gratification."[485]

---

[485] Cantor, *The Sacred Chain,* London: Fontana, 1996, pp. 198-199.

31. THEORIES OF SOVEREIGNTY: (1) BODIN

International law was born in the context of two international settlements - the first at Augsburg in 1555, and the second at Westphalia in 1648, - which determined how multi-confessional states in the empire should be governed.

"Augsburg," writes Philip Bobbitt, "is an historic agreement because it provided that rulers were to determine the religious denomination of their respective states (the constitutional principle of *cuius regio eius religio*), matching Lutheran princes with Lutheran subjects and Catholic rulers with Catholic peoples. According to this principle, the decisions of the ruler as to which sectarian preference to adopt were binding also upon his subjects with the concession that dissatisfied persons were welcome to emigrate to more congenial states… Augsburg… attached to the State an attribute – religious affiliation – hitherto associated with a human being, the prince."[486] Still more important, the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* "implied a 'theory of sovereignty by the states of Europe that permitted no distinction in law between a Catholic and a Protestant country' [Wilbur Jordan]." Moreover, "Adam Watson has observed that although at the time of the Peace of Augsburg, 'the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* applied formally only to the Holy Roman Empire, … the practice quickly extended throughout the Christian commonwealth of Europe. It carried, as a corollary, another principle which rulers readily acknowledged and proclaimed though they did not always scrupulously observe it: non-interference by one state in the affairs of another'."[487]

However, this settlement did not work, for it failed to provide a method of conflict resolution if the prince of a territory changed his religion. Rather, it created conditions that incited rather than averted civil war and the persecution of the religious minorities within each state. And so the Wars of Religion that broke out in France alone after 1562 may have claimed as many as four million people.[488] Usually these involved Catholics persecuting Protestants, such as Spanish Catholics persecuting Dutch Calvinists or French Catholics persecuting French Huguenots.

There were partial resolutions, as when King Henry IV of France issued his Edict of Nantes (1598), granting religious freedom to all the citizens of France. But the real solution, some thought, could only be *absolute kingship*. An "absolute" king was a ruler absolved from all higher loyalties, who could impose his peace – and his religion - on the warring sides…

*

---

[486] Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles,* London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 105, 106.

[487] Bobbitt, op. cit., pp. 487, 488.

[488] Peter Marshall, "The Savage Reformation", *BBC History Magazine,* May, 2017, p. 30.

The theorist of absolute sovereignty <u>par excellence</u> was Jean Bodin, who addressed the problem of how to keep the nation-state together when it is being torn apart by religious passions. Richard Bourke writes: "In his most famous work, the *Six Books of the Commonwealth,* which originally appeared in French in 1576, Bodin presented a definition of sovereignty. He claimed that it was 'the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth, which the Latins call *maiestas* [majesty]'. Later in his text, Bodin made clear that the Romans had yet other terms for sovereignty, *summum imperium* (ultimate authority) being conspicuous among them. Yet, while the Romans, like the Greeks and the Hebrews had a conception of supreme authority, Bodin believed that they had not fully understood its implications. Above all, it could not be shared among competing powers in the commonwealth."[489]

"Bodin," writes J.S. McClelland, "is probably the first important political thinker to offer what is recognisably a modern theory of sovereignty, and in essence this theory is very simple: a well-ordered state needs an absolute and legitimate sovereign centre. Bodin's motives for saying that are much more intelligible than his arguments. We can see that the France of the sixteenth century civil wars, those wars being based on differences of religious opinion, needed a strengthening of the monarchy if France was to survive as a political community. By harking back to Aristotelian precedents, Bodin took the theory of sovereignty out of Divine Right theology and tied it to a view of what a political community needed in its own best interest. Bodin is impeccably classical in his recognition that states are typically destroyed by faction, and the fact that these factions are religious factions does not alter this truth at all…

"Bodin's defence of sovereignty is really a defence of rule against faction. He defends the division of Christendom's individual kingdoms into Protestant and Catholic as an accomplished fact. The problem is then how it can ever be that a realm divided into contending religious factions, each of which would coerce the other if it could…

"For all his Aristotelianism, Bodin recognises that the ancient city-state cannot be identified with the sixteenth-century realm of France. That is why the state's law must be supreme over other potentially competing systems of law, whether law means manners, morals, customs, or the law which defines minority or local privilege… Sovereignty is absolute and undivided. All surviving law-bound corporations – religious bodies, municipalities, commercial companies and guilds – owe their rights and privileges to the sovereign. It follows, therefore, that estates and parliaments exist only to advise the sovereign, and it also follows that the sovereign cannot be bound to take their advice…

"Bodin was anti-feudal where competing jurisdictions got in the way of the exercise of sovereignty. Far from thinking that the king's position was at the head of a hierarchy whose justification was the hierarchy itself, Bodin looked

---

[489] Bourke, "Power and the People", *History Today,* September, 2016, pp. 4-5.

at the matter from the top down, and attempted to show that all subordinate authorities derived from the supreme sovereign."[490]

Bodin believed that an absolute monarchy was necessary in France to balance the claims of the nobles and the Huguenots in the interests of the state as a whole. He allowed only one check on monarchy – the Estates General, an assembly representing clergy, nobles and commoners which met irregularly to vote new taxes and of which he was the secretary in 1576. Ironically, it was the Estates General that brought down the monarchy in 1789…

Does this mean that Bodin recognizes that the Estates General have a share in sovereignty? The famous German legal theorist Carl Schmitt answers in the negative: "[Bodin] discussed his concept [of sovereignty] using many practical examples and always returned to the same question: to what extent is the sovereign bound to laws, and responsible to the estates? To this last, especially important question, Bodin replies that commitments are binding because the obligatory strength of a commitment rests on natural law; in the case of emergencies, the bond to general natural principles ceases. Generally, he says, the ruler is responsible to the estates or the people only so long as the fulfilment of his commitment is in the interests of the people, but that he is not so bound *si la necessite est urgente* (if the necessity is urgent)…

"Bodin asks whether the promises that the ruler gives to the estates of the people override his sovereignty. He answers by referring to the case when it becomes necessary to counteract such promises, to amend or completely override the laws, *selon l'exigence des cas, des temps, et des personnes* (according to the demands of the cases, [the times], the laws, and the people.) If in such a case the ruler must first ask permission of a senate or the people, he must be prepared to let his subjects dispense with him. This seems to Bodin an absurdity, for he holds that since the estates are also not masters over the law, they would in turn have to allow their ruler to dispense with them, and so sovereignty would become *jouee a deux parties* (a play between two parties): sometimes the people would be master, sometimes the ruler, and this is contrary to all reason and justice. That is why the authority to suspend normally valid law – be this in general or in a particular case – is so much the mark of true sovereignty that Bodin derives all other features from it: declaration of war or peace agreement, appointment of officials, last resort, right to pardon, and so on…"[491]

Bodin's essentially secular defence of the indivisibility of the power of the monarch was very influential. The English royalist Robert Filmer used his arguments in his *Patriarcha*, written in defence of the Stuart monarchy. However, by 1628 all Bodin's works had been placed on the Vatican's

---

[490] McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 281-282, 283, 284.

[491] Schmitt, "Political Theology", in *The Sovereign Collection,* Antelope Hill Publishing, 2020, pp. 6, 7.

prohibited list for an obvious reason – they denied the right of the popes, claimed since the eleventh century, to overthrow secular rulers. And "Bellarmine's *Tractatus de potestate summi pontificis in temporalibus* reiterated, against Bodin's sovereignty theory, an indirect form of the traditional papal deposing power to release subjects from the duty of obedience to tyrants."[492]

---

[492] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Bodin.

32. RICHELIEU AND THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

The conflict between Spain and France over the future of Germany and the Holy Roman Empire dominated European politics until the middle of the seventeenth century. In the course of it, the ideal of a united Catholic Europe was destroyed as the more homogenous absolutism of France finally triumphed over that of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. The innovative Italian city-states were eclipsed, and the nation-states of France, England, Sweden and Holland came more to the fore.

However, it must not be thought that this conflict was a nationalist conflict in the modern use of the word. C.V. Wedgwood writes: "For the most part, national feelings could be exploited by the sovereign with whose rule they were connected, and the dynasty was, with few exceptions, more important in European diplomacy than the nation. Royal marriages were the rivets of international policy and the personal will of the sovereign or the interests of his family its motive… For all practical purposes France and Spain are misleading terms for the dynasties of Bourbon and Habsburg…"[493]

France's first minister until his death in 1642 was Cardinal Richelieu. What would have been more natural than for a powerful and sincerely believing Catholic Churchman such as Richelieu to work, in concert with the great Catholic Habsburg Empire, for the triumph of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in Europe? But that would have meant subordinating the interests of the Bourbon monarchy to those of the Habsburgs. And this Richelieu was not prepared to do. For "if Germany is lost," he said, "France cannot survive". In this placing of the interests of Catholicism firmly in second place he followed in the footsteps of King Francis I, who had even seriously contemplated an alliance with the infidel Turks against the Habsburgs.

"He had no zeal," writes Hilaire Belloc, "such as had so many men of his time, for the triumph of Catholicism; he did not consider Europe as a battlefield between tradition and revolution in doctrine and philosophy. He considered the conflict between them mainly as one by the right manipulation of which the interests of the French monarchy might be advanced. It is probable that he hardly understood, he certainly never yielded to, the instinctive feeling [of] all around him – that unless French policy were whole-heartedly Catholic in that critical moment 1620-40, Europe would never be reunited. He presumably thought the ultimate reunion of Europe, that is, the ultimate triumph of Catholicism, certain, and would not, to accelerate it, sacrifice one detail of his policy. He abandoned, and at last combated, the effort to restore Catholicism throughout Europe. He devoted himself to the consolidation and aggrandisement of the nation he governed. Hence toleration at home and alliance with Protestantism abroad against the Catholic Powers. Hence his nickname of 'the Cardinal of the Huguenots'. Hence the worship by those who

---

[493] Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (1944), in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 451.

accept the new religion of Nationalism and have forgotten, or think impossible, the idea of [Catholic] Christendom."[494]

Although we have seen that the conflict was not a nationalistic war, Hilaire Belloc nevertheless blamed Richelieu for dividing him from other Catholics through his "new religion of Nationalism": "We are what we are, and in peril of dissolution through our division, because Richelieu applied his remote, his isolated, his overpowering genius to the creation of the modern state, and, unknowingly to himself, to the ruin of our common unity of Christian life. [Through him], modern Europe arose, until there came, two hundred years after Richelieu, to confirm its divisions, and to render apparently irreparable the schism in our culture, the corresponding genius of Bismarck…"[495]

Richelieu's strategy was not evident at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, which began in 1618, writes James Hawes, "when the new King of Bohemia and Emperor-apparent, Ferdinand, an ardent Catholic, tried to rescind a deal he'd done with the Bohemian Protestants. In one of the more memorable scenes in European history, his top officials were thrown from a window – defenestrated – in Prague…

"In 1630, the Imperial forces, led by the Dutch-Bohemian double act of Generals Tilly and Wallenstein, seemed close to winning. But now Protestant Sweden and Catholic France began to fear total imperial control of Germany. The Catholic regime in Paris subsidized the Lutheran Swedes to intervene against the Catholic Empire. Gustavus Adolphus, the first general to employ highly trained infantry firepower, won an annihilating victory at Breitenfeld in 1631 and instructed his army to *turn Bohemia entirely to waste and ashes.* When he was killed at the Battle of Lützen the following year, the French entered the conflict themselves.

"It was now in reality a fight between Spanish Habsburgs and French Bourbons, with the disunited little German realms mere pawns or battlefields for the mightier, centralised nations. An entire generation simply gave up trading and farming, knowing that at any moment another vast and starving army might pass through, leaving nothing but plague and corpses in its wake."[496]

When Richelieu became France's First Minister [in 1624], writes Henry Kissinger, "Machiavelli's treatises on statesmanship circulated. It is not known whether Richelieu was familiar with these texts on the politics of power. He surely practiced their essential principles. Richelieu developed a radical approach to international order. He invented the idea that the state was an abstract and permanent entity existing in its own right. Its requirements were not determined by the ruler's personality, family interests, or the universal

---

[494] Belloc, *Richelieu*, pp. 83-84.

[495] Robert Knecht, "Cardinal Richelieu: Hero or Villain?" *History Today,* March, 2003, p. 17.

[496] Hawes, *The Shortest History of Germany,* Devon: Old Street Publishing, 2018, pp. 74-75.

demands of religion. Its lodestar was the national interest following calculable principles – what later came to be known as *raison d'état*. Hence it should be the basic unit of international relations.

"Richelieu commandeered the incipient state as an instrument of high policy. He centralized authority in Paris, created so-called intendants or professional stewards to project the government's authority into every district of the kingdom, brought efficiency to the gathering of taxes, and decisively challenged traditional local authorities of the old nobility. Royal power would continue to be exercised by the King as the symbol of the sovereign stat and an expression of the national interest.

"Richelieu saw the turmoil in Central Europe not as a call to arms to defend the Church but as a means to check imperial Habsburg pre-eminence. Though France's King had been styled as the *Rex Catholicissimus*, or the 'Most Catholic King', since the fourteenth century, France moved – at first unobtrusively, then openly – to support the Protestant coalition (of Sweden, Prussia, and the North German princes) on the basis of cold national-interest calculations.

"To outraged complaints that, as a cardinal, he owed a duty to the universal and eternal Catholic Church – which would imply an alignment *against* the rebellious Protestant princes of Northern and Central Europe – Richelieu cited his duties as a minister to a temporal, yet vulnerable, political entity. Salvation might be his personal objective, but as a statesman he was responsible for a political entity that did not have an eternal soul to be redeemed. 'Man is immortal, his salvation is hereafter,' he said. 'The state has no immortality, its salvation is now or never.'

"The fragmentation of Central Europe was perceived by Richelieu as a political and military necessity. The basic threat to France was strategic, not metaphysical or religious: a united Central Europe would be in a position to dominate the rest of the Continent. Hence it was in France's national interest to prevent the consolidation of Central Europe: 'If the [Protestant] party is entirely ruined, the brunt of the power of the House of Austria will fall on France.' France, by supporting a plethora of small states in Central Europe and weakening Austria, achieved its strategic objective.

"Richelieu's design would endure through vast upheavals. For two and a half centuries – from the emergence of Richelieu in 1624 to Bismarck's proclamation of the German Empire in 1871 – the aim of keeping Central Europe (more or less the territory of contemporary Germany, Austria, and northern Italy) divided remained the guiding principle of French foreign policy. For as long as this concept served as the essence of the European order, France was preeminent on the Continent. When it collapsed, so did France's dominant role…"[497]

---

[497] Kissinger, *World Order,* London: Penguin, 2015, pp. 20-23.

Thus just as the idea of natural law preached by the Jesuits Las Casas and De Mariana, Suarez and Bellarmine, was the worm in the apple of the theology of Catholic Absolutism, so the quasi- or proto-nationalism so successfully practised by Cardinal Richelieu seriously undermined the politics of Catholic Absolutism. Already the attempts by Francis I to limit the power of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in the middle of the sixteenth century had injured Catholic unity in the vital first stage of the struggle with Protestantism. Now, when Catholicism had reorganized itself at the Council of Trent and was back on the offensive in Germany especially, it was Richelieu's anti-Catholic diplomacy (he was always more loyal to his king that to his pope), driving a nationalist wedge into the united internationalist offensive of the Habsburg Catholic monarchs against the Protestant princes, that guaranteed the survival of German Protestantism.

As the Pope said on hearing of his death in 1642: "If there be a God, then Cardinal de Richelieu will have much to answer for. If there be none, why, he lived a successful life…"[498]

---

[498] Belloc, *Richelieu*, p. 304.

33. THE TREATY OF WESTPHALIA

The second major international settlement of this period was the Westphalian settlement. Concluded in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years' War (and of the Eighty Years' War between Spain and Holland), it reflected the European peoples' psychological exhaustion with religious conflict.[499] As C.V. Wedgwood put it, at the end of the war people at last "grasped the futility of putting their beliefs of the mind to the judgement of the sword. Instead, they rejected religion as an object to fight form and found others."[500] Or, as Stephen Winder writes, "The fighting had burned out the religious impulse that had begun it."[501]

"The exhausted participants," writes Henry Kissinger, "met to define a set of arrangements that would stanch the bloodletting. Religious unity had fractured with the survival and spread of Protestantism; political diversity was inherent in the number of autonomous political units that had fought to a draw. So it was that in Europe the conditions of the contemporary world were approximated: a multiplicity of political units, none powerful enough to defeat all others, many adhering to contradictory philosophies and internal practices, in search of neutral rules to regulate their conduct and mitigate conflict.

"The Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality, not a unique moral insight. It relied on a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other's domestic affairs and checking each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power. No single claim to truth or universal rule had prevailed in Europe's contests…"[502]

There were, of course, other concepts of order in the world at that time – the Russian, the Chinese, the Islamic. Even the North American was not identical with the Westphalian system.

But, continues Kissinger, "of all these concepts of order, Westphalian principles are, at this writing, the sole generally recognized basis of what exists of a world order. The Westphalian system spread around the world as the framework for a state-based international order spanning multiple civilizations and regions because, as the European nations expanded, they carried the blueprint of their international order with them. While they often neglected to

---

[499] "By conservative estimates," writes Michael Allen Gillespie, the religious wars "claimed the lives of 10 percent of the population in England, 15 percent in France, 30 percent in Germany, and more than 50 percent in Bohemia. By comparison, European dead in World War II exceeded 10 percent of the population only in Germany and the USSR. Within our experience only the Holocaust and the killing fields of Cambodia can begin to rival the levels of destruction that characterized the Wars of Religion." (*The Theological Origins of Modernity,* University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 130). Gillespie forgets the vast numbers killed in the Soviet Union by the Bolsheviks before the Second World War.

[500] Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War,* London, 1938, p. 506.

[501] Winder, *Danubia,* London: Picador, 2013, p. 161.

[502] Kissinger, op. cit., p. 3.

apply concepts of sovereignty to the colonies and colonized peoples, when these peoples began to demand their independence, they did so in the name of Westphalian concepts. The principles of national independence, sovereign statehood, national interest, and noninterference proved effective arguments against the colonizers themselves during the struggles for independence and protection for their newly formed states afterward…

"The Peace of Westphalia became a turning point in the history of nations because the elements it set in place were as uncomplicated as they were sweeping. The state, not the empire, dynasty, or religious confession, was affirmed as the building block of European order. The concept of state sovereignty was established. The right of each signatory to choose its own domestic structure and religious orientation free from intervention was affirmed, while novel clauses ensured that minority sects could practice their faith in peace and be free from the prospect of forced conversion. Beyond the immediate demands of the moment, the principles of a system of 'international relations' were taking shape, motivated by the common desire to avoid a recurrence of total war on the Continent. Diplomatic exchanges, including the stationing of resident representatives in the capitals of fellow states (practice followed before then generally only by the Venetians), were designed to regulate relations and promote the arts of peace. The parties envisioned future conferences and consultations on the Westphalian model as forums for settling dispute before they led to conflict. International law, developed by traveling scholar advisors such as Hugo de Groot (Grotius) during the war, was treated as an expandable body of agreed doctrine aimed at the cultivation of harmony, with the Westphalian treaties themselves at its heart.

"The genius of the system, and the reason it spread across the world, was that its provisions were procedural, not substantive. If a state would accept these basic requirements, it could be recognized as an international citizen able to maintain its own culture, politics, religion, and internal policies, shielded by the international system from outside intervention. The ideal of imperial or religious unity – the operating premise of Europe's and most other regions' historic orders – had implied that in theory only one center of power could be full legitimate. The Westphalian concept took multiplicity as its starting point and drew a variety of multiple societies, each accepted as a reality, into a common search for order. By the mid-twentieth century, this international system was in place in every continent; it remains the scaffolding of international order such as it now exists…

"The Peace of Westphalia did not mandate a specific arrangement of alliances or a permanent European political structure. With the end of the universal Church as the ultimate source of authority, and the weakening of the Holy Roman Emperor, the ordering concept for Europe became the balance of power – which, by definition, involves ideological neutrality and adjustment to evolving circumstances. The nineteenth-century British statesman Lord Palmerston expressed its basic principle as follows: 'We have no eternal allies,

and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow…"[503]

The most important immediate consequence of the Peace was the degradation of the power of the Holy Roman Empire. "It would now be possible," writes Bobbitt, "to speak of the interests of the Empire as deriving from the electors, princes, and free cities represented in the Diet. All princes were confirmed in their 'territorial superiority in matters ecclesiastical as well as political'. All princes gained the right to conclude treaties with foreign powers. Thus did the Reformation destroy the universal lay structure [of the Empire], just as the Renaissance had destroyed the universal Church…

"The Peace of Westphalia 'is null, void, invalid, damnable, reprobate, inane, empty of meaning and effect for all time,' declared Pope Innocent X, reflecting a shrewd and percipient assessment of the implications of the treaty for a universalist Catholic Europe. Rather than an imperial, hierarchical states system that might operate in tandem with a pan-European *Reconquista*, the Peace created a system based on absolutist sovereignty predicated on the legal equality of states."[504]

The pope had said the same about *Magna Carta* over 430 years before – and with even less practical result. He was of course being consistent with his own principles when he rejected a world order that placed all states on a theoretically equal basis and had no place for the concept of one universal truth. But when he rejected the Peace of Westphalia, he was simply ignored, even by the Catholic princes. For the treaty itself bound all its signatories to ignore any ecclesiastical objections to it, making it perhaps the first purely secular treaty in European history and ushering in a new age of secularism.

---

[503] Kissinger, op. cit., pp. 6-7, 26-27, 30.
[504] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 116.

34. THEORIES OF SOVEREIGNTY: (2) GROTIUS VERSUS SHELDEN

In conformity with Westphalian principles, the Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) took political thought not only beyond the categories of medieval Catholic thought, but even beyond religion altogether. Grotius first came to prominence by providing, in his *De Antiquitate* (1610), a justification for the Dutch War of Independence against Spain. Grotius wanted to find a way of regulating wars in accordance with principles that would be universally accepted. For, as he wrote in 1625, "I saw prevailing throughout the Christian world a license in making war of which even barbarous nations would have been ashamed; recourse was had to arms for slight reasons, or for no reason; and when arms were once taken up, all reverence for divine and human law was thrown away, just as if men were thenceforth authorized to commit all crimes without restraint."[505]

Grotius wrote a popular religious work, *On the Truth of the Christian Religion*. However, in *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625) he let slip a phrase that pointed the way to a theory of international law and human rights that was completely independent of Christianity: "Even the will of an omnipotent Being," he wrote, "cannot change or abrogate" natural law, which "would maintain its objective validity *even if we should assume the impossible, that there is no God* or that He does not care for human affairs" (Prolegomena XI). According to Grotius, therefore, natural law is *the most* objective truth, more objective, if that were possible, even than the existence of God or God's care for the world. That being the case, *theoretically* if natural law says that something is right, whereas God says it is wrong, we should stick to natural law. Of course, if natural law derives ultimately from God, there will never by any such conflict between Divine and natural law. But Grotius appears here to envisage the possibility of a world with natural law but without God.

What, then, is the "Grotian view" on international law? According to Bobbitt, this is generally taken to mean "the assertion on the part of the individual state to serve the interests of the society of states as a whole. A weaker version of this simply asserts that there are such interests; a stronger version claims that only such interests can justify certain activities of the State, such as war. Thus the Grotian view is to be distinguished from the Hobbesian view that international society can have no legal rules because there is no sovereign to organize and maintain the collaboration among states that might replace the constant struggle of each state against every other state. Although the Grotian society of states is perhaps anarchic, it does not exist in a naked state of nature. The rationale for the Grotian view is that there exists a great society of all mankind – *humani generis societas* – and all human institutions are governed by the rules of that society. Thus the Grotian perspective is also quite different from the Kantian view that perpetual peace can only be achieved through the construction of supra-state institutions.

---

[505] Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis,* in Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 517.

"Six corollaries follow from the Grotian view: that natural law is a source (though not the only source) of the rules that govern states (because man is a creature of nature, and all his activities are governed thereby); that international society is universal and not merely limited to Christendom or the European state system; that individuals and non-state actors can have a role in the application of the rules of international law; that the universal traits shared by all mankind can give rise to cooperative requirements, and these requirements can be a source of justice; that supra-state institutions are not necessary for the rule of law to be applied to states; and that, being a source of law, the individual person is a bearer of rights. Taken together, this infrastructure of ideas provides a surprisingly modern and surprisingly accurate description of international law as it actually is – universal yet pluralistic, occasionally the source of cooperation, functioning in the absence of a universal sovereign but difficult to enforce and rarely functioning very authoritatively, a discipline that embraces not only the relations between states, but also the human rights of individuals…"[506]

*

We may contrast Grotius' attempt to found political theory on abstract, rationalist and universalist principles with the much more conservative, tradition-based approach of his contemporary, John Selden (1584–1654), whom we have already met as the English parliamentarian and opponent of Stuart absolutism. "In the generation that bore the full brunt of the new absolutist ideas," write Haivry and Hazony, "it was John Selden who stood above all others. The most important common lawyer of his generation, he was also a formidable political philosopher and polymath who knew more than twenty languages. Selden became a prominent leader in Parliament, where he joined the older Coke in a series of clashes with the king. In this period, Parliament denied the king's right to imprison Englishmen without showing cause, to impose taxes and forced loans without the approval of Parliament, to quarter soldiers in private homes, and to wield martial law in order to circumvent the laws of the land.

"In 1628, Selden played a leading role in drafting and passing an act of Parliament called the Petition of Right, which sought to restore and safeguard 'the divers rights and liberties of the subjects' that had been known under the traditional English constitution. Among other things, it asserted that 'your subjects have inherited this freedom, that they should not be compelled to contribute to any tax . . . not set by common consent in Parliament'; that 'no freeman may be taken or imprisoned or be disseized of his freehold or liberties, or his free customs . . . but by the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land'; and that no man 'should be put out of his land or tenements, nor taken, nor imprisoned, nor disinherited nor put to death without being brought to answer by due process of law.'

---

[506] Bobbitt, op. cit., pp. 513-514.

"In the Petition of Right, then, we find the famous principle of 'no taxation without representation,' as well as versions of the rights enumerated in the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments of the American Bill of Rights—all declared to be ancient constitutional English freedoms and unanimously approved by Parliament, before Locke was even born. Although not mentioned in the Petition explicitly, freedom of speech had likewise been reaffirmed by Coke as 'an ancient custom of Parliament' in the 1590s and was the subject of the so-called Protestation of 1621 that landed Coke, then seventy years old, in the Tower of London for nine months.

"In other words, Coke, Eliot, and Selden risked everything to defend the same liberties that we ourselves hold dear in the face of an increasingly authoritarian regime. (In fact, John Eliot was soon to die in the king's prison.) But they did not do so in the name of liberal doctrines of universal reason, natural rights, or 'self-evident' truths. These they explicitly rejected because they were conservatives, not liberals. Let's try to understand this.

"Selden saw himself as an heir to Fortescue and, in fact, was involved in republishing the *Praise for the Laws of England* in 1616. His own much more extensive theoretical defense of English national traditions appeared in the form of short historical treatises on English law, as well as in a series of massive works (begun while Selden was imprisoned on ill-defined sedition charges for his activities in the 1628–29 Parliament) examining political theory and law in conversation with classical rabbinic Judaism. The most famous of these was his monumental *Natural and National Law* (1640). In these works, Selden sought to defend conservative traditions, including the English one, not only against the absolutist doctrines of the Stuarts but also against the claims of a universalist rationalism, according to which men could simply consult their own reason, which was the same for everyone, to determine the best constitution for mankind. This rationalist view had begun to collect adherents in England among followers of the great Dutch political theorist Hugo Grotius, whose *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625) suggested that it might be possible to do away with the traditional constitutions of nations by relying only on the rationality of the individual.

"Then as now, conservatives could not understand how such a reliance on alleged universal reason could be remotely workable, and Selden's *Natural and National Law* includes an extended attack on such theories in its first pages. There Selden argues that, everywhere in history, 'unrestricted use of pure and simple reason' has led to conclusions that are 'intrinsically inconsistent and dissimilar among men.' If we were to create government on the basis of pure reason alone, this would not only lead to the eventual dissolution of government but to widespread confusion, dissension, and perpetual instability as one government is changed for another that appears more reasonable at a given moment. Indeed, following Fortescue, Selden rejects the idea that a universally applicable system of rights is even possible. As he writes in an earlier work, what 'may be most convenient or just in one state may be as unjust

and inconvenient in another, and yet both excellently as well framed as governed.' With regard to those who believe that their reasoning has produced the universal truths that should be evident to all men, he shrewdly warns that custom quite often wears the mask of nature, and we are taken in [by this] to the point that the practices adopted by nations, based solely on custom, frequently come to seem like natural and universal laws of mankind.

"Selden responds to the claims of universal reason by arguing for a position that can be called *historical empiricism*. On this view, our reasoning in political and legal matters should be based upon inherited national tradition. This permits the statesman or jurist to overcome the small stock of observation and experience that individuals are able to accumulate during their own lifetimes ('that kind of ignorant infancy, which our short lives alone allow us') and to take advantage of 'the many ages of former experience and observation,' which permit us to 'accumulate years to us, as if we had lived even from the beginning of time.' In other words, by consulting the accumulated experience of the past, we overcome the inherent weakness of individual judgement, bringing to bear the many lifetimes of observation by our forebears, who wrestled with similar questions under diverse conditions.

"This is not to say that Selden is willing to accept the prescription of the past blindly. He pours scorn on those who embrace errors originating in the distant past, which, he says, have often been accepted as true by entire communities and 'adopted without protest, and loaded onto the shoulders of posterity like so much baggage.' Recalling the biblical Jeremiah's insistence on an empirical study of the paths of old (Jeremiah 6:16), Selden argues that the correct method is that 'all roads must be carefully examined. We must ask about the ancient paths, and only what is truly the best may be chosen.' But for Selden, the instrument for such examination and selection is not the wild guesswork of individual speculation concerning various hypothetical possibilities. In the life of a nation, the inherited tradition of legal opinions and legislation preserves a multiplicity of perspectives from different times and circumstances, as well as the consequences for the nation when the law has been interpreted one way or another. Looking back upon these varied and changing positions within the tradition, and considering their real-life results, one can distinguish the true precepts of the law from the false turns that have been taken in the past. As Selden explains: 'The way to find out the Truth is by others' mistakings: For if I [wish] to go to such [and such] a place, and [some]one had gone before me on the right-hand [side], and he was out, [while] another had gone on the left-hand, and he was out, this would direct me to keep the middle way that peradventure would bring me to the place I desired to go.'

"Selden thus turns, much as the Hebrew Bible does, to a form of pragmatism to explain what is meant when statesmen and jurists speak of *truth*. The laws develop through a process of trial and error over generations, as we come to understand how peace and prosperity ('what is truly best,' 'the place I desired to go') arise from one turn rather than another.

"Selden recognizes that, in making these selections from the traditions of the past, we tacitly rely upon a higher criterion for selection, a natural law established by God, which prescribes 'what is truly best' for mankind in the most elementary terms. In his *Natural and National Law*, Selden explains that this natural law has been discovered over long generations since the biblical times and has come down to us in various versions. Of these, the most reliable is that of the Talmud, which describes the seven laws of the children of Noah prohibiting murder, theft, sexual perversity, cruelty to beasts, idolatry and defaming God, and requiring courts of law to enforce justice. The experience of thousands of years has taught us that these laws frame the peace and prosperity that is the end of all nations, and that they are the unseen root from which the diverse laws of all the nations ultimately derive.

"Nonetheless, Selden emphasizes that no nation can govern itself by directly appealing to such fundamental laws, because 'diverse nations, as diverse men, have their diverse collections and inferences, and so make their diverse laws to grow to what they are, out of one and the same root.' Each nation thus builds its own unique effort to implement the natural law according to an understanding based on its own unique experience and conditions. It is thus wise to respect the different laws found among nations, both those that appear right to us and those that appear mistaken, for different perspectives may each have something to contribute to our pursuit of the truth. (Selden's treatment of the plurality of human knowledge is cited by Milton as a basis for his defense of freedom of speech in *Areopagitica*.)

"Selden thus offers us a picture of a philosophical parliamentarian or jurist. He must constantly maintain the strength and stability of the inherited national edifice as a whole—but also recognize the need to make repairs and improvements where these are needed. In doing so, he seeks to gradually approach, by trial and error, the best that is possible for each nation."[507]

---

[507] Haivry and Hazony, "What is Conservatism?", *American Affairs,* Summer, 2017, vol. I, no. 2, https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/what-is-conservatism/

35. THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

The English revolution was, together with the French revolution of 1789 and the Russian revolution of 1917, the most important event of modern European history. Like the later revolutions, it tried to overthrow both the national Church and the monarchy. Like them, too, it elicited a very broad range of arguments on the fundamental questions of the origin and nature of the State and its relationship to the Church and people. In the English revolution, the pros and cons of all the major forms of government - with the single exception of the Orthodox symphony of powers, - which, however, received a powerful contemporary advocate in the person of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow – were exhaustively discussed, often by men of undoubted, if not always well-balanced genius, such as the poet and pamphleteer John Milton.

Ann Hughes writes: "At least one in 10 – or perhaps as many as one in five – men in England and Wales fought in the Civil War. It has been calculated that loss of life, in proportion to the national population of the time, was greater than in the First World War. Perhaps 85,000 people, mostly men but also women camp followers, died in combat. Up to 130,000 people were killed indirectly, primarily as a result of disease spread by troops."[508]

The English revolution was a "revolution" not only in the sense that it overthrew the powers that be, but also in the older sense of a cyclical movement. For it brought things back to the *status quo ante* formally, if not essentially. Thus from 1642 to 1688, England underwent successively: an Anglican monarchy, a Calvinist parliamentocracy, the beginnings of a communist revolution, a military dictatorship, the restoration of the Anglican monarchy, a Catholic absolute monarchy, and the second restoration of the Anglican (now constitutional) monarchy under new (Dutch) leadership.

Was the English revolution essentially religious or political? There are differences of opinion on this question. Sir Roger Scruton writes that at the heart of the civil war was "religion – the Puritan desire to impose godly rule on the people of Great Britain regardless of whether they wanted it, and the leaning of the Stuart King towards a Roman Catholic faith that had become deeply antipathetic to the majority and a vehicle to unwanted foreign intervention."[509]

On the other hand, the French Prime Minister in the 1840s, François Guizot, wrote: "Taking everything together, the English revolution was essentially *political*; it was brought about in the midst of a religious people and in a religious age; religious thoughts and passions were its instruments; but its chief design and definite aim were political, were devoted to liberty, and the

---

[508] Hughes, in "The Great Misconceptions of the Civil War", *BBC History Magazine,* May,2015, p. 36.
[509] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative,* London: Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 69.

abolition of all absolute power." [510] Niall Ferguson agrees: "the aristocratic 'junto' aspired not so much to religious revolution, but to rendering the English king little more than a Venetian doge, subordinate to their oligarchy."[511]

And yet Cromwell constantly used religious language. And John Milton used similarly religious language to clothe his revolutionary message: "Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her as out of Zion should be sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of reformation to all Europe? Now once again, by all concurrence of signs and the general instinct of holy and devout men, God is decreeing to begin some new and great reformation in his Church, even to the reforming of the Reformation itself. What does He, then, but reveal Himself to His servants, and (as His manner is) first to His Englishmen?"[512]

However, the use of religious language does not mean that the motivation of the parliamentarians was primarily religious. Rachel Foxley writes: "In a speech from 1655 when looking back at the war, Cromwell said: 'Religion was not the thing at the first contested for, but God brought it to that issue at last and gave it to us by way of redundancy, and at last it proved that which is most dear to us.' Historians have often dismissed this as a mistake or hindsight on Cromwell's part, but I think he was quite serious: it was God, not people, who had the power to bring religious reform out of civil war. The godly could not set out to fight a war of religion.

"So parliamentarians and Puritans like Cromwell were quite careful to avoid saying that religion could be a justification for war. Instead, they justified their war by saying they were fighting for a set of liberties protected by law and that Charles I, in their view, had been attacking. They didn't think it was legitimate to fight for religion with the sword because religion could only be fought for with spiritual weapons. But they did think it legitimate to take up arms against a ruler who was breaking the law of the land. Along with political liberties and rights, this also included religion because the English Reformation had been established through parliamentary statute…"[513]

Having said all that, and while agreeing that the main protagonists were locked in a struggle for *political* power, we should not underestimate the religious element, which was clearly the main motivation behind the Scottish Covenanters in 1639 after King Charles' attempt to impose the English Book of Common Prayer on the Scottish Church, and remained powerful right until the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Nor, in the last analysis, can we fully disentangle

---

[510] Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 1847, 1997, p. 217.

[511] Ferguson, op. cit., p. 89. On the other hand, John Morrill considers the English revolution not so much the first of Europe's political revolution as the last of its religious wars. ("The Morrill Majority", *History Today,* October, 2005, p. 19)

[512] Milton, *To the Lords and Commons of England*, 1644.

[513] Foxley, in "The Great Misconceptions of the Civil War", *BBC History Magazine,* May, 2015, p. 38.

the political ideas of the age from the religious ideas. Indeed, insofar as it was a *Calvinist* revolution it was *both* religious *and* political; for, as we have seen, Calvinism represented a rebellion against *all* traditional authority, both ecclesiastical and secular.[514]

Tombs puts it well when he declares that in that age "politics was a branch of theology rather as twenty-first-century politics is a branch of economics"[515]. And so we can agree with his judgement that the Civil War "was the last in the series of European wars of religion. England was not a revolutionary society: there was no class war, and the two sides were not socio-economically defined. Parliament and the Crown were not pursuing a centuries-old constitutional struggle of liberty against tyranny,"[516] but rather working out the consequences of the new concepts of authority in Church and State injected into the European consciousness by the Protestant Reformation…

*

"The whole of Europe," writes Sir Christopher Hill, "faced a crisis in the mid-seventeenth century, which expressed itself in a series of breakdowns, revolts and civil wars. The sixteenth century had seen the opening up of America and of new trade routes to the Far East; a sudden growth of population all over Europe, and a monetary inflation which was also all-European. These phenomena are related (both as effect and as cause) to the rise of capitalist relations within feudal society and a consequent regrouping of social classes. Governments tried in different ways to limit, control or profit by these changes, and with varying results. The republic of the United Provinces, where a burgher oligarchy had taken power during the sixteenth-century revolt against Spain, was best adapted to weather the crisis and enjoyed its greatest prosperity in the seventeenth century. But with a population of only some 2-2½ millions and meagre natural resources, its predominance could not last once its larger rivals had won through to a more appropriate political organization. Germany and Italy failed to establish national states based on a single national market during this period, and slipped behind in the race: so too did Spain, where the power of landed interests and the church counteracted the flying start which the conquest of South America appeared to have given. In France, after a series of convulsions in the first half of the century, national unity was secured under the monarchy with the acquiescence of the commercial classes, who accepted a recognized but subordinate place in the country's power structure. Only in England was a decisive break-through made in the seventeenth century, which ensured that henceforth governments would give great weight to commercial considerations. Decisions made during the century enabled England to become the first industrialized imperialist great power, and

---

[514] Some of the leading revolutionaries, such as John Milton, were also Arians. See C.S. Lewis, *Preface to Paradise Lost,* New Delhi: Atlantic, 2012, pp. 82-83.

[515] Tombs, op. cit., p. 304.

[516] Tombs, op. cit., p. 273.

ensured that it should be ruled by a representative assembly. Within the seventeenth century the decisive decades are those between 1640 and 1660."[517]

What were the contextual phenomena that must be taken account of when considering the causes of the revolution?

"First, there are the political and constitutional problems, arising mainly from the relationship between the executive and the men of property who regarded themselves as the natural rulers of the counties and cities. In the course of the sixteenth century the great feudal lords had been disarmed and tamed, the church had lost its international connections, much of its property and many of its immunities. The residuary legatees were the crown, and the gentry and merchant oligarchies who ran local affairs. So long as there was any danger of revolt by over-mighty subjects, or of peasant revolt, or of foreign-supported Catholic revolt, the alliance between crown and 'natural rulers', though tacit, was firm. There was no need to define it, especially during the last half of the century when the sovereigns of England were successively a minor and two women. But before Oliver had reached his tenth year all these things had changed. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the failure of Essex's rebellion in 1601, of Gunpowder Plot in 1605 and of the Midlands peasant rising in 1607, the peaceful and uneventful succession of James I on Elizabeth's death in 1603, all these showed the stability of protestant England. It was now possible to fall out over the distribution of authority between the victors.

"In James's reign Parliament, representing the men of property, was quite clearly arrogating more power to itself – over taxation, over commercial policy, over foreign policy – and asserting its own 'liberties', its independent status in the constitution. James I, an experienced and successful King of Scotland for thirty-six years, retaliated by enunciating the theory of Divine Right of Kings and stressing the royal prerogative, the independent power of the executive. Elizabeth also had probably believed in the Divine Right of Queens, but she had been too prudent to thrust her views down her subjects' throats. James proved more circumspect in practice than in theory, and genuinely sought compromise with his powerful subjects. But his son Charles I was less wise. By arbitrary arrest and imprisonment he enforced his claim to tax without Parliamentary consent; he tried to rule without Parliament by a quite novel use of the prerogative courts as executive organs to enforce government policy. Elizabeth, Professor Elton tells us, had always shown 'reluctance to assert the central authority against local interests'. The first two Stuarts interfered increasingly with these interests, and in the 1630s there was a concerted campaign to drive local government, to force unpopular government policies on the sheriffs, deputy-lieutenants and justices of the peace who were used to being little sovereigns in their own areas. In the 1620s billeting of troops and the use of martial law had seemed to be a preparation for military rule, over-riding the authority of justices of the peace; in the thirties Sir Thomas Wentworth was believed to be building up an army in Ireland with which to

[517] Hill, *God's Englishman,* London: Penguin, 1970, pp. 13-14.

subdue England and Scotland. Thanks to control of the judges Charles seemed likely to establish Ship Money as an annual tax, over which Parliament had no control. He seemed on the way to establishing an absolute monarchy of the continental type."[518]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The first parliament of Charles I's reign – in the spring of 1626 – saw the same conflicts that had disfigured his father's relationship with Parliament, only in a sharper form. The main issue again was money: Charles, like his father, thought that he had only to ask for it in order to receive it by his Divine right as monarch. Parliament, however, wanted details on know how the money was going to be spent, and also wanted the removal of the king's corrupt favourite, the Duke of Buckingham. Charles would have none of it. "Remember," he said, "that parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting, and dissolution; therefore, as I find their fruits good or evil, they are to continue, or not to be."

The issues were remarkably similar to those of the Fronde in contemporary France and of the later struggle between Tsar Nicholas II and the Russian Duma: the need for money to wage an international war (World War I instead of the Thirty Years' War), the argument over where supreme power lay (the Duma instead of Parliament), the scandal over the power of a royal favourite (Rasputin instead of Buckingham and Stafford).

"These political and constitutional quarrels," continues Hill, "concealed, or were mingled with, deeper issues. Disputes over customs and impositions in James's reign raised the questions of whether the King alone or the King in Parliament should control commercial policy. Disputes over foreign policy included questions affecting Anglo-Dutch rivalry for the trade of the world, British imperial policy in India, North America and the West Indies. On all these questions the governments of the first two Stuarts gave little satisfaction to commercial interests (which included many gentlemen investors). Indeed, they seemed by their passivity in the Thirty Years' War (due to shortage of money, itself the result of the tax-payers' lack of confidence), by Charles I's provocation of protestant Scotland and his concessions to papists in Ireland, to be endangering England's national security and independence. Government regulation and control of the economy contradicted the views of those who thought that freer trade and industrial production would maximize output as well as enriching the producers. The military basis of feudalism had vanished, but fiscal feudalism remained. If a tenant-in-chief of the crown – and this category included most great landowners – died before his heir had reached the age of 21, the latter became a ward of the crown. The management of the ward's estates, and the right to arrange his marriage, were taken over by the Court of Wards; often the wardship would be handed on to a courtier, who made what profit he could from the estate during the minority, and no doubt

---

[518] Hill, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

married the heir or heiress to some needy relative of his own. A minority might thus gravely impale the family estate. Under James and Charles revenue from the Court of Wards rose rapidly. In 1610 Parliament had tried to buy the abolition of this court and the feudal tenures of landlords: the theme will recur.

"The problem of agricultural production was crucial. England's population was growing [from 2.2 million in 1500 to 5.5 million in the 1630s], and it was increasingly concentrated in urban or rural industrial centres, which were not self-sufficient. If this population was to be fed, a vast increase in production was necessary. In the sixteenth century starvation had been the inevitable consequence of a series of bad harvests, the worst of which occurred just before Oliver was born, from 1593 to 1597. More food could be produced if the vast areas reserved as royal forests were thrown open to cultivation: if commons and waste lands were ploughed up; if fens and marshes were drained. But each of these three solutions posed problems which were social as well as technical: who was to control and profit by the extension of cultivation? Smaller occupiers, squatters, cottagers and all those with common rights would lose valuable perquisites if forests, fens and commons were enclosed and taken into private ownership: the right to pasture their own beasts, to hunt game, to gather fuel. For exactly this reason Francis Bacon advised James I to retain control over royal wastes and commons, as potential sources of wealth if they were enclosed and improved. Throughout the first half of the century enclosing landlords fought cottagers and squatters claiming rights in commons and fens; the crown fought those who encroached on royal forests. The government sporadically fined enclosures, but did little to protect the victims of enclosure: it was itself an enclosing landlord.

"The interregnum [1649-1660] saw a widespread movement against enclosure and for the rights of copyholders, which in 1649-50 culminated in the Digger or True Leveller movement. The Diggers demanded that all crown lands and forests, all commons and wastes, should be cultivated by the poor in communal ownership, and that buying and selling land should be forbidden by law. 'Do not all strive to enjoy the land?' asked their leader Gerrard Winstanley. 'The gentry strive for land, the clergy strive for land, the common people strive for land, and buying and selling 'is an art whereby people endeavour to cheat one another of the land'. The expansion of food production waited on solution of the questions of landownership, of common rights, of security of tenure for copyholders, and a host of connected problems…"[519]

Finally, there was the religious question. This had both a domestic and an international aspect. The domestic aspect related to the power of the bishops of the Anglican church. "Many protestants had hoped that just as Henry VIII's breach with Rome had been followed by more radical changes in Edward VI's reign, so the accession of Elizabeth would lead to a resumption of the policy of continuous reformation. They were disappointed, and a stalemate ensued. So long as England's national independence was in the balance the government

---

[519] Hill, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

needed Puritan support against papist enemies at home and abroad, and Puritans had no wish to overthrow Elizabeth to the advantage of Mary Queen of Scots and Spain. But the victories of the 1590s and succession of James I brought questions of church government to a head. The bishops went over to the offensive against their critics, and harried sectaries out of the land. Through the High Commission the independent authority of the episcopal hierarchy grew, and Parliament and common lawyers alike wished to control it. Especially under William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633, but in effective control of ecclesiastical affairs from 1628, the claims of the clergy were extended. Church courts were used impartially against members of the gentry and professions as well as against lower-class sectaries. But the independence of thought, the dissidence of dissent, which was rooted in a century of Bible-reading, could not so easily be crushed. Already some Baptists were suggesting the possibility of tolerating more than one brand of religious worship in a state.

"As Winstanley suggested, ecclesiastical questions were also in part economic. The Laudian attempt to increase tithe payments (which had declined in real value during the inflationary century before 1640) would in effect have meant increased taxation of the laity without Parliament's consent. Laud's expressed desire to recover impropriated tithes for the church threatened the property rights of all who had succeeded to the estates of the dissolved monasteries. Laud's attempt to suppress lecturers similarly challenged the right of richer members of congregations, and of town corporations, to have the kind of preaching they liked if they were prepared to pay for it. As society was progressively commercialized and as the common-law courts adapted themselves to the needs of this business society, so the jurisdiction of church courts, backed up by the power of the High Commission, was more and more resented. Their excommunications, their prohibition of labour on saints' days, their enforcement of tithe claims, their putting men on oath to incriminate themselves or their neighbours – all these were increasingly out of tune with the wishes of the educated, propertied laity, who were also critical of ecclesiastical control of education and the censorship. The Laudians rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and doubted whether the Pope was Antichrist. This 'Arminian' theology, and the Laudian attempt to elevate the power and social status of the clergy, seemed to many protestants to be abandoning basic tenets of the reformation."[520]

The Arminians, writes Peter Ackroyd, they "believed in the primacy of order and ritual in the customary ceremonies; they preached against predestination and in favour of the sacraments, and had already earned the condemnation of the Calvinists at the Synod of Dort [in Holland, in 1618]... Some of them were dismissed as mere papists under another name, but in fact they were as much estranged from the Catholic communion as they were from the puritan congregation; they wished for a purified national Church, and their most significant supporter was already William Laud, a prominent bishop now in royal favour. The English Arminians in turn became known as 'Laudians', with

[520] Hill, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

one of their central precepts concerning 'the beauty of holiness' by which they meant genuflections and bowings as well as painted images. There was even room to be made for an incense pot.

"The Arminians had been in an equivocal position during the previous reign because of James's residual Calvinist sympathies and his unwillingness to countenance doctrinal controversy. His son was made of sterner, or more unbending, material. In the weeks after James's death, Bishop Laud prepared for the new king a list of senior churchmen, with the letters 'O' or 'P' appended to their names; 'O' meant orthodox and 'P' signalled a puritan. So the lines were drawn.

"The powerful bias towards 'adoration', with all the ritual and formality it implied, was deeply congenial to the young king who had already brought order and ceremony to his court; just as he delighted in masques, so he wished for a religion of splendour and mystery. Charles had in any case a deep aversion to puritanism in all of its forms, which he associated with disobedience and the dreadful notion of 'popularity'; he thought of cobblers and tailors and sharp-tongued dogmatists. Above all else he wanted a well-ordered and disciplined Church, maintaining undeviating policies as well as uniform customs, with the bishops as its principal representatives. It was to be a bulwark in his defence of national stability. Laud himself used to quote the phrase '*stare super antiquas vias*' – it was important to stand upon ancient ways.

"With a sermon delivered in the summer of 1626, Laud aimed a direct hit against the puritans by claiming that the Calvinists were essentially anti-authoritarian and therefore anti-monarchical. In the following year George Abbot was deprived of his powers as archbishop of Canterbury and replaced by a commission of anti-Calvinist bishops. When one Calvinist bishop, Davenant of Salisbury, delivered a sermon in which he defended the doctrine of predestination, he was summoned before the privy council; after the prelate had kissed the king's hand, Charles informed him that 'he would not have this high priest meddled withal or debated, either the one way or the other, because it was too high for the people's understanding'. After 1628 no Calvinist preachers were allowed to stand at Paul's Cross, the centre for London sermons…

"Yet the Calvinists, and the puritans, did not go gently into the dark. The victory of the Laudian cause in the king's counsels, more than anything else, stirred the enmity between opposing religious camps that defined the last years of his reign. It should be added, however, that these doctrinal discontents wafted over the heads of most parish clergy and their congregations who attended church as a matter of habit and took a simple attitude towards the gospels and the commandments…"[521]

*

---

[521] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 121-123.

The religious question also had an international aspect. As a Calvinist king, James I had felt obliged to join the Protestant International in the Thirty Years' War in support of his sister, Elizabeth Stuart, the "White Queen" of Bohemia; and this is certainly what most of the people wanted. But parliament, distrustful of his prodigal habits, did not give him the money he needed to make an effective intervention in Europe.

Moreover, his heart was not really in the war because he wanted his son Charles to marry the Spanish infanta (he allowed him to go with the Duke of Buckingham to woo her in Madrid), and, later, the French Henrietta Maria – both Catholics...

Charles eventually married Henrietta Maria. But she refused to attend what she considered to be his heretical coronation service in February, 1626. The new king, who did not have his father's peacemaker's skills, found himself at odds not only with his people but even with his queen from the very beginning of his reign (although she rallied to his side later)…

At the beginning of Charles' reign, writes Hill, "England was at war with Spain in alliance with France. In 1627, because Buckingham [the favourite of both James I and Charles I] had quarrelled with the French court in another of his disastrous wooing expeditions, England was at war with both France and Spain. These military undertakings were uniformly unsuccessful. They did nothing to help German Protestantism, which by 1628 was in grave danger of extinction. In that year England helped the Catholic king of France to deprive his protestant subjects of the privileges that Queen Elizabeth had helped them to win in the Edict of Nantes (1598). When Buckingham was assassinated in 1628 England's international reputation was at its nadir. The assassin, Felton, was the most popular man in England.

"In other ways unity between King and Parliament was broken. Parliament refused to vote taxes for this impossible foreign policy, and Charles resorted to forced loans. In 1627 five knights refused to pay, and were imprisoned. When Parliament met in 1628 the Petition of Right declared both unparliamentary taxation and arbitrary imprisonment illegal…"[522]

The quarrel between King and Parliament came to a head in 1629, when Parliament, now increasingly self-confident and assertive, demanded that the King renounce his ancient right to the important revenues from Tonnage and Poundage. The Speaker, John Finch, even declared that anyone who paid Tonnage and Poundage was a traitor to the country. This left the King, who had continued to levy these taxes, no choice but to prorogue parliament…

*

---

[522] Hill, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

For several years there was relative calm. But then "in the spring of 1637 a new Service Book for Scotland was published by the king. It applied much of the English Book of Common Prayer and abolished most of John Knox's Book of Common Order. It was in effect another English imposition, bearing all the marks of the intervention of Archbishop Laud. It was first read in public at St Giles, recently become the cathedral church of Edinburgh. The dean ascended the pulpit, but when he began to recite the words of the new book, shouts of abuse came from the women of the congregation. 'The Mass is entered among us!' 'Baal is in the church!' The bishop of Edinburgh then stepped forward to calm the angry women and begged them to desist from profaning 'holy ground'. This was not a phrase to be used in front of a puritan assembly, and further abuse was screamed against him; he was denounced as 'fox, wolf, belly god'. One of the women hurled her stool at him which, missing its target, sailed perilously close to the head of the dean.

"The magistrates were then called to clear the church but the women, once ejected, surrounded the building; its great doors were pummelled and stones were flung at its windows as the unhappy ceremony proceeded to its end. Cries could be heard of 'a pope, a pape, anti-Christ, stone him, pull him down!' When the bishop came out, the women shouted 'get the thrapple out of him' or cut his windpipe; he barely escaped with his life. This was not a spontaneous combination of irate worshippers, however, but a carefully organized assault on the Service Book; certain nonconformist gentry and clergy had been planning the event for approximately three months, even though the scale of the riot became known as 'Stony Sunday'…"[523]

There was much sympathy for the Scots among the English Puritans. But Charles came down hard on the opponents both of his religious and of his fiscal measures. In 1637 John Hampden was brought before the court of the exchequer for refusing to pay his portion of "ship money", a tax devised to take the place of the obligation to fit out of a ship in time of war.

"At the beginning of the year twelve senior judges had declared that, in the face of danger to the nation, the king had a perfect right to order his subjects to finance the preparation of a fleet; in addition they declared that, in the event of refusal, the king was entitled to use compulsion. Leopold von Ranke believed that 'the judges could not have delivered a more important decision; it is one of the great events of English history'. The royal prerogative had become the foundation and cornerstone of government. Simonds D'Ewes wrote that if indeed it could be exacted lawfully, 'the king, upon the like pretence, might gather the same sum ten, twelve, or a hundred times redoubled, and so to infinite proportions to any one shire, when and as often as he pleased; and so no man was, in conclusion, worth anything.' It was a powerful argument, to be tested in the trial of John Hampden…

---

[523] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

"The judges deliberated and eventually gave a decision in favour of the king, seven against five. It was the smallest of all possible majorities for the king. Nevertheless the words of the chief justice in his support were repeated throughout the country. Finch declared that 'acts of parliament to take away his royal power in the defence of the kingdom are void'. Or, as another judge put it, '*rex est lex*' – the king *is* the law. The ancient rights of Englishmen were of no importance, and the declarations of Magna Carta or the 'petition of right' were inconsequential. Neither law nor the parliament could bind the king's power. Clarendon, in his *History of the Rebellion*, states that 'undoubtedly my Lord Finch's speech made ship-money much more abhorred and formidable than all the commandments by the council table and all the distresses taken by the sheriffs of England'…

"In the middle of the trial, on 9 February 1638, the king issued a proclamation in Scotland in which he stated that 'we find our royal authority much impaired' and declared that all protests against the new prayer book would be deemed treasonable… He did not want to become as powerless as the doge of Venice and he informed his representative in Scotland, the marquis of Hamilton, that he was 'resolved to hazard my life rather than suffer authority to be condemned'…

"In response the commissioners in Edinburgh, representing the petitioners, drew up a national covenant in which the precepts of the Kirk were re-established. Among its declarations was one that the innovations of the prayer book 'do sensibly tend to the re-establishing of the popish religion and tyranny, and to the subversion and ruin of the true reformed religion and of our liberties, laws and estates'… The elect were now bound to God in solemn contract, as the Israelites once had been, with a clear moral obligation to fulfil His commands… The national covenant was carried in triumph through the streets, accompanied by crowds of women and children who alternately cheered and wept…

"…. The English dissenters, already excited and agitated by the trial of John Hampden, welcomed the defiant action of the Scots; many of them hoped that the Scottish example might be followed closer to home. The most impassioned denunciations of the king's policy could be read in the verses and broadsides distributed in the streets of London…

"When the general assembly of the Church of Scotland met in Glasgow Cathedral towards the end of November, the bishops were charged with violating the boundaries of their proper authority. The marquis of Hamilton attended in the name of the king, and he reported to his master that 'my soul was never sadder than to see such a sight; not one gown amongst the whole company, many swords but many more daggers – most of them having left their guns and pistols in their lodgings'. The voting of course went against the orders and wishes of the king. Hamilton thereupon declared the assembly dissolved but, after he had left the church, the delegates voted to continue their debate. They also passed a resolution declaring that the Kirk was independent

of the civil power, in effect stripping Charles of any religious supremacy he had previously claimed.

"For the next three weeks the delegates revised the whole form of the Scottish faith that had recently been imposed upon them. The new liturgy was abolished. The bishops were excommunicated. The king's writ no longer ran in Scotland…"[524]

"The Bishops' War" as it was called began in 1639 as the Scottish army advanced to Kelso on the Border, while Charles sent an army to Berwick. Jonathan Healey writes that the king "ordered Hamilton to face the Covenanters down, but they were ready and committed. So much so that even Hamilton's own mother fought for them, raising a cavalry troop and, allegedly, threatening to shoot her own son."[525]

In 1640 the king was defeated at Newburn, and a truce was signed. But Charles still believed he could defeat the Scots. So, desperate for men and money to continue the war, he turned to parliament. But a group of Puritan nobles led by the Earls of Warwick and Essex and Lords Saye and Brooks used the opportunity to organize a conspiracy against him.

"They were driven," writes John Adamson, "by a complex amalgam of motives partly religious, provoked by hatred of the 'popish' innovations Charles and his bishops had introduced into the church; partly legal, moved by alarm at the King's erosion of his subjects' traditional rights of property and what they believed to be his disdain for the rule of law; partly also a matter of noble honour, outraged by the King's indifference to the advice of the 'ancient nobility' and his promotion of social parvenus. By the summer of 1640, however, they were united by one common ambition: the desire to topple the existing regime and to redefine permanently the powers of the Crown. To achieve this, the conspirators had entered into direct negotiations with the rebel leadership in Scotland, and were preparing themselves, if necessary, to fight what they believed would be a short and decisive civil war."[526]

Faced by traitors from within and without, the king was forced to back down and allow the reconvening of Parliament – it became known as the "Long Parliament" - on November 3, 1640 that was dominated by his enemies. "Within a matter of months, they had usurped many of the key functions of government which, hitherto, would have been the business of the Privy Council. Perhaps most importantly, in September, they won control of the new treaty negotiations that were to redefine a new 'Union' between England and Scotland, and over the following 11 months, they worked with the very same

[524] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 175-179.

[525] Healey, "What Sparked the Civil War?" *BBC History Magazine,* August, 2018, p. 24.

[526] Adamson, "Rising of the Rebel Lords", *BBC History Magazine,* vol. 7 (7), July, 2006, p. 14.

Scots with whom they had conspired during the summer to redraft the constitution of both British kingdoms."[527]

On May 5, 1641, on the pretence that a papist uprising was afoot - there was no such rising in England, but in Ireland a real uprising was taking place, by the Catholics against the Protestants, and supposedly in the name of the king, - "a new bill was passed allowing parliament to remain in session until it voted for its own dissolution. It has been said that this was the moment that reform turned into revolution; it deprived the monarch of his right to govern.

"The Lords themselves had directed that an armed force should take command of the Tower, thus divesting the king of responsibility for military affairs. It was another blow to his authority."[528]

On May 12, the king's faithful minister, the Earl of Stafford, at the demand of both houses of parliament and a mob of 12,000 shouting "Justice! Justice!", was executed on Tower Hill "in front of what was said to be the largest multitude ever gathered in England. Crowds of 200,000 people watched his progress [to the block] in an atmosphere of carnival and rejoicing." On his last journey, Stafford asked the blessing of Archbishop Laud, who was looking on the scene from a house in which he was confined – "but the cleric [who was to be executed himself a few years later] fell into a dead faint…"

However, some now began to think again about parliament's increasingly radical demands. 'The radicals," writes Healy, "tried to abolish bishops, and this lost the support of those who loved church tradition. They attempted to control appointments to the Privy Council, but this shocked constitutional conservatives. When parliament bypassed legal process and executed Thomas Wentworth, one of Charles's leading administrators, simply by passing a statue declaring him guilty, it offended those who respected due process. When the opposition leader John Pym used the London crowd to pressure parliament, it seemed to conservatives like they were handing power to a rabble, even if it was often literate tradespeople who made up much of that crowd.

"By later 1641, parliament had become dangerously fractured. It was possible to talk of two sides, and in the street politics of the capital, these had started to be nicknamed Roundheads and Cavaliers. In November, an attempt by the opposition to collate their [over 200] grievances into a 'Grand Remonstrance' had passed the Commons only by 159 votes to 148. [In December, by clever filibustering tactics, the Puritans in the Commons managed to legislate the publication of the Remonstrance.] There were two sides in the house and two sides in the country.

"Ireland was the match that lit the powder. Since early Tudor times, Ireland had been exploited by England. From the late 16th century, England had

---

[527] Adamson, op. cit., p. 15.
[528] Adamson, op. cit., p. 15.

pursued a policy of plantation whereby Irish lands were given over to settlers. Under James VI and I, the plantations were accelerated, with thousands of Protestant families from England and Scotland brought over and settled in Ulster.

"Nonetheless, anger at Anglo-Scottish colonisation could be tempered by effective rule. Partly through conciliation and partly through military force, Thomas Wentworth (he called his policy 'thorough') had managed to hold Ireland's government together. He had even raised an army in Ireland that Charles hoped to use against the Scottish Covenanters.

"By October 1641, though, Wentworth was dead, and his army had been disbanded. The success of the Scots, meanwhile, encouraged aggrieved Irish to believe they too could win better treatment by rising in force. When the rebellion came, it was swift and it was bloody. A plot to seize Dublin Castle failed, but settlers in Ulster were cast off their land, and many were murdered.

"Lurid reports of atrocities – some true, some fictional – filtered back to England, encouraged by a rabid London press. The effect was like a bolt of lightning. Now an army would have to be raised, although neither side trusted the other to lead it.

"The winter of 1641-42 brought a climactic power struggle. Charles tried to gain control of London by putting a Thomas Lunsford, a hardline royalist ultra, in charge of the Tower. Paper 'libels' spread around the City alleging that Lunsford was a baby-eating cannibal. He was so vociferously opposed [by an apprentices' riot on Christmas Day] that the king had to back down and remove his man…"[529]

The king's main supporters, the bishops, were also intimidated from going to Westminster, and by the end of the year had been imprisoned by the Puritans. Charles also feared for the security of his Queen, Henrietta Maria, who, as a Catholic, was hated by the Puritans and accused by them of inciting the rebellion in Ireland.

On January 1, having lost control of parliament, Charles offered his main enemy, John Pym, the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. But Pym, a ruthless, determined and clever politician, refused. Charles sent an arrest warrant to the Commons, accusing Pym and four other members of treason. Parliament refused to hand Pym over. The scene was set for the most famous confrontation in parliamentary history.

"The coup de grace happened on 4 January. Charles, realising his grip on his capital was slipping, decided to make a desperate move against parliament. He would strike against five leaders of the opposition in the Commons and one in the Lords...

---

[529] Healey, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

"Setting out from his palace with a gang of armed Cavaliers, Charles marched down Whitehall and into the Commons. It was a terrifying, dramatic scene: an attempted coup by the king against his parliament. But the men had gone. 'I see the birds have flown,' said Charles, and they had. Forewarned, they had hastened away down the river, and slipped into the knotted lanes of the city.

"Charles spent the next few days at Whitehall... On 10 January he and his family stole away into the cold winter night [and moved his court and government to Oxford]. The slide to war had begun…"[530]

*

In June 1642, John Pym – "King Pym", as he was known by his enemies - demanded that the king accept a list of religious reforms demanded by parliament and exclude the "popish" peers from the House of Lords. "His principal officers should be appointed only with the approval of parliament, and all important matters of state must be debated there. The document became in the words of one parliamentarian, Edmund Ludlow, 'the principal foundation of the ensuing war'. Ludlow said that the question came to this: 'whether the king should govern as a god by his will and the nation be governed by force like beasts; or whether the people should be governed by laws made by themselves, and live under a government derived from their own consent'.

"The king of course rejected the demands out of hand with the words *'nolumus leges Angliae mutari'* – we do not wish the laws of England to be changed. He said that acceptance of parliamentary demands would ensure that he became 'but the outside, but the picture, but the sign, of a king'. The propositions were 'a mockery' and 'a scorn'."[531]

Unable to resolve the conflict by peaceful means, the parties took to the sword… On July 12, 1642 the Earl of Essex was placed in charge of a parliamentary army, and a "committee of safety" (ancestor of the KGB, which means "Committee of State Safety") was set up to organize soldiers, weaponry and supplies. The king was not far behind. On August 22, he marched into Nottingham and unfurled a banner which read: "Give Caesar his due". But what was Caesar's according to the king encroached on what was God's according to his opponents…

And so the scene was set for the English revolution - "that grand crisis of morals, religion and government", as Coleridge called it[532], or, as Charles George calls it, "the first major breech in Absolute Monarchy and the spawning

---

[530] Healey, op. cit., p. 27.
[531] Ackroyd, op. cit., p.243.
[532] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, 9 November, 1833.

of the first major, secular, egalitarian and liberal culture in the modern world".[533]

The country was split down the middle; even families were divided. Most of the peers, landowners and gentry were royalist, as were the Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Parliament dominated the south-east and London, and were allied with the Scots, while the king, based in Oxford, dominated the north and south-west. Although parliament won, the war demonstrated the continuing power of monarchism. For, as the Earl of Manchester said: "If we beat the king ninety and nine times, yet he is king still, and so will his posterity be after him" – a true prophecy insofar as Charles I, beheaded in 1649, was succeeded by his son, Charles II, in 1660…

"Countrywide," writes Robert Tombs, "the royalists maintained military superiority during the first part of the war, despite Parliament's possession of London and the south-east, with their vast reserves of men and money. Cromwell famously put this down to the royalists being 'gentlemen's sons', compared with Parliament's 'broken-down tapsters'. The difference was rather more substantial. The royalists had greater popular support and better military leadership, and adopted modern methods, including Swedish-style cavalry and the latest artillery-proof fortifications. Charles appointed able commanders with Continental experience, including this nephew, the twenty-three-year-old Prince Rupert, son of the Elector Palatine, already a veteran of the Thirty Years' War. The royalists took Bristol, England's second port, in July 1643, cleared the south-west, and consolidated control of the north. Fighting in Ireland was interrupted in September 1643 by a truce between the rebel Catholic Confederation and King Charles's Lord Lieutenant, the Marquess of Ormonde, which raised the prospect, terrifying parliamentarians, that a royalist and 'papist' Irish army might cross over into England, as indeed some of it did. Parliament ordered the killing of all Irish prisoners.

"In desperation, Parliament appealed to the ruling Scottish Convention for help, offering in return to make England and Ireland Presbyterian. In September 1643, Parliament and the Convention drew up a Solemn League and Covenant to resist 'the bloody plots… of the enemies of God' and eliminate 'Popery, prelacy… superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness. ' This brought the two countries closer than ever to union, and a Committee of Both Kingdoms was established as a joint authority. In January 1644, 21,500 Scots marched into England again under Leslie (now Earl of Leven). This was the largest army of the whole Civil War. Its intervention prevented a probable royalist victory and a compromise peace.

"The Scots reversed the military balance in the north of England. Charles sent an army under Rupert to restore the situation. Rupert, with some 17,000 men to the allies' 27,000, manoeuvred successfully to force them to raise the

[533] George, *500 Years of Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin*, Chicago, 1998, p. viii.

siege of York. The two sides met on 2 July 1644 at nearby Marston Moor. As fighting had not started by early evening, the royalists relaxed. Seeing them preparing their supper, the allies launched a surprise attack at seven o'clock. Although the royalists recovered and drove back some of the attackers, they were in the end overwhelmed by the combination of stubborn Scottish infantry and disciplined East Anglian cavalry commanded by Cromwell. Over 6,000 died in probably the biggest battle ever fought on English soil. A jubilant Cromwell wrote that 'God made them as stubble to our swords'. Parliament took control of northern England…

"Parliament offered peace terms in November 1644, but these included the 'utter abolishing' of bishops and cathedrals, imposition of Scottish-style Presbyterianism, waging war in Ireland and Europe, savage measures against Catholics (including taking away their children – and possibly those of the king himself), permanently banning stage plays, and imposing a blacklist of royalists whom the king could not pardon. When these terms were rejected, Parliament took decisive steps early in 1645 to intensify the war. An Act of Attainder condemned the imprisoned Archbishop Laud, the hated symbol of 'popery', for whom a retroactive definition of treason was invented. 'Is this the liberty that we promised to maintain with our blood?' exclaimed Essex. Laud was beheaded on 10 January.

"The natural selection of war had produced a new officer corps, led by a new lord-general, Sir Thomas Fairfax, aged thirty-two, the son of a Yorkshire peer, and in his spare time a collector of art, church historian, and translator of poetry and philosophy. He had served with the Swedish army, the most efficient in Europe, and three of his brothers had been killed on the continent. A Self-Denying Ordinance (April 1645) removed members of Parliament from military command. At the same time a 'New Model Army' of 22,000 men was formed under central, not local, control, directly paid by Parliament, and excluding foreign mercenaries – 'there was not one man but of our owne Nation'. The infantry included royalist prisoners and impressed men from the south of England, who were quick to desert. But the cavalry, the decisive weapon, were volunteers from existing parliamentary forces, mainly the sons of yeomen and craftsmen. These 'Ironsides' were better paid, better armed and equipped and uniformed in red coats. Oliver Cromwell, an MP, was given command notwithstanding the Self-Denying Ordinance. Parliament was creating a professional standing army, more detached from civil society and accountability. It was an ideological force, officially described as 'a rod of iron in Christ's hand to dash his enemies in pieces'. Harsh discipline knocked it into shape, including humiliating and painful penalties for drunkenness and fornication: blasphemers had their tongues pierced with a hot iron. They could be equally brutal towards royalist prisoners. Conformity was reinforced by preaching and collective prayer – 'no oaths nor cursing, no drunkenness nor quarrelling, but love, unanimity,' wrote one observer. They developed an ideological and psychological ruthlessness; for these men, backsliders and the lukewarm, even if a majority in Parliament or the nation, must not prevail against the will of God, who manifested his favour by granting victory.

"Victory indeed came quickly. On 14 June 1645 at Naseby in Northamptonshire, about 13,500 troops of the New Model Army under Fairfax and Cromwell decisively defeated 9,000 royalists under Rupert and Charles in person…"[534]

The revolutionary aspect of the New Model Army was that the soldiers were chosen on a meritocratic basis, not on the basis of rank or nobility, and were paid on a regular basis as professionals. Thus the professionalization of war, which made it increasingly deadly, was one of the first products of the revolution. The trend would continue in the French and Russian revolutions.

The soldiers of the New Model Army, writes David Starkey, "were fed on a diet of tracts and pamphlets that cast Charles as an evil tyrant and godly MPs and soldiers as God's true 'Vice-regents' on Earth. They believed that kingly government was ordained by God, for they read in Deuteronomy: 'one from among thy brethren shalt thou set as king over thee'. But if kings were ordained by God, it did not mean that all kings were godly. Some monarchs did God's work, while others, like Pharaoh, were scourges that the pious were charged with fighting as a religious duty. Charles, it was clear to them, was akin to an Old Testament tyrant who set up false idols and oppressed the people of God. Such a man must be resisted, lest Englishmen commit blasphemy themselves by acquiescing in the sacrilege of a latter-day king of Babylon. It was not that Charles was just a secular despot: he was a tyrant over Christianity itself…

"These tough, Bible-quoting, disputatious soldiers were agreed on two things – that the state had no right to interfere in their religion and that Charles was a tyrant and a traitor who must be defeated and brought to account for his crimes…"[535]

"The king," continues Tombs, "having gradually run out of options following Naseby, arrived unexpectedly at the headquarters of the Scottish army at Southwell, in Nottinghamshire, on 5 May 1646. It soon became clear that the defeated monarch was in a surprisingly strong political position. The parliamentary coalition was divided and increasingly unpopular, and a large element of it wanted to negotiate with Charles. So did its Scottish allies. Public opinion was increasingly royalist, associating the king with peace and a return to normality. Crowds turned out to cheer him, and many people came to be 'touched' for the 'King's Evil', scrofula – a quasi-religious ceremony copied from the French monarchs[536] and, like all faith healing, sometimes effective. In February 1647 Parliament paid the Scots army to go home. Charles was handed over to an English officer, and comfortably interned in Leicestershire. Over the next two years, he fatally overplayed his hand. The capture at Naseby of his

---

[534] Tombs, op. cit., pp. 230-233.

[535] Starkey, *Crown and Country,* London: Harper Press, 2011, pp. 343-344.

[536] However, there was a good Anglo-Saxon precedent in King Edward the Confessor, who had the power of healing (see Anonymous' *Vita Edwardi Regis*). (V.M.)

correspondence and its subsequent publication showed him as duplicitous, as his behaviour confirmed. He was convinced of his own rightness, and saw no reason to deal frankly under duress with rebels. He thought he could play off the factions among his enemies; if not, he was prepared for martyrdom.

"The factionalism of the parliamentary side was real enough. The religious gulf had widened, and had become entangled with struggles over power. Alliance with the Scots had required Parliament to make the English Church Presbyterian. This would have been an authoritarian system, rough on heresy and schism, requiring everyone to be a member of their parish church, and giving religious and hence much social and political power to committees of clergy and godly elders. To those fearing religious anarchy and social breakdown, this came to have attractions, at least as a lesser evil, and so Presbyterianism went from being seen as a means of subversion to being an ark of stability and authority. In contrast, 'Independents' claimed the right to organize their own godly congregations outside a state Presbyterian Church. They demanded liberty of conscience for unorthodox beliefs – sects such as Brownites, Baptists, Congregationalists and even Quakers, whose strange beliefs and shocking behaviour meant that they were feared and detested by more orthodox Puritans. The sects allowed anyone to preach – not only educated and licensed clergy. All this alarmed a society that took it for granted that law, order and community could only be based on common religious belief and discipline. It therefore seemed possible that Presbyterian parliamentarians and royalists might come together in agreement.

"Independency has many followers in the army. Godly soldiers came to see their own companies or regiments as religious brotherhoods, and the army as a collection of congregations. They were tolerant of exotic religious beliefs among their comrades, and liked spontaneous preaching and prophesying. We would get some of the flavour by imagining 'Bible Belt' emotionalism backed by the ruthlessness of a revolutionary militia.

"The New Model Army itself was a focus of financial and legal controversy. Its heavy cost, whether met through taxation or by direct exactions by troops on civilians, caused mounting resentment – 'For the king, and no plunder,' shouted rioters. The army was coming to be hated, even by its own side. A petition from Essex lamented being 'eaten up, enslaved and destroyed by an army raised for their defence'. Disbanding most of the army was the obvious solution. But many soldiers resisted being simply turned loose, especially as they were owed large arrears of pay - £3m in all, equal to more than three years of pre-war state income. Many were fearful of being sent to Ireland, from where most soldiers never returned. Many too were preoccupied by the question of indemnity from prosecution. England had long been a litigious society, and, amazingly, officers and soldiers found themselves being sued by royalists for trespass, theft, burglary, assault or wrongful imprisonment for military actions taken during the war, and they faced ruin, imprisonment or worse from hostile juries and judges. One regiment feared that 'we should be hanged like dogs' without a parliamentary law of indemnity. Finally, the army did not want its

wartime sacrifices thrown away by a Parliament and a public backsliding towards royalism. These grievances turned the army into a political actor, debating and presenting collective demands, and eventually claiming the right of ultimate decision.

"Amid this political imbroglio, the king appeared to be a key figure and a potentially decisive ally. Cornet Joyce took a force of cavalry in June 1647 to secure him and prevent his being used by Parliament. He was taken to the army's headquarters at Newmarket, and greeted by cheering crowds strewing green branches in his path. In July 1647 army commanders offered Charles a relatively conciliatory settlement, the 'Heads of the Proposals', which included tolerance for Anglicans moderate treatment for royalists, biennial parliaments, a redistribution of seats, and some popular reforms, including abolition of excise, monopolies and imprisonment for debt. The army and government were to be controlled by Parliament, but only for ten years, after which the Crown would resume authority. Charles made a conciliatory reply, accepting many of the army's proposals and promising to meet their arrears of pay. But many important matters were unresolved, and finally Charles spurned the deal, believing he could bargain for better terms: 'You will fall to ruin if I do not sustain you.' The army marched on London, lodging Charles nearby at Hampton Court...

"Charles slipped away from Hampton Court by night on 11 November 1647. His first thought was to make for France, but he ended up on the Isle of Wight, where he was politely interned at Carisbrook Castle. There he was able to negotiate an alliance with important politicians in Ireland and with the Scots, who were promised a Presbyterian Church in England for a period, and a complete union of the two kingdoms. His escape from Hampton Court triggered royalist uprisings in several parts of England. The army leaders held an emotional three-day fast and prayer meeting in Windsor. All agreed to fight back, confident 'in the name of the Lord only, that we should destroy them', and resolving to 'call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed.'

"There was fighting in London, Ken, south Wales, the north and East Anglia in a 'second civil war'. The most important struggle took place at Colchester, held by 4,000 royalists commanded by the Earl of Norwich. Its siege tied down a large part of the parliamentary army. This left the rest of the country vulnerable, and handfuls of royalists captured Berwick, Carlisle and Pontefract (where they held out for five months – long after Charles had been beheaded). A Scottish army invaded in July 1648, though they made themselves unpopular by plundering. Cromwell crushed them at Preston on 17 August, and marched into Scotland to force the removal of royalist sympathizers from the Edinburgh government. Colchester withstood a hopeless siege for eleven weeks, but surrendered after learning the news of Preston – flown in by the besiegers with a kite. The 300 royalist officers were given no guarantee of their safety, and two were executed...

"Charles himself was to pay the price. Many in the army wanted him dead. They realized he could never be trusted to accept the system they wanted to impose. He was too popular, too slippery, and had support in all three kingdoms. But he might be even more dangerous dead, so some influential officers and the vast majority of MPs opposed regicide, and began another series of negotiations. After another long prayer meeting at Windsor in November, the army commanders – 'never more politically dangerous than when they were wrestling with the Almighty' – decided to bring Parliament to heel. On 6 December 1648 the Palace of Westminster was occupied by Colonel Pride's troops, who arrested forty-one Ps and confined them, singing psalms, in a nearby alehouse. 'Pride's Purge' reduced the House to a 'Rump' of about 150 members acceptable to the army. They now asserted their right to try the king, because 'the people', and hence the English House of Commons, 'have the supreme power in this nation' – a revolutionary step, and one unacceptable to the Scots. To objections that to try a king would be unconstitutional, Cromwell retorted, 'I tell you, we will cut off his head with the crown upon it…'"[537]

In 1647 Cromwell's regime suspended the celebration of Christmas because it supposedly produced unseemly merrymaking. No further proof is needed of the essentially anti-Christian nature of his regime, in spite of its ostentatious religiosity… The feast was restored in 1660, with the restoration of the monarchy.

---

[537] Tombs, op. cit., pp. 235-238.

36. THE EXECUTION OF KING CHARLES I

"Pride's Purge" was truly prideful and undoubtedly a purge – a purge of elected MPs in order to impose the will of a military dictator on a frightened remnant, the rump of the fledgling English democracy. The resultant "Rump Parliament" consisted of about 300 members – and even their will was not allowed to interfere with the will of the proto-Leninist Cromwell. For of these 300 only 59 signed King Charles' death warrant. The decision, therefore, was hardly that of "we, the People": it was the will, essentially, of one man.

Cromwell was not technically an anti-monarchist. As the communist historian Christopher Hill writes, "he was no republican: his enemies described him as 'king-ridden'. Early in 1648 Cromwell and his friends annoyed the republican Ludlow by refusing to commit themselves to a preference for monarchy, aristocracy or democracy: 'Any of them might be good in themselves, or for us, according as providence should direct us.' The farthest Oliver would go was to say that a republic might be desirable but not feasible – and one suspects that he only said that to please Ludlow. As late as 12 January 1649 Cromwell opposed a motion to abolish the House of Lords, with the highly characteristic argument that it would be madness at a time when unity was so essential. Political practice was always more important to him than constitutional theory. He subsequently justified the abolition of King and Lords not on any ground of political principle but 'because they did not perform their trust'."[538]

The trial began on 20 January 1649 in Westminster Hall…

Traditionally, since *Magna Carta*, it had been the aristocrats who reined in tyrannical kings; and when King Charles was brought to trial the parallel with *Magna Carta* was uppermost in his judges' minds. Thus the court's first meeting was held in the Painted Chamber at the Palace of Westminster where the nobles traditionally put on their robes. But in 1649, unlike 1215, the aristocrats sitting in in the House of Lords had to be wary of more revolutionary rivals sitting in the House of Commons. For, as Sean Kelsey writes, "In the course of proceedings, John Bradshaw, Lord President of the High Court of Justice, recalled the 'Barons' Wars', 'when the nobility of the land did stand up for the liberty and property of the subject and would not suffer the kings that did invade to play the tyrant freely… But… if they [the peers] do forbear to do their duty now and are not so mindful of their own honour and the kingdom's good as the barons of England of old were, certainly the Commons of England will not be so unmindful of what is for their preservation and for their safety.'"[539]

Moreover, even further to the left than the Commons was the Army, seething as it was with radical sectarianism. So in the English revolution for the

---

[538] Hill, *God's Englishman,* London: Penguin, 1970, p. 195.
[539] Kelsey, "The Trial of Charles I: A New Perspective", *History Today*, vol. 49 (1), January, 1999, p. 37.

first time we see that phenomenon that is so familiar to us from contemporary democracies: the "leftists" fearing those even more radical than themselves more than their official, "rightist" opponents. For the Parliamentarians in 1649 were already a "rump", purged by the army radicals; and this rump knew that if they did not do what the army wanted, they would be swept away…

The execution of Charles I was the first ideologically motivated and judicially executed regicide in history. Before then, kings had been killed in abundance, and many Popes since Gregory VII had presumed to depose kings. But Charles I was not deposed by any Pope, nor was he the victim of a simple coup: he was charged with treason against the State by his subjects; he was "a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and a public enemy".

Treason by a king rather than against him?! An unheard-of idea! As Christopher Hill writes: "high treason was a personal offence, a breach of personal loyalty to the King: the idea that the King himself might be a traitor to the realm was novel"[540] - to say the least…

The king himself articulated the paradoxicality of the idea during his trial, declaring: "A King cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth."

As a supposedly Shakespearean play, *Sir Thomas More,* put it:

> *For to the king God hath his office lent*
> *Of dread of justice, power and command,*
> *Hath bid him rule and willed you to obey;*
> *And to add ampler majesty to this,*
> *He hath not only lent the king his figure,*
> *His throne and sword, but given him his own name,*
> *Calls him a god on earth. What do you, then,*
> *Rising 'gainst him that God himself installs*
> *But rise 'gainst God?[541]*

The Earl of Northumberland declared concerning the passing of an "ordinance" to try the king for treason: "Not one in twenty people in England are yet satisfied whether the king did levy war against the Houses first, or the Houses first against him; and besides, if the King did levy war first, we have no law extant that can be produced to make it treason in him to do so; and, for us, my Lords, to declare treason by an Ordinance when the matter of fact is not yet proved, nor any law to bring to judge it by, seems very unreasonable."

Trevor Royle comments: "Just as there had been doubts about the legality of trying a monarch in Mary [Queen of Scots]'s case, so did the same arguments re-emerge in the House of Lords some sixty-two years later, and the ordinance was duly rejected. Under normal circumstances the Commons could not have

---

[540] Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, p. 172.
[541] John Dover Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 92.

proceeded further, but the times were out of joint and a streak of ruthlessness appeared in public affairs; on 4 January, using language that presaged the birth of the United States of America a century later, the Rump passed three further resolutions stating the legality of its position: 'That the people are, under God, the original of all just power: that the Commons of England, in Parliament assembled, being chosen by and representing the people, have the supreme power in this nation; that whatsoever is enacted or declared for law by the Commons in Parliament assembled, hath the force of law, and all the people of this nation are concluded thereby, although the consent and concurrence of King or House of Peers be not had thereunto.' The resolution showed England what politics would be like without a king and without the checks and balances provided by the upper house. Two days later, on 6 January, the ordinance became law as an act of parliament and the way was open to begin the legal proceedings against the king."[542]

Charles presented his case well. Overcoming a life-long speech impediment, as Tim Blanning writes, he "played a strong hand for all it was worth. John Bradshaw, and the prosecuting counsel, John Cook, look clumsy and foolish. Charles played a strong hand for all it was worth. He had no difficulty in showing that he was being prosecuted by 'a fraction of a Parliament'; that his trial was opposed by the House of Lords, the third part of the constitutional trinity forming the 'King in Parliament'; that the Commons' claim to have the support of the 'people' was fictitious, for not one tenth of the population had been consulted; and that his trial was contrary to both the common law, which held that the king could do no wrong, and to God's law, for was not Holy Scripture unequivocal on the absolute duty of obedience? No matter what side they were on, these were men who knew their Bible inside out, including St. Paul's injunction: 'The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil' (Romans 13.1-3).

"But Charles had a higher objective than proving the incompetence of his judges. Knowing that such a state trial could only produce one verdict (guilty) and one sentence (death), he set about constructing a programme for posterity. Offering no compromise on monarchical authority, he made it more palatable both by invoking divine support and by contrasting the deep historical roots of his own position with the radical novelty of his opponents: 'I have a trust committed to me by God, by old and lawful descent; I will not betray it, to answer to a new unlawful authority.' More importantly, he stressed that it was he who was the true champion of the people of England: 'do you pretend what you will, I stand more for their liberties. For if power without law may make laws, my alter the fundamental laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject he is in England, that can be sure of his life, or anything he calls his own.' In a particularly memorable utterance combining aristocratic insouciance

[542] Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-1660,* London: Abacus, 2004, p. 491.

with populism, he proclaimed: 'For the charge, I value it not a rush; it is the liberty of the people of England that I stand for.'"[543]

However, Charles' concept of liberty depended on the preservation of lawful hierarchy, which alone can guarantee the preservation of life and property. For "if they can do this to me [regicide], which of you is safe?" "Truly I desire their liberty and freedom, as much as anybody whomsoever; but I must tell you that their liberty consists *in having government*… It is not their having a share in government, sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clear different things…"

As Leanda de Lisle writes, "A brave, resilient and principled king, Charles's fate had all the elements of classical Greek tragedy. His ruin followed not from wickedness, but from ordinary human flaws and misjudgements. For all the hate that he engendered, he inspired great loyalty and he died loved – in a way that his son, the cynical, merry Charles II, would never be."[544] He believed that through his death – in front of Westminster Hall on 30 January, 1649 - he went, as he put it, "from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown", and did so with great courage and dignity.

"He was beheaded," writes Tombs, "by a heavily disguised executioner, and as the axe fell, soon after two o'clock there was an anguished groan from the watching crowd, who were hustled away by the cavalry. His body was exposed 'for many days to the public view' in Whitehall, 'that all men might know that he was not alive'. Charles was more successful as a martyr than a monarch. Even the parliamentarian poet Andrew Marvell thought that 'he nothing common did or mean.' A collection of his speeches and thoughts, the *Eikon Basilike*, published on the very day of his execution, rapidly went through thirty-six editions – far more than any Leveller writings…"[545]

Two months later, the House of Commons passed an Act stating that "the office of a King, in this nation… is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people of this nation; and therefore ought to be abolished."

*

There were attempts to justify the revolution in theological terms[546], notably by the poet John Milton, whom Engels called "the first defender of regicide".

---

[543] Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory. Europe 1648-1815,* London: Penguin, 2008, pp. 196-197.

[544] De Lisle, in *History Revealed,* 52, February, 2018, p. 87.

[545] Tombs, op. cit., p. 241. "The blow I saw given," wrote the young Philip Henry, "and I can truly say with a sad heart at the instant thereof I remember well, there was such a groan by the thousands then present, as I never heard before and desire I may never hear again."

[546] For, as Sir Edmund Leach writes, "at different times, in different places, Emperor and Anarchist alike may find it convenient to appeal to Holy Writ" ("Melchisedech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy", *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Society*, 1972, p. 6).

He began, in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, with a firm rejection of the Divine Right of Kings. "It is lawful and hath been held so through all ages for anyone who has the power to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King, and after due conviction to depose and put him to death." Charles I was to be identified with the Antichrist, and in overthrowing him the English people had chosen God as their King. Moreover, it was now the duty of the English to spread their revolution overseas (Cromwell had begun the process in Scotland and Ireland in 1649-51), for the saints in England had been "the first to overcome those European kings which receive their power not from God but from the Beast".[547]

"No man who knows aught," wrote Milton, "can be so stupid as to deny that all men naturally were born free". Kings and magistrates are but "deputies and commissioners of the people". "To take away from the people the right of choosing government takes away all liberty". Milton attributed the dominance of bishops and kings to the Norman Conquest, and he bewailed men's readiness "with the fair words and promises of an old exasperated foe… to be stroked and tamed again into the wonted and well-pleasing state of their true Norman villeinage."[548]

Had the Norman conquerors finally been conquered in the revolution? By no means: absolutism had indeed been introduced into England by the Normans, but Normans and Saxons had long since been merged into a single nation of the English, and the revolution in no way restored the faith and customs of Anglo-Saxon England. This historical argument was simply a cloak for that root cause of all revolutions – pride, the pride that Milton himself had so convincingly portrayed in Satan in *Paradise Lost* (262-263):

> *To reign is worth ambition though in hell:*
> *Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven…*

And just as Satan is no democrat, so the English revolutionaries – like their followers Robespierre in 1793 or Lenin in 1917 – had no intention of giving the rule to the *demos*. *Of course*, they thought, the "inconstant, irrational and image-doting rabble", could not have the rule. The better part – i.e. the gentry, people like Milton himself, like Cromwell – must act on their behalf…

But the problem was: how could the better part stop the worser part from taking over? For, as history was to show in 1789 and again in 1917, the revolution never stops half way: once legitimacy has been taken from the King by the Lords, it does not remain with them, but has to pass on to the Commons, and from the Commons to the people. And to the lowest of the people at that; for, as Denzill Holles, once a leading opponent of the king, wrote already in 1649: "The meanest of men, the basest and vilest of the nation, the lowest of the people have got power into their hands; trampled upon the crown; baffled and

---

[547] Milton, in Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, p. 167.
[548] Milton, in Hill, op. cit., pp. 100, 101, 169.

misused the Parliament; violated the laws; destroyed or suppressed the nobility and gentry of the kingdom…"

And then there was a further problem, one raised by Filmer in his argument against Milton, that even if we accept that "the sounder, the better and the uprighter part have the power of the people… how shall we know, or who shall judge, who they can be?"[549] But Milton brushed this problem aside… This was the problem that would haunt all those, in every succeeding generation, who rejected hereditary monarchy: if not the king, then who will rule, and how can we be sure that they really are "the better and the uprighter part"?... indeed, is it not much more likely that a man who comes to power by violence and intrigue is likely to be much worse – and more tyrannical – that the one who receives the throne, without violence, but by hereditary right, having been trained for the role throughout his preceding life?

*

Within a week of the execution of King Charles in 1649, *Eikon Basilike* ("The Royal Icon") was published by the royalists, being supposedly the work of Charles himself. This enormously popular defence of the monarchy was countered by the revolutionaries with the argument that the king was not an icon or likeness of God, so veneration of the king was idolatry, and it was right to kill the king. "Every King is an image of God," wrote N.O. Brown. But "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Revolutionary republicanism seeks to abolish effigy and show."[550]

Milton, too, came out against *Eikon Basilike* with his *Eikonoklastes*, in which the destruction of the icon of the king was seen as the logical consequence of the earlier iconoclasm of the English Reformation. For, as Hill explains: "An ikon was an image. Images of saints and martyrs had been cleared out of English churches at the Reformation, on the ground that the common people had worshipped them. Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, was austerely monotheistic, and encouraged lay believers to reject any form of idolatry. This 'desacralisation of the universe' in the long run was its main contribution to the rise of modern science."[551]

This "iconic" justification of monarchy goes back to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* in the fourth century. But the theory of the Divine Right of kings, which was affirmed by all the Stuart kings of England in the seventeenth century, as well as by King Louis XIV of France, more usually argued simply that the king is not accountable to men. Thus Louis XIV's ideologist, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, in his *Politics Taken from the Word of Scripture* (1679), after quoting <u>Proverbs</u> 8.15-16 and <u>Romans</u> 13.1-2 and from the lives of Kings David

---

[549] Filmer, in Hill, op. cit., p. 169.
[550] Brown, *Love's Body,* in Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution,* London: Faber & Faber, 1997, p. 171.
[551] Quoted in Hill, <u>op. cit.,</u> pp. 173-174.

and Solomon, wrote: "It appears from all this that the person of the king is sacred, and that to attack him in any way is sacrilege. God has the kings anointed by the prophets with the holy unction in like manner as He has his bishops and altars anointed… Kings should be guarded as holy things, and whosoever neglects to protect them is worthy of death… The royal power is absolute… The prince need render account of his acts to no one."

This thesis is "a logical inference," writes Barzun, "from sovereignty itself: the ultimate source of law cannot be charged with making a wrong law or giving a wrong command. Modern democracies follow the same logic when they give their lawmakers immunity for anything said or done in the exercise of their duty; they are members of the sovereign power. Constitutions, it is true, limit law-making; but the sovereign people can change the constitution. There is no appeal against the acts of the sovereign unless the sovereign allows, as when it is provided that citizens can sue the state.

"Of course, the monarch can do wrong in another sense – in a couple of senses. He can add up a sum and get a wrong total and he can commit a wrongful act morally speaking – cheating at cards or killing his brother. To make clear this distinction between sovereign and human being, theorists developed quite early the doctrine that 'the king has two bodies'; as a man he is fallible, as king he is not. Similarly in elective governments, a distinction is made between the civil servant acting in his official capacity and as a private citizen…"[552]

Nevertheless, the distinction between the two "bodies" of the king, while comprehensible in theory, is difficult to establish in practice. What if the king goes mad and decides that he wants to murder all his subjects? Or compels all of them to accept Islam? In practice, no king is *absolutely* absolutist. This is a problem that all absolutist theories of government encounter…

"The intriguing contraction in Bossuet's account," writes A.C. Grayling, "is that although the king is absolute in power, there is a limit: if he misuses his authority he violates God's law, and if he violates God's law, does he not thereby forfeit the right to rule? Can the Church oblige him to abdicate in such a case? Can the people – all the estates of the people: nobility, clergy, general populace – resist him? The question was intriguing because of a parallel consideration: in Church doctrine it is laid down that once a priest has been ordained it does not matter what sins he commits, he can still administer the sacraments because the powers conferred on him exist independently of him. Does this apply also to kings? Louis XIV embodies an answer to these questions, in regarding his right to rule as inalienable. This was the majority view among Protestant theologians, however, which was a source of trouble for rulers who subscribed to their views."[553]

---

[552] Barzun, op. cit., pp. 250-251.
[553] Grayling, op. cit., p. 284.

37. THEORIES OF SOVEREIGNTY: (3) FILMER

An important strand of royalist thinking in the West was what may be called the patriarchal theory of royal authority. James I argued that just as God is the Father of mankind, "so the style of *Pater patriae* was ever, and is commonly applied to Kings."[554] As such, the King does not merely represent his people: he embodies them – which is why in his edicts he says We, not I.[555]

As Ashton writes, "the patriarchal theory of royal authority was to prove a powerful argument both against the idea that government originated in a political contract between ruler and ruled and against the far more influential notion that representative government and the limitations which it placed on the royal exercise of power were immemorial features of the constitution….

"Just as kings were little Gods, so were fathers little monarchs. He who does not honour the king, maintained Thomas Jordan, cannot truly honour his own parents, as the fifth commandment bids him. So, in his speech on the scaffold in February, 1649, the royalist Lord Capel affirmed 'very confidently that I do die here… for obeying that fifth commandment given by God himself.'… 'For this subordination of children is the foundation of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself.'"[556]

For when man is defined in <u>Genesis</u> as being in the image of God, he is told to have dominion over the whole earth and everything in it. In other words, he is to be a *king* in the image of God's Kingship. And if man as a species is king of the earth, every father in particular is king of his family, and every political leader is king of his tribe or nation. Kingship and hierarchy are part of the nature of things…

The best-known exponent of the patriarchal theory was Sir Robert Filmer, whose *Patriarcha or The Natural Power of Kings* was written under Cromwell (or earlier) but published in 1680, during the reign of Charles II. Filmer wrote against constitutional monarchy, against the Levellers, and against Hugh Grotius. His work is famous for having elicited Locke's attempted riposte in *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, but it is worth studying for its own sake and for its continuing relevance.

Filmer believed that the idea of the "consent of the governed", the ruling idea of all the revolutionaries, would inevitably lead to anarchy: "Since nature hath not distinguished the habitable world into Kingdomes, nor determined what part of a *people* shall belong to one Kingdome, and what to another, it follows that the originall freedome of mankind being supposed, every man is at liberty to be of what Kingdome he please, and so every petty company hath a right to make a Kingdome by it self, and not only every City, but every

---

[554] James I, in Ashton, *The English Civil War*, p. 7.
[555] Barzun, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 249.
[556] Ashton, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 7, 8.

Village, and every Family; nay, and every particular man a liberty to chuse himself to be his owne King if he please, and he were a mad man that being by nature free would chuse any man but himself to be his own Governour. Thus to avoid the having but one King of the whole world, we shall run into a liberty of having as many Kings as there be men in the world, which upon the matter, is to have no King at all, but to leave all men to their naturall liberty, which is the mischief the Pleaders for *naturall liberty* do pretend they would most avoid."

"What is particularly interesting in Filmer's argument is that he clearly sees the somewhat arbitrary way in which 'consent to be governed' was framed. Did it apply all people who lived on earth; did it only apply to people living in a particular state or geographical area; did it also apply to children and women; was consent given at only one moment in time or renewed at periodic intervals to be legitimate? And if not, then why not, he asked? Filmer's criticism was that whatever boundary one drew around the group who gave their consent to be ruled, the logical result had to be either that some individuals were denied the right to choose who governed them, or that the process had to be continued until there was 'a liberty of having as many Kings as there be men in the world' or in other words a form of 'anarchy' had been established."[557]

Filmer argues for the Divine right of kings on the basis of Fifth of the Ten Commandments, that which enjoins honouring one's father and one's mother. "'Even the power which God himself exerciseth over mankind,' wrote Filmer, 'is by right of fatherhood; he is both the King and Father of us all.' 'The subjection of children to their parents is the fountain of all royal authority.' 'It is true, *all* kings be not the natural parents of their subjects… yet in their right succeed to the exercise of supreme jurisdiction.' 'All power on earth is either derived or usurped from the fatherly power.' 'The law which enjoyns obedience to kings is delivered in the terms of Honour thy father.' Similarly John Winthrop, the Puritan Governor of Massachusetts, a contemporary of Sir Rober Filmer, but who could not have been acquainted with Filmer's works and certainly would not have accepted his conclusions, declared, when arguing against democracy, that to allow it in Massachusetts would be 'a manifest breach of the 5th Commandment.'…"[558]

Filmer's thinking was based on the idea that Adam was the first father and king of the whole human race, and that "the Right of exercising government" was first bestowed by God on him and then through him on his descendants. "He believed," writes J.R. Western, "that God had given the sovereignty of the world to Adam and that it had passed by hereditary descent, through the sons of Noah and the heads of the nations into which mankind was divided at the Confusion of Tongues, to all the modern rulers of the world. Adam was the

[557] https://oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/602.
[558] Filmer, in Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, London: Macmillan, 1930, 1963, p. 26.

father of all mankind and so all other men were bound to obey him: this plenary power has passed to his successors."[559]

The problem with this view, according to Locke in his *First Treatise of Civil Government* (1681), as interpreted by McClelland, is that "the book of Genesis does not actually say that God gave the world to Adam to rule; Adam is never referred to as king." However, contrary to Locke, God *does* say to Adam that he is to have "*dominion* over… every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1.28). Moreover, the right to rule is clearly given by God to at least some of the descendants of Adam, such as Noah, Abraham and David.

But "Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede, for which there is no biblical evidence, that Adam really was king by God's appointment. That still leaves the awkward fact that Genesis makes no mention of the kingly rights of the sons of Adam; there is simply no reference to the right of hereditary succession. Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede both Adam's title to kingship and the title of the sons of Adam, for neither of which there is biblical evidence, how does that help kings now to establish their titles by Divine Right? Despite the biblical concern with genealogy, the line of Adam's posterity has become hopelessly scrambled. How can any king at the present time seriously claim that he is in the line of direct descent from Adam?… Because the genealogy since Adam is scrambled, it is perfectly possible that all the present kings are usurpers, or all the kings except one. Perhaps somewhere the real, direct descendant of Adam is alive and living in obscurity, cheated of his birth-right to universal monarchy by those pretending to call themselves kings in the present world."[560]

This objection is very weak. The real point of the patriarchal theory is that just as the headship of the father in a family is natural, and therefore Divine in origin, so the headship of a society or nation by a single man, who derives it by right of succession from his father, is natural and Divinely instituted. And all kings, just as all men in general, come from Adam, the father of the whole human race. "That which is natural to man exists by Divine right," writes Filmer; and "kingship is natural to man. Therefore kingship exists by Divine right." The people, on the other hand, "are not born free by nature" and "there never was any such thing as an independent multitude, who at first had a natural right to a community [of goods]".

As Harold Nicolson writes: "'This conceit of original freedom', as [Filmer] said, was 'the only ground' on which thinkers from 'the heathen philosophers' down to Hobbes had built the idea that governments were created by the deliberate choice of free men. He believed on the contrary, as an early opponent put it, that 'the rise and right of government' was natural and native, not

---

[559] Western, *Monarchy and Revolution*, London: Blandford Press, 1972, p. 8.
[560] J.S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 232. Rousseau also pointed out, in *The Social Contract*, that since every man is equally a descendant of Adam, it was not clear which descendants of Adam were to exercise lordship over others.

voluntary and conventional'. Subjects therefore could not have a right to overturn a government because the original bargain had not been kept. There were absurdities and dangers in the opposing view. 'Was a general meeting of a whole kingdom ever known for the election of a Prince? Was there any example of it ever found in the world?' Some sort of majority decision, or the assumption that a few men are allowed to decide for the rest, are in fact the only ways in which government by the people can be supposed to have been either initiated or carried on. But both are as inconsistent as monarchy with the idea that men are naturally free. 'If it be true that men are by nature free-born and not to be governed without their own consents and that self-preservation is to be regarded in the first place, it is not lawful for any government but self-government to be in the world… To pretend that a major part, or the silent consent of any part, may be interpreted to bind the whole people, is both unreasonable and unnatural; it is against all reason for men to bind others, where it is against nature for men to bind themselves. Men that boast so much of natural freedom are not willing to consider how contradictory and destructive the power of a major part is to the natural liberty of the whole people.' The claims of representative assemblies to embody the will of the people are attacked on these lines, in a manner recalling Rousseau. Filmer also points out that large assemblies cannot really do business and so assemblies delegate power to a few of their number: 'hereby it comes to pass that public debates which are imagined to be referred to a general assembly of a kingdom, are contracted into a particular or private assembly'. In short, 'Those governments that seem to be popular are kinds of petty monarchies' and 'It is a false and improper speech to say that a whole multitude, senate, council, or any multitude whatsoever doth govern where the major part only rules; because many of the multitude that are so assembled… are governed against and contrary to their wills.'"[561]

Sir Lewis Namier writes: "Whether the theory of an actual paternal origin of government is a correct phylogenetic or logical inference, or merely a psychological delusion, we shall probably never know; but this much is certain, that it is an assumption natural to us all. Correct perception of a psychological fact underlay Sir Robert Filmer's theory: all authority is to human beings paternal in character, for they are born, not free and independent as some of Filmer's opponents would have it, but subject to parental authority; in the first place, to that of their fathers…"[562]

It is a tragedy that the pernicious theory of the social contract, invented by English thinkers such Hobbes and Locke, should have found its best refutation also in England, in Sir Robert Filmer's theory of the patriarchal origin of kingship…

---

[561] Nicolson, *Monarchy*, pp. 9-10.
[562] Namier, op. cit., 27-28.

38. CROMWELL AND THE RADICALS

The problems facing Cromwell after he had killed the king were ironically very similar to those that had faced King Charles: rebellion from without (Ireland and Scotland) and radicalism from within.

Both the Irish and the Scots proclaimed Charles II as their king. For his father had been king of three kingdoms, not only of England, but also of Ireland and Scotland… Cromwell dealt with this external threat efficiently if cruelly. Thus his slaughter of 3500 soldiers, clergy and civilians in Drogheda in Ireland is remembered by Irish Catholics to this day. Indeed, "Ireland was by far the worst sufferer in the British civil wars, its population falling between 1649 and 1653 by perhaps 20 per cent – many times the loss in England."[563]

As for the Scots, "Throughout the 1640s," writes John Morrill, "the Scots had been calling for a union [with the English] because they believed that there could be no future for Scotland except in a defined federal relationship. The English parliament resisted for two main reasons. It was determined not to let Scotland impose strict separation of church and state and clerical supremacy. And it did not wish to allow the Scottish parliament to have any kind of veto over policies in England.

"In return for Scottish support during the wars, parliament had promised federal union and a united church. But when parliament abolished the monarchy in England and Ireland after the execution of Charles I in 1649, it told the Scots they were an independent nation free to go their own way. The Scots refused to accept this and voted to fight to install Charles II as king of England, Scotland and Ireland. They recalled him from Holland in June, 1650, and then crowned him at Scone in January, 1651. He now led an army of 12,000 Scots into England, which was defeated by Cromwell at Worcester [in 1651]."

The English, writes Morrill, now "had to make a choice: they could either withdraw or they could occupy Scotland to prevent constant attacks on England. Eventually, they decided to quell the threat by uniting England and Scotland. It was a reluctant conquest. There may have been no great enthusiasm for union; but it was deemed necessary."[564]

Scotland now came under the rule of the Englishman General Monck. Ironically in view of the major role the Scottish covenanters played in starting the Civil War that deposed Charles I, it was Monck, the governor of Scotland, who, after the death of Cromwell in 1658-59, played the major role in negotiating the accession of Charles II to the throne of England…

*

---

[563] Tombs, op. cit., p. 244.

[564] Morrill, in "The Great Misconceptions of the Civil War", *BBC History Magazine,* May, 2015, p. 39.

However, it was the English *internal* dissidents that really troubled Cromwell. He had been a libertarian by comparison with the Presbyterian mainstream. But this "liberty" seemed to be getting out of hand when the Koran rolled off the printing presses in May, 1649... The English revolutionaries consisted of many more than Cromwell and his military and parliamentary allies. These were the eventual victors. But there were many other players; and in some ways the essence and spirit of the revolution is revealed more in Cromwell's leftist rivals, the communist and anarchist sects, than in Cromwell himself...

Thus there were the Levellers...

Led by John Lilburne, a "born again" Puritan from the gentry, the Levellers were a sect with whom Cromwell and other army Independents tried to form an alliance. They formed a kind of left-wing opposition to Cromwell within his own power-base.

The Levellers "were so called," write Taylor Downing and Maggie Millman, "because they insisted that since all men were equal before God so should they be equal before the law. They were never a political party in the modern sense, but they put forward a number of Leveller programmes. On the basis of these programmes, the Levellers gained support and allies, particularly in London where most of their activities were centred. They were able to raise thousands of signatures for their petitions and thousands turned out for their demonstrations; their support ranged from religious radicals to craftsmen, small masters and shopkeepers. In the same tradition as many religious radicals, they appealed for freedom of religious belief. In pamphlets and petitions they demanded liberty of conscience, the disestablishment of the Church and the abolition of compulsory tithes. As time went on, their outlook became more secular with demands for legal reforms and for equal application of the laws, the end of imprisonment for debt, the abolition of trade monopolies and the end of press censorship. They appealed to many people who had expected and hoped that the end of the war [the first Civil War, ending in 1646] would herald a new order but instead were faced with high taxes, economic depression and a Parliament which abused its powers.

"The truly revolutionary programme of the Levellers emerged from their attack on the unrepresentativeness of England's constitution. They looked back to the period when the Norman conquerors had imposed their tyrannical laws on the people of England and looked forward to a new order in which the sovereignty of the people was central and when representative institutions were democratically elected."[565]

"The Levellers," writes Tombs, "wanted limited government – Lilburne extolled Magna Carta – with power decentralized and taxation low. But the

---

[565] Downing and Millman, *Civil War*, London: Parkgate books, 1991, p. 109.

army needed central authority to be strong and taxation high – anathema to the Levellers. For a time, soldiers and Levellers found common ground in blaming their troubles on parliamentary corruption."[566]

Lilbourne, according to Ackroyd, "helped to promote agitation in the New Model Army, had turned against the new administration. In 'England's New Chains Discovered' he lambasted Cromwell and the army grandees for dishonesty and hypocrisy; he accused them of being 'mere politicians' who wished to aggrandize themselves while they pretended 'a waiting upon providence, that under the colour of religion they might deceive the more securely'. A pamphlet, 'The Hunting of the Foxes', complained that 'you shall scarce speak to Cromwell but he will lay his hand on his breast, elevate his eyes, and call God to record. He will weep, howl and repent, even while he does smite you under the fifth rib.'

"Cromwell was incensed at the pamphlet and was overheard saying at a meeting of the council of state, 'I tell you, sir, you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them in pieces… if you do not break them, they will break you.' By the end of March Lilburne and his senior colleagues had been placed in the Tower on the charge of treason. The levellers, however, were popular among Londoners for speaking home truths about the condition of the country. When thousands of women flocked to Westminster Hall to protest against Lilburne's imprisonment the soldiers told them to 'go home and wash your dishes'; whereupon they replied that 'we have neither dishes nor meat left'. When in May a group of soldiers rose in mutiny for the cause of Lilburne, Cromwell and Fairfax suppressed them; three of their officers were shot. As Cromwell said on another occasion, 'Be not offended at the manner of God's working; perhaps no other way was left.'

"Assaults also came from the opposite side with royalist pamphlets and newsletters mourning 'the bloody murder and heavy loss of our gracious king' and proclaiming that 'the king-choppers are as active in mischief as such thieves and murderers need to be'. The authorities were now awake to the mischief of free speech, and in the summer of the year the Rump Parliament passed a Treason Act that declared it high treason to state that the 'government is tyrannical, usurped or unlawful, or that the Commons in parliament assembled are not the supreme authority of this nation'. There was to be no egalitarian or libertarian revolution. At the same time the council of state prepared 'An Act against Unlicensed and Scandalous Books and Pamphlets' that was designed to prohibit any pamphlets, papers or books issued by 'the malignant party'. A resolution was also passed by the Rump that any preacher who mentioned Charles Stuart or his son would be deemed a 'delinquent'."[567]

*

---

[566] Tombs, op. cit., p. 238.
[567] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 314-315.

Another revolutionary sect was the Diggers, who called themselves "True Levellers', but acquired their name when, in April 1649, they gathered on the common on St. George's Hill in Surry and began to dig the land and create a quasi-communist community. Their leader Gerrard Winstanley, basing his teaching on the Bible, declared his belief in the common ownership of land and property, equality between the sexes. In one of his "revelations" he declared "That the earth shall be made a common Treasury of livelihood to whole mankind, without respect of persons; and I had a voice within me declare it all abroad, which I did obey..."[568] He announced his programme in an introductory letter to *The New Law of Righteousness*, which was dated four days before the execution of the king. Then, on 17 March, he abolished kingship. And on 19 May he declared England to be a commonwealth and free state. "Anything seemed possible, including the Second Coming of Jesus Christ..."[569]

Further Digger colonies were founded in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire and other parts of the country. The Diggers demanded that confiscated Church, Crown and Royalists lands should be turned over to the poor. In *The Law of Freedom*, Winstanley put forward his vision of a communist Utopia based on true Christian freedom.

At one point, in May, 1649, central government got involved. A month earlier, Sir Thomas Fairfax, the Lord General, had summoned Winstanley to explain himself. The Digger leader had on that occasion, writes Holland, "succeeded in persuading Fairfax that his project presented no threat to the Commonwealth." A month later, however, as we have seen, a Leveller mutiny broke out in the army. "Only swift action by Fairfax and his deputy, Oliver Cromwell, a general as formidable as he was devout, had succeeded in breaking it. The mutineers had been taken by surprise at night in Burford, a town west of Oxford. The next morning, three of them had been executed in a churchyard. Order had successfully been restored. Fairfax, however, as he headed back to London, had good reason to view the Diggers with renewed suspicion. Christ, who had foretold the doom of the rich, and whose return would see the poor inherit the earth, was hailed by Winstanley as 'the greatest, first, and truest Leveller that ever was spoke in the world'. The title of 'Leveller' was not in fact original to him. It was one that the mutineers had already claimed as their own. Like Winstanley, they believed that rank and wealth were evils; that all were by nature equal: that Christ's work was to be 'the Restorer and Repairer of man's loss and fall'. Soldiers, though, could not be Diggers. Without rank there would be no discipline; and without discipline there would be no army. Godliness in England did not stand so secure that it could afford that. Cromwell, leaving Burford, had begun to prepare an expedition to Ireland, a notorious stump of papacy, where loyalists continued to plot the return of monarchy to England, and the overthrow of everything that the army had fought so long and hard to achieve. The responsibility of Fairfax, meanwhile, was to keep his lieutenant-general's rear secure. The Lord General,

---

[568] Winstanley, *Watch Word to the City of London*.

[569] Hill, op. cit., pp. 273-274.

as he turned off the highway to London and rode with his attendants to inspect St. George's Hill, had much on his mind.

"Arriving before the Diggers, he gave them a short speech of admonition. Winstanley, though, was nothing daunted. Scorning to remove his hat, he scorned as well to moderate his views. Soberly though he spoke, he was not the man to bit or bridle the Spirit. More than a century before, in the first throes of the Reformation, Thomas Münster had proclaimed that scripture itself was a less certain witness of truth than God's direct speaking to the soul; and now, in the hothouse of the English Commonwealth, the Spirit was once again bringing enlightenment to common men and women. 'I have nothing,' Winstanley insisted, 'but what I do receive from a free discovery within.' The proofs of God's purpose were more surely to be found in a ploughboy whose heart had been suffused with an awareness of the essential goodness of mankind than they ever were in churches. Just as Münster had done, Winstanley despised the book-wrangling of pastors. 'All places stink with the abomination of Self-seeking Teachers and Rulers.' True wisdom was the knowledge of God that all mortals could have, if only they were prepared to open themselves to the Spirit: for God, Winstanley proclaimed, was Reason. It was Reason that would lead humanity to forswear the very concept of possessions; to join in building a heaven on earth. His foes might dismiss Winstanley as a dreamer; but he was not the only one. The occupation of St. George's Hill was a declaration of hope: that others some day would join the Diggers, and the world would be as one."[570]

The Diggers moved from St. George's Hill to Cobham Heath early in 1650. Then, in February 1650, "the Council of State again ordered army intervention, bidding Fairfax to address complaints of woods being 'despoiled' by arresting the offenders, to prevent the diggers encouraging 'the looser and disordered sort of people to the greater boldness in other designs…'

"By April 1650, the St George's Hill commune was in effect defeated and the second experiment at Cobham also followed shortly. A week before Easter Parson Platt attacked a man and a woman working on the heath; a week later he returned with several men and set fire to houses and dug up the corn. Eleven acres of corn and a dozen houses were destroyed; a twenty four hour a day watch was put on Cobham heath to prevent any resumption of digging. The diggers were threatened with death if they returned. A 'Humble Request to the ministers of both universities and to all lawyers in every Inns-a-Court' complaining of Platt's actions, but without result.

---

[570] Holland, *Dominion*, London: Abacus, 2019, pp. 349-350.

"This marked the end of the active communist phase of the True Levellers, though Gerard Winstanley continued to write and set out radical egalitarian ideas…"[571]

*

Cromwell may have killed a king, and subdued the Irish and the Scots, but his victory "had not led to a tightening of discipline. Quite the opposite. Despite the passing in 1648 of blasphemy ordinance that punished anti-trinitarianism with death, and a host of other heresies with imprisonment, it had improved impossible to enforce. The streets of London – which had witnessed an archbishop of Canterbury as well as a king being led to the block – seethed with contempt for the very notion of authority. Practices and beliefs that previously had lurked in the shadows burst into spectacular flower. Baptists who, as the more radical of the first generation of Protestants had done, dismissed infant baptism as an offence against scripture; Quakers, who would shake and foam at the mouth with the intensity of their possession by the Spirit; Ranters, who believed that every human being was equally a part of God: all made a mockery of the notion of a single national church. Their spread, to enthusiasts for Presbyterian discipline, was like that of the plague. Christian order in England seemed at risk of utter disintegration…"[572]

Every revolution has its anarchist element. In the English revolution this element was represented above all by the Diggers. But there were still other anarchists, such as the Ranters, who "believed that to the pure all things were pure; Laurence Clarkson, 'the Captain of the Rant', professed that 'sin had its conception only in imagination'. They might swear, drink, smoke and have sex with impunity. No worldly magistrate could touch them."[573]

"The Ranters pushed toleration to the limit. In no way a sect nor an organized congregation, this loose group of individuals provoked fear and hostility quite out of proportion to their numbers. As individuals they were undeniably provocative; taking their belief in the individual's personal relationship with God to its extreme, they broke with all traditions and moral constraints. By the standards of their day they appeared sexually and socially immoral….

"Mainstream Protestantism was, however, to face its biggest challenge from the Quakers. The Quakers of the seventeenth century had little in common with the Friends of today, known for their pacifism and quietism. The Quakers originated in the north of England and found adherents among farmers and artisans as well as the poor. Like the Diggers, they believed in universal

---

[571] Mudlark121, *Rebel History Calendar*, https://pasttenseblog.wordpress.com/2019/04/01/today-in-radical-history-1649-the-diggers-take-over-common-land-st-georges-hill.

[572] Holland, *Dominion*, p. 351.

[573] Ackroyd, op. cit., p. 313

salvation and the notion of Christ within the individual. Their success in evangelising is proved by the numbers of converts: in 1652 they numbered about 500, by 1657 there were perhaps 50,000. Their leaders were often flamboyant and aggressive in their beliefs; Quakers also demanded religious freedom alongside calls for social reforms. They were to be found disrupting services in the 'steeplehouses', their name for parish churches. They refused to pay tithes and challenged the authority of local magistrates. Their belief in equality of all men in the sight of God led them to eschew traditional forms of deference; they refused 'hat-honour', the removing of hats in front of figures of authority…"[574]

Another radical group were the Fifth Monarchists, who, writes Tombs, were "led by Major-Generals Overton and Harrison but mainly drawn from the London labourers, servants and journeymen, wanted the adoption of the Law of Moses in preparation for the Fifth Universal Monarchy. This, foretold by the prophet Daniel, they expected to begin in 1656, inaugurating the thousand-year rule of the saints (themselves)."[575]

"The Fifth Monarchists," writes Professor Bernard Capp, "were a sect that emerged in the early 1650s, convinced that the Civil War was part of God's design to bring about a kingdom of heaven on earth. Their name came from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, whose vision of four great beasts was widely understood to signify four great kingdoms that would be swept away and replaced by a golden age on Earth. This group believed that Cromwell's parliament had failed to advance God's plan, and that it was therefore now up to them to help establish the new order by overturning a worldly regime.

"[Thomas] Venner's plebeian followers represented the most militant wing of the movement. Their unique attempt at an uprising in 1657 had been foiled by Cromwell's spy agency. They saw the restoration of the Stuarts in 1660 as a disastrous obstacle to Christ's kingdom, and responded by launching a second and bloody uprising in 1661.[576] It created widespread alarm, and had the effect of hardening government attitudes to all Nonconformists.

"In its aftermath, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers were rounded up and imprisoned. Venner's rising was therefore a factor in prompting the harsh laws against Nonconformists, the so-called 'Clarendon

---

[574] Downing and Millman, op. cit., pp. 119-121, 125.

[575] Tombs, op. cit., p. 242.

[576] "Thomas Venner staged an uprising against earthly monarchy, shouting that their allegiance was to 'King Jesus, and the heads [of the regicides] upon the gates' Londoners were appalled and did not join them; the heads of Fifth Monarchists soon joined those of the regicides and other criminals... Venner's small group had terrified the capital for four days, but the rising ultimately strengthened Charles's regime" (Kate Lovemen, "Putting the Realm Back Together", *BBC History Magazine,* November, 2019, p. 48). (V.M.)

Code', that resulted in the imprisonment of thousands, including John Bunyan, over the following twenty-five years.[577]

"The Fifth Monarchy men and women were actively preparing the reign of Christ and His saints that was destined to supersede the four monarchies of the ancient world; the reign of Jesus would begin in 1694. They would clap hands and jump around, calling out: 'Appear! Appear! Appear!'; they would be joined by travelling fiddlers and ballad-singers until they were in an emotional heat.

"The Muggletonians also had apocalyptic and millenarian tendencies. They believed that the soul died with the body and would be raised with it at the time of judgement, and that God paid no attention to any earthly activities. They also asserted that heaven was 6 miles above the earth and that God was between 5 and 6 feet in height…"[578]

The Muggletonians were founded by the London "prophet" Ludowick Muggleton and were waiting for the end of the world. They had that suspicion of the law and lawyers that ran through all the revolutionary sects. Thus "Muggleton accepted that 'the poor… can have no law at all, although his cause be ever so just, no judge will hear him, nor no lawyer will give him any counsel, except he hath monies in his hand; nor no judge will do the poor any justice, except he go in the way of the law, and that the poor cannot do'. 'So that if the birthright of the poor be ever so great or just, it must be lost for want of monies to fee lawyers'. Although 'the government of this world hath brought a necessity of the use of lawyers', none of the saints should enter that profession. Lawyers will be condemned to hell in the last judgement. The 169th Song in *Divine Songs of the Muggletonians* rejoiced that lawyers 'are damned without mercy to all eternity' – a sentence which Milton reserved for bishops…"[579]

As we can see, the main motivation of the radical sectarians was religious utopianism and apocalypticism, reinforcing that link between religious apocalypticism and political radicalism that we first saw among the Hussites. They must be sharply distinguished from the Parliamentarians, who were men of property who "associated liberty exclusively with property or Parliament".[580] For the poor, on the other hand, who joined the sects, the law was the enemy; for "radical Puritan theology converges with politics in opposition to law".[581]

This antinomianism was the real novelty of the English revolution, the anarchical and proletarian ground base which threatened to overwhelm the

---

[577] Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists believed it was up to them to establish a new order", *History Today,* January, 2018, p. 9.

[578] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 313-314.

[579] Hill, *Liberty against the Law,* London: Penguin, 1997, pp. 266-267.

[580] Hill, *Liberty against the Law,* p. 325.

[581] Hill, *Liberty against the Law,* p. 216.

less radical, more middle-class disputes between the royalists and parliamentarians.

39. CROMWELL AS LORD PROTECTOR

The problem for Cromwell after returning from his triumphant wars in Scotland and Ireland in 1651 was not only that not everyone obeyed the Rump Parliament, but also that the Rump, in spite of its purged condition, was "in no way inclined to obey his orders with the same promptness as the soldiers of the New Model Army. Those parliamentarians who were members of the council of state were in most respects still conscientious and diligent, yet others were not so easily inspired by Cromwell's zeal or vision.

"Cromwell had argued for an immediate dissolution of parliament, making way for a fresh legislature that might deal with the problems attendant upon victory [over Scotland and Ireland]. Yet the members prevaricated and debated, finally agreeing to dissolve their assembly at a date not later than November 1654. They gave themselves another three years of procrastination. The army was by now thoroughly disillusioned with those members who seemed intent upon thwarting or delaying necessary legislation. The most committed soldiers believed them to be time-servers or worse, uninterested in the cause of 'the people of God'.

"In truth the Rump was essentially a conservative body, while the army inherently favoured radical solutions; there was bound to be conflict between them. Yet Cromwell himself was not so certain of his course; he wished for godly reformation of the commonwealth but he also felt obliged, at this stage, to proceed by constitutional methods. He did not want to impose what was known as a 'sword government'. Another possibility was also full of peril. In the current state of opinion it was possible that, unless fresh elections were carefully managed, a royalist majority might be returned; this could not be permitted."[582]

Cromwell was now faced with the same dilemma that faces all revolutionaries: that while they *seize* power by destroying the legitimate power, they eventually need to recreate legitimacy in order to *retain* power. Might had triumphed over right; but now might wanted to be perceived as right. But that was impossible; for Cromwell's government was indeed a "sword government", and, as the Lord said (Cromwell must have known this), "all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matthew 26.52).

Earlier, just after his victory over the King at Naseby in 1645, he had declared: "God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands, - for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that, - he knows not the Gospel". But when anarchy threatened, and Parliament failed him, Cromwell found an exemption to the Gospel: "Necessity hath no law," he said to the dismissed representatives of the people. And as he gazed on King Charles's body shortly after his execution he murmured: "Cruel necessity"…

---

[582] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 322-323.

Napoleon adopted a similar rationale when he dismissed the French Directory and the elected deputies in 1799.[583] As did Lenin when he dismissed the Russian Constituent Assembly in 1918.

For "necessity" in one age becomes the "revolutionary morality" of the next – that is, the suspension of all morality.

And so on April 20, 1653 "Cromwell came into the chamber of the House of Commons, dressed in plain black, and took his seat; he had left a file of musketeers at the door of the chamber and in the lobby. He took off his hat and rose to his feet. He first commended the Commons for their early efforts at reform but then reproached them for their subsequent delays and obfuscations; he roamed down the middle of the chamber and signalled various individual members as 'whoremaster' and 'drunkard' and 'juggler'. He declared more than once that 'it is you that have forced me to do this, for I have sought the Lord night and day that he would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work'. He spoke, according to one observer, 'with so much passion and discomposure of mind as if he had been distracted'; he shouted, and kicked the floor with his foot.

"In conclusion he called out, 'You are no parliament. I will put an end to your sitting.' He then called for the musketeers and pointed to the parliamentary mace lying on the table. 'What shall be done with this bauble? Here. Take it away.' He said later that he had not planned or premeditated his intervention and that 'the spirit was so upon him, that he was overruled by it; and he consulted not with flesh and blood at all'. This is perhaps too convenient an explanation to be altogether true. He had dissolved a parliament that, in one form or another, had endured for almost thirteen years. The Long Parliament, of which the Rump was the final appendage, had witnessed Charles I's attempt to seize five of its members and then the whole course of the civil wars; it had seen some of its members purged and driven away. It was not a ruin, but a ruin of that ruin. It ended in ignominy, unwanted and unlamented. Cromwell remarked later that, at its dissolution, not even a dog barked. On the following day a large placard was placed upon the door of the chamber. 'This House to be let, unfurnished.'"[584]

Such was the inglorious, indeed farcical end of the first parliament that wielded supreme power in England – only four years after it had executed the previous supreme ruler, King Charles I.

*

[583] As Guizot wrote, Cromwell "was successively a Danton and a Buonaparte" (*The History of Civilization in Europe*, p. 221).
[584] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 325-

In spite of speculation about the replacement of Parliament by one-man rule of some kind, Cromwell was not yet ready for such a drastic step, which would have alienated many of his fellow Army officers. He admitted, however, that "for the preservation of our Rights, both as Englishmen, and as Christians, a settlement, with somewhat of Monarchical Power in it, would be very effective." So he was no democrat, but rather looking forward to a kind of constitutional monarchy of the king that actually came into being in the "Glorious Revolution" thirty years after his death.

In any case, parliament and the army offered him the quasi-monarchical post of "Lord Protector", which he accepted. So he became the constitutional monarch – but with the preponderance of power very much in his hands rather than parliament's. In fact, he was really an absolutist dictator that tolerated parliament only so long as it towed his line…

A new Parliament, as provided for by the new constitution and selected by Cromwell and his Council of Officers, came into being. "It was nicknamed 'Barebone's Parliament' after Praise-God Barebone (or Barbon), one of its members. Optimists hoped that it would be the prelude to the Second Coming. Cromwell expected the Assembly to 'usher in things God hath promised'. It could hardly fail to disappoint. In fact, it was not wholly different from earlier parliaments, being largely made up of gentry, JPs and lawyers."[585]

Cromwell's relationship with the new Parliament continued to be uneasy. Thus in September, 1654, he "addressed the new assembly in the Painted Chamber of Westminster Palace; he sat in the chair of state while the members were seated on benches ranged against the walls. 'Gentlemen,' he told them, 'you are met here on the greatest occasion that, I believe, England ever saw.' He then proceeded to speak for three hours on the various manifestations of God's providence in an oration that veered from messianic enthusiasm to scriptural exposition. He had called parliament, but 'my calling be from God'. He was thus reiterating, in his own fashion, the divine right of kings. He was above parliament. Yet he came to them not as a master but as a fellow servant. Now was a time for 'healing and settling'.

"Yet the new parliament was by no means a compliant body. For some days its members had debated, without reaching any conclusion, whether they should give the protectorate their support. On 12 September they found the doors of their chamber closed against them, and they were asked once more to assemble in the Painted Chamber where the Protector wished to address them. He chided them for neglecting the interest of the state, 'so little valued and much slighted', and he would not allow them to proceed any further unless and until they had signed an oath to agree to 'the form of government now settled'. All members had to accept the condition that 'the persons elected shall

---

[585] Tombs, op. cit., p. 247. "Sixty of the members (nearly half) either had been or were to be members of elected Parliaments, and most of them were of respectable standing" (Hill, *God's Englishman,* p. 134).

342

not have power to alter the government as it is hereby settled in one single person and a Parliament'. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'I am sorry, and I could be sorry to the death that there is cause for this. But there is cause…'

"Some members protested and refused to sign, but the majority of them either agreed or at least submitted. Cromwell still did not attempt to guide the debates, but he became increasingly alarmed at their nature. He is reported to have said in this period that he 'would rather keep sheep under a hedge than have to do with the government of men'. Sheep were at least obedient. The members voted to restrict the power of the Protector to veto legislation; they also decided that their decisions were more authoritative than those of the council of state. They believed, in other words, that parliament should still be paramount in the nation. That was not necessarily Cromwell's view. From day to day they debated every clause of the 'Instrument of Government', with the evident wish to replace it with a constitution of their own. On 3 January 1655 they voted to reaffirm the limits to religious toleration; two days later they decided to reduce army pay, thus striking at Cromwell's natural constituency. On 20 January they began to discuss the formation of a militia under parliamentary control.

"Two days later, Cromwell called a halt. He lambasted them for wasting time in frivolous and unnecessary discourse when they should have been considering practical measures for the general reformation of the nation. He told them that 'I do not know what you have been doing. I do not know whether you have been alive or dead.' He considered that it was not fit for the common welfare and the public good to allow them to continue; and so, farewell. The first protectorate parliament was dissolved. The larger problem, however, was not addressed. Could a representative parliament ever co-exist with what was essentially a military dictatorship."[586]

Indeed, that was precisely what it was: a military dictatorship. Cromwell and his Army had simply taken the place of King Charles and his court; and his arguments with Parliament were more or less the same as those of the king with Parliament – except that Cromwell, unlike Charles, usually got his way. Moreover, his power was much wider and more obtrusive than the king's, with Major-Generals ruling the provinces instead of the "natural leaders" of the country as the parliamentarians saw themselves.

But the people were unhappy, not least with the Major-Generals. So Cromwell decided quietly to drop them and proceed to the last act of what was now becoming a farce, if not a tragedy. Early in 1657 a member of Parliament put forward a motion that Cromwell should "take upon him the government according to the ancient constitution" – in other words, become king. After a long debate, at the end of March the members formally offered him the crown. Cromwell dithered for a long time. Finally, the opposition of his army

---

[586] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 336-337.

colleagues forced him to give up the idea. God, he said, had "blasted the title and the name of king".

But he would accept the power, if not the name, of a king.

And so "Cromwell's second inauguration as Protector took place on 26 June 1657 in Westminster Hall. The first had been modest; this was virtually regal. Edward I's Coronation Chair was brought from Westminster Abbey. Cromwell was invested with an imperial robe of purple velvet lined with ermine. He was presented with a gilt-bound and embossed Bible, a golden-hilted sword and a massive gold sceptre. He swore a version of the Coronation Oath and finally, seated in majesty in the Coronation Chair, he was acclaimed three times to the sound of trumpets and the cry 'God Save the Lord Protector'."[587]

"His office was not declared to be hereditary but he had been given the power to name his successor; it was generally believed that this would be one of his sons. So began the second protectorate, which was now a restored monarchy in all but name."[588]

The king is dead (Charles)! Long live the king (Oliver)!

When King Oliver came to die, and his body was carried in procession through London on November 23, 1658, "he lay in his robe of state, a sceptre in one hand, an orb in the other, with an Imperial Crown laid on a velvet cushion a little above his head".[589] But he left behind no successor. His son Richard was elected Lord Protector; but he lacked the prestige and authority of his father. Such was the difference between a dictatorship or parliamentocracy and a hereditary monarchy… The naturalness, the indisputability, of a son succeeding his father can never belong to an elected dictatorship or republic, however powerful…

In one respect, therefore, Cromwell performed a great service for all subsequent generations: by attempting, and completely failing, to make himself a secular king in place of the anointed king whom he had killed, and while hypocritically claiming that he was not restoring one-man rule, he showed both that legitimate and sacred monarchism is a permanent and ineradicable striving of the human spirit, which no revolution, however democratic in theory, can completely extirpate, and that a true monarchy should never be confused with the deceiving pretences of a revolutionary usurper…

Deceiving usurper though he was, we may largely agree with Frederic Harrison that: "Apart from its dictatorial character, the Protector's government was efficient, just, moderate, and wise. Opposed as he was by lawyers, he made

---

[587] Starkey, op. cit., p. 352.

[588] Ackroyd, op. cit., pp. 346-347.

[589] Starkey, op. cit., p. 340.

some of the best judges England ever had. Justice and law opened a new era. The services were raised to their highest efficiency. Trade and commerce revived under his fostering care. Education was reorganised; the Universities reformed; Durham founded. It is an opponent who says: 'All England over, these were Halcyon days.' Men of learning of all opinions were encouraged and befriended. 'If there was a man in England,' says Neal, 'who excelled in any faculty or science, the Protector would find him out, and reward him according to his merit.' It was the Protector's brother-in-law, Warden of Wadham College, who there gathered together the group which ultimately founded the Royal Society.

"Noble were the efforts of the Protector to impress his own spirit of toleration {!] on the intolerance of his age; and stoutly he contended with Parliaments and Council for Quakers, Jews, Anabaptists, Socinians, and even crazy blasphemers. He effectively protected the Quakers; he admitted the Jews after an expulsion of three [nearer four] centuries; and he satisfied [the French Cardinal] Mazarin that he had given to Catholics all the protection that he dared. In his bearing towards his personal opponents, he was a model of magnanimity and self-control. Inexorable where public duty required punishment, neither desertion, treachery, obloquy, nor ingratitude ever could stir him to vindictive measures…"[590]

And yet, of course, this is only half the story – and not the most important half. On the one hand, it is true, his firm but (generally) just rule as protector restored order to his country, held it back from a truly radical revolution, and laid the foundations for its future greatness. But on the other, he gave the revolution, with all its enormously destructive, truly apocalyptic consequences, its decisive break-through in Europe and the world…

For we must remember that the Antichrist himself, according to tradition, will come at a time of chaos and bring much-needed peace and prosperity before introducing the most thoroughly anti-christian government in history. In this light, Cromwell must be recognized to be a forerunner of the Antichrist. For the good he did was essentially secular in nature and ultimately constituted a subtle and profound spiritual deception. He introduced much-needed peace and prosperity (if you ignore the losses of the Civil War and unless you are a Catholic Irishman). *But he also broke the back of Old England; after the period of his reign the concepts of true faith, Christian monarchy and faithfulness to tradition* that, however perverted and corrupted, still linked England to her Orthodox past, *were banished from English political discourse.*

Cromwell is one of the most important and contradictory figures of English and world history. As Hill writes, "for good and for evil, Oliver Cromwell presided over the great decisions which determined the future course of English and world history. [The battles of] Marston Moor, Naseby, Preston, Worcester – and regicide – ensured that England was to be ruled by

---

[590] Harrison, *Oliver Cromwell,* 1892, pp. 216-217.

Parliaments and not by absolute kings: and this remains true despite the Protector's personal failure to get on with his Parliaments…

"The British Empire, the colonial wars which built it up, the slave trade based on Oliver's conquest of Jamaica, the plunder of India resulting from his restitution and backing of the East India Company, the exploitation of Ireland; a free market, free from government interference and from government protection of the poor; Parliamentary government, the local supremacy of JPs, the Union of England and Scotland; religious toleration, the nonconformist conscience, relative freedom of the press, an attitude favourable to science; a country of landlords, capitalist farmers and agricultural labourers, the only country in Europe with no peasantry: none of these would have come about in quite the same way without the English Revolution, without Oliver Cromwell.

"If we see this revolution as a turning point in English history comparable with the French and Russian Revolutions in the history of their countries, then we can agree with those historians who see Cromwell in his Revolution combining the roles of Robespierre and Napoleon, or Lenin and Stalin, in theirs. Oliver was no conscious revolutionary like Robespierre or Lenin: the achievements of the English Revolution were not the result of his deliberate design. But it would not have astonished Oliver or his contemporaries to be told that the consequences of men's actions were not always those which the protagonists intended…"[591]

Even such a wise and Orthodox writer as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) of New York admits that he did much to restrain the evil he had himself unleashed: "[The English revolution] bore within itself as an embryo all the typically destructive traits of subsequent revolutions; but the religious sources of this movement, the iron hand of Oliver Cromwell, and the immemorial good sense of the English people, restrained this stormy element, preventing it from achieving its full growth. Thenceforth, however, the social spirit of Europe has been infected with the bacterium of revolution…"[592]

---

[591] Hill, *God's Englishman,* pp. 253-254.
[592] Metropolitan Anastasy, "The Dark Visage of Revolution", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVII, N 5, September-October, 1996, p. 10.

40. THEORIES OF SOVEREIGNTY: (4) HOBBES

In 1651, shortly after Cromwell had assumed power, Thomas Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* (1651), an attempt to justify absolutism in the context of Cromwell's amoral approach to politics, so reminiscent (if we ignore its religiosity) of Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513). Almost all contemporary theorists, whether monarchist or revolutionary, agreed that all power was from God and was legitimate only if sanctioned by God, differing only in their estimate of which power, the king's or the people's, was the final arbiter of conflicts. But Hobbes derived his theory of sovereignty from reason and "the principles of Nature only", from a mythical social contract between men in which God had no part.

Hobbes initial axiom was what he called the State of Nature, which, he believed, was WAR, a state devoid of civilization in which every man's hand was raised against his neighbour, and in which the life of man was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Let us linger on this first proposition of Hobbes' theory and ask: How could such a bleak axiom become so influential in a region that was, after all, still nominally, even fanatically Christian? The answer is: because *Europe – by which I mean Western, Catholic and Protestant Europe - was not in fact Christian at all,* and for the last two hundred years, since being supposedly "reborn" in the Renaissance, had indulged in nothing else than WAR, first: *external, colonial war* against peaceful natives on other Africa, America and Asia, and then, with ever-increasing ferocity: *civil war* within and between the European "Christian" (as we shall still call them, even if Europe did not deserve the epithet) nations.

As Frankopan writes, "it was Europe's entrenched relationship with violence and militarism that allowed it to place itself at the centre of the world after the great expeditions of the 1490s.

"Even before the near-simultaneous discoveries of Columbus and Vasco da Gama, competition between kingdoms in Europe had been intense. For centuries, the continent had been characterized by fierce rivalry between states that frequently erupted into open hostility and war. This in turn prompted advancements in military technology. New weapons were developed, introduced and then refined after being tested on the battlefield. Tactics evolved as commanders learnt from experience. The concept of violence was institutionalized too: European art and literature had long celebrated the life of the chivalrous knight and his capacity to use force judiciously – as an act of love and of faith, but also as an expression of justice. Stories about the Crusades, which praised nobility and heroism and hid treachery, betrayal and the breaking of sworn oaths, became intoxicatingly powerful.

"Fighting, violence and bloodshed were glorified, as long as they could be considered just. This was one reason, perhaps, why religion became so important: there could be no better justification of war than as being in defence of the Almighty. From the outset, the fusion of religion and expansion were

closely bound together: even the sails of Columbus' ships were marked by large crosses. As contemporary commentators constantly stressed, in regard to the Americas, but also as Europeans began to fan out over Africa, India and other parts of Asia and then Australia as well, it was all part of God's plan for the west to inherit the earth."[593]

Perhaps it was in ways that have not yet been revealed to us. But there was no way in which the west's inheriting the earth had anything to do with the Gospel Beatitude: "Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." For western man was anything but *meek*. He was proud, rapacious, avaricious and violent. Such vices, and the terrible things that resulted – genocide, rape, theft on a breathtaking scale – could not possibly be blessed by God.

"In fact, Europe's distinctive character as more aggressive, more unstable and less peace-minded than other parts of the world now paid off. After all, this was why the great vessels of the Spanish and Portuguese had proved successful in crossing the oceans and connecting continents together. The traditionally built craft that had sailed across the Indian and Arabian seas for centuries with little change to their design were no match for western vessels that could outmanoeuvre and outgun them at will. Continuous improvements in ship design that made them faster, stronger and more deadly widened the gulf ever further.

"The same was true of military technology. Such was the reliability and accuracy of arms used in the Americas that small numbers of conquistadors were able to dominate populations that were vastly superior numerically – and populations that were advanced and highly sophisticated, except when it came to weapons. In the Inca lands, wrote Pedro de Cieza de Léon, law and order were carefully maintained, with great care taken 'to see that justice was meted out and that nobody ventured to commit a felony or theft'. Data was collected annually across the Inca Empire to make sure taxes were calculated correctly and kept up to dat.e The elite had to work the land themselves for a set number of days each year and did so 'to set an example, for everybody was to know that there should be nobody so rich that… he might disdain or affront the poor'.

"These were not the savages described by triumphalists in Europe… Although Europeans might have thought they were discovering primitive civilization and that this was why they could dominate them, the truth was that it was the relentless advances in weapons, warfare and tactics that laid the basis for the success of the west…

"The great irony was that although Europe experienced a glorious Golden Age, producing flourishing art and literature and leaps of scientific endeavour, it was forged by violence. Not only that, but the discovery of new worlds served to make European society more unstable. With more to fight over and

---

[593] Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*, London: Abacus, 2019, pp. 258-259.

ever greater resources available, stakes were raised, sharpening tensions as the battle for supremacy intensified.

"The centuries that followed the emergence of Europe as a global power were accompanied by relentless consolidation and covetousness. In 1500, there were around 500 political units in Europe; in 1900, there were twenty-five. The strong devoured the weak. Competitions and military conflicts were endemic to Europe. In this sense, later horrors in the twentieth century had their roots in the dep past. The struggle to dominate neighbours and rivals spurred improvements in weapons technology, mechanization and logistics, which ultimately allowed arenas of warfare to be expanded substantially and enabled the numbers killed to rise from the hundreds to the millions. In time, persecution could be perpetrated on a massive scale. It was not for nothing that world war and the worst genocide in history had their origins and execution in Europe; these were the latest chapters in a long-running story of brutality and violence.

"Thus while focus normally falls on the investment in art and the impact of new wealth on culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is perhaps more instructive to look to the parallel advances in weapon-making in this period. Just as paintings were produced in enormous quantities for a hungry audience, so too were guns. By the 1690s, some 600,000 flintlocks were being sold by the entrepreneur Maximilien Tiron in central France alone; some contemporaries thought it was impossible even to estimate how many workers were employed in the handgun industry in Saint-Etienne because they were so numerous. Between 1600 and 1750, the rate of successful fire of handguns multiplied by a factor of ten. Technological advances – including the inventions of ramrods, paper cartridges and bayonets – made guns cheaper, better, quicker and more deadly.

"Similarly, although the names of scientists like Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton and Leonhard Euler have become famous to generations of schoolchildren, it can be all too easy to forget that some of their most important work was on the trajectory of projectiles and understanding the causes of deviation to enable artillery to be more accurate. These distinguished scientists helped make weapons more powerful and even more reliable; military and technological advances went hand in hand with the Age of Enlightenment.

"It was not that aggression did not exist in other countries. As numerous examples across other continents show, any conquest could bring death and suffering on a large scale. But periods of explosive expansion across Asia and North Africa, such as the extraordinary first decades of the spread of Islam or during the time of the Mongol conquests, were followed by long periods of stability, peace and prosperity. The frequency and rhythm of warfare was different in Europe to other parts of the world: no sooner would one conflict be resolved than another would flare up. Competition was brutal and relentless. In that sense, seminal works like Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* were quintessential texts that explained the rise of the west. Only a European author could have

concluded that the natural state of man was to be in a constant state of violence; and only a European author would have been right…"[594]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

 Let us continue with Hobbes' text, in which he argues that the only solution to man's endemic violence is the violence of the state… Some kinds of animals, such as bees and ants, live sociably with each other. But this is not the case of men, because of their various destructive passions. And so "the agreement of these creatures is natural; that of men, is by covenant only, which is artificial: and therefore it is no wonder if there be somewhat else required, besides covenant, to make their agreement constant and lasting which is a common power, to keep them in awe, and to direct their actions to the common benefit.

"The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; that is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; … and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgements, to his judgement. This is more than consent, or concord; it is the real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence."

The State was therefore a Leviathan, "a monster composed of men" headed by a sovereign, personal or collective, whose power was created by a social contract. As a result, his power was unlimited. For, as Roger Scruton explains, "since the sovereign would be the creation of the contract, he could not also be party to it: he stands above the social contract, and can therefore disregard its terms, provided he enforces them against all others. That is why, Hobbes thought, it was so difficult to specify the obligations of the sovereign, and comparatively easy to specify the obligations of the citizen."[595]

Here, then, we find the Divine Right of Kings in secular garb… But with the vital qualification that the "king" need not be a single man, but could be many men, or even a whole people. Nevertheless, even if the whole people could be

---

[594] Frankopan, op. cit., pp. 259-261..

[595] Scruton, *Modern Philosophy*, London: Arrow Books, 1997, p. 415.

the State, this did not limit the absolute power of the State over each one of them.

<div align="center">*</div>

"The state's function," then, write John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, "was to wield power: its legitimacy lay in its effectiveness, its opinions defined the truth, and its orders represented justice.

"It is not hard to see why Europe's monarchs welcomed that idea. But *Leviathan* also featured a subversive dash of liberalism. Hobbes was the first political theorist to base his argument on the principle of a social contract. He had no time for the divine right of kings or dynastic succession: his Leviathan could take the form of a parliament, and its essence lay in the nation-state rather than in family-owned territories. The central actors in Hobbes' world were rational individuals trying to balance their desire for self-promotion and their fear of self-destruction. They gave up some rights in order to secure the more important goal of self-preservation. The state was ultimately made for (and of) subjects, rather than the subjects for the state: the original frontispiece of *Leviathan* shows a mighty king constructed out of thousands of tiny men."

"This mixture of firm control with a touch of liberalism helps explain why Europe's nation-states surged ahead. Beginning in the sixteenth century, across the continent, monarchs established monopolies of power within their own borders, progressively subordinating rival centers of authority, including the princes of the church. Kings promoted powerful bureaucrats, such as Cardinal Richelieu in France and the Count-Duke of Olivares in Spain, who expanded the reach of the central government and built efficient tax-gathering machines. This shift allowed Europe to escape from the problem that had doomed Indian civilization to impotence: a state that was so weak that society constantly dissolved into petty principalities that inevitably fell prey to more powerful invaders. Yet Europe also avoided the problem that had plagued the Chinese state: too much centralized control over too vast a region. Even Europe's most imposing monarchs were far less powerful than the Chinese emperor, whose enormous bureaucracy faced no opposition from China's landed aristocracy or its urban middle classes and thus fell prey to self-satisfied decadence…"[596]

However, in spite of Hobbes' "subversive dash of liberalism", his system effectively destroyed the liberty of the individual once the state was formed. For the burden of that liberty was too great for men to bear. For, as McClelland explains, interpreting Hobbes: "if everyone has that same equal and unlimited liberty to do as he pleases in pursuit of the literally selfish end of self-preservation, then without law every man is a menace to every other man. Far from being an original endowment for which men should be grateful, the

---

[596] John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, "The State of the State", *Foreign Affairs,* July-August, 2014, pp. 121-122.

unlimited liberty of the Right of Nature is a millstone round men's necks, of which they would be wise to unburden themselves at the first opportunity."[597]

And they did, by giving up their rights to the sovereign.

Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor was to say something similar…

The lack of accountability of the sovereign is regrettable, but a necessity; and "necessity", as Cromwell said, "hath no law…"

In any case, the sovereign's will *is* the law, so it makes no sense to accuse the sovereign of acting unlawfully. "It follows from this that a Sovereign may never justly be put to death by his subjects because they would be punishing the Sovereign for their own act, and no principle of jurisprudence could ever conceivably justify punishing another for what one did oneself."[598]

Hobbes wanted to ban such books as John of Salisbury's *Politicus*, which justified the killing of tyrants: "From the reading, I say, of such books, men have undertaken to kill their Kings, because the Greek and Latine writers, in their books, and discourses of Policy, make it lawfull, and laudable, for any man so to do; provided before he do it, to call him Tyrant. For they say not *Regicide*, that is the killing of a King, but *Tyrannicide,* that is, killing of a Tyrant is lawfull… I cannot imagine, how anything can be more prejudiciall to a Monarchy, than the allowing of such books to be publickely read."

Hobbes defined liberty negatively, as the absence of impediments to motion. Subjects are free when the laws do not interfere with them, allowing them some liberty of action. However, liberty is not a right, and subjects have no right to rebel for any reason except self-preservation (for that is the very purpose of the social contract). Thus subjects have the right to refuse military service. And they have the right to refuse to obey a sovereign who cannot protect them against their enemies.[599]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Hobbes's *Leviathan* is particularly interesting for its argument that without a worldwide, fully-fledged super-state, as opposed to an alliance or association of states, there is no way to prevent war.

As McClelland writes, "*Leviathan* contains a very clear explanation of why supra-national organisations like the League of Nations or the UN are bound to fail in their avowed purpose of keeping the international peace, or even in their intention to provide some measure of international co-operation which is different from traditional alliances between states for traditional foreign policy

---

[597] McClelland, op. cit., p. 199.
[598] McClelland, op. cit., p. 207.
[599] Russell, op. cit., p. 575.

ends. For Hobbes, there is no peace without law, and there can be no law without a Sovereign whose command law is. Hobbes is absolutely insistent that individuals in the State of Nature cannot make law by agreement; all they can do by contract is to choose a Sovereign. What applies to individuals in the State of Nature also applies to sovereigns in their State of Nature in relation to each other. The only way there could be a guarantee of international peace would be if all the sovereigns of the earth, or an overwhelming majority of them, were voluntarily to give up the right of national self-defence to some kind of super-sovereign whose word would be law to all the nations of the earth. This the various nations of the earth have been notoriously reluctant to do. They have tried to make international law by agreement, but that has never stopped war. They have tried to make international law by agreement, but that has never stopped war. Hobbes could have told them why: covenants without the sword are but breath, without any power to bind a man at all. No all-powerful international Sovereign, then no international peace."[600]

This argument holds, whatever or whoever the international Sovereign may be. For Hobbes thinks "that the sovereignty which is exercised by a Sovereign is the same sovereignty, no matter how that sovereignty is in fact constituted. The sovereignty which is exercised by a Sovereign people, as at ancient Athens or republican Rome, does not change its nature as sovereignty just because it is democratic. Democratic sovereignty properly understood would have the same attributes as the sovereignty of an absolute monarch."[601]

So democracy and despotism, according to Hobbes, are not real opposites; the point is that the secular state, of whatever kind it may be, is the absolute sovereign. In fact, the only real opposite to this bipolar monster, or Leviathan, is the Orthodox autocracy, or the symphony of powers, the theory of which Hobbes' contemporary, Patriarch Nikon, was developing in Russia. According to this theory, there is a law that stands above the state – the Law of God, as interpreted by the Church… Only the symphony of Church and State, in which the State is sovereign in its sphere, but has no right to dictate to the Church (from which it derives its own legitimacy), can prevent the complete suppression of freedom that we find in the totalitarian – that is, Hobbesian – states of the twentieth century.

*

We have noted the difference between the views of Hobbes and Grotius on international law. "Grotius believed," writes Bobbitt, that the common interest between states, "which was the basis for law, arose from the inherent sociability of man. Nowadays we might say that human beings only become complete in association with one another [a view that goes back to Aristotle's *Politics*], that every associational society has a constitution, and thus the nature of man gives rise to law. Men seek law naturally, as roses turn themselves to the sun, because

---

[600] McClelland, op. cit., p. 203.
[601] McClelland, op. cit., p. 201.

law permits and enhances their development. Other philosophers, notably Thomas Hobbes, believed that man's inherent nature was for power and that the role of law was to prevent the savage competition to which man's nature would otherwise lead him. Thus men seek law to compensate for their natures, as wolves submit to the pack rather than starve singly. Either approach supported the legitimacy of the individual kingly state, but there were profound differences between these two views regarding the law of the society of such states. There being no sovereign [of the society of states], Hobbes denied that an international law could exist; by contrast, Grotius denied that there had to be a supreme sovereign for there to be a law of the society of kingly states or sovereigns, and he implied that kingly states could only achieve complete legitimacy as part of a society of sovereigns to whom they owed certain duties.

"It is often said that Hobbes and later Spinoza extrapolated from the life of the individual human being to that of the State. If the natural condition of men was one of endless war, then the superimposition of an absolute ruler, the sovereign State – Leviathan – did not terminate the state of nature, but merely transferred it to another plane. States are enemies by nature. Agreements to cooperate will be preserved only so long as fear of the consequences of breaking agreements binds the parties. Grotius, by contrast, extrapolated from the lives of persons in a society to that of states in a society. The natural condition of a society is one of potential cooperation – no man is an island sufficient unto himself. Not fear but aspiration binds states to their agreements…"[602]

Another argument against Hobbes' theory of international relations is that even a worldwide superstate may not prevent war for the simple reason that it could fall apart. Recently, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed this fatal flaw in Hobbes' argument by saying that if the present-day European Union were to fall apart because of the economic crisis in the Eurozone, it might lead to war between the constituent countries. And since the main justification for the creation of the European Union in the 1950s, according to the Eurocrats, was to prevent another war between France and Germany, this could not be allowed to happen…

Nevertheless, there is a permanent truth in Hobbes' theory of international relations that has particular relevance to the modern arguments about the sovereignty of, for example, member-states of the European Union or the United Nations. This is that sovereignty is an absolute, not a relative concept. This truth can be clearly seen if we compare the political sovereignty of states to the free will of individual human beings. A person either has free will or he does not. His will may be weak, it may be constrained by external circumstances or illness; but as long as the person is a person in his sound mind he must be acknowledged to have free will. In the same way, a state – be it monarchical, aristocratic or democratic – either has sovereignty or it does not. Its sovereignty can be constrained or weakened by political infighting or

---

[602] Bobbitt, op. cit., p. 518.

external enemies or other circumstances beyond its control; but it cannot be "pooled" or diluted as long as it remains a state worthy of the name. The proof that a state is sovereign is its ability to wage wars; for the act of waging war is the act of enforcing a command upon another state or of saying "no" to another's state's command.

Since sovereignty, according to Hobbes, is absolute, there cannot be two sovereign powers within a single society. In particular, there cannot be a truly independent Church. And so the Church must submit to Leviathan, "our mortal god". For a nation cannot serve two masters, says Hobbes (using, ironically, the words of the Head of the Church asserting the absolute sovereignty of the Kingdom of God): either it will cleave to the one and despise the other, or vice-versa. One cannot serve God and Mammon, and Hobbes plumped, quite unashamedly, for Mammon...[603]

Jean Bethke Elshtain writes that Hobbes makes two main points concerning the Church: "first, that the church *cannot* be extraterritorial; there is no universal Christian *oikumene*, for to acknowledge such would be to sneak in Rome and the pope as universal pastor. The sovereign, instead, can command obedience to scripture and order the religion of his own people. Second, given Hobbes's obsession with 'where is sovereignty?' ecclesiastical power is strictly limited to teaching. The sovereign, however, judges what doctrines are fit to teach insofar as they are conducive to civic peace and order. The sovereign, whether he be Christian or an infidel, is head of the Church."[604]

However, Hobbes' argument can be turned on its head. We may agree with him that the initial State of Fallen Nature is WAR – war between God and man, between man and man, and within each individual man, as the fallen passions of pride, envy, anger, greed and lust tear him apart. Again we agree that the State exists in order to provide some protection for citizens against each other, against citizens of other states, and against their own passions, although the State's power is only a restraining power that does not and cannot cure the fundamental causes of war among men. And again we agree that within a given nation there can be only one truly sovereign power… But that power must be the Church, not the State; for only the Church can introduce true and lasting peace, since it is the Kingdom of Christ, Who is our Peace (Ephesians 2.14). This is not to say that the State must become a Hierocracy, or priests politicians – that is strictly forbidden by the Law of God (Apostolic Canon 81). Rather, God has decreed that the State should be independent of the Priesthood in its everyday decision-making, but subject to God in its spirit and fundamental aims and principles. In giving the state taxes and military service and obeying the laws, we give to Caesar what is Caesar's. But we do so in obedience to God and the Church. And if the two obediences contradict each other, our obedience goes to the one and only true sovereign, God…

---

[603] A.L. Smith, "English Political Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *The Cambridge Modern History,* vol. VI: The Eighteenth Century, 1909, pp. 786-787.

[604] Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self,* New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 112.

The particularity of Hobbes' Leviathan – which, we may recall, may be an individual or a collective – is that it is bound by no law, human or Divine. Indeed, as Smith writes, "even Henry VIII is a pale shadow beside the spiritual supremacy in which the Leviathan is enthroned. There are only two positions in history which rise to this height; the position of a Caliph, the vice-regent of Allah, with the book on his knees that contains all law as well as all religion and all morals; and the position of the Greek where heresy was treason, where the State gods and no other gods were the citizens' gods, and the citizen must accept the State's standard of virtue."[605]

"*Leviathan*," writes Ackroyd, "created a sensation at the time, and it has been said that is inspired universal horror. The Commons proposed to burn the book, and one suggested that Hobbes himself should be tied to the stake."[606] In fact, because of the book's implicit totalitarianism, and the author's personal atheism, it was burned at Oxford in 1683.

However, it was admired on the continent, where Louis XIV of France was creating the most totalitarian state in European history thus far, and the militaristic state of Prussia was just beginning to emerge out of obscurity.

Thus, as Christopher Clark writes, the book greatly influenced Samuel Pufendorff, the biographer of the Great Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia. Like Hobbes, he "grounded his arguments for the necessity of the state in a dystopian vision of ambient violence and disorder. The law of nature alone did not suffice to preserve the social life of man, Pufendorff argued in his *Elements of Universal Jurisprudence*. Unless 'sovereignties' were established men would seek their welfare by force alone, 'all places would reverberate with wars between those who are inflicting and those who are repelling injuries.' Hence the supreme importance of states, whose chief purpose was that 'men, by means of mutual cooperation and assistance, be safe against the harms and injuries they can and commonly do inflict on one another'. The trauma of the Thirty Years War reverberates in these sentences…"[607]

---

[605] Smith, op. cit., p. 789.

[606] Ackroyd, op. cit., p. 330.

[607] Clark, *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1917,* London: Penguin, 2007, pp. 36-37.

41. THE JEWS OF WESTERN EUROPE

The Jews have influenced modern Europe through three major channels: economic, religious and political… *Economically*, the Jews played a decisive part in the development of capitalism, and in particular in the breaking down of the Christian prohibition on usury, that hindered its full emergence. In the *religious* sphere, Cabbalistic Judaism greatly influenced a whole series of heretical sects and magical practices that flooded Western Europe from the time of the Templars. From the beginning of the eighteenth century these sects and practices began to converge into the movement known as Freemasonry. *Politically*, from the second half of the eighteenth century the Jews began to harness the economic power they wielded through the banks, and the religious power they wielded through the masonic lodges, to assist that vast phenomenon which we shall simply call *the Revolution,* which had already had its first major success in Cromwell's England.

Capitalism on the grand scale is the product of avarice, the love of money, which St. Paul called "the root of all kinds of evil" (<u>I Timothy</u> 6.10). Of course, avarice was not invented by the Jews or the modern capitalists, but has been a trait of fallen man since the beginning. However, in most historical societies, while many men might dream of great wealth, only very few could have a realistic hope of acquiring it. Or rather, those few who had great wealth did not acquire it so much as inherit it. For they were the sons of the great landowning aristocratic families. Most ordinary people, on the other hand, were born as peasants. A peasant might dream of wealth, but his bondage to his landowning master and the necessity of spending all his time tilling the soil and bringing in the harvest, condemned his dreams to remain no more than that - dreams. This was especially the case in the feudal society of the medieval West – and indeed in almost all societies before the sixteenth century, insofar as almost all societies were based on a rural economy. However, the growth of towns in the Renaissance, and especially the growth of capitalism and banking, made a certain measure of wealth a real possibility for a rapidly increasing proportion of the population. And it was the Jews who very quickly came to dominate the burgeoning capitalism of the West.

The reason was that the Talmud has a specific economic doctrine that favours the most ruthless kind of exploitation. According to Oleg Platonov, it "teaches the Jew to consider the property of all non-Jews as 'gefker', which means free, belonging to no one. 'The property of all non-Jews has the same significance as if it had been found in the desert: it belongs to the first who seizes it'. In the Talmud there is a decree according to which open theft and stealing are forbidden, but anything can be acquired by deceit or cunning…

"From this it follows that all the resources and wealth of the non-Jews must belong to representatives of the 'chosen people'. 'According to the Talmud,' wrote the Russian historian S.S. Gromeka, "God gave all the peoples into the hands of the Jews" (Baba-Katta, 38); "the whole of Israel are children of kings; those who offend a Jew offend God himself" (Sikhab 67, 1) and "are subject to

execution, as for lèse-majesté" (Sanhedrin 58, 2); pious people of other nations, who are counted worthy of participating in the kingdom of the Messiah, will take the role of slaves to the Jews' (Sanhedrin 91, 21, 1051). From this point of view, … all the property in the world belongs to the Jews, and the Christians who possess it are only temporary, 'unlawful' possessors, usurpers, and this property will be confiscated by the Jews from them sooner or later. When the Jews are exalted above all the other peoples, God will hand over all the nations to the Jews for final extermination.'

"The historian of Judaism I. Lyutostansky cites examples from the ancient editions of the Talmud, which teaches the Jews that it is pleasing to God that they appropriate the property of the goyim. In particular, he expounds the teaching of Samuel that deceiving a goy is not a sin…

"Rabbi Moses said: 'If a goy makes a mistake in counting, then the Jew, noticing this, must say that he knows nothing about it.' Rabbi Brentz says: 'If some Jews, after exhausting themselves by running around all week to deceive Christians in various places, come together at the Sabbath and boast of their deceptions to each other, they say: "We must take the hearts out of the goyim and kill even the best of them." – of course, if they succeed in doing this.' Rabbi Moses teaches: 'Jews sin when they return lost things to apostates and pagans, or anyone who doesn't reverence the Sabbath.'…

"To attain the final goal laid down in the Talmud for Jews – to become masters of the property of the goyim – one of the best means, in the opinion of the rabbis, is usury. According to the Talmud, 'God ordered that money be lent to the goyim, but only on interest; consequently, instead of helping them in this way, we must harm them, even if they can be useful for us.' The tract Baba Metsiya insists on the necessity of lending money on interest and advises Jews to teach their children to lend money on interest, 'so that they can from childhood taste the sweetness of usury and learn to use it in good time.'"[608]

Now the Old Testament forbids the lending of money for interest to brothers, but allows it to strangers (Exodus 22.25; Leviticus 25.36; Deuteronomy 23.24). This provided the Jews' practice of usury with a certain justification according to the letter of the law. However, as the above quotations make clear, the Talmud exploited the letter of the law to make it a justification for outright exploitation of the Christians and Muslims.

Johnson, while admitting that some Talmudic texts encouraged exploitation of Gentiles, nevertheless argues that the Jews had no choice: "A midrash on the Deuteronomy text [about usury], probably written by the nationalistic Rabbi Akiva, seemed to say that Jews were obliged to charge interest to foreigners. The fourteenth-century French Jew Levi ben Gershom agreed: it was a positive commandment to burden the gentile with interest 'because one should not benefit an idolater… and cause him as much damage as possible without

---

[608] Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, pp. 144-145, 147.

deviating from righteousness'; others took this line. But the most common justification was economic necessity:

"'If we nowadays allow interest to be taken from non-Jews it is because there is no end of the yoke and the burden kings and ministers impose upon us, and everything we take is the minimum for our subsistence; and anyhow we are condemned to live in the midst of the nations and cannot earn our living in any other manner except by money dealings with them; therefore the taking of interest is not to be prohibited.'

"This was the most dangerous argument of all because financial oppression of Jews tended to occur in areas where they were most disliked, and if Jews reacted by concentrating on moneylending to gentiles, the unpopularity – and so, of course, the pressure – would increase. Thus the Jews became an element in a vicious circle. The Christians, on the basis of the Biblical rulings, condemned interest-taking absolutely, and from 1179 those who practised it were excommunicated. But the Christians also imposed the harshest financial burdens on the Jews. The Jews reacted by engaging in the one business where Christian laws actually discriminated in their favour, and so became identified with the hated trade of moneylending. Rabbi Joseph Colon, who knew both France and Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century, wrote that the Jews of both countries hardly engaged in any other profession..."[609]

Whichever was the original cause – the Talmud's encouragement of usury, or the Christians' financial restrictions on the Jews – the fact remains that it was through usury that the Jews came to dominate the Christians economically. "Already in the Middle Ages," writes Platonov, "the Jews, using the Christians' prejudice against profit, the amassing of wealth and usury, seized many of the most important positions in the trade and industry of Europe. Practising trade and usury and exploiting the simple people, they amassed huge wealth, which allowed them to become the richest stratum of medieval society. The main object of the trade of Jewish merchants was slave-trading. Slaves were acquired mainly in the Slavic lands[610], whence they were exported to Spain and the countries of the East. On the borders between the Germanic and Slavic lands, in Meysen, Magdeburg and Prague, Jewish settlements were formed, which were constantly occupied in the slave trade. In Spain Jewish merchants organized hunts for Andalusian girls, selling them into slavery into the harems of the East. The slave markets of the Crimea were served, as a rule, by Jews. With the opening of America and the penetration into the depths of Africa it was precisely the Jews who became suppliers of black slaves to the New World.

"From commercial operations, the Jews passed to financial ones, to mortgages and usury, often all of these at once. Already from the 15th century very large Jewish fortunes were being formed. We can judge how big their resources were from the fact that in Spain merchants kept almost a whole army

---

[609] Johnson, *History of the Jews*, p. 174.
[610] Hence the English word "slave", and the French "esclave", which come from "Slav". (V.M.)

of mercenaries who protected their dubious operations – 25,000 horsemen and 20,000 infantry.

"'The great universal historical event,' wrote the Jewish historian V. Zombardt, author of the book *The Jews and Economic Life*, 'was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal (1492 and 1497). It must not be forgotten that on the very day that Columbus sailed from Palos to discover America (August 3, 1492), 300,000 Jews were expelled to Navarra, France, Portugal and the East[611], and that in the years in which Vasco da Gama was discovering the sea route to East India, the Jews were also being expelled from other parts of the Pyrenean peninsula.' According to Zombardt's calculations, already in the 15th century the Jews constituted one third of the numbers of the world's bourgeoisie and capitalists.

"In the 16th to 18th centuries the centre of Jewish economics became Amsterdam, which the Jews called 'the new, great Jerusalem'… In Holland, the Jews became key figures in government finance. The significance of the Jewish financial world in this country went beyond its borders, for during the 17th and 18th centuries it was the main reservoir out of which all monarchs drew when they needed money…"[612]

*

Probably the most famous and influential Jew of the period was Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), who was born in Amsterdam of Portuguese Jewish (Sephardic) parents. He was a pantheist ("God or Nature", *Deus sive Natura,* was the All) who denied both the soul/body distinction and freewill, believing in absolute determinism. Freedom, for Spinoza, consisted, not in freewill, but in the recognition of necessity, of our lack of freedom…

John Barton writes: "He lived much of his life in Amsterdam, where he was eventually expelled from the synagogue for his unorthodox beliefs. He is generally regarded as one of the first rationalists of the period, and thus a founding father of the European Enlightenment. Where study of the Bible is concerned, he was a crucial figure in casting doubt on the reality of Biblical miracles, which he thought to be either fictitious or descriptions of natural processes, and in opening up questions about the authorship of biblical books. He notoriously suggested that the Pentateuch was written not by Moses but by Ezra…

"… On miracles, Spinoza was certainly sceptical in a way that anticipated the scepticism of David Hume (1711-76). He thought that biblical stories of

---

[611] These figures are considered vastly exaggerated by Cantor, op. cit., p. 189 (V.M.)
[612] Platonov, op. cit., pp. 148-149, 154.

miraculous events were either records of visions and dreams, or else were susceptible of a naturalistic explanation."[613]

Tom Holland writes: "His ambition in questioning the fundamentals of Christian belief was political as well as philosophical. 'How pernicious it is,' he declared, 'both for religion and the state to allow ministers of things sacred to acquire the right to make decrees or handle the business of government.' There were plenty of Protestants who agreed; but increasingly, in the Dutch Republic, the tide seemed to be turning against them. In 1668, a Reformed preacher who had come strongly under Spinoza's influence was arrested; his brother, convicted on a charge of blasphemy, died in prison a year later. Spinoza, putting the finishing touches to his book, did so in the conviction that the only way to annihilate the authority of the Reformed Church was to attack the deep foundations on which it ultimately depended. Religion itself had to be discredited. Simultaneously, Spinoza knew how dangerously he was treading. The *Theological-Political Treatise*, when it was published in Amsterdam early in 1670, did not have his name on the cover. It also declared its place of publication to be Hamburg. The guardians of Reformed orthodoxy were not fooled. By the summer of 1674, the Dutch authorities had been persuaded to issue a formal ban on Spinoza's book. The directive imposing it listed an entire litany of its most monstrous blasphemies: 'against God and his attributes, and his worshipful trinity, against the divinity of Jesus Christ and his true mission, along with the fundamental dogmas of the true Christian religion, and in effect the authority of Holy Scripture…' The notoriety of Spinoza as an enemy of the Christian religion was assured.

"Yet in truth, the *Theological-Political Treatise* was a book that a man only utterly saturated in Protestant assumptions could ever have written. What rendered it so unsettling to the Dutch authorities was less that it served as a repudiation of their beliefs than that it pushed them to a remorseless conclusion. Spinoza's genius was to turn strategies that Luther and Calvin had deployed against popery on Christianity itself. When he lamented just how many people were 'in thrall to pagan superstition', when he dismissed the rituals of baptism or the celebration of feast days as mere idle 'ceremony', and when he lamented that the original teachings of Christ had been corrupted by popes, he was arguing nothing that a stern Reformed pastor might not also have argued. Even the most scandalous of his claims – that a belief in miracles was superstitious nonsense, and that a close reading of scripture would demonstrate it to have been of human rather than divine origin – were entirely Protestant arguments pushed to a radical extreme. When Spinoza sought to substantiate them, he described himself – just as he had done to the Quakers – as a pupil of 'the light'. Naturally, he did not cast his own experience of enlightenment as anything supernatural. Those who claimed to be illumined by the Spirit were, he scoffed, merely fabricating a sanction for their own fantasies. True enlightenment derived from reason. 'I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy', Spinoza wrote to a former pupil who, to his

---

[613] Barton, *A History of the Bible,* London: Allen Lane, 2019, p. 409.

dismay, had converted to Catholicism, 'but I know that I understand the true one.' Here too he was pursuing a familiar strategy. Protestants had been insisting on the correctness of God's purpose since the time of Luther's confrontation with Cajetan. Now, in the purpose of Spinoza, the tradition had begun to cannibalise itself.

"Spinoza himself, though, saw it as something more than merely Protestant. A Jew learned in the law of his ancestors, who had left his own community to preach a radical and unsettling new message, he did not hesitate to hint at whom he saw as his most obvious forbear. Paul, when he was first converted, saw God as a great light. This light, so Spinoza strongly implied, had been authentically divine. Paul, unlike Moses or the prophets, had adopted the methods of a philosopher: debating with his opponents, and submitting his teachings to the judgement of others. Spinoza's critique of Judaism, for all that it might be disguised by a tone of scholarly detachment, was recognisably Christian. He admired Paul much as Luther had done: as the apostle who had brought to all of humanity the good news that God's commandments were written on their hearts. Unlike the Old Testament – a term pointedly used throughout the *Theological-Political Treatise* – the New bore witness to a law that was for all peoples, not just the one; that constituted 'true liberty' rather than a burdensome legalism, that was best comprehended by means of the light. 'Anyone therefore who abounds in the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, against whom (as Paul says in his Epistle to the Galatians 5.22) there is no law, he, whether he has been taught by reason alone or by Scripture alone, has truly been taught by God and is altogether happy.

"Spinoza certainly did not approve of all the Christian virtues. Humility and repentance he dismissed as irrational; pity as 'evil and unprofitable'. Nevertheless, his equation of Christ's teachings with the universal laws of nature was a manoeuvre as audacious as it was brilliant. To Christians unenthused by the prospect of worshipping a triangle, it offered a momentous reassurance: that much of Christianity, even without a creator God of Israel, might still be retained. Although Spinoza was privately disdainful of any notion that Jesus might have risen from the dead, he unhesitatingly affirmed in the *Theological-Political Treatise* that Christ – as he always made sure to call him – was a man who had indeed attained a superhuman degree of perfection. 'Therefore his voice may be called the voice of God.' Even in his unpublished writings, Spinoza maintained this tone of awe. Liberty – the cause which he valued above all others, and to which he had devoted his entire career – he identified directly with 'the Spirit of Christ'. Notorious as an enemy of religion though Spinoza rapidly became throughout Europe, there remained in his attitude to Jesus the sense of a profound enigma. When, in the decades that followed his death in 1677, both his enemies and his admirers hailed him as 'the chief atheist of our age', the ambivalences in his attitude to Christianity, and the way in which his philosophy constituted less a beginning than a mutation, were rapidly occluded. Quakers, when they preached that it was the inner light which enabled the truth to be known, and [the Dutch] Collegiants,

when they preached that it was Christ, had both been beating a path to Spinoza. All of them, whether they trusted in the Spirit, or reason, or both, had dreamed that sectarian disputes might be resolved for good, and all of them had failed…"[614]

Spinoza is therefore less important as a pillar of seventeenth-century rationalism than as pointing the way to many of the themes of the eighteenth-century: the themes of light, of reason, of freedom, of adogmatism, even of indifferentism. His rationalism was not of the empirical kind that became dominant in the eighteenth century, but of the logical kind exemplified by Descartes and Leibniz. But in the task of casting off the shackles of established religion, whether he deserved the epithet of "atheist" or not, Spinoza was an important pioneer.

<div align="center">*</div>

The migration of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal to Holland and England (they were also given a warm welcome in Ottoman Turkey) marked the beginning both of the ascent of these latter states to the status of world powers, and of the decline of Spain and Portugal. For, as R.H. Tawney writes: "Portugal and Spain held the keys of the treasure house of the east and the west. But it was neither Portugal with her tiny population, and her empire that was little more than a line of forts and factories 10,000 miles long, nor Spain, for centuries an army on the march and now staggering beneath the responsibilities of her vast and scattered empire, devout to the point of fanaticism, and with an incapacity for economic affairs which seemed almost inspired, which reaped the material harvest of the empires into which they had stepped, the one by patient toil, the other by luck. Gathering spoils which they could not retain, and amassing wealth which slipped through their fingers, they were little more than the political agents of minds more astute and characters better versed in the arts of peace… The economic capital of the new civilization was Antwerp… its typical figure, the paymaster of princes, was the international financier"[615] – that is, the Jew.

In September, 1655, the rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel came to London from Amsterdam to plead the case for Jewish readmission to England.

Now in 1290 King Edward I had expelled the Jews from England, and the ban had never been rescinded. "There were plenty of Protestants who thought it never should be. Christian hostility to Jews, far from being moderated by the Reformation, had in many ways been refined by it. Luther, reading Paul's letter to the Galatians, had found in it a direct inspiration for his own campaign against the papacy. The Spirit was all. Those who denied the primacy of faith as the way to God – be they papists, be they Jews – were guilty of a baneful

---

[614] Holland, *Dominion,* pp. 360-363.

[615] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* 1926, 1937, p. 78; in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations,* London: Cassell, 2004, p. 323.

legalism. Desiccated and sterile, they blocked the panting sinner from the revivifying waters of the truth. To Luther, the enduring insistence of the Jews that they were God's Chosen People was a personal affront. 'We foolish Gentiles, who were not God's people, are now God's people. That drives the Jews to distraction and stupidity.' If anyone had been driven to distraction, though, it was Luther. By the end of his life, he had come to nurture fantasies of persecution that went far beyond anything the papacy had ever sanctioned. The Jews, he had demanded, should be rounded up, housed beneath one roof, put to hard labour. Their prayer books, their Talmuds, their synagogues, all should be burned. 'And whatever will not burn should be buried and covered with dirt, so that no man will ever again see so much a stone or cinder of them.'"

"Even Luther's admirers tended to regard this as a bit extreme. Widespread though resentment of the Jews might be among Protestants, there were also some who felt sympathy for them. In England, where the self-identification of Puritans as the new Israel had fostered a boom in the study of Hebrew, this might on occasion shade almost into admiration. Even before Manasseh's arrival in London, there were sectarians who claimed it a sin 'that the Jews were not allowed the open profession and exercise of their religion amongs us'. Some warned that God's anger was bound to fall on England unless repentance was shown for their expulsion. Others demanded their readmission so that they might the more easily be won for Christ, and thereby expedite the end of days…"[616]

As R.A. York points out, there was "quite a strong philo-semitic tendency was developing in English Puritanism at this time. Puritanism encouraged the return to the text of the Bible, in particular to the Old Testament. This in turn encouraged greater interest in the study of Hebrew and the Jews themselves.

"Part of the reason for this interest was proselytising. The Jews had long been resistant to Christianity, but they might be more attracted to a purer, more Judaic form…"[617]

Rabbi Jeremy Gordon writes: "England was in the grip of Messianic excitement. Cromwell had opened Parliament that July with the announcement that 'this may be the door to usher in the things that God has promised… You are at the edge of the promises and prophecies.'

"Ben Israel lost no time stoking the messianic fervour for his own purposes. In 'A Humble Addresse to the Lord Protector' he notes: 'The opinion of many Christians and mine doe concurre herin, in that we both believe the restoring time of our Nation into their Native Country is very near at hand; I believing that this restauration cannot be before the words of Daniel be first accomplished. And when the dispersion of the Holy people shall be completed

---

[616] Holland, op. cit., pp. 355-356.

[617] York, Letters, *History Today*, vol. 50 (12), December, 2000, p. 61.

in all places, then shall all these things be completed. Signifying therewith, that all be fulfilled, the People of God must be first dispersed into all places of the World. Now we know how our Nation is spread all about, and hath its seat and dwellings in the most flourishing Kingdomes of the World except only this considerable and mighty Island [Britain]. And therefore this remains onely in my judgements before the MESSIA come.'

"It is fascinating to observe Ben Israel's theological partnering with the Puritans. He is tempting Christians to let Jews into Britain in order to bring the second coming of Jesus! The 'Addresse' is a masterful work of flattery, requestiong a 'free and publick Synagogue' in order that Jews may, 'sue also for a blessing upon this [British] Nation and People of England for receiving us into their bosoms and comforting Sion in her distresse.' But it also reminded Cromwell that no ruler, 'hath ever afflicted [the Jews] who hath not been, by some ominous Exit, most heavily punished of God Almighty; as is manifest from the Histories of the Kings; Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezer & others.'

"Ben Israel also marshals less spiritual arguments, devoting several pages to a survey of the profitability of 'The Nation of Jewes' in a range of states that have seen fit to let in Jews. This might have been particularly interesting to Cromwell, seeking to find ways to keep Britain ahead of the Dutch economy.

"Suitably inspired, Cromwell called a conference of merchants and clergymen but didn't get the support he was looking for. Admitting the Jews would be a blasphemy, some claimed. Others spread rumours of child murder… There were also fears, if re-admission were formalised, that 'every Vagabond Jew may purchase the Liberties and Immunities of free-born Englishmen'.

"Not everyone, and least of all the guilds, were anxious to see the Jews' economic nous and power in competition with the existing British mercantile classes. Perhaps in the face of such opposition, Cromwell disbanded the conference before it could report."[618]

The Venetian ambassador to England, Giovanni Sagredo describes these events as follows: "A Jew came from Antwerp and… when introduced to his highness [Oliver Cromwell] he began not only to kiss but to press his hands and touch… his whole body with the most exact care. When asked why he behaved so, he replied that he had come from Antwerp solely to see if his highness was of flesh and blood, since his superhuman deeds indicated that he was more than a man… The Protector ordered [i.e. set up] a congregation of divines, who discussed in the presence of himself and his council whether a Christian country could receive the Jews. Opinions were very divided. Some thought they might be received under various restrictions and very strict

---

[618] Gordon, "Flaw of Return", *The Jewish Chronicle,* March 31, 2006, Weekly Review, p. 38; Christopher Hale, "Oliver Cromwell and the Readmission of the Jews", *BBC History Magazine,* vol. 7, no. 11, pp. 44-47.

obligations. Others, including some of the leading ministers of the laws, maintained that under no circumstances and in no manner could they receive the Jewish sect in a Christian kingdom without very grave sin. After long disputes and late at night the meeting dissolved without any conclusion…"[619]

Eventually, in 1656, the Jews got their way. Their success "owes its origin to the imprisonment of a *converso* merchant, Antonio Rodrigues Robles, on the charge of being a papist. Robles was threatened with sequestration of his assets and escaped punishment only when he claimed that, rather than being a papist, he was Jewish. Cromwell intervened, Robles escaped punishment and, as the historian Heinrich Graetz remarked, Jews 'made no mistake over the significance of this ruling, [and threw] off the mask of Christianity.'

"It was, in Cromwell's England, far safer to be an avowed Jew than a closeted pseudo-Puritan who might harbour papist tendencies. Devoid of constitutional upheaval, legislation or fanfare, the Jews got on with the day-to-day business of establishing a community on this 'considerable and mighty Island'."[620]

Jewish influence on the political and religious, no less than the economic life of England, now increased. Eliane Glaser writes: "In 1653… the radical Fifth Monarchist preacher John Rogers suggested a plan to model the new parliament on the Sanhedrin. Rogers, like other members of the millenarian sect, believed that this would hasten Christ's coming, and the idea appeared in the manifesto of the Fifth Monarchy rebels in 1657. In fact the use of the Jewish court as a template for the English religious and political constitution is one of the most startling aspects of Christian discourse in the 17th century.

"In 1653, the legal scholar John Selden wrote a lengthy tract on the Sanhedrin; and Selden's Jewish ideas greatly influenced John Milton. Utopian visions of the English constitution, such as James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1656), contain numerous references to ancient Israel. The Sanhedrin was at the centre of debates about the place of religious minorities and the relationship between religious and civil law, because Christian commentaries could never agree on whether the Sanhedrin had arbitrated in secular as well as sacred affairs…"[621]

---

[619] Sagredo, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 184.
[620] Gordon, op. cit., p. 38.
[621] Glaser, "Napoleon's Jews: A Law unto Themselves", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 8, no. 8, August, 2007, p. 37.

42. THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES

Could the New World be the setting of a new start for western humanity? Could Europe's constant cultural, religious, philosophical, moral and aesthetic change and corruption, as well as the never-ending, ever bloodier wars (of which the Thirty Years' War was the latest and bloodiest) be consigned to the dustbin of history? Could the transplant of the physical and cultural DNA of Old Europe to the new setting of the New World elicit a mutation in the species? That was the question…

North America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a virgin land of enormous natural resources, a huge temptation for European adventurers just beginning to spread their global wings. The first to arrive, as we have seen, were the Spanish, and, as Hugh Brogan writes, "Spain at first resisted the attempts on her American monopoly with considerable success. Time and the church eventually abated the savagery of the *conquistadores*; by gentler methods her devoted friars converted and pacified the Indians, so that her forts and missions could spread up the coast from Florida into what are now Georgia and the Carolinas; defences were strengthened in the Caribbean, so that Drake, in spite of all the damage he had inflicted, died at last broken-hearted after a final failure to capture and keep Panama. In time Spain weakened; but this merely increased conflict, for, as the power of the European states became more equal, one with another (as it did, on the whole, throughout the seventeenth century), so did their capacity and will to make trouble for each other. In turn, New France, New England, New Netherland, even tentative New Sweden and New Denmark, imitated New Spain. Settlements in North America wer fought and haggled over as if they were provinces in Europe: for example, the English took Quebec from the French, restoring it on payment of Queen Henrietta's dowry in 1633; New Netherland changed hands twice before becoming New York for good. The unfortunate Indians – above all, French-backed Hurons and English-backed Iroquois – found themselves and their quarrels drawn into European disputes in which they had no interest…"[622]

In his book *Albion's Seed*, David Fischer has shown that the early British colonies in what is now the Eastern United States were peopled by four main sub-groups of Britons, each with widely differing religious and moral beliefs: the Puritans in New England in the 1620s, the Cavaliers in Virginia from 1607, the Quakers in Pennsylvania in the 1670s, and the Borderers in Appalachia in the 1700s.

The earliest English colony in America was Virginia, founded in 1607 by the Virginia Company in Jamestown. Unlike the Puritan colonies of New England, which were founded a little later, the Virginians' leaders recognized the Anglican Church as its state religion; they were of aristocratic origin and had supported the king in the English civil war. They were almost wiped out by disease and famine in 1609-10, but its founder, Captain John Smith, and the

---

[622] Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA,* London: Penguin, 1999, pp. 7-8.

other survivors kept going through digging roots, catching fish - and cannibalism. The fact that the English settlers' first contact with the native Indians involved not only killing them, but also eating their flesh, was an ominous sign of the future…

The colony of Virginia was based, as David Reynolds writes, on two important precedents which distinguished the English-speaking colonies from those planted by France and Spain: "The first was private ownership of land. To encourage migration to what was fast becoming notorious as a death trap, the Company started a 'headright' system. Anyone who paid his own passage across the Atlantic received fifty acres of land in Virginia. Not surprisingly, settlers with private property proved more enterprising than mere company employees.[623]

"Equally important was an annual assembly, comprising the governor, his appointed council and a House of Burgesses elected by local freemen, which the Company established in 1619. The assembly survived the takeover of Virginia by the Crown [in 1624], and increased its powers in the 1630s at a time when, back in England, Charles I was trying to suppress the rights of Parliament. The right to vote was generally restricted to men owning at least fifty acres – not exactly democracy but still a generous franchise by contemporary English standards. Underpinning this was a network of county courts, which were really agents of local government, handling tax-gathering, land deeds and highways, as well as police and justice."[624]

The main motivation of English emigration to America was land-hunger. The slogan was: "In Virginia land free and labour scarce; in England land scarce and labour plenty". Moreover, Virginians soon began to make huge profits from cultivation of tobacco.

But there were, of course, great perils in trying to make a living across the ocean. So it needed an extra motivation. And that motivation was religious. "It is difficult to overemphasise the fact," writes Bragg, "that they came with the Bible in English and lived every hour of their days by that Bible. For the word of God in English, their predecessors – as we saw with Wycliffe and Tyndale – had suffered exile, persecution, torture and death. They went to America to find a better place. They wanted to stay English and they sought a true England in which to plant their courageously and obstinately English Bible. They were not going to yield its language to anyone…"[625]

---

[623] "In terms of the European 'competition'," writes Melvyn Bragg, "the English Protestants were to score heavily because they came primarily not to plunder, which had been the gleeful purpose of the Spanish, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch, nor even to trade; but to settle and build a new world with God's law and above all following God's word. They came to stay…" (*The Adventure of English*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003, p. 156)

[624] David Reynolds, *America: Empire of Liberty,* London: Penguin, 2010, op. cit., p. 26.

[625] Bragg, op. cit., p. 156.

The colony of Virginia was a product of the Virginia Company of London; it was an oligarchical society revolving around the institutions of the court and the parish. Concerning the county court, Professor Fischer writes: "Its principal officers were the county justices, the county sheriff and the county surveyor, who were nominally appointed from above rather than elected from below. In practice they were controlled by the county gentry, who regarded these offices as a species of property which they passed on to one another. . . .

"On court days a large part of the county came together in a great gathering which captured both the spirit and substance of Virginia politics. Outside the courthouse, the county standard flew proudly from its flagstaff, and the royal arms of England were emblazoned above the door. The courthouse in Middlesex County actually had two doors which symbolized the structure power in that society — a narrow door at one end of the building for gentry, and a broad double door at the other for ordinary folk. Inside, on a raised platform at one end of the chamber sat the gentlemen-justices, their hats upon their heads, and booted and spurred . . . . To one side sat the jury, 'grave and substantial freeholders' who were mostly chosen from the yeomanry of the county. Before them stood a mixed audience who listened raptly to the proceedings. Outside on the dusty road, and peering in through the windows was a motley crowd of hawkers, horse traders, traveling merchants, servants, slaves, women and children — the teeming political underclass of Virginia."[626]

<center>*</center>

English settlement in the Caribbean is the context of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1613), but it was not until 1620 that a group of 102 English Puritans, disturbed by James I's persecution of them, set out from Plymouth in a ship called *The Mayflower* to start a new life in what is now the state of Massachusetts. They were mainly from East Anglia, supported the parliamentarians in the Civil War, and were well educated.

Half of the pilgrims, as they were called, "died of starvation in the first winter. Recent evidence from an archaeological dig indicates the highly religious community even resorted to cannibalism. They may have eaten a 14-year-old girl. Come springtime, those who pulled through only survived thanks to the kindness of Native Americans.[627] The story of that kindness, expressed as a meal of thanksgiving shared between strangers, is the source of Thanksgiving today."[628]

---

[626] Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, Oxford UP, 1989, pgs. 406-7; cited by Walt Garlington, "Overextending Political Loyalties", *The Abbeville Blog,* November 8, 2019.

[627] In particular, they were helped by a Native American called Squanto who had been kidnapped by English sailors fifteen years before and had learned English in London before managing to escape on a returning boat. (V.M.)

[628] Nick Hubble, "Why Thanksgiving Happened in the First Place", *Capital & Conflict,* May 9, 2018.

The leader of the original Pilgrim community, William Bradford, wrote down its experiences in the first work of American literature, which was lost but then found in England in 1855. However, it was a later expedition under John Winthrop in 1630 to Salem and Cape Ann that made the first well-established settlements in New England. By 1640 another two hundred ships had brought another fifteen thousand settlers to New England. Boston was founded at this time.

The Puritan experiment that created the United States of America was made possible by the great distance of the new colonies from the English king, and by the system whereby "a number of immigrants were given the right to form a political society under the patronage of the motherland and allowed to govern themselves in any way not contrary to her laws."[629] The experiment was carried out in a new world, where neither the weight of historical institutions, such as feudalism and the official Church, nor great differences in wealth or limitations of space, nor the pressure of external enemies (the Indians were not formidable adversaries), hindered the development of a society that was unique in the degree of its democratism and egalitarianism – and religiosity.

The United States was founded on strictly religious principles, the principles of Calvinism. As John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts in the 1630s and 1640s, whom Brogan calls "the first great American", said on board the ship that was to take him to the New World, they were going to build "a city upon a hill", "a bullwarke against the kingdom of Antichrist which the Jesuites labour to reare up in all places of the worlde."[630] Its founders, fleeing persecution at the hands of the Anglican State Church in England, found in New England almost ideal conditions in which to put their doctrine of "theocratic democratism" into practice.

These conditions were described by Alexis de Tocqueville in his famous work, *Democracy in America*: "There was a strong family likeness between all the English colonies as they came to birth. All, from the beginning, seemed destined to let freedom grow, not the aristocratic freedom of their motherland, but a middle-class and democratic freedom of which the world's history had not previously provided a complete example…

"All the immigrants who came to settle on the shores of New England belonged to the well-to-do classes at home. From the start, when they came together on American soil, they presented the unusual phenomenon of a society in which there were no great lords, no common people, and, one may almost say, no rich or poor. In proportion to their numbers, these men had a greater share of accomplishments than could be found in any European nation now. All, perhaps without a single exception, had received a fairly advanced education, and several had made a European reputation by their talents and their knowledge. The other colonies [including the southern English colonies

---

[629] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York: Fontana, 1968, p. 45.

[630] Winthrop, in Reynolds, op. cit., p. 32.

such as Virginia] had been founded by unattached adventurers, whereas the immigrants to New England brought with them wonderful elements of order and morality; they came with their wives and children to the wilds. But what distinguished them from all others was the very aim of their enterprise. No necessity forced them to leave their country; they gave up a desirable social position and assured means of livelihood; nor was their object in going to the New World to better their position or accumulate wealth; they tore themselves away from home comforts in obedience to a purely intellectual craving; in facing the inevitable sufferings of exile they hoped for the triumph of an idea.

"The immigrants, or as they so well called themselves, the Pilgrims, belonged to that English sect whose austere principles had led them to be called Puritans. Puritanism was not just a religious doctrine; in many respects it shared the most democratic and republican theories. That was the element which had aroused its most dangerous adversaries. Persecuted by the home government, and with strict principles offended by the everyday ways of the society in which they lived, the Puritans sought a land so barbarous and neglected by the world that there at last they might be able to live in their own way and pray to God in freedom."[631]

The Puritans of England, who first arose as an extreme Protestant tendency in the reign of Elizabeth I, did not separate from the Anglican Church, much as they disliked the "papist" tendencies of Archbishop Laud, even when he began to persecute them. Nor, officially, did the Massachusetts Puritans. They were not "voluntary schismatics; they were driven out of their church by Laud… Winthrop and his friends (protesting, maybe, a trifle too much) issued a fulsome declaration of loyalty to the Church of England just before sailing. They had no wish to seem deserters of God's cause in England. But the act of sailing was a sign that they had in fact abandoned it. Geography was too strong. Three thousand miles of ocean, they discovered, left them free (and therefore bound) to follow their religious principles to their logical conclusion without fear or regret. Bishops and the Book of Common Prayer were abandoned. Ties of sentiment and habit fell away, and non-separating Congregationalism ended. Every New England church was sovereign in its locality, amenable only to the advice of neighbouring churches and the strong arm of the civil authority.

"This last was a very severe restriction on the sacred freedom of the churches. It was a much more total surrender to the state than anything which Charles I or Laud were able to impose on the church in England. But Winthrop and the ministers felt they had little choice but to try to square the circle. Heresy and sedition (that is, non-Congregationalist views) would sprout unless some power existed to check them. That power could only be the state, since no church might coerce another, and since the state existed only to further God's clear purpose… It was sophistry, but plausible enough. Heresy became a civil offence, like any of the others (such as witchcraft, profanity, blasphemy,

---

[631] Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 37, 40.

idolatry, adultery, sodomy, Sabbath-breaking) with which the courts had to deal. Right liberty, Winthrop carefully explained, was liberty only to do God's will. All other forms of liberty were frowned on. So, arm in arm, the Puritan churches and the Puritan state forced men to be free. It was an enlightened despotism…"[632]

This founding ideology, according to Tocqueville, was the product "of two perfectly distinct elements which elsewhere have often been at war with one another but which in America it was somehow possible to incorporate with each other, forming a marvellous combination. I mean the *Spirit of Religion* and the *Spirit of Freedom.*"

"Puritanism," noted Tocqueville, "was almost as much a political theory as a religious doctrine. No sooner had the immigrants landed on that inhospitable coast described by Nathaniel Morton than they made it their first care to organise themselves as a society. They immediately passed an act which stated: 'We whose names are underwritten … having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our king and country a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid: and by virtue hereof, do enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.'"[633]

This act of 1620 was the nearest non-mythical expression, before or since, of the idea of the social contract that later became such a dominant political idea in the democratic development of the English-speaking countries.

And yet democracy as we understand the term now was far from the aim of its founders. Thus John Winthrop thought that his colony was "a mixed Aristocracy": "If we should change from a mixt Aristocratie to a meere Democratie: first we should have no warrant in scripture for it: there was no such government in Israel". True enough: Israel from the time of Saul was a Monarchy! "He also claimed that 'a Democratie is, amongst most Civill nations, accounted the meanest & worst of all forms of Government', adding that 'Historyes doe recorde that it hath been allwayes of least continuance & fullest of troubles".[634] But in 1648, at a synod in Cambridge, Mass., the settlers defined their society as one of mixed Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy: "This Government of the church is a mixed Government…. In respect of Christ, the Head and King of the church, and the Sovereign power residing in Him, and exercised by Him, it is a Monarchy. In respect of the body, or Brotherhood of

---

[632] Brogan, op. cit., pp. 44-45.
[633] Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 43-44.
[634] Winthrop, in Reynolds, op. cit., p. 33.

the church, and power granted unto them, it resembles a Democracy. In respect of the Presbytery (i.e. the Elders) and power committed to them, it is an Aristocracy" (X, 3)."[635] No place, then, for an earthly king…

As for democracy, Winthrop grudgingly had to concede a role for it. For "in 1632 the settlers insisted on the principle of no taxation without representation (though not in those words). It was agreed that every town was to elect two deputies (like the borough members of the House of Commons) to confer with the Governor and other magistrates (known as assistants) and vote necessary taxes. They also successfully claimed the right to elect the Governor and deputy. Then in 1634, at the May meeting of the General Court, 'it was ordered, that four general courts should be kept every year, and that the whole body of the freemen should be present only at the court of election of magistrates, etc., and that, at the other three, every town should send their deputies, who should assist in making law, disposing lands, etc.' The General Court was, under the charter, the sovereign body both of the Massachusetts Bay Company and of its colony, into which it had merged. Increasingly, this court came to resemble the English Parliament …"[636]

When it came to Biblical analogies – which, of course, were vitally important for the Puritans, - the most influential, from both a moral and a political point of view, was undoubtedly the theocratic structure of Israelite society under Moses. In fact, the influence of the Old Testament on the North American colonies was not less than it was to be in the mother-country of England in the 1650s. Thus in 1650 the little state of Connecticut drew up a code of laws, which begins: "If any man after legal conviction shall have or worship any other God but the Lord God, he shall be put to death."

"There follow," writes Tocqueville, "ten or twelve provisions of the same sort taken word for word from <u>Deuteronomy</u>, <u>Exodus</u>, or <u>Leviticus</u>. Blasphemy, sorcery, adultery, and rape are punished by death; a son who outrages his parents is subject to the same penalty. Thus the legislation of a rough, half-civilised people was transported into the midst of an educated society with gentle mores; as a result the death penalty has never been more frequently prescribed by the laws or more seldom carried out.

"The framers of these penal codes were especially concerned with the maintenance of good behaviour and sound mores in society, so they constantly invaded the sphere of conscience, and there was hardly a sin not subject to the magistrate's censure. The reader will have noticed the severity of the penalties for adultery and rape. Simple intercourse between unmarried persons was likewise harshly repressed. The judge had discretion to impose a fine or a whipping or to order the offenders to marry. If the records of the old courts of New Haven are to be trusted, prosecutions of this sort were not uncommon; under the date May 1, 1660, we find a sentence imposing a fine and reprimand

---

[635] Eric Jay, *The Church*, London: SPCK, 1977, p. 214.

[636] Brogan, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

on a girl accused of uttering some indiscreet words and letting herself be kissed. The code of 1650 is full of preventive regulations. Idleness and drunkenness are severely punished. Innkeepers may give each customer only a certain quantity of wine; simple lying, if it could do harm, is subject to a fine or a whipping… In 1649 an association was solemnly formed in Boston to check the worldly luxury of long hair…"[637]

As regards the federal structure of the United States, this again was modelled on Mosaic Israel. Thus, as A.P. Lopukhin writes: "On examining the structure of the Mosaic State, one is involuntarily struck by its similarity to the organisation of the state structure in the United States of Northern America." "The tribes in their administrative independence correspond exactly to the states, each of which is a democratic republic." The Senate and Congress "correspond exactly to the two higher groups of representatives in the Mosaic State - the 12 and 70 elders." "After settling in Palestine, the Israelites first (in the time of the Judges) established a union republic, in which the independence of the separate tribes was carried through to the extent of independent states."[638]

In the imagination of the Pilgrim Fathers, their colonization of America was like Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land. Just as the Canaanites had to be driven out from the Promised Land, so did the Red Indians from America. Thus one New England meeting agreed: 1. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. *Voted*. 2. The Lord may give the earth or any part of it to His chosen people. *Voted*. 3. We are His chosen people. *Voted*.[639]

*

Meanwhile, English and French colonization of the Caribbean was beginning. As A.C. Grayling writes, "A band of shipwrecked English sailors had been washed up on the pleasant shores of Bermuda in 1609, and when their reports of the place reached England a decision to colonise the island was taken, and a group of settlers arrived in 1612. This was the first English post in the Caribbean whose largest islands – Cuba, Hispaniola and San Salvador – had already been in Spanish hands for a century.

"Thirty years later disputes over religious matters within the Bermudan colony prompted a number of the colonists to leave and plant themselves in the Bahamas, then uninhabited because the Spanish had long since transported all the native inhabitants (the Arawaks) into slavery in the mines of Hispaniola.

---

[637] Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 47-49.

[638] Lopukhin, A.P. *Zakonodatel'stvo Moisea* (The Legislation of Moses). Saint Petersburg, 1888, p. 233; quoted in Alexeyev, N.N. "Khristianstvo i Idea Monarkhii" ("Christianity and the Idea of the Monarchy"), *Put'* (The Way), N 6, January, 1927, p. 557.

[639] J.M. Roberts, *The Triumph of the West*, London: Phoenix Press, 1985, p. 149.

"Before this, however, the fact that there were uncolonised islands in the Caribbean set off a race between the English and French to take as many of them as they could. The English occupied St. Kitts in 1623, Barbados in 1627, and by 1636 they were in possession of Antigua, Nevis and Montserrat. Meanwhile the French succeeded in getting a toe on another shore of St. Kitts in 1627 and they occupied Dominica in 1632 and Guadeloupe in 1635.

"The process of colonising the islands was cumulative; having a port on one island served as a base for establishing occupancy of the next on the list. More than that, it provided a means of capturing some of the existing Spanish possessions; in 1655 England took Jamaica from the Spanish, and in 1664 France wrested half of Hispaniola from them, the half now known as Haiti.

"The Spanish had sought to mine gold in their Caribbean possessions, but the islands yielded relatively little of the stuff in comparison with the immense wealth extractable from Mexico and Peru, so the islands became staging posts for their galleons rather than centres of economic activity themselves. In the English and French possessions matters were different; the settlers engaged in agriculture, starting with tobacco but soon diversifying into the highly lucrative sugar business. Because the original populations had been wiped out by labouring as slaves (and by European illnesses from they had no immunity), African slaves were required; by the mid-seventeenth century Jamaica was the largest slave market in the West Indies.

"With several major powers grabbing at opportunities in the region, it is no surprise that it quickly became a theatre of almost constant war. It had been a focus of piracy for many decades already; English pirates had preyed on the big Spanish bullion galleons with the sanction of the English government since Elizabethan times. The Caribbean quarrels went on until the Napoleonic Wars a century and a half later, but they paid for themselves, as did the less frequent quarrels in the East, because both the West and East Indies offered lucrative resources for the English, Dutch and French nations whose sailors and merchants took their opportunities there…" [640]

*

The perceived lucrativeness of the slave trade in the Caribbean colonies led to its introduction into Virginia and the other east coast colonies. English traders made slaves of native Indians from an early date; and "Dutch traders brought Africans to Virginia for the first time in 1619, and more followed in tiny numbers, over the next few decades. For the first two generations, Africans were treated, it seems, much like other indentured servants, even (in some cases) to the distribution of land to them when their time of service was up. One of them, Anthony Johnson, is recorded as a freeman owning cattle and 250 acres in 1650. Perhaps, while African-Americans were few, the Virginians did

---

[640] Grayling, *The Age of Genius. The Seventeenth Century & The Birth of the Modern Mind,* London: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 55-56.

not think to treat them as anything other than fellow human beings. But after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 the planters could no longer be blind to the opportunities suggested by the example of the Caribbean sugar islands, which now took African slaves in huge numbers with correspondingly huge profits. The price of tobacco was still falling rapidly as new lands came into production, for instance in the colony of Maryland, founded in 1632 to the great indignation of the Virginians, who saw it as a rival (which indeed it was). Because sorweed was so cheap, and because of the growing prosperity of the English people at large, smoking became an ever more general habit in England; the market was limitless, and the producers could make vast fortunes, provided that they kept their costs down – their labour costs above all.

"The turning point came with the first of the great American uprisings, Bacon's Rebellion, in 1676. As leader of the poorer planters, Nathaniel Bacon, a distant relation of the great Francis, seized control of Virginia from the royal Governor, Sir George Berkeley, on the grounds that Berkeley opposed making war on the Susquehanna Indians and seizing their lands. Bacon and his followers were true revolutionaries, planning to overturn the political and social structure of the colony, abolish the poll tax, and enlist poor freemen, indentured servants and African slaves in their forces. They burned Jamestown to the ground. But Bacon died of dysentery, and Berkeley then rallied enough strength to suppress the rebellion. To prevent any recurrence of these events, royal authority was placed firmly on the side of the richer settlers; their attempts to grab all the best land in Virginia were endorsed, and Africans were rapidly excluded from the privileges of civil society (if free) or thrust down into hopeless servitude (if slaves). A new gentry emerged, which quickly enriched itself by its effective monopoly of land, labour and political power. The price would be paid, for nearly two centuries, by the slaves. It was a tragic development…"[641]

---

[641] Brogan, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

IV. EAST: THE ROMANOV DYNASTY

43. THE TIME OF TROUBLES: (1) BORIS GODUNOV

The Brest *unia*, and the threat that posed to Orthodoxy, made a strong autocracy in Moscow more essential than ever. Under Patriarch Job (1589-1605), the patriarchate had become an important player in State affairs. The bishops "together with the tsar and the boyars came together in a *Zemsky Sobor* in the dining room of the State palace and there reviewed the matters reported to them by the secretary. The patriarch [Job] began to play an especially important role after the death of Theodore Ivanovich (1598). The tsar died without [male] children, and the throne was vacant. Naturally, the patriarch became head of the fatherland for a time [in 1598] and had to care for State affairs."[642]

However, the patriarch favoured his patron, Boris Godunov, for the throne, andput forward his candidacy to the Land Assembly (*Zemskij* Sobor). And on 21 February 1598, he headed a religious procession to Boris Godunov at the Novodevichy Convent, imploring him to accept the throne. However, Boris Godunov had been a member of the dreaded *oprichnina* from his youth, and had married the daughter of the murderer of St. Philip of Moscow, Maliuta Skouratov.[643] He therefore represented that part of Russian society that had profited from the cruelty and lawlessness of Ivan the Terrible. Moreover, although he was the first Russian tsar to be crowned and anointed by a full patriarch (on September 1, 1598), and there was no serious resistance to his ascending the throne, he acted from the beginning as if not quite sure of his position, or as if seeking some confirmation of his position from the lower ranks of society. This was perhaps because he was not a direct descendant of the Rurik dynasty, which died out with the death of Tsar Theodore, perhaps because (according to the *Chronograph* of 1617) the dying Tsar Theodore had pointed to his mother's nephew, Theodore Nikitich Romanov, the future patriarch, as his successor, perhaps because Godunov had some dark crime on his conscience…

In any case, Boris decided upon an unprecedented act. He interrupted the liturgy of the coronation, as Stephen Graham writes, "to proclaim the equality of man. It was a striking interruption of the ceremony. The Cathedral of the Assumption was packed with a mixed assembly such as never could have found place at the coronation of a tsar of the blood royal. There were many nobles there, but cheek by jowl with them merchants, shopkeepers, even beggars. Boris suddenly took the arm of the holy Patriarch in his and declaimed

---

[642] A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 312.

[643] Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 105. However, Ian Grey writes that "Boris managed somehow to keep himself apart from the Tsar's savageries and, at the same time, to remain in favour. He was not given to outbursts of anger or to violence, but was generally courteous and mild in manner. He impressed his contemporaries by his humanity and concern for the weak. Moreover, he was courageous and even dared to try to restrain the dreaded Tsar." ("Boris Godunov, Tsar of Russia", *History Today,* Vol. 22 Issue 1 January 1972)

in a loud voice: 'Oh, holy father Patriarch Job, I call God to witness that during my reign there shall be neither poor man nor beggar in my realm, but I will share all with my fellows, even to the last rag that I wear.' And he ran his fingers over the jewelled vestments that he wore. There was an unprecedented scene in the cathedral, almost a revolutionary tableau when the common people massed within the precincts broke the disciplined majesty of the scene to applaud the speaker."[644]

What could have been Boris' motive? Perhaps, as Ian Grey writes, he wanted to court the people so as to gain their support for his election: "He had told the Patriarch that he would not accept the throne. On being informed of his election, he declined to acknowledge the decision. Without doubt he wanted to be Tsar. He had courted popularity; he was ambitious, and he knew that he was more experienced and able than the other candidates. At the same time, he was aware of the opposition that he would meet among the princes and boyars. They would try to impose restrictions on his powers as autocrat and to ensure that, following practice in Poland-Lithuania, the Muscovite throne was no longer hereditary. Evidently he had decided to accept election only on the acclamation of the people as a whole and on the understanding that he would be the founder of a new dynasty…"[645]

How different was this pseudo-democratism from the self-confidence of Ivan the Terrible: "I perform my kingly task and consider no man higher than myself… The Russian autocrats have from the beginning had possession of all the kingdoms, and not the boyars and grandees."[646] And again, this time to the (elected) king of Poland: "We, humble Ivan, tsar and great prince of all Rus', by the will of God, and not by the stormy will of man…."[647]

In fact, Ivan the Terrible's attitude to his own power, at any rate in the first part of his reign, was much closer to the attitude of the Russian people as a whole than was Boris Godunov's. For, as St. John Maximovich writes, "the Russian sovereigns were never tsars by the will of the people, but always remained Autocrats by the Mercy of God. They were sovereigns in accordance with the dispensation of God, and not according to the 'multimutinous' will of man."[648]

As the boyars began to plot against him, "Boris set his minions to spy on his rivals and enemies: he imprisoned or murdered some, and exiled others to remote regions. Deportations, confiscations and executions multiplied, recalling sinister memories of Ivan the Terrible. These afflictions might have

[644] Graham, *Boris Godunof*, London: Ernest Benn, 1933, p. 116.

[645] Grey, op. cit.

[646] Ivan IV, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 64.

[647] Ivan IV, in Archbishop Seraphim, op. cit., p. 65.

[648] St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994; in "Nasledstvennost' ili Vybory?" ("Heredity or Elections?"), *Svecha Pokaiania* (Candle of Repentance), N 4, February, 2000, p. 12

been tolerated in a Tsar who had come to the throne by heredity. But Boris had been chosen, and it followed that alternatives could be contemplated. The last straw was the bad harvests in 1601-3."[649]

The people now paid more heed to the rumours that he had murdered the Tsarevich Dmitri, the Terrible one's youngest son, in 1591… "To attain the first place among the courtiers of Tsar Theodore, Godunov poisoned many of the nobles. When he had become first after the Tsar, he decided to poison the Tsar's brother, the eight-year-old Dmitri. Through hired men, he several times administered the strongest poison to the young Tsarevich, who was unaffected by it. It came about by providence that the evil-doer killed his prey, though not in any way secretly. Godunov sent murders who beheaded the Tsarevich in broad daylight, and thus Dmitri became known as a martyr and Godunov as a murderer throughout Russia. After that, a certain Dmitri arose and proclaimed himself Tsarevich (as though he was the true Tsarevich and some other had been killed) and set out with an army against Godunov. He overcame Godunov and reduced him to such desperate straits that he poisoned himself. He who had poisoned others himself ended by self-administered poison, and he who had murdered the righteous Dmitri was himself defeated by another man named Dmitri, He who has spiritual eyes to see, let him see the mystery of God's providence…"[650]

That is one account of the Tsarevich's death. According to another, Tsar Boris began to fear the ambitions of Theodore (Fyodor) Nikitich Romanov, eldest nephew of Tsarina Anastasia and the nearest claimant to the throne. Boris and Theodore Romanov's father had been allies, but all that changed after Tsar Theodore's death.

"In 1600," writes Sebasian Sebag Montefiore, "Godunov pounced on Fyodor and his four brothers, who were accused of treason and sorcery; their servants testified under torture to their practice of witchcraft and stashes of 'poisonous herbs'. Tsar Boris burned down one of their palaces, confiscated their estates and exiled them to the Arctic. To ensure that Fyodor Romanov could never be tsar, he was forced to take holy orders, under a new priestly name Filaret, while his wife became Nun Martha. Michael [his son] was sent to live with his aunt, the wife of his uncle Alexander Romanov, in the remote village of Belozersk. He remained there for fifteen frightening months before he and his aunt were allowed to move to a Romanov estate fifty miles from Moscow. Three of the five Romanov brothers were liquidated or died mysteriously. 'Tsar Boris got rid of us all,' Filaret remembered later. 'He had me tonsured, killed three of my brothers, ordering them strangled. I now only had one brother Ivan left.' Godunov could not kill all the Romanovs, with their special connections to the Rurikid tsars, not after the murky demise of Tsarevich Dmitri. The vanishing

---

[649] Hosking, op. cit., p. 59.
[650] St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid,* Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, vol. !, June 3, pp. 265-266.

of royal children at the hands of power-hungry relatives has a fitting way of destroying the very power they seek.

"The whispering campaign percolated through the land and convinced many that the real Rurikid heir, Tsarevich Dmitri, had been raised in Poland and was now ready to claim his throne; this unleashed the mayhem that became known as the Time of Troubles…"[651]

There came news that a young man claiming to be the Tsarevich was marching at the head of a Polish army into Russia. If this man was truly Dmitri, then Boris was, of course, innocent of his murder. But paradoxically this only made his position more insecure; for in the eyes of the people the hereditary principle was higher than any other – an illegitimate but living son of Ivan the Terrible was more legitimate for them than Boris, even though he was an intelligent and experienced ruler, the right-hand man of two previous tsars, and fully supported by the Patriarch, who anathematized the false Dimitri and all those who followed him. However, support for Boris collapsed, and in April, 1605 he died, after which Dmitri, who had promised the Pope to convert Russia to Catholicism, swept to power in Moscow…

How was such sedition against their tsar possible in a people that had patiently put up with the terrible Ivan?

Solonevich points to the importance that the Russian people attached to the legitimacy of their tsars, in sharp contrast to the apparent lack of concern for legitimacy which he claims to find among the Byzantines. "Thus in Byzantium out of 109 reigning emperors 74 ascended onto the throne by means of regicide. This apparently disturbed no one. In Russia in the 14th century Prince Demetrius Shemyaka tried to act on the Byzantine model and overthrow Great Prince Vasily Vasilyevich – and suffered a complete defeat. The Church cursed Shemyaka, the boyars turned away from him, the masses did not follow him: the Byzantine methods turned out to be unprofitable. Something of this sort took place with Boris Godunov. The dynasty of the Terrible had disappeared, and Boris Godunov turned out to be his nearest relative. Neither the lawfulness of his election to the kingdom, nor his exceptional abilities as a statesman, can be doubted… With Boris Godunov everything, in essence, was in order, except for one thing: the shade of Tsarevich Dmitri."[652]

This is an exaggeration: there were many things wrong with the reign of Boris Godunov, especially his encouragement of eastern and western

---

[651] Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London, 2016, p. 18.

[652] Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (The People's Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 81. Grey goes further: "Boris had acted honestly and humanely. He had pursued sound policies with some success. Unlike nearly all of his predecessors, he had shown genuine concern for the welfare of his people, but their strong support for him had changed into a wholesale betrayal. Suddenly the country was engulfed in anarchy in the tragic period known in Russian history as the 'Time of Troubles'." (op. cit.)

heretics[653], and his introduction of mutual spying and denunciation. Moreover, it did not help that he was not a Riurik by blood… However, there is no doubt that it was Boris's murder of the Tsarevich Dmitri, the supposed lawful heir to the throne[654], that especially excited the people to rebel. For "who in Byzantium would have worried about the fate of a child killed twenty years earlier? There might created right, and might washed away sin. In Rus' right created might, and sin remained sin."[655] Although these words exaggerate the contrast between Byzantium and Rus', the point concerning the importance of legitimacy in Muscovy is well taken. "As regards who had to be tsar," writes St. John Maximovich, "a tsar could hold his own on the throne only if the principle of legitimacy was observed, that is, the elected person was the nearest heir of his predecessor. The legitimate Sovereign was the basis of the state's prosperity and was demanded by the spirit of the Russian people."[656]

The people were never sure of the legitimacy of Boris Godunov. However, even if these doubts could excuse their rebellion against Boris (which is doubtful, since he was a lawfully anointed tsar), it did not excuse the cruel murder of his son, Theodore Borisovich, who became Tsar at his death, still less their recognition of a series of usurpers in the next decade. The lawless character of these rebellions has been compared, not without justice, to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917…[657]

---

[653] The cellarer of the Holy Trinity Monastery, Abraham Palitsyn, said that he was "a good pander to the heresies of the Armenians and Latins" (in Lebedev, op. cit.).

[654] Although his father's marriage to his mother, the last of his seven wives, was not considered legitimate by the Church.

[655] Solonevich, op. cit., p. 82.

[656] St. John Maximovich, op. cit., p. 13.

[657] Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "Smuta" (Troubles),

603 http://catacomb.org.ua/modlues.php?=Pages&go=print_page&pid=642.

44. THE TIME OF TROUBLES: (2) THE FALSE DMITRI AND VASILY SHUISKY

The first pretender who claimed to be the Tsarevich Dmitri was probably in fact the defrocked monk Grishka Otrepev.[658] After Tsar Boris' death, "slowly, the military balance began to turn in the pretender's favour. On 1 June, 1605, Moscow reached a turning-point when a group of officials from Dmitry's camp gathered beneath the Kremlin walls to read a proclamation in their master's name. It urged every Muscovite to abandon the bloody struggle and swear allegiance to the real heir. 'God grant' ran the slogan, 'that the true sun will once again rise over Russia'.

"Moscow's population – encircled, hungry and sick of the fear and bloody spectacle of torture – needed no further encouragement. The Kremlin harboured their tormentors; this long day was their chance to act. A mob more than a thousand strong burst through the gates, and one of its first targets was Godunov's palace. The vanguard managed to arrest the dead tsar's widow, her son, and members of his inner circle, but others went on a looting spree, venting their wrath on anything Godunov might have touches. The discovery of alcohol brought chaos as the looters fought to get at the casks and barrels. In their excitement, some of the men took to drinking from their hats: at least fifty drank themselves to death in the Kremlin cellars. At the same time, treasures and palace fittings, food and weapons were seized, disputed, and trampled or carried off much of the gold was buried and lost in the months to come. It was the first day of Dmitry's rule – his succession was proclaimed from the Kremlin in the midst of the tumult…

Patriarch Job had strongly opposed Dmitry, so he was deposed and went into exile, where he went virtually blind. "Tsar Fedor and his mother were strangled. The hated inquisitor, Semen Godunov, was captured, taunted and locked away to starve to death. Boris himself had been laid to rest in the Rurikid mausoleum in the Archangel Cathedral just over six weeks before. His coffin was removed (today, his remains lie outside the cathedral walls in the monastery complex at Sergiev-Posad). For a moment, it was possible to hope that the Kremlin had been purified, the royal line restored. The idea that Russia's murderous crisis might resolve if someone could create a rightful heir was appealing, but Russia would face years of civil war before it could agree about the candidate…"[659]

Dmitri's victory was in reality the victory of King Sigismund of Poland and the Vatican, who used him as their agent in their aim of subduing Russia to themselves politically and ecclesiastically.

---

[658] Although "one historian, Chester Dunning, has recently broken with tradition by suggesting that he may indeed have been Ivan the Terrible's youngest son" (Merridale, *Red Fortress*, pp. 121-122)

[659] Merridale, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

But the charade did not last long: Dmitri was a poor actor. He surrounded himself with Polish advisors and did not respect the Orthodox Church, forgetting that he was supposed to be Russian and Orthodox. "The foreignness of these advisors put the locals on their guard at once. No real Muscovite could think it seemly for a Catholic to tread the Kremlin's sacred soil, still less to trample on its customs, fasts and prayers. The same crowd that had swept Dmitry to the throne began to speculate about his morals once his retinue became ensconced. And the incomprehension was mutual…

"The pretender's reign lasted for less than a year. His fatal mistake may well have been his choice of bride. When he accepted the help of the Polish noble Jerzy Mniszeck, in 1603, Dmitry had agreed to marry his sponsor's daughter, Marina, and in the spring of 1606 Mniszeck called in the debt. If Dmitry had chosen a Russian wife, and forged the right kind of dynastic link, the court might well have closed ranks round the self-proclaimed Riurikid, hoping to re-establish the familiar elite ballet. Instead, in May 1606, Marina was summoned to Moscow with a spectacular retinue of Polish retainers and a horde of disorderly – and very foreign – wedding guests.

"The bride's progress was sumptuous. The procession of gilded carriages, the liveried servants and the jewels alone cost several fortunes. Moscow was especially impressed by the horses, the coats of some of which had been transformed with red, orange and yellow dyes. The ten prize animals that pulled the royal carriage were 'spotted with black (like tigars or elephants), and matched so well that one could not distinguish one from another'. Horses and all, the whole party, which was grander than the retinue of any bride since Sofiya Palaeologa married Ivan III, was accompanied by music, including flutes, trumpets and kettle-drums, though this, the Russians thought, was a distraction from Orthodox prayer. The noise and swagger, however, were only the first of many insults. These Poles seemed to have come to stay. Even if they had enjoyed the pageant and the coloured horses, Moscow's people caught their breath when the baggage-train behind the guests began to disgorge household goods. The visitors were billeted on wealthy local families, and their hosts (who had not been given much choice) were shocked to glimpse bundles of weapons among the trunks and boxes that were being carried into their guest rooms.

"The next few days were even worse. It was not the fact of the Poles' persistent drunkenness (what Russian could speak out on that?), but its timing that caused such offence, the disregard for priests and icons, and the surprise (in a land of full-length robes) of strutting men in vulgar-looking breeches and high boots. On the day of the wedding, the crowds of common citizens, who had been shut out of the Kremlin for the ceremony itself, was horrified to learn that Catholics had taken the best places in the Dormition Cathedral…"[660]

---

[660] Merridale, op. cit., pp. 123, 124-125.

On May 17, 1606, Prince Vasily Shuisky led a successful rebellion against the false Dmitri, and executed him, shooting his body through the barrel of a cannon over the Kremlin walls. He killed five hundred foreigners (and not only Poles) and expelled the false patriarch Ignatius, the Poles' secretly Catholic appointment. He then called on Patriarch Job to come out of his enforced retirement, but Job refused by reason of his blindness and old age.[661]

So another Patriarch was required; the choice fell on Metropolitan Hermogen of Kazan, who anointed Vasily to the kingdom… "The accession of Vasily Shuisky," writes the famous historian V.O. Kliuchevsky, "is epoch making in Russia's political history. On mounting the throne he limited his autocratic power, and in an official document sent to all the provinces he defined the limitations that he swore, kissing the cross, to observe faithfully…

"The statement was very limited in scope. The obligations undertaken by Tsar Vasili were solely intended to guarantee his subjects' personal and financial security from arbitrary action by the sovereign, and had no direct bearing upon the constitution. They did not change or even define more closely the relations between the Tsar and the chief governmental institutions, or their respective competence and significance. The power of the Tsar was limited by the Boyars' Council as before, but this limitation was binding on him solely in judicial cases, in dealing with particular individuals.

"The origin of the sworn statement, however, is more complex than its content. Behind the scenes it had a history of its own. The chronicler records that as soon as Shuisky was proclaimed Tsar, he went to the Dormition Cathedral and announced there, as had never been done in the Muscovite state before, 'I kiss the cross and swear to the *whole country* not to do any hurt to anyone without the Sobor's consent.' The boyars and men of other ranks advised the Tsar that 'he must not take such an oath, for that was not the custom in Muscovy, but he would not listen to anyone.'

"Vasily Shuisky's action evidently seemed to the boyars a revolutionary prank. The Tsar was offering to share his sovereign judicial functions not with the Boyars' Council, which had always helped the tsars to dispense justice and administer public affairs, but with the *Zemsky Sobor*, a recent institution occasionally called together to discuss some special problem in the life of the state. Shuisky's actions seemed to the boyars a whim, an unheard-of novelty, an attempt to replace the Council by the Sobor, to shift the political center of gravity from the aristocracy to the people's representatives. The Tsar who had been afraid to consult the Sobor on his claim to the throne was now venturing to ask its advice in ruling the country!

---

[661] According to Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Patriarch Job's blindness and expulsion from his see were his punishment for lying during the Council of 1598 that Ivan the Terrible had "ordered" that Boris Godunov be crowned in the case of the death of his son Theodore, and for lying again in covering up Boris' guilt in the murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius (op. cit., p. 112).

"But Shuisky knew what he was doing. On the eve of the rising against the Pretender [Dmitri] he [had] promised his fellow conspirators to rule 'by general agreement'. Thrust upon the country by a clique of great nobles, he was a party man, a 'boyars' tsar', bound to depend upon them. He naturally sought support among the people for his irregular stardom, and hoped to find in the Sobor a counterbalance to the Boyars' Council. Promising on oath to the whole country not to punish anyone without the consent of the Sobor, he reckoned to escape the Boyars' tutelage, to become the people's Tsar, and to limit his power by an institution unaccustomed to that role – that is, to exercise his power unhampered.

"In its published form the sworn statement was the result of a compromise between the sovereign and the boyars. According to the preliminary unpublished agreement, the Tsar shared his power with them in all matters of legislation, administration, and jurisdiction. Having won the case for their Council versus the Sobor, the boyars did not insist on publishing all the concessions they had compelled the Tsar to make. Indeed, it would have been unwise of them to publicize how thoroughly they had plucked their old cock. The sworn statement emphasized only the significance of the Boyars' Council as the Tsar's collaborators in the supreme court. That was all the foremost boyars wanted at the time. As a ruling class they had shared power with the sovereigns throughout the sixteenth century, but individual members of it had suffered a great deal from the tsars' tyranny under Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov. Now the boyars hastened to seize the opportunity of abolishing this tyranny and safeguarding private persons – that is, themselves – against the recurrence of past troubles by compelling the Tsar to let the Boyars' Council take part in political judicial trials. They were confident that administrative power would remain in their hands as before, on the strength of custom.

"… Tsar Vasily's sworn statement was a new, hitherto unheard-of thing in Muscovite constitutional practice. It was the first attempt to establish a political system in which the power of the sovereign was formally limited. A new element was introduced that completely altered the nature and meaning of that power. Not only did Tsar Vasily limit his autocracy, but he confirmed this limitation on oath, showing that he was a 'sworn-in', as well as an elected one. The oath by its very nature negated the personal power of the tsars based on the old appanage system idea of the sovereign as the owner of the country. The master of the house does not swear allegiance to his servants and tenants.

"At the same time Tsar Vasily renounced three prerogatives in which the personal power of the tsars found its clearest expression. These were (1) 'ban without cause', the tsar's disfavor without sufficient reason and solely at his discretion, (2) confiscation of property belonging to the criminal's family and relatives innocent of the crime (abrogation of this right did away with the ancient practice of making the clan collectively responsible for a political offense), (3) special trial, accompanied by torture, on mere denunciation, without confronting the accused with the informers, without the presence of

witnesses and the introduction of evidence, and other procedures normally required by law. These prerogatives were an essential part of the Muscovite tsars' power. As Ivan III put it, 'I shall give my realm to whomever I like'. And his grandson, Ivan IV, said, 'We are free to show favor to our servants and are free to put them to death'. By swearing to renounce these privileges, Vasily Shuisky became a constitutional sovereign governing his country in accordance with law, instead of being master over slaves…"[662]

However, the choice set before the Russian people at this time was not as simple as that between an absolutist tyranny of the kind conducted by Ivan the Terrible and a proto-constitutional monarchy of the kind put forward by Vasily Shuisky. There was also the third, traditionally Orthodox choice: of an autocracy that was genuinely sovereign in its own, political sphere, but which was limited morally and dogmatically by the Orthodox Church. Ivan the Terrible had created a tyranny by trying to abolish the influence of the Church and killing her first-hierarch. Vasily Shuisky had surrendered his sovereignty, formally to the people but in reality to the boyars. It was now up to the Church, in the person of its new first hierarch, St. Hermogen, to lead the country in re-establishing a truly Orthodox autocracy whose rule was sovereign but not unlimited, being limited by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the counsel of His Church…

---

[662] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, pp. 35, 36-38.

45. THE TIME OF TROUBLES: (3) ST. HERMOGEN OF MOSCOW

"Wonderful is the Providence of God," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "in bringing [Hermogen] to the summit of ecclesiastical power at this terrible Time of Troubles… In 1579 he had been ordained to the priesthood in the St. Nicholas Gostinodvordsky church in Kazan. And in the same year a great miracle had taken place, the discovery of the Kazan icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. This was linked with a great fall in the faith of Christ in the new land, the mocking of the Orthodox by the Muslims for failures in harvest, fires and other woes. A certain girl, the daughter of a rifleman, through a vision in sleep discovered on the place of their burned-down house an icon of the Mother of God. Nobody knew when or by whom it had been placed in the ground. The icon began to work wonders and manifest many signs of special grace. The whole of Kazan ran to it as to a source of salvation and intercession from woes. The priest Hermogen was a witness of all this. He immediately wrote down everything that had taken place in connection with the wonderworking icon and with great fervour composed a narrative about it. The glory of the Kazan icon quickly spread through Russia, many copies were made from it, and some of these also became wonderworking. The Mother of God was called "the fervent defender of the Christian race" in this icon of Kazan. It was precisely this icon and Hermogen who had come to love it that the Lord decreed should deliver Moscow and Russia from the chaos of the Time of Troubles and the hands of the enemies. By the Providence of the Mother of God Hermogen was in 1589 appointed Metropolitan of Kazan for his righteous life, and in 1606 he became Patriarch of all Rus'.

"As his first work it was necessary for him to correct the wavering of the people in relation to the false Dmitri and free them from the oath (curse) they had sworn. A special strict fast was declared, after which, on February 20, 1607, public repentance began in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin. Patriarch Job repented of having hidden from the people the fact that the Tsarevich Dmitri had been killed 'by the plotting of Boris' and called everyone to repentance. Nun Martha [the mother of the Tsarevich Dmitri] repented that out of fear she had recognized the Imposter to be her son. The Muscovites wept and repented of having sworn to Boris Godunov and Grisha Otrepev. Two Patriarchs – [the retired] Job and Hermogen – absolved everyone with a special prayer-declaration, which was read aloud by the archdeacon.

"However, by this time it was already the question of another Imposter – false Dmitri the second. He was an obvious adventurer. And knowing about this, Rome and certain people in Poland again supported him! The legend was as follows: 'Tsar' Dmitri had not been killed in Moscow, but had managed to flee ('he was miraculously saved' for the second time!). And again Cossack detachments from Little Russia, the Don and Ukraine attached themselves to him. Again quite a few Russian people believed the lie, for they very much wanted to have a 'real', 'born' Tsar, as they put it at that time, who in the eyes

of many could only be a direct descendant of Ivan IV. Marina Mnishek [wife of the first false Dmitri] 'recognized' her lawful husband in the second false Dmitri. However, her spiritual father, a Jesuit, considered it necessary to marry her to the new Imposter; the Jesuit knew that he was not the same who had been killed in Moscow, but another false Dmitri… Certain secret instructions from Rome to those close to the new Imposter have been preserved. Essentially they come down to ordering them gradually but steadily to bring about the unia of the Russian Church with the Roman Church, and her submission to the Pope. In 1608 the second false Dmitri entered Russia and soon came near to Moscow, encamping at Tushino. For that reason he was then called 'the Tushino thief'. 'Thief' in those days mean a state criminal… Marinka gave birth to a son from the second false Dmitri. The people immediately called the little child 'the thieflet'. Moscow closed its gates. Only very few troops still remained for the defence of the city. A great wavering of hearts and minds arose. Some princes and boyars ran from Moscow to the 'thief' in Tushino and back again. Not having the strength to wage a major war, Tsar Vasily Shuisky asked the Swedish King Carl IX to help him. In this he made a great mistake… Carl of Sweden and Sigismund of Poland were at that time warring for the throne of Sweden. By calling on the Swedes for help, Shuisky was placing Russia in the position of a military opponent of Poland, which she used, seeing the Troubles in the Russian Land, to declare war on Russia. Now the Polish king's army under a 'lawful' pretext entered the Muscovite Kingdom. The Imposter was not needed by the Poles and was discarded by them. Sigismund besieged Smolensk, while a powerful army under Zholevsky went up to Moscow. The boyars who were not content with Shuisky… forced him to abdicate in July, 1610."[663] He was then tonsured.

The *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613 called this act "a common sin of the land, committed out of the envy of the devil". But whom would they now place as Tsar? This depended to a large extent on the boyars.

Lebedev continues: "O Great Russian princes and boyars! How much you tried from early times to seize power in the State! Now there is no lawful Tsar, now, it would seem, you have received the fullness of power. Now is the time for you to show yourselves, to show what you are capable of! And you have shown it…

"A terrible difference of opinions began amidst the government, which consisted of seven boyars and was called the 'semiboyarschina'. Patriarch Hermogen immediately suggested calling to the kingdom the 14-year-old 'Misha Romanov', as he called him. But they didn't listen to the Patriarch. They discussed Poland's suggestion of placing the son of King Sigismund, Vladislav, on the Muscovite Throne. The majority of boyars agreed. The gates of Moscow were opened to the Poles and they occupied Chinatown and the Kremlin with their garrison. But at the same time a huge Polish army besieged the monastery of St. Sergei, 'the Abbot of the Russian Land', the Trinity-St. Sergei Lavra, but

---

[663] Lebedev, op. cit.

after a 16-month siege they were not able to take it! Patriarch Hermogen was ready to agree to having the crown-prince Vladislav, but under certain conditions. Vladislav would be immediately, near Smolensk, baptised into the Orthodox Faith. He would take for a wife only a virgin of the Orthodox Confession. The Poles would leave Russia, and all the Russia apostates who had become Catholic or uniates would be executed. There would never be any negotiations between Moscow and Rome about the faith. An embassy was sent from near Smolensk to Sigismund for negotiations about the succession to the Throne. The spiritual head of the embassy was Metropolitan Philaret Nikitich Romanov of Rostov, who had been taken out of exile and then consecrated to the episcopate under Tsar Vasily Shuisky. But at the same time Patriarch Hermogen did not cease to exhort the Tushintsy who were still with the thief near Moscow, calling on them to be converted, repent and cease destroying the Fatherland.

"However, it turned out that Sigismund himself wanted to be on the Throne of Moscow… But this was a secret. The majority of the boyars agreed to accept even that, referring to the fact that the Poles were already in Moscow, while the Russians had no army with which to defend the country from Poland. A declaration was composed in which it was said that the Muscovite government 'would be given to the will of the king'. The members of the government signed it. It was necessary that Patriarch Hermogen should also give his signature. At this point Prince Michael Saltykov came to him. The head of the Russian Church replied: 'No! I will put my signature to a declaration that the king should give his son to the Muscovite state, and withdraw all the king's men from Moscow, that Vladislav should abandon the Latin heresy, and accept the Greek faith… But neither I nor the other (ecclesiastical) authorities will write that we should all rely on the king's will and that our ambassadors should be placed in the will of the king, and I order you not to do it. It is clear that with such a declaration we would have to kiss the cross to the king himself.' Saltykov took hold of a knife and moved towards the Patriarch. He made the sign of the cross over Saltykov and said: 'I do not fear your knife, I protect myself from it by the power of the Cross of Christ. But may you be cursed from our humility both in this age and in the age to come!'"[664]

On February 4, 1610 Saltykov and his comrades concluded an agreement with King Sigismund. Sir Geoffrey Hosking calls it a Russian *Magna Carta* – but one doomed to failure because of the opposition of the Church: "They presented King Sigismund with a set of conditions on which they were prepared to accept his son Vladyslav as Tsar. The first was that the Orthodox faith should remain inviolate. Then came stipulations on the rights of individual estates, for example, not to be punished or to have property confiscated without trial before a properly constituted court, not to be demoted from a high chin [rank] without clear and demonstrable fault. The document implied a state structure in which supreme authority would be shared with a combined boyar assembly and *zemskii sobor* (*duma boiar i vseia zemli*), in

---

[664] Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 118-121.

agreement with which questions of taxes, salaries of service people and the bestowal of patrimonial and service estates would be decided. Such a document might have laid for the basis for a constitutional Muscovite monarchy in personal union with Poland."[665]

But constitutionalism, the perennial temptation of Russian history, was rejected – this time, because the Church did not approve of it. Thus when the document was brought to the Poles at Smolensk, where there was a Russian embassy led by Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, then, "on not seeing the signature of the Patriarch on the document, the ambassadors replied to our boyars that the declaration was unlawful. They objected: 'The Patriarch must not interfere in affairs of the land'. The ambassadors said: 'From the beginning affairs were conducted as follows in our Russian State: if great affairs of State or of the land are begun, then our majesties summoned a council of patriarchs, metropolitans and archbishops and conferred with them. Without their advice nothing was decreed. And our majesties revere the patriarchs with great honour… And before them were the metropolitans. Now we are without majesties, and the patriarch is our leader (that is – the main person in the absence of the Tsar). It is now unfitting to confer upon such a great matter without the patriarch… It is now impossible for us to act without patriarchal declarations, and only with those of the boyars…'

"The agreement with Sigismund and the transfer of the Muscovite Kingdom into his power did not take place… That is what such a mere 'detail' as a signature sometimes means – or rather, in the given case, the absence of a signature!

"This gave a spiritual and lawful basis (in prevision of fresh boyar betrayals) for the Russian cities to begin corresponding with each other with the aim of deciding how to save Moscow and the Fatherland. In this correspondence the name of Patriarch Hermogen was often mentioned, for he was 'straight as a real pastor, who lays down his life for the Christian Faith'. The inhabitants of Yaroslavl wrote to the citizens of Kazan: 'Hermogen has stood up for the Faith and Orthodoxy, and has ordered all of us to stand to the end. If he had not done this wondrous deed, everything would have perished.' And truly Russia, which so recently had been on the point of taking Poland at the desire of the Poles, was now a hair's-breadth away from becoming the dominion of Poland (and who knows for how long a time!). Meanwhile Patriarch Hermogen began himself to write to all the cities, calling on Russia to rise up to free herself. The letter-declarations stirred up the people, they had great power. The Poles demanded that he write to the cities and call on them not to go to Moscow to liberate it from those who had seized it. At this point Michael Saltykov again came to Hermogen. 'I will write,' replied the Patriarch, '… but only on condition that you and the traitors with you and the people of the king leave Moscow… I see the mocking of the true faith by heretics and by you traitors, and the destruction of the holy Churches of God and I cannot bear to hear the

---

[665] Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 118-121.

Latin chanting in Moscow'. Hermogen was imprisoned in the Chudov monastery and they began to starve him to death. But the voice of the Church did not fall silent. The brothers of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery headed by Archimandrite Dionysius also began to send their appeals to the cities to unite in defence of the Fatherland. The people's levies moved towards Moscow. The first meeting turned out to be unstable. Quite a few predatory Cossacks took part in it, for example the cossacks of Ataman Zarutsky. Quarrels and disputes, sometimes bloody ones, took place between the levies. Lyapunov, the leader of the Ryazan forces, was killed. This levy looted the population more than it warred with the Poles. Everything changed when the second levy, created through the efforts of Nizhni-Novgorod merchant Cosmas Minin Sukhorukov and Prince Demetrius Pozharsky, moved towards the capital. As we know, Minin, when stirring up the people to make sacrifices for the levy, called on them, if necessary, to sell their wives and children and mortgage their properties, but to liberate the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Dormition of the All-Holy Theotokos, where there was the Vladimir icon and the relics of the great Russian Holy Hierarchs (that is, he was talking about the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin!) That, it seems, was the precious thing that was dear to the inhabitants of Nizhni, Ryazan, Yaroslavl, Kazan and the other cities of Russia and for the sake of which they were ready to sell their wives and lay down their lives! That means that the Dormition cathedral was at that time that which we could call as it were the geographical centre of patriotism of Russia!

"On the advice of Patriarch Hermogen, the holy Kazan icon of the Mother of God was taken into the levy of Minin and Pozharsky.

"In the autumn of 1612 the second levy was already near Moscow. But it did not succeed in striking through to the capital. Their strength was ebbing away. Then the levies laid upon themselves a strict three-day fast and began earnestly to pray to the Heavenly Queen before her Kazan icon. At this time Bishop Arsenius, a Greek by birth, who was living in a monastery in the Kremlin, and who had come to us in 1588 with Patriarch Jeremiah, after fervent prayer saw in a subtle sleep St. Sergius. The abbot of the Russian Land told Arsenius that 'by the prayers of the Mother of God judgement on our Fatherland has been turned to mercy, and tomorrow Moscow will be in the hands of the levy and Russia will be saved!' News of this vision of Arsenius was immediately passed to the army of Pozharsky, which enormously encouraged them. They advanced to a decisive attack and on October 22, 1612 took control of a part of Moscow and Chinatown. Street fighting in which the inhabitants took part began. In the fire and smoke it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. On October 27 the smoke began to disperse. The Poles surrendered….

"Patriarch Hermogen did not live to see this radiant day. On February 17, 1612 he had died from hunger in the Chudov monastery. In 1912 he was numbered among the saints, and his relics reside to this day in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin.

"Thus at the end of 1612 the Time of Troubles came to an end. Although detachments of Poles, Swedes, robbers and Cossacks continued to wander around Russia. After the death of the second false Dmitri Marina Mnishek got together with Zarutsky, who still tried to fight, but was defeated. Marinka died in prison… But the decisive victory was won then, in 1612!"[666]

In the Time of Troubles the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen, stood courageously for those Tsars who had been lawfully anointed by the Church and remained loyal to the Orthodox faith, regardless of their personal virtues or vices. Conversely, they refused to recognize (even at the cost of their sees and their lives) the pretenders to the tsardom or foreign interlopers who did not satisfy these conditions – again, regardless of their personal qualities. Most of the Russian clergy accepted the first false Dmitri. But "in relation to the second false Dmitri," writes Lebedev, they "conducted themselves more courageously. Bishops Galaction of Suzdal and Joseph of Kolomna suffered for their non-acceptance of the usurper. Archbishop Theoctistus of Tver received a martyric death in Tushino. Dressed only in a shirt, the bare-footed Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, the future patriarch, was brought by the Poles into the camp of the usurper, where he remained in captivity. Seeing such terrible events, Bishop Gennady of Pskov 'died of sorrow…'"[667]

There were other champions of the faith: the monks of Holy Trinity – St. Sergei Lavra, who, fortified by several appearances of St. Sergei, heroically resisted a long Polish siege[668], and the hermits St. Galaction of Vologda and Irinarchus of Rostov, who were both martyred by the Latins. Thus in the life of the latter we read: "Once there came into the elder's cell a Polish noble, Pan Mikulinsky with other Pans. 'In whom do you believe?' he asked. 'I believe in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!' 'And what earthly king do you have?' The elder replied in a loud voice: 'I have the Russian Tsar Vasily Ioannovich [Shuisky]. I live in Russia, I have a Russian tsar – I have nobody else!' One of the Pans [ns]aid: 'You, elder, are a traitor; you believe neither in our king, nor in [the second false] Demetrius!' The elder replied: 'I do not fear your sword, which is corruptible, and I will not betray my faith in the Russian Tsar. If you cut me off for that, then I will suffer it with joy. I have a little blood in me for you, but my Living God has a sword which will cut you

---

[666] Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 121-123.

[667] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia* (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow, 1995, p. 14.

[668] St. Sergius appeared on the ramparts of the monastery and to individuals. But he made it clear that the sins of the monks had much to do with their woes. Thus once he "healed a certain sick elder in the monastery, at which time he said: 'The stench of laymen who sin by fornicating is not so repulsive to me as that of monks who violate their vows. Under the ramparts of my monastery I will destroy all who have come as enemies, and within my monastery I will likewise destroy those who live impurely and hypocritically. I will deal with those who have defiled themselves" (*The Patericon of the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra*, Sergiev Posad, 1896, pp. 330-337)

off invisibly, without flesh or blood, and He will send your souls into eternal torment!' And Pan Mikulinsky was amazed at the great faith of the elder…"[669]

46. THE FIRST ROMANOV TSAR AND THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE

At the beginning of February, 1613, a *Zemsky Sobor* was assembled in Moscow in order to elect a Tsar. "Some five hundred delegates came from everywhere between the White Sea and the Don, representing boyars, service nobles, clergy, merchants, Cossacks, *posad* people (townsfolk), and 'black' (non-enserfed) peasants. The bitter divisions which had plunged Russia into anarchy for so long were not fully stilled by the common victory; service nobles and Cossacks were at loggerheads, boyar clans continued to feud and insist on their pedigree, while some supported foreign candidates."[670]

But then the miracle of unanimity was achieved… In accordance with pious tradition, the Sobor began with a three-day fast and prayer to invoke God's blessing on the assembly. "At the first conciliar session," writes Hieromartyr Nikon, Archbishop of Vologda, "it was unanimously decided: 'not to elect anyone of other foreign faiths, but to elect our own native Russian'. They began to elect their own; some pointed to one boyar, others to another… A certain nobleman from Galich presented a written opinion that the closest of all to the previous tsars by blood was Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov: he should be elected Tsar. They remembered that the reposed Patriarch had mentioned this name. An ataman from the Don gave the same opinion. And Mikhail Fyodorovich was proclaimed Tsar. But not all the elected delegates had yet arrived in Moscow, nor any of the most eminent boyars, and the matter was put off for another two weeks. Finally, they all assembled on February 21, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and by a common vote confirmed this choice. Then Archbishop Theodorit of Ryazan, the cellarer Avraamy Palitsyn of the Holy Trinity Monastery and the boyar Morozov came out onto the place of the skull and asked the people who were filling Red Square: 'Who do you want for Tsar?' And the people unanimously exclaimed: 'Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov!' And the Council appointed Archbishop Theodorit, Avraamy Palitsyn, three archimandrites and several notable boyars to go to the newly elected Tsar to ask him to please come to the capital city of Moscow to his Tsarist throne."[671]

---

[669] *The Life of St. Irinarchus*, in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, pp. 16-17.

[670] Hosking, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

[671] Archbishop Nikon, "Dostoslavnoe Trekhsotletie" ("A worthy 300-hundred-year anniversary"), in *Mech Oboiudoostrij, 1913* (The Double-Edged Sword, 1913), St. Petersburg, 1995, pp. 25-26. "According to Avraamy, 'many of the gentry and lesser boyars, merchants from many towns, atamans, and Cossacks all came openly and declared to him their opinions, bringing their written depositions concerning the election of the tsar, asking him to convey them to the ruling boyars and commanders.' Avraamy did this. According to the official account, 'they listened, and thanked God for such a glorious beginning.' The next day Mikhail was duly elected." (Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 141).

The adolescent boy and his mother, Schema-Nun Martha were living in the Ipatiev monastery in Kostroma, on the Volga. Arriving there from Moscow, the delegation had great difficulty in persuading the mother to agree to her son's enthronement. She at first refused, pointing to the fickleness of the Muscovites, the devastation of the kingdom, the youth of her son, the fact that his father was in captivity, her own fears of revenge…

Finally, she relented, and, falling before the Fyodorovskaia icon, she said: "May thy will be done, O Heavenly Queen! Into thy hands I deliver my son. Guide him on the path of righteousness for his sake and the sake of the Fatherland!"

In recognition of the fact that it was largely the nation's betrayal of legitimate autocratic authority that had led to the Time of Troubles, the Sobor swore eternal loyalty to Michael Romanov and his descendants, promising to sacrifice themselves body and soul in his service against external enemies, "Poles, Germans and the Crimeans". Moreover, they called a curse upon themselves if they should ever break this oath. In February, 1917 the people of Russia broke their oath to the House of Romanov by their betrayal of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II. The curse duly fell upon them in the form of the horrors of Soviet power…

"The outcome," writes Lebedev, "suggested that Russians identified themselves with strong authority, backed by the Orthodox Church and unrestrained by any charter or covenant, such as might prove divisive and set one social group against another… The *zemlia* had for the first time constituted itself as a reality, based on elective local government institutions, and had chosen a new master…"[672]

For, as Pozharsky said in 1612, "we know that unless we possess a monarch we can neither fight our common enemies – Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, nor our own brigands, who threaten the State with further bloodshed. Without a monarch how can we maintain relations with foreign states, or preserve the stability and strength of our country?"[673]

"The Time of Troubles," writes Lebedev, "illuminated the profound basis of the interrelationship of ecclesiastical and royal power. This problem was reflected, as if in magnifying glass, in the above-mentioned quarrels of the Russian ambassadors with regard to the absence of Patriarch Hermogen's signature on the document of the capitulation of Russia. It turns out that both the Russian hierarchs and the best statesmen understood the relationship of the tsar and the patriarch in a truly Christian, communal sense. In the one great Orthodox society of Russia there are two leaders: a spiritual (the patriarch) and a secular (the tsar). They are both responsible for all that takes place in society, but each in his own way: the tsar first of all for civil affairs (although he can

---

[672] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 63, 64.

[673] Pozharsky, in Arsène de Goulévitch, *Czarism and Revolution,* Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 34.

also take a very active and honourable part in ecclesiastical affairs when that is necessary), while the patriarch is first of all responsible for ecclesiastical, spiritual affairs (although he can also, when necessary, take a most active part in state affairs). The tsars take counsel with the patriarchs, the patriarchs – with the tsars in all the most important questions. Traditionally the patriarch is an obligatory member of the boyars' Duma (government). If there is no tsar, then the most important worldly affairs are decided only with the blessing of the patriarch. If in the affair of the establishment of the patriarchate in Russia it was the royal power that was basically active, in the Time of Troubles the royal power itself and the whole of Russia were saved by none other than the Russian patriarchs! Thus the troubles very distinctly demonstrated that the Russian ecclesiastical authorities were not, and did not think of themselves as being, a 'legally obedient' arm of the State power, as some (A.V. Kartashev) would have it. It can remain and did remain in agreement with the State power in those affairs in which this was possible from an ecclesiastical point of view, and to the extent that this was possible.

"In this question it was important that neither side should try to seize for itself the prerogatives of the other side, that is, should not be a usurper, for usurpation can be understood not only in the narrow sense, but also in the broad sense of the general striving to become that which you are not by law, to assume for yourself those functions which do not belong to you by right. It is amazing that in those days there was no precise juridical, written law ('right') concerning the competence and mutual relations of the royal and ecclesiastical powers. Relations were defined by the spiritual logic of things and age-old tradition…"[674]

*

Tsar Michael, on ascending the throne, added the word "autocrat" (*samoderzhets*) to the state seal. This was to indicate that he was neither a despot on the model of Ivan the Terrible nor a quasi-constitutional monarch on the model of Boris Godunov or Vasily Shuisky. An autocrat is above human law, but not above Divine law; for his whole purpose is to uphold Divine law in the face of any every kind of human opposition – including the will of the people...

He was also a hereditary monarch. The Time of Troubles cannot be understood if we do not take into account the continuing importance of the hereditary principle in the Russian mind in that period. According to V.O. Kliuchevsky, the soil for the Time of Troubles "was prepared by the harassed state of the people's minds, by a general state of discontent with the reign of Ivan the Terrible – discontent that increased under Boris Godunov. The end of the dynasty and the subsequent attempt to revive it in the persons of the pretenders provided a stimulus for the Troubles. Their basic causes were, first, the people's view of the old dynasty's relation to the Muscovite state and consequently their difficulty in grasping the idea of an elected tsar, and

---

[674] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia,* pp. 18-19.

secondly – the political structure of the state, which created social discord by its heavy demands on the people and an inequitable distribution of state dues. The first cause gave rise to the need of reviving the extinct ruling line, and thus furthered the pretenders' success; the second transformed a dynastic squabble into social and political anarchy."[675]

"While the boyars, using the crisis of tsarist power, had made attempts to limit it – first in relation to Vasily Shuisky, and then to Michael Fyodorovich, which was aided by the appearance of democratic principles among the Cossacks, the Russian people had preserved the rights of the Tsarist autocracy in a holy manner. Gradually, by means of the Zemsky sobors (1620-1625) it destroyed both all the creeping limitations on the power of Tsar Michael and the very limitations that the boyars had managed to attain.

"Moved by the Orthodox faith, the Russian people during all the pan-Russian woes of the Time of Troubles accused, not the tsarist power, but themselves. That is why it repented before Tsar Michael and triumphantly swore an oath before him, promising to correct itself."[676]

The Russian people understood the state to be the personal property of the tsar and of his blood descendants. They could not conceive of a non-hereditary tsar, a legitimate ruler who was not the heir by blood of the previous tsar; hence the confusion when the last Riurik tsar, Theodore, died without issue. Boris Godunov was related to the Riuriks by marriage – but may have killed the Tsarevich Dmitri. So he, in the end, was rejected by the people. Tsar Vasily Shuisky was not a Riurik, but was "the boyars' tsar". So he, too, was not acceptable. The pretenders were followed because they claimed to be the Tsarevich, but their claims were of course false. The tsar had to be a "born tsar". Only Michael Romanov fitted that role because his family was related to the Riuriks through Ivan IV's first wife, Anastasia Romanova. And so in almost all his proclamations Michael called himself the grandson of Ivan the Terrible. During his coronation Michael declared that "Russia had suffered terrible trials in the fifteen years since the death of the last rightful tsar, his cousin Fyodor, son of Ivan the Terrible. Now Russians must restore peace and order…"[677]

Since the hereditary principle is commonly considered to be irrational insofar as it supposedly places the government of the State "at the mercy of chance", it will be worth examining its significance in Russian Orthodox statehood more closely.

First, the hereditary principle was upheld by a still deeper principle, namely, that the tsar had to be Orthodox, confessing the faith that Russia had inherited

---

[675] Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 60.

[676] Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 67.

[677] Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 26.

from the time of St. Vladimir. The second False Dmitri and the Polish King Sigismund's son Vladislav were both rejected by St. Hermogen, Patriarch of Moscow, because they were Catholics. "It is quite impossible," said the Muscovite envoys, "that the sovereign should be one faith, and his subjects of another. You yourselves would not tolerate your kings being of another faith."[678]

Secondly, after electing the first Romanov tsar, the people retained no right to depose him or any of his successors. On the contrary, they elected a hereditary dynasty, and specifically bound themselves by an oath to be loyal to that dynasty *forever*. Hence the peculiar horror and *accursedness* of their rejection of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917... It follows that the hereditary tsar's rule is inviolable, the only possible exception being in the case that tsar becomes a heretic. As Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: "A government that is not fenced about by an inviolability that is venerated religiously by the whole people cannot act with the whole fullness of power or that freedom of zeal that is necessary for the construction and preservation of the public good and security. How can it develop its whole strength in its most beneficial direction, when its power constantly finds itself in an insecure position, struggling with other powers that cut short its actions in as many different directions as are the opinions, prejudices and passions more or less dominant in society? How can it surrender itself to the full force of its zeal, when it must of necessity divide its attentions between care for the prosperity of society and anxiety about its own security? But if the government is so lacking in firmness, then the State is also lacking in firmness. Such a State is like a city built on a volcanic mountain: what significance does its hard earth have when under it is hidden a power that can at any minute turn everything into ruins? Subjects who do not recognize the inviolability of rulers are incited by the hope of licence to achieve licence and predominance, and between the horrors of anarchy and oppression they cannot establish in themselves that obedient freedom which is the focus and soul of public life."[679]

Thirdly, while the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613 has been called an election, it was by no means a democratic election, but rather a *recognition* of *God's* election of a ruler on the model of the Israelites' "election" of Jephtha (Judges 11.11). For, as Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: "Tsars are not elected! And a Council, even a *Zemsky Sobor*, cannot be the source of his power. The kingdom is a calling of God, the Council can determine who is the lawful Tsar and summon him."[680] As the *gramota* issued by the Sobor declared: Michael had been chosen "not by the

---

[678] Ivan Ilyin, "O Monarkhii i Republikanstve" (On Monarchy and Republicanism), *Sobrannie Sochinenia* (Collected Works), Moscow, 1994, vol. 4, p. 493.

[679] Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1848, vol. 2, p. 134; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 6.

[680] Lebedev, *Velikorossia,* St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 126.

unanimity of men, nor in order to please men, but by the righteous judgement of God."[681]

Again, as Ivan Solonevich writes, "when, after the Time of Troubles, the question was raised concerning the restoration of the monarchy, there was no hint of an 'election to the kingdom'. There was a 'search' for people who had the greatest hereditary right to the throne. And not an 'election' of the more worthy. There were not, and could not be, any 'merits' in the young Michael Fyodorovich. But since only the hereditary principle affords the advantage of absolutely indisputability, it was on this that the 'election' was based."[682]

St. John Maximovich writes: "It was almost impossible to elect some person as tsar for his qualities; everyone evaluated the candidates from his own point of view….

"What drew the hearts of all to Michael Romanov? He had neither experience of statecraft, nor had he done any service to the state. He was not distinguished by the state wisdom of Boris Godunov or by the eminence of his race, as was Vasily Shuisky. He was sixteen years old, and 'Misha Romanov', as he was generally known, had not yet managed to show his worth in anything. But why did the Russian people rest on him, and why with his crowning did all the quarrels and disturbances regarding the royal throne come to an end? The Russian people longed for a lawful, 'native' Sovereign, and was convinced that without him there could be no order or peace in Russia. When Boris Godunov and Prince Vasily Shuisky were elected, although they had, to a certain degree, rights to the throne through their kinship with the previous tsars, they were not elected by reason of their exclusive rights, but their personalities were taken into account. There was no strict lawful succession in their case. This explained the success of the pretenders. However, it was almost impossible to elect someone as tsar for his qualities. Everyone evaluated the candidates from their point of view. However, the absence of a definite law which would have provided an heir in the case of the cutting off of the line of the Great Princes and Tsars of Moscow made it necessary for the people itself to indicate who they wanted as tsar. The descendants of the appanage princes, although they came from the same race as that of the Moscow Tsars (and never forgot that), were in the eyes of the people simple noblemen, 'serfs' of the Moscow sovereigns; their distant kinship with the royal line had already lost its significance. Moreover, it was difficult to establish precisely which of the descendants of St. Vladimir on the male side had the most grounds for being recognized as the closest heir to the defunct royal line. In such circumstances all united in the suggestion that the extinct Royal branch should be continued by the closest relative of the last 'native', lawful Tsar. The closest relatives of Tsar Theodore Ioannovich were his cousins on his mother's side: Theodore, in monasticism Philaret, and Ivan Nikitich Romanov, both of whom had sons. In

[681] Michael Nazarov, *Kto Naslednik Rossijskogo Prestola?* (Who is the Heir of the Russian Throne?), Moscow, 1996 p. 89.
[682] Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, pp. 82-83.

that case the throne had to pass to Theodore, as the eldest, but his monasticism and the rank of Metropolitan of Rostov was an obstacle to this. His heir was his only son Michael. Thus the question was no longer about the election of a Tsar, but about the recognition that a definite person had the rights to the throne. The Russian people, tormented by the time of troubles and the lawlessness, welcomed this decision, since it saw that order could be restored only by a lawful 'native' Tsar. The people remembered the services of the Romanovs to their homeland, their sufferings for it, the meek Tsaritsa Anastasia Romanova, the firmness of Philaret Nikitich. All this still more strongly attracted the hearts of the people to the announced tsar. But these qualities were possessed also by some other statesmen and sorrowers for Rus'. And this was not the reason for the election of Tsar Michael Romanov, but the fact that in him Rus' saw their most lawful and native Sovereign.

"In the acts on the election to the kingdom of Michael Fyodorovich, the idea that he was ascending the throne by virtue of his election by the people was carefully avoided, and it was pointed out that the new Tsar was the elect of God, the direct descendant of the last lawful Sovereign."[683]

Fourthly, the tsar is above all man-made laws. As Solonevich writes: "The fundamental idea of the Russian monarchy was most vividly and clearly expressed by A.S. Pushkin just before the end of his life: 'There must be one person standing higher than everybody, higher even than the law.' In this formulation, 'one man', Man is placed in very big letters above the law. This formulation is completely unacceptable for the Roman-European cast of mind, for which the law is everything: *dura lex, sed lex*. The Russian mind places, man, mankind, the soul higher than the law, giving to the law only that place which it should occupy: the place occupied by traffic rules. Of course, with corresponding punishments for driving on the left side. Man is not for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man. It is not that man is for the fulfilment of the law, but the law is for the preservation of man…

"The whole history of humanity is filled with the struggle of tribes, people, nations, classes, estates, groups, parties, religions and whatever you like. It's almost as Hobbes put it: 'War by everyone against everyone'. How are we to find a neutral point of support in this struggle? An arbiter standing above the tribes, nations, peoples, classes, estates, etc.? Uniting the people, classes and religions into a common whole? Submitting the interests of the part to the interests of the whole? And placing moral principles above egoism, which is always characteristic of every group of people pushed forward the summit of public life?"[684]

---

[683] St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, pp. 13, 43-45.

[684] St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, pp. 13, 43-45.

But if the tsar is above the law, how can he not be a tyrant, insofar as, in the famous words of Lord Acton, "power corrupts, and absolute power absolutely corrupts"?

In order to answer this question we must remember, first, that as we have seen, the tsar's power is not absolute insofar as he is limited by the law of God and Orthodoxy.

Secondly, it is not only tsars, but rulers of all kinds that are subject to the temptations of power. Indeed, these temptations may even be worse with democratic rulers; for whereas the tsar stands above all factional interests, an elected president necessarily represents the interests only of the party that propelled him to power at the expense of the country as a whole. And if the elected president does put the interests of the whole country first, he will not remain long in power.

"Western thought," writes Solonevich, "sways from the dictatorship of capitalism to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but no representative of this thought has even so much as thought of 'the dictatorship of conscience'."[685]

"The distinguishing characteristic of Russian monarchy, which was given to it at its birth, consists in the fact that the Russian monarchy expressed the will not of the most powerful, but the will of the whole nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy and politically given shape by the Empire. The will of the nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy will be 'the dictatorship of conscience' Only in this way can we explain the possibility of the manifesto of February 19, 1861 [when Tsar Alexander II freed the peasants]: 'the dictatorship of conscience' was able overcome the opposition of the ruling class, and the ruling class proved powerless. We must always have this distinction in mind: the Russian monarchy is the expression of the will, that is: the conscience, of the nation, not the will of the capitalists, which both French Napoleons expressed, or the will of the aristocracy, which all the other monarchies of Europe expressed: the Russian monarchy is the closest approximation to the ideal of monarchy in general. This ideal was never attained by the Russian monarchy – for the well-known reason that no ideal is realizable in our life. In the history of the Russian monarchy, as in the whole of our world, there were periods of decline, of deviation, of failure, but there were also periods of recovery such as world history has never known."[686]

Now State power, which, like power in the family or the tribe, always includes in itself an element of coercion, "is constructed in three ways: by inheritance, by election and by seizure: monarchy, republic, dictatorship. In practice all of these change places: the man who seizes power becomes a hereditary monarch (Napoleon I), the elected president becomes the same (Napoleon III), or tries to become it (Oliver Cromwell). The elected 'chancellor',

---

[685] Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

[686] Solonevich, op. cit., p. 86.

Hitler, becomes a seizer of power. But in general these are nevertheless exceptions.

"Both a republic and a dictatorship presuppose a struggle for power – democratic in the first case and necessarily bloody in the second: Stalin – Trotsky, Mussolini-Matteotti, Hitler-Röhm. In a republic, as a rule, the struggle is unbloody. However, even an unbloody struggle is not completely without cost. Aristide Briand, who became French Prime Minister several times, admitted that 95% of his strength was spent on the struggle for power and only five percent on the work of power. And even this five percent was exceptionally short-lived.

"Election and seizure are, so to speak, rationalist methods. Hereditary power is, strictly speaking, the power of chance, indisputable if only because the chance of birth is completely indisputable. You can recognize or not recognize the principle of monarchy in general. But no one can deny the existence of the positive law presenting the right of inheriting the throne to the first son of the reigning monarch. Having recourse to a somewhat crude comparison, this is something like an ace in cards… An ace is an ace. No election, no merit, and consequently no quarrel. Power passes without quarrel and pain: the king is dead, long live the king!"[687]

We may interrupt Solonevich's argument here to qualify his use of the word "chance". The fact that a man inherits the throne only because he is the firstborn of his father may be "by chance" from a human point of view. But from the Divine point of view it is *election.* For, as Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: "There is no blind chance! God rules the world, and everything that takes place in heaven and beneath the heavens takes place according to the judgement of the All-wise and All-powerful God."[688] Moreover, as Bishop Ignaty also writes, "in blessed Russia, according to the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole."[689] This being so, it was only natural that the law of succession should be hereditary.

Solonevich continues: "The human individual, born by chance as heir to the throne, is placed in circumstances which guarantee him the best possible professional preparation from a technical point of view. His Majesty Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich was probably one of the most educated people of his time. The best professors of Russia taught him both law and strategy and history and literature. He spoke with complete freedom in three foreign languages. His knowledge was not one-sided… and was, if one can so express it, living knowledge…

---

[687] Solonevich, op. cit., p. 87.

[688] Brianchaninov, "Sud'by Bozhii" (The Judgements of God), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), volume II, Moscow, 2001, p. 72.

[689] Brianchaninov, *Pis'ma* (Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781.

"The Russian tsar was in charge of everything and was obliged to know everything - it goes without saying, as far as humanly possible. He was a 'specialist' in that sphere which excludes all specialization. This was a specialism standing above all the specialisms of the world and embracing them all. That is, the general volume of erudition of the Russian monarch had in mind that which every philosophy has in mind: the concentration in one point of the whole sum of human knowledge. However, with this colossal qualification, that 'the sum of knowledge' of the Russian tsars grew in a seamless manner from the living practice of the past and was checked against the living practice of the present. True, that is how almost all philosophy is checked – for example, with Robespierre, Lenin and Hitler – but, fortunately for humanity, such checking takes place comparatively rarely….

"The heir to the Throne, later the possessor of the Throne, is placed in such conditions under which temptations are reduced… to a minimum. He is given everything he needs beforehand. At his birth he receives an order, which he, of course, did not manage to earn, and the temptation of vainglory is liquidated in embryo. He is absolutely provided for materially – the temptation of avarice is liquidated in embryo. He is the only one having the Right – and so competition falls away, together with everything linked with it. Everything is organized in such a way that the personal destiny of the individual should be welded together into one whole with the destiny of the nation. Everything that a person would want to have for himself is already given him. And the person automatically merges with the general good.

"One could say that all this is possessed also by a dictator of the type of Napoleon, Stalin or Hitler. But this would be less than half true: everything that the dictator has he conquered, and all this he must constantly defend – both against competitors and against the nation. The dictator is forced to prove every day that it is precisely he who is the most brilliant, great, greatest and inimitable, for if not he, but someone else, is not the most brilliant, then it is obvious that that other person has the right to power…

"We can, of course, quarrel over the principle of 'chance' itself. A banal, rationalist, pitifully scientific point of view is usually formulated thus: the chance of birth may produce a defective man. But we, we will elect the best… Of course, 'the chance of birth' can produce a defective man. We have examples of this: Tsar Theodore Ivanovich. Nothing terrible happened. For the monarchy 'is not the arbitrariness of a single man', but 'a system of institutions', - a system can operate temporarily even without a 'man'. But simple statistics show that the chances of such 'chance' events occurring are very small. The chance of 'a genius on the throne' appearing is still smaller.

"I proceed from the axiom that a genius in politics is worse than the plague. For a genius is a person who thinks up something that is new in principle. In thinking up something that is new in principle, he invades the organic life of the country and cripples it, as it was crippled by Napoleon, Stalin and Hitler…

403

"The power of the tsar is the power of the average, averagely clever man over two hundred million average, averagely clever people… V. Klyuchevsky said with some perplexity that the first Muscovite princes, the first gatherers of the Russian land, were completely average people: - and yet, look, they gathered the Russian land. This is quite simple: average people have acted in the interests of average people and the line of the nation has coincided with the line of power. So the average people of the Novgorodian army went over to the side of the average people of Moscow, while the average people of the USSR are running away in all directions from the genius of Stalin."[690]

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow expressed the superiority of the hereditary principle as follows: "What conflict does election for public posts produce in other peoples! With what conflict, and sometimes also with what alarm do they attain the legalization of the right of public election! Then there begins the struggle, sometimes dying down and sometimes rising up again, sometimes for the extension and sometimes for the restriction of this right. The incorrect extension of the right of social election is followed by its incorrect use. It would be difficult to believe it if we did not read in foreign newspapers that elective votes are sold; that sympathy or lack of sympathy for those seeking election is expressed not only by votes for and votes against, but also by sticks and stones, as if a man can be born from a beast, and rational business out of the fury of the passions; that ignorant people make the choice between those in whom wisdom of state is envisaged, lawless people participate in the election of future lawgivers, peasants and craftsmen discuss and vote, not about who could best keep order in the village or the society of craftsmen, but about who is capable of administering the State.

"Thanks be to God! It is not so in our fatherland. Autocratic power, established on the age-old law of heredity, which once, at a time of impoverished heredity, was renewed and strengthened on its former basis by a pure and rational election, stands in inviolable firmness and acts with calm majesty. Its subjects do not think of striving for the right of election to public posts in the assurance that the authorities care for the common good and know through whom and how to construct it." [691]

"God, in accordance with the image of His heavenly single rule, has established a tsar on earth; in accordance with the image of His almighty power, He has established an autocratic tsar; in accordance with the image of His everlasting Kingdom, which continues from age to age, He has established a hereditary tsar."[692]

---

[690] Solonevich, op. cit. , pp. 87-88, 89-90, 91-92.

[691] Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1861, vol. 3, pp. 322-323; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 9.

[692] Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1877, vol. 3, p. 442; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 5.

An elected president is installed by the will of man, and can be said to be installed by the will of God only indirectly, by permission. By contrast, the determination of who will be born as the heir to the throne is completely beyond the power of man, and so entirely within the power of God. The hereditary principle therefore ensures that the tsar will indeed be elected – but by God, not by man.

And so, with the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar, Muscovy was established on the twin pillars of the Orthodox Faith and the Dynastic Principle. The requirement of Orthodoxy had been passed down from the Byzantines. Hereditary Succession was not a requirement in Rome or Byzantium (which is one reason why so many Byzantine emperors were assassinated); but in Russia, as in some Western Orthodox autocracies (for example, the Anglo-Saxon), it had always been felt to be a necessity.

Both pillars had been shaken during the Time of Troubles, after the death of the last Riurik tsar. But Orthodoxy had been restored above all by the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen refusing to recognize a Catholic tsar, and then by the national army of liberation driving out the Poles. And the Hereditary Principle, already tacitly accepted if mistakenly applied by the people when they followed the false Dmitri, had been affirmed by all the estates of the nation at the *Zemsky Sobor* in 1613.

Thus began the rule of the Romanov dynasty, which lasted until 1917, whose last tsar, Nicholas II, was murdered in a house of the same name - Ipatiev. The whole of Russian history from Riurik to Nicholas II (862-1917) was the history of only two, interrelated dynasties – the Riuriks and the Romanovs. Only in the Time of Troubles (1598-1612) was that dynastic continuity briefly interrupted. This continuity of the hereditary principle in Russian history has no parallel in world history with the possible exception of the very different case of China, where, however, there were many dynastic changes.

47. THE RESURRECTION OF MUSCOVY

Now, with Orthodoxy and the hereditary principle restored, the Muscovite state entered on a period of slow but steady growth… However, after years of famine, war and massive destruction the tsardom was still too weak, at the beginning of the new dynasty, to take on all the responsibilities of a fully sovereign autocratic. So the Church stepped into the breach on a temporary basis. Thus the first Romanov tsar, Michael Fyodorovich, had his own natural father, Philaret Nikitich, as his Patriarch, and ruled the State together with him. This unusual relationship, in which both took the title "Great Sovereign", was profoundly significant in the context of the times. It was "unique," according to Lebedev, "not only for Russian history, but also for the universal history of the Church, when a natural father and son become the two heads of a single Orthodox power!"[693]

"The letters of the tsar and patriarch show how father and son addressed each other formally. 'We pray Almighty God that we shall see your holy fair and angelic face and kiss your Holiness's head and bow down to do obeisance,' wrote Michael. Filaret went through the motions of advising – 'And how will you, Sovereign, command on the Crimean business?' – but then he answered his own question: 'To me, the Sovereign, I think that…' They received ambassadors sitting side by side on identical thrones, sometimes diplomatically playing different roles. 'Don't declare it is written by me,' Filaret instructed Michael in one case."[694]

Patriarch Philaret's firm hand was essential in holding the still deeply shaken State together. The sixteenth century had seen the power of the tsar, in the person of Ivan the Terrible, leaning dangerously towards absolutism, tyranny and caesaropapism in practice, if not in theory. However, the Time of Troubles had demonstrated how critically the Orthodox Autocracy depended on the legitimizing and sanctifying power of the Church. In disobedience to her, the people had broken their oath of allegiance to the legitimate tsar and plunged the country into anarchy. But in penitent obedience to her, they had succeeded in finally driving out the invaders. The election of the tsar's father to the patriarchal see both implicitly acknowledged this debt of the Autocracy and People to the Church, and indicated that while the Autocracy was now re-established in all its former power and inviolability, the tsar being answerable to God alone for his actions in the political sphere, nevertheless he received his sanction and sanctification from the Church in the person of the Patriarch, who was as superior to him in his sphere, the sphere of the Spirit, as a father is to his son, and who, as the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1619 put it, "for this reason [i.e. because he was father of the tsar] is to be a helper and builder for the kingdom, a defender for widows and intercessor for the wronged."[695]

---

[693] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 20.

[694] Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 33.

[695] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 20.

As A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: "The Time of Troubles had shaken the structure of the State in Russia, weakening discipline and unleashing arbitrariness; the material situation of the country demanded improvements that could not be put off. On ascending the throne, Michael Fyodorovich was still too young, inexperienced and indecisive to correct the shattered State order. Having become accustomed to self-will, the boyars were not able to renounce it even now: 'They took no account of the tsar, they did not fear him,' says the chronicler, 'as long as he was a child… They divided up the whole land in accordance with their will.' In the census that took place after the devastation of Moscow many injustices had been permitted in taxing the people, so that it was difficult for some and easy for others. The boyars became 'violators', oppressing the weak; the Boyar Duma contained unworthy men, inclined to intrigues against each other rather than State matters and interests. In the opinion of some historians, the boyars even restricted the autocracy of the tsar, and the whole administration of the State depended on them. A powerful will and an experienced man was necessary to annihilate the evil. Such could be for the young sovereign his father, Patriarch Philaret, in whom circumstances had created a strong character, and to whom age and former participation in State affairs had given knowledge of the boyar set and the whole of Russian life and experience in administration. Finally, the woes of the fatherland had generated a burning patriotism in him. In reality, Philaret became the adviser and right hand of the Tsar. The Tsar himself, in his decree to the voyevodas of July 3, 1619 informing them of the return of his father from Poland, put it as follows: 'We, the great sovereign, having taken counsel with our father and intercessor with God, will learn how to care for the Muscovite State so as to correct everything in it in the best manner.' The chroniclers call Philaret 'the most statesmanlike patriarch', noting that 'he was in control of all the governmental and military affairs' and that 'the tsar and patriarch administered everything together'. Philaret was in fact as much a statesman as a churchman. This is indicated by the title he used: 'the great sovereign and most holy Patriarch Philaret Nikitich'. All important State decrees and provisions were made with his blessing and counsel. When the tsar and patriarch were separated they corresponded with each other, taking counsel with each other in State affairs. Their names figured next to each other on decrees… Some decrees on State affairs were published by the patriarch alone; and he rescinded some of the resolutions made by his son. Subjects wrote their petitions not only to the tsar, but at the same time to the patriarch; the boyars often assembled in the corridors before his cross palace to discuss State affairs; they presented various reports to him as well as to the tsar. The patriarch usually took part in receptions of foreign ambassadors sitting on the right hand of the tsar; both were given gifts and special documents; if for some reason the patriarch was not present at this reception, the ambassadors would officially present themselves in the patriarchal palace and with the same ceremonies as to the tsar. The influence of the patriarch on the tsar was so complete and

powerful that there was no place for any influence of the boyars who surrounded the throne."[696]

"Yet Filaret's purpose," writes Montefiore, "the Romanov mission, was to mobilize Russia. He 'administered everything concerning tsardom and army,' and he saw his most urgent task as preparing for vengeance against Poland. Tax collecting was reformed; the Church was disciplined and its lands co-opted by the dynasty, laying the foundations for its wealth. The landowners were given greater control over their serfs in return for their readiness to fight. As border clashes with Poland intensified, Filaret knew that his Polish and Swedish enemies were technically far ahead of Russia, but with Europe now being ravaged by the Thirty Years' War, experienced mercenaries were plentiful and he hired English and Scottish officers to modernize the army."[697]

The Church's recovery was reflected in the more frequent convening of Church Councils. If we exclude the false council of 1666-67 (about which more below), these were genuinely free of interference from the State, and the tsar was sometimes forced to submit to them against his will. Thus a Church Council in 1621 decreed that the proposed Catholic bridegroom for the Tsar's daughter would have to be baptized first, and that in general all Catholics and uniates joining the Orthodox Church, and all Orthodox who had been baptized incorrectly, without full immersion, would have to be baptized.

The bond between Tsar and People was maintained throughout the administration. The central administrative institutions were: (a) the *Prikazy*, or Ministries, over each of which the Tsar appointed a boyar with a staff of secretaries (*dyaki*), (b) the Boyar Duma, an essentially aristocratic institution, which, however, was broadened into the more widely representative (c) Councils of the Land (*Zemskie Sobory*) for particularly important matters, in which representatives of all classes of the people were included. This constituted a much wider consultative base than prevailed in contemporary Western European states.

Again, the institution of Councils of the Land (first introduced by Ivan the Terrible) owed much to the experience of the Time of Troubles; for, as Kliuchevsky writes, "The calamities of the Time of Troubles brought together the last resources of the Russian community for the restoration of order in the state. The representative assembly was created by this enforced social unanimity and helped to sustain it. Popular representation in Russia came into being not in order to limit authority, but to find and strengthen it, and therein lay its difference from representation in western Europe."[698]

---

[696] Dobroklonksy, *Rukovodstvo*, pp. 323-324.

[697] Montefiore, op. cit., p. 34

[698] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., p. 127.

Thus in the reign of Tsar Michael Fyodorovich all the most important matters were decided by Councils, which, like the first Council of 1613, were Councils "of the whole land"; such Councils continued to be convened until 1689.

For "in what was this autocratic power of the Tsar strong?" asks Hieromartyr Andronicus, Archbishop of Perm. "In the fact that it was based on the conscience and on the Law of God, and was supported by its closeness to the land, by the council of the people. The princely entourage, the boyars' Duma, the *Zemsky Sobor* - that is what preserved the power of the Tsars in its fullness, not allowing anyone to seize or divert it. The people of proven experience and honesty came from the regions filled with an identical care for the construction of the Russian land. They raised to the Tsar the voice and counsel of the people concerning how and what to build in the country. And it remained for the Tsar to learn from all the voices, to bring everything together for the benefit of all and to command the rigorous fulfilment for the common good of the people of that for which he would answer before the Omniscient God and his own conscience."[699]

The Tsars always appreciated the significance of a direct link with the people over the heads of the bureaucracy. In 1550 Ivan the Terrible had created a personal office to deal with petitions called the *Chelobitnij Prikaz*, and this lasted until Peter the Great. It disappeared under the eighteenth century Tsars, but was revived by Tsar Paul at the end of the century…

To the local administration, writes Tikhomirov, "*voyevodas* were sent, but besides them there existed numerous publicly elected authorities. The *voyevodas*' competence was complex and broad. The *voyevoda*, as representative of the tsar, had to look at absolutely everything: so that all the tsar's affairs were intact, so that there should be guardians everywhere; to take great care that in the town and the *uyezd* there should be no fights, thievery, murder, fighting, burglary, bootlegging, debauchery; whoever was declared to have committed such crimes was to be taken and, after investigation, punished. The *voyevoda* was the judge also in all civil matters. The *voyevoda* was in charge generally of all branches of the tsar's administration, but his power was not absolute, and he practised it together with representatives of society's self-administration… According to the tsar's code of laws, none of the administrators appointed for the cities and *volosts* could judge any matter without society's representatives…

"Finally, the whole people had the broadest right of appeal to his Majesty in all matters in general. 'The government,' notes Soloviev, 'was not deaf to petitions. If some *mir* [village commune] asked for an elected official instead of the crown's, the government willingly agreed. They petitioned that the city bailiff… should be retired and a new one elected by the *mir*: his Majesty ordered the election, etc. All in all, the system of the administrative authorities of

---

[699] Archbishop Andronicus, O Tserkvi Rossii (On the Church of Russia), Fryazino, 1997, pp. 132-133.

Muscovy was distinguished by a multitude of technical imperfections, by the chance nature of the establishment of institutions, by their lack of specialisation, etc. But this system of administration possessed one valuable quality: the broad admittance of aristocratic and democratic elements, their use as communal forces under the supremacy of the tsar's power, with the general right of petition to the tsar. This gave the supreme power a wide base of information and brought it closer to the life of all the estates, and there settled in all the Russias a deep conviction in the reality of a supreme power directing and managing everything."[700]

In practice, however, things did not always measure up to this standard. Thus Riasanovsky writes that the *voevodas,* the tsar's representatives in the provinces, sometimes abused their positions. Their posts were known as "*kormlenia*, that is, feedings", and "were considered personal awards as well as public acts. The officials exercised virtually full powers and at the same time enriched themselves at the expense of the people."[701] Kliuchevsky puts it still more bluntly: "*Voevodas* either exceeded their powers or did nothing at all…"[702]

By the middle of the century, and in spite of its defeats at the hands of the Poles and Swedes, the prestige of the Muscovite monarchy among the Orthodox was reaching its height. Even the Greeks were looking to it to deliver them from the Turkish yoke and take over the throne of the Byzantine Emperors. Thus in 1645, during the coronation of Tsar Alexei, Patriarch Joseph for the first time read the "Prayer of Philaret" on the enthronement of the Russian Tsar over the whole *oikoumene.* And in 1649 Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem wrote to the tsar: "May the All-Holy Trinity multiply you more than all the tsars, and count you worthy to grasp the most lofty throne of the great King Constantine, your forefather, and liberate the peoples of the pious and Orthodox Christians from impious hands. May you be a new Moses, may you liberate us from captivity just as he liberated the sons of Israel from the hands of Pharaoh."[703]

As V.M. Lourié writes: "At that time hopes in Greece for a miraculous re-establishment of Constantinople before the end of the world [based on the prophecies of Leo the Wise and others], were somewhat strengthened, if not squeezed out, by hopes on Russia. Anastasius Gordius (1654-1729), the author

---

[700] Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, pp. 270-271, 272.

[701] Riasanovsky, op. cit., p. 192.

[702] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., p. 161.

[703] Quoted in Sergius Fomin, *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity – St. Sergius monastery, first edition, 1993, p. 20. Under Alexis Mikhailovich, writes Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "the principle of the 'ministry' (prikaz) did not cease to take precedence over the principle of the 'land' (zemskij): instead of the healthy forces of local government, there was a badly organized bureaucracy – and that for three hundred years to come. The reign of Alexis Mikhailovich is full of rebellions: protests of the people against the voevodas and the central ministries..." (*Le 'Problème Russe' à la fin du xxe siècle* (The 'Russian Problem' at the End of the 20th Century), Paris: Fayard, 1994, p. 13)

of what later became an authoritative historical-eschatological interpretation of the Apocalypse (1717-23) called the Russian Empire the guardian of the faith to the very coming of the Messiah. The hopes of the Greeks for liberation from the Turks that were linked with Russia, which had become traditional already from the time of St. Maximus the Greek (1470-1555), also found their place in the interpretations of the Apocalypse. Until the middle of the 19th century itself – until the Greeks, on a wave of pan-European nationalism thought up their 'Great Idea' – Russia would take the place of Byzantium in their eschatological hopes, as being the last Christian Empire. They considered the Russian Empire to be their own, and the Russian Tsar Nicholas (not their Lutheran King Otto) as their own, to the great astonishment and annoyance of European travellers."[704]

Tragically, however, it was at precisely this time, when Russia seemed ready to take the place of the Christian Roman Empire in the eyes of all the Orthodox, that the Russian autocracy and Church suffered a simultaneous attack from two sides from which it never fully recovered. From the right came the attack of the "Old Ritualists" or "Old Believers", as they came to be called, who expressed the schismatic and nationalist idea that the only true Orthodoxy was Russian Orthodoxy. From the left came the attack of the westernizing Russian aristocracy and the Greek pseudo-hierarchs of the council of 1666-67, who succeeded in removing the champion of the traditional Orthodox symphony of powers, Patriarch Nikon of Moscow.

The fact that these attacks were able to cause such long-term damage proves that the Russian autocracy was not in such a flourishing condition as it appeared to many of its contemporaries…

All of the first three Romanov tsars came to power when they were in their teens. This inevitably meant that the power of the tsars was weaker and that, in spite of the good influence of powerful patriarchs such as Philaret and Nikon, some of that power devolved to the boyars. This fact, combined with the continuing greed of the boyars and the general instability that continued to reverberate from the Time of Troubles, caused frequent uprisings among the people during the reign of the second Romanov tsar, Alexei Mikhailovich.

The most serious of these took place in June, 1648 in Moscow. "The June riots," write Kliuchevsky, "were a rebellion of the common people against the strong. 'The rabble rose against the boyars,' began plundering their houses and those of the gentry and government clerks, and attacked the most hated of the high officials.

"The lesson had a considerable effect. The court was greatly alarmed. Steps were taken to mollify the Muscovite soldiery and the mob. At the Tsar's command the streltsy [musketeers] were treated to drinks. For several days the

---

[704] Lourié, "O Vozmozhnosti Kontsa Sveta v Odnoj Otdel'no Vzyatoj Strane" ("On the Possibility of the End of the World in One Separate Country"), pp. 1-2 (MS).

Tsar's father-in-law entertained delegates from the taxpaying population of the capital in his home. The Tsar himself, during a church procession, addressed the people with a speech that sounded like an apology, and with tears in his eyes 'begged the rabble' to spare his dear friend and relative Morozov. Promises were lavishly given. The rulers began to fear the community. Rumors went about that the Tsar had become gracious and was driving the strong men out of his realm, that they were being stoned and beaten. Under the old dynasty Moscow had never experienced such stormy manifestations of popular resentment against the ruling classes, had never seen such a rapid transition from contempt for the people to pandering to them or heard such unseemly speeches about the Tsar as spread through the city after the riots. 'The Tsar is a fool. He does what the boyars Morozov and Miloslavsky tell him. They are the real masters, and the Tsar himself knows it, but he says nothing. The devil has robbed him of his wits.'

"It was not the Moscow riot of June 1648, soon re-enacted in other towns, that prompted the idea of compiling the new law code – there were other reasons for this – but it caused the government to invite representatives of the people to take part in the work. The *Zemsky Sobor*, called for September 1 of the same year to hear and confirm the new code, was regarded by the government as a means of pacifying the people. We may well believe Patriarch Nikon, who wrote, as though it were a matter of common knowledge, that the *Zemsky Sobor* was summoned 'out of fear of the common people and of civil strife, and not for the cause of truth'. There is no doubt that although the riots were not the original reason for undertaking the work of codification, they affected the course of it. The government's alarm interfered with the work."[705]

We may compare Tsar Alexei's law code, or *Ulozhenie*, with the Emperor Justinian's similar and much more famous work of codification, the *Corpus juris civilis*, also compiled during a period of civil unrest (the Nika riots). Just as Justinian's code preceded the expansion of his empire to the West (the code was immediately introduced into reconquered Italy), so Alexei's code preceded the expansion of his empire to the west and the south. The *Ulozhenie* was the first systematization of law in Russian history. It combined Church canons with laws of the Byzantine emperors, the laws of Russian tsars and great princes and completely new laws. An impressive and necessary work, it was published in 1649 with two print runs of 1200 copies each.

However, the subsequent history of Tsar Alexei's reign elicits the reflection: the internal stability and justice of a state cannot be guaranteed by laws, however many and just they may be, if the minds of the people are still ruled by passion…

Now the *Ulozhenie* laid great emphasis on the defence of the Orthodox Faith, and on the rights of the Patriarch and the clergy. Thus in the first article, strict punishments up to and including the death penalty were prescribed for heresy,

---

[705] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

and articles 27 to 89 of chapter 10 were devoted to various punishments for offending the clergy, while no special sanctions were prescribed for offending the tsar.[706] And yet by the end of the reign the Patriarch had been deposed, the Church humbled, and the power of the Tsar exalted, a development that was continued and magnified, with enormous consequences for Russia, by Tsar Alexei's son, Peter the Great…

This turn-round began with a controversial section of the *Ulozhenie* itself, the establishment of the so-called *Monastyrskij Prikaz*, a purely secular institution that administered disputes between clergy and laity, and also suits involving monasteries, monks and parish clergy. Patriarch Nikon tried hard to get it abolished, but failed. Eventually, in 1675, after Nikon's fall, it was abolished. Nevertheless, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, "the interference of the state in church life steadily increased. The property privileges of church institutions and the clergy were gradually limited or completely removed. Gradually state obligations were extended to ecclesiastical estates…"[707]

Of particular significance in this respect was article 42 of chapter 17 of the *Ulozhenie*, which forbade the giving or sale of estates to the Church. This article "did not deprive the spiritual authorities and monasteries of the right to own property, but only stopped any increase in their possessions. Chapter 19 already contained norms that presupposed or even directly prescribed such deprivations. Article 1 of this chapter established the requisitioning of church estates in Moscow and near Moscow. On the face of it, this seemed to be a violation of the decrees of the *Laws of St. Vladimir and Yaroslav*, the 49th canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the 12th canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council."[708]

---

[706] Fr. Alexei Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (The Church and the State), Moscow: Sretensky monastery, 1997, pp. 70-71.

[707] Nikolin, op. cit., p. 73.

[708] Nikolin, op. cit., p. 73.

48. MUSCOVY AND UKRAINE

It is in this period that the beginnings of a distinction between Russia and Ukraine appear.

"During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "with the greater physical security afforded by the Polish-Lithuanian state, Ukraine became [Muscovy's] grain belt. The landed nobility gained in both privilege and material wealth, while imposing an ever more debilitating serfdom on the peasants. The Lithuanian Statute of 1529, together with the Magdeburg Law in the cities, provided some guarantees of citizenship for all non-serfs and, although often in practice ignored, it inculcated a stronger legal awareness in Ukraine than was prevalent in Muscovy.

"Polish culture proved highly attractive to many Ukrainian landowners, especially since those who converted to Catholicism received the full rights of the *szlachta* (Polish nobility) to enserf the peasants and to participate as citizens in the political life of the Commonwealth. With the coming of the counter-reformation, the Polish king encouraged the expansion of a network of Jesuit colleges, which brought with them the latest in European culture and thinking, while a new Greek Catholic (or Uniate) Church was created, Orthodox in ritual, but administratively in union with Rome, which took over all Orthodox parishes. Originally conceived as an attempt to begin the reunification of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the Uniate Church became in effect an instrument of Polonization.

"Where the ill-defined borders of the joint Commonwealth faded into the steppe, however, Catholicism and high culture made but few and feeble inroads. There the Cossack community of the lower Dnieper continued its steppe way of life, hunting, fishing, raiding across the sea into the Ottoman Empire, and striking up temporary alliances with Muscovy or Poland for the defence of its frontiers. The Cossacks' headquarters, the Sech', on an island below the Dnieper rapids, was almost impregnable and guaranteed their dogged self-rule as well as their privileges, notably their exemption from taxation, which were registered by the Polish Crown."[709]

While Tsar Michael Romanov was consolidating his rule in Great Russia, the uniate persecution was continuing in Ukraine. In 1620, writes Archpriest Andrei Tkachev, "Patriarch Theophan of Jerusalem arrived and renewed the lawful hierarchy, ordaining new bishops. He was immediately accused of being an agent... Of whom? Of Istanbul! And only under the protection of the Cossacks was he able to stay alive and leave the borders of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth."[710]

---

[709] Hosking, op. cit., pp. 23-25.

[710] Tkachev, "Ukraine: Then and Now", *Orthodox Christianity,* pravolavie.ru, March 21, 2019.

This was indeed a difficult time for the Orthodox in Ruthenia – that is, what later came to be known as Western Ukraine.

"In 1632 Metropolitan Isaiah Kopinsky wrote to the Moscow Patriarch: 'There are no pious princes, noble dignitaries have disappeared, everyone has left from Eastern Orthodoxy to the West, and one can hardly find a man among the poor and inglorious who have remained pious in the Orthodox faith.' It was precisely those 'poor and inglorious' — the peasants, craftsmen, merchants, and clergy — who were faced with the struggle against the Jesuit influence, which was particularly active in those times. St. Job of the Pochaev Monastery became the strong spiritual backbone, the symbol of this struggle.

"The saint lived during difficult times for Russia, when on its western borders the Orthodox people of Volhynia and Galicia were subjected to cruel ecclesiastical and political oppression from the Polish-Lithuanian magnates. St. Job witnessed the Brest Unia and the implacable Catholic invasion that followed it, as well as the growth of Protestant influence. As the abbot of the monastery he had enormous spiritual authority, and he used all of his resources to strengthen Orthodoxy, to struggle with the heterodox and heretic influences on the people's consciousness."[711]

St. Job (1551-1651) had approved and blessed the printing of the first Slavonic Bible, the Ostrozhsky Bible, by his spiritual son, Prince Constantine Ostrozhsky, in 1580-81. On being made abbot of the Pochaev monastery in the very year of the unia, 1596, he built a beautiful new church whose dome was directly above the healing footprint of the Mother of God and the Pochaev icon of the Mother of God. As Archpriest Andrew Koinatsky writes, "one would have to be very inattentive to the judgments of God not to see in this coincidence the activity of the right hand of God which, at the same time as the bitter persecutions by the Unia, prepared gracious consolations for the Orthodox in the miraculous Icon of the All-pure Virgin, who in this manner chose Mount Pochaev as her headquarters for the defence of the Orthodox people, their encouragement and deliverance."[712]

The Uniates conquered Pochaev in 1721, but continued to venerate St. Job, the great opponent of the Unia, whose incorrupt relics and many miracles could not be gainsaid. They even petitioned unsuccessfully that he be proclaimed as saint of the Uniate church! Pochaev returned to Orthodoxy under Tsar Nicholas I.

Somewhat further to the north, in Lithuania and Belorussia, another hero of the faith was St. Athanasius of Brest, who was sent by the Mother of God to the Polish Sejm in order to rebuke them for their cruelty to the Orthodox. In 1648 he was captured, tortured and killed by the Jesuits.

---

[711] Stanislav Minakov, "The Iron Stance of St. Job of Pochaev", *Orthodox Christianity,* November 20, 2018.

[712] Koinatsky, "Orthodoxy and the Unia", *Living Orthodoxy,* July-August, 1997, p. 14.

The Unia has continued to be a snare for the Orthodox to the present day. In the period of the Turkish yoke, the Antiochian patriarchate proved to be especially vulnerable to uniate propaganda.[713] Some uneducated Orthodox Christians were snared by the pretence of Orthodoxy, which consisted in preserving all the external forms of the Orthodox rite while "slipping in" the commemoration of the Pope.

*

An important factor in this situation was the Ashkenazi Jews, whom persecutions in Western Europe had gradually pushed further east, into Poland.

Norman Cantor writes: "The Polish king and nobility held vast lands and ruled millions of newly enserfed peasants and could make varied use of the Jews. Hence the Jews were welcomed into Poland in the sixteenth century from Germany and Western Europe. Even Jews exiled from Spain in 1492 and those tired of the ghettos of northern Italy under the oppressive eye of the papacy found their way to Poland. Its green, fruitful, and underpopulated land seemed wonderful to the Jews. By the end of the sixteenth century Poland was being hailed as the new golden land of the Jews…"[714]

Ivan the Terrible banned the entry of Jewish merchants into Moscow. This "Russian barrier to further eastern penetration", writes Paul Johnson, "led to intensive Jewish settlement in Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine… By 1575, while the total population [of Poland] had risen to seven million, the number of Jews had jumped to 150,000, and thereafter the rise was still more rapid. In 1503 the Polish monarchy appointed Rabbi Jacob Polak 'Rabbi of Poland', and the emergence of a chief rabbinate, backed by the crown, the first allowed since the end of the exilarchate. From 1551 the chief rabbi was elected by the Jews themselves. This was, to be sure, oligarchic rather than democratic rule. The rabbinate had wide powers over law and finances, appointing judges and a great variety of other officials… The royal purpose in devolving power on the Jews was, of course, self-interested. There was a great deal of Polish hostility to the Jews. In Cracow, for instance, where the local merchant class was strong, Jews were usually kept out. The kings found out they could make money out of the Jews by selling to certain cities and towns, such as Warsaw, the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis*. But they could make even more by allowing Jewish communities to grow up, and milking them. The rabbinate and local Jewish councils were primarily tax-raising agencies. Only 30 per cent of what they raised went on welfare and official salaries; all the rest was handed over to the crown in return for protection.

---

[713] See the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1722.

[714] Cantor, *The Secret Chain,* London: Fontana, 1996, p. 182.

"The association of the rabbinate with communal finance and so with the business affairs of those who had to provide it led the eastern or Ashkenazi Jews to go even further than the early-sixteenth-century Italians in giving halakhic approval to new methods of credit-finance. Polish Jews operating near the frontiers of civilization [!] had links with Jewish family firms in the Netherlands and Germany. A new kind of credit instrument, the mamram, emerged and got rabbinical approval. In 1607 Jewish communities in Poland and Lithuania were also authorized to use heter iskah, an inter-Jewish borrowing system which allowed one Jew to finance another in return for a percentage. This rationalization of the law eventually led even conservative authorities, like the famous Rabbi Judah Loew, the Maharal of Prague, to sanction lending at interest.

"With easy access to credit, Jewish pioneer settlers played a leading part in developing eastern Poland, the interior of Lithuania, and the Ukraine, especially from the 1560s onwards. The population of Western Europe was expanding fast. It needed to import growing quantities of grain. Ambitious Polish landowners, anxious to meet the need, went into partnership with Jewish entrepreneurs to create new wheat-growing areas to supply the market, take the grain down-river to the Baltic ports, and then ship it west. The Polish magnates – Radziwills, Sovieskis, Zamojskis, Ostrogskis, Lubomirskis – owned or conquered the land. The ports were run by German Lutherans. The Dutch Calvinists owned most of the ships. But the Jews did the rest. They not only managed the estates but in some cases held the deeds as pledges in return for working capital. Sometimes they leased the estates themselves. They ran the tolls. They built and ran mills and distilleries. They owned the river boats, taking out the wheat and bringing back in return wine, cloth and luxury goods, which they sold in their shops. They were in soap, glazing, tanning and furs. They created entire villages and townships (shtetls), where they lived in the centre, while peasants (Catholics in Poland and Lithuania, Orthodox in the Ukraine) occupied the suburbs.

"Before 1569 [*recte*: 1596] when the Union of Brest-Litovsk made the Polish settlement of the Ukraine possible, there were only twenty-four Jewish settlements there with 4,000 inhabitants; by 1648 there were 115, with a numbered population of 51,325, the total being much greater.[715] Most of these places were owned by Polish nobles, absentee-landlords, the Jews acting as middlemen and intermediaries with the peasants – a role fraught with future danger. Often Jews were effectively the magnates too. At the end of the sixteenth century Israel of Zloczew, for instance, leased an entire region of hundreds of square miles from a consortium of nobles to whom he paid the enormous sum of 4,500 zlotys. He sub-let tolls, taverns and mills to his poorer

---

[715] "Yu. Hessen writes that under the first false Dmitri (1605-06) the Jews appeared in Moscow 'in comparatively large numbers', as did other foreigners. But after the end of the Time of Troubles it was declared that the second false Dmitri ('the thief of Tushino') was 'Jewish by race'" (A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, vol. 1, p. 23). (V.M.)

relatives. Jews from all over Europe arrived to take part in this colonizing process. In many settlements they constituted the majority of the inhabitants, so that for the first time outside Palestine they dominated the local culture. But they were important at every level of society and administration. They farmed the taxes and the customs. They advised government. And every Polish magnate had a Jewish counsellor in his castle, keeping the books, writing letters, running the economic show…

"In 1648-49, the Jews of south-eastern Poland and the Ukraine were struck by catastrophe. This episode was of great importance in Jewish history for several reasons… The Thirty Years War had put growing pressure on the food-exporting resources of Poland. It was because of their Polish networks that Jewish contractors to the various armies had been so successful in supplying them. But the chief beneficiaries had been the Polish landlords; and the chief losers had been the Polish and Ukrainian peasants, who had seen an ever-increasing proportion of the crops they raised marketed and sold at huge profit to the ravenous armies. Under the Arenda system, whereby the Polish nobility leased not only land but all fixed assets such as mills, breweries, distilleries, inns and tolls to Jews, in return for fixed payments, the Jews had flourished and their population had grown rapidly. But the system was inherently unstable and unjust. The landlords, absentee and often spendthrift, put continual pressure on the Jews by raising the price each time a lease was renewed; the Jews in turn put pressure on the peasants….

"The Ukrainian peasants finally rose in the late spring of 1648, led by … Bogdan Chmielnicki, with the help of Dnieper Cossack and Tartars from the Crimea. His rising was fundamentally aimed at Polish rule and the Catholic church, and many Polish nobles and clergy were among the victims. But the principal animus was directed against Jews, with whom peasants had the most contact, and when it came to the point the Poles always abandoned their Jewish allies to save themselves. Thousands of Jews from villages and shtetls scrambled for safety to the big fortified towns, which turned into death-traps for them. At Tulchin the Polish troops handed over the Jews to the Cossacks in exchange for their own lives[716]; at Tarnopol, the garrison refused to let the Jews in at all. At Bar, the fortress fell and all the Jews were massacred. There was another fierce slaughter at Narol. At Nemirov, the Cossacks got into the fortress by dressing as Poles, 'and they killed about 6,000 souls in the town', according to the Jewish chronicle; 'they drowned several hundreds in the water and by all kinds of cruel torments'. In the synagogue they used the ritual knives to kill Jews, then burned the building down, tore up the sacred books, and trampled them underfoot, and used the leather covers for sandals."[717]

---

[716] At Tulchin the Cossacks said to the Poles: "We will spare you as long as you pay a ransom, then we will leave. But we will not have mercy on the Jews for any money. They are our accursed enemies; they have insulted our faith, and we have sworn to destroy their tribe. Expel them from the city and be in agreement with us" (Platonov, op. cit., p. 228).

[717] Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, pp. 250-252, 258-260.

Cantor (a Jewish professor) writes that "the Ukrainians had a right to resent the Jews, if not to kill them. The Jews were the immediate instrument of the Ukrainians' subjection and degradation. The Halakic rabbis never considered the Jewish role in oppression of the Ukrainian peasants in relation to the Hebrew prophets' ideas of social justice. Isaiah and Amos were dead texts from the past in rabbinical mentality.

"Or perhaps the Jews were so moved by racist contempt for the Ukrainian and Polish peasantry as to regard them as subhuman and unworthy of consideration under biblical categories of justice and humanity…"[718]

*

The Moscow tsars were hesitant about getting involved in the complicated politics of the Ukraine. It was not that they did not want to help their fellow Orthodox who were being persecuted by heretics and Jews. Besides, helping them accorded with their policy of the gradual gathering of the former Russian lands under their rule. But they did not know how to handle the Cossacks, who were anarchical, fickle in their loyalties and divided amongst themselves. Moreover, they feared another war with the Poles, who had defeated them near Smolensk in 1634…

Another important factor was the Muscovites' distrust of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, which had become to fall under Catholic influence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Particularly suspect to some people was the Metropolitan of Kiev since 1633, Peter Mogila (Mohyla), the son of the ruler of Moldavia, who, as Serhii Plokhy writes, "worked hard to reform Ukrainian and Belarussian Orthodoxy. He began with the education of the clergy. In 1632, he merged two existing schools for Orthodox youth, establishing a Kyivan college – the first Western-type educational institution in Ukraine, modeled in structure and curriculum on the Jesuit colleges of the era. The Catholic reform, launched by Rome at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), became the inspiration and model for Mohyla's reform of the Orthodox Church of the Commonwealth.

"Catholic influences were apparent in the new metropolitan's liturgical innovations and in his Confession of Faith – an Eastern Orthodox catechism that the Orthodox had lacked. An Orthodox catechism was compiled in the 1640s by a circle of intellectuals working under Mohyla's supervision and approved by the Kyivan church council. In 1643, it was approved by the Eastern patriarchs. The confession that Mohyla and his learned circle composed became an official exposition of the dogmas and articles of the Orthodox faith throughout the Orthodox world, with the notable exception of Muscovy.

"The rise of Kyiv as a center of Orthodox learning took place at a time when Muscovy and its church were in almost complete isolation, oblivious to the challenges that faced their fellow Orthodox abroad. But the desire of the young

---

[718] Cantor, op. cit., p. 184.

Tsar Aleksei to reform his church changed the attitude of the Muscovite state to Kyiv and its teachings. Nowhere was this more evident than in the sphere of publishing. In 1649, Moscow printers published a *Brief Compendium of Teachings on the Articles of Faith,* based on Peter Mohyla's Orthodox Confession of Faith. Muscovite Orthodoxy was rejoining the rest of the Orthodox world, now defined by the theological teachings of Kyiv."

Peter Mohyla was not the only Orthodox hierarch in this period who was accused of submitting to Catholic influences. Thus in relation to the Catholic teaching on purgatory, Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) writes: "During the 'Babylonian captivity' of Orthodox theology in the 17th and 18th centuries, there were Greeks and Russians who, while avoiding the actual word 'purgatory' and any reference to purgatorial fire, otherwise adopted a position more or less identical with the Latin view, including the notions of penal, expiatory suffering after death and of satisfaction or *satispassio*. Gabriel Severus, Peter Mogila, Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem and Elias Minetti are notable cases in point. But they are not representative of the Orthodox tradition as a whole. Even at the height of the Latin influence in the Middle East, there were always others, such as Patriarch Meletios Pigas of Alexandria, who strongly objected to such ideas…"[719]

*

In 1649 Khmelnytsky and the Cossacks appealed for support against the Catholic Poles to Tsar Alexei, using Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem as a mediator. However, the Tsar was cautious. "It was explained to the confessionally minded patriarch that the tsar could not do as Khmelnytsky requested because, as a Christian ruler, he was bound by the peace treaty concluded with the Commonwealth in 1634. He could take the Cossacks under his protection only if they secured their own liberation. Otherwise, he could allow them to resettle to Muscovy if they were persecuted by the Poles because of their Orthodox faith. The tsar seemed to be caught in a religious dilemma – whether to violate the oath he had given to a fellow Christian – but not Orthodox – ruler, or to protect his fellow Orthodox Christians. For the next four years, he would stay out of the Ukrainian conflict. Muscovy was not prepared to make war on a country that had defeated it more than once in recent decades and had even managed to place a garrison in Moscow itself.

"Muscovy began preparing for war with the Commonwealth in the spring of 1651, when the tsar realized that the Commonwealth was too weak to effectively suppress the Cossack uprising. It was then that Muscovite diplomats began preparing the ground for a breach with the Commonwealth, casting themselves as protectors of the Polish king's Orthodox subjects. They claimed that Khmelnytsky had risen in protest against religious persecution, as the Poles had forced the Cossacks to 'accept their Roman faith, sealed godly churches, and imposed the Union [of Brest-Litovsk] on the Orthodox churches,

---

[719] Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom,* London: Allen Lane, 2017, p. 31.

and oppressed them in every way.' The final decision to go to war with the king was made in the Assembly of the Land, which met in Moscow in a number of sessions between June and October 1653. The delegates concluded that the tsar was free to take the Cossacks and their lands under his high hand (protection) for the sake of 'the Orthodox Christian Faith and the holy Churches of God'

"An embassy was sent to Khmelnytsky to break the news. Muscovy was entering the war on the side of the Cossacks. The embassy's path through Ukrainian territory was marked by religious processions and church services celebrating the newfound unity of the two Orthodox peoples. At a Cossack officers' council convened by Khmelnytsky in the town of Pereiaslav east of Kyiv, the hetman presented three alternatives: go back under the rule of the Catholic king; recognize the suzerainty of the Muslim sultan, who ruled over the Crimea and was interested in extending his authority northward; or accept the protectorate of the Orthodox tsar. He called on his officers to accept protection from a ruler 'of the same worship of the Greek rite, of the same faith'. The gathering supported the hetman, shouting that they wanted the 'eastern Orthodox tsar'…"[720]

And so Khmelnitsky petitioned the protection of the Muscovite tsar in the name of "the whole Zaporozhye Army and the whole of the Russian Christian world (*ves' mir Khristianskij Rossijskij*), promising to obey him in all things "unto the ages". His reason was "first of all, we suffered no persecution of our faith or freedoms from the Polish kings. We had freedom in all our ranks, and for that reason we served them faithfully. But now because they have attacked our freedom are forced to submit ourselves under the powerful and lofty hand of Your Royal Majesty".

A Treaty was signed in the Dormition church in Periaslavl on January 8, 1654. In return for the Cossacks' eternal loyalty, the Tsar confirmed the Cossack Host in its privileges, "including its own law and administration, the right to elect its own Hetman and to receive foreign envoys not hostile to the Tsar. He also guaranteed the Ukrainian nobility, church and cities their traditional rights. Under these arrangements the alliance was concluded and Poland was driven out of left-bank [i.e. Eastern] Ukraine and Kiev…

"Left-bank Ukraine became the site of a new state, the Ukrainian Hetmanate, which preserved a degree of autonomy, as well as its own culture, well into the eighteenth century. The representatives of nobles, clergymen and burghers were given their place alongside Cossacks in the General Council which elected the Hetman. An institutional foundation was thus laid for the Cossacks to create the framework of a Ukrainian nation-state in alliance with Russia…"[721]

In view of the fact that Khmelnitsky's Hetmanate is often considered to be the beginning of the Ukrainian state, it should be noted that Khmelnitsky called

---

[720] Plokhy, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

[721] Hosking, op. cit., p. 25.

his land both "Little Russia" and "the Russian world" (*rossijskij mir*). And when he returned to Kiev, the Kievans met him with great rejoicing some ten kilometres from the city. They escorted him and his Cossacks through the Golden Gates, and added their own signatures to the treaty.

*

The tsar now entered into war with Poland and was at first successful. As Kliuchevsky writes, "a large tract of Russian territory was wrested from Poland and restored to its hereditary owner, the Tsar of Muscovy. After the conquest of White Russia and Lithuania, the Tsar's title was immediately revised, and he was styled 'the autocrat of Great and Little and White Russia, of Lithuania, Volhynia, and Podolia'. But in Moscow they understood very little about relations between the different social groups in the Ukraine and took little notice of them, as being of no importance. The Moscow boyars wondered why Ataman Vyhovsky's envoys spoke with such contempt about the Zaporozhye Cossacks as gamblers and drunkards, while all the Cossack population, including the ataman, was called 'the host of Zaporozhye'. They questioned the envoys with interest, asking them whether the former atamans lived in towns or at Zaporozhye, and from what ranks they were elected, and where Bohdan Khmelnitsky himself came from. Evidently the Muscovite government, having annexed the Ukraine, found that it knew nothing whatever about its internal relations. In consequence, the Ukrainian question, so crookedly presented by both sides, impeded and defeated Moscow's foreign policy for years to come, entangled Muscovy in the hopeless Ukrainian squabbles, split its forces in the struggle against Poland, compelled it to renounce Lithuania and White Russia with Volhynia and Podolia, and barely permitted it to keep Ukrainian lands east of the Dnieper, with Kiev on the opposite bank. After these losses Moscow could apply to itself Bohdan Khmelnitsky's words when he reproached it, weeping, for not having helped him in time: 'It was not this that I wanted, and this isn't the way things should have happened.'

"The Ukrainian question directly or indirectly complicated Moscow's foreign policy. Tsar Alexei began the war with Poland for the Ukraine in 1654, and soon gained the whole of White Russia and a considerable part of Lithuania with the towns of Vilna, Kovno, and Grodno. While Muscovy was annexing Poland's eastern provinces, another enemy, the Swedish King Charles X, attacked the country from the north and, moving as quickly as the Russians, occupied all Great and Little Poland with Cracow and Warsaw, drove out King Jan Casimir, and proclaimed himself king of Poland. Finally he tried to rob Tsar Alexei of Lithuania. Thus the two enemies who had been attacking Poland from different sides collided and quarreled over the booty. Tsar Alexei recalled Ivan IV's idea about the shores of the Baltic and Livonia, when the war with Poland was interrupted in 1656 by war with Sweden. The forgotten idea of expanding the Muscovite territory to its natural boundary, the Baltic Sea, came to the fore again. The question remained as far from solution as ever. The Russians did not succeed in taking Riga, and the Tsar soon stopped military operations and finally made peace with Sweden in 1661, giving back

all he had gained from it. The war proved fruitless and indeed harmful to Muscovy, because it gave Poland a chance to recover from the Swedish onslaught; but it did something to prevent the union of the two states under the same king. They were equally hostile to Muscovy but constantly weakened their own powers by opposing each other."[722]

We may interrupt Kliuchevsky's narrative to ask: why, under both Ivan the Terrible and Tsar Alexei, were Muscovite attempts to reach the Baltic unsuccessful? And we may suggest the following answer: that, unlike White Russia or the Ukraine, the Baltic peoples were neither Orthodox nor part of the ancient patrimony of Kievan Rus'; that is, they had never been part of what in today's parlance would be called "the Russian world". Therefore they were in effect wars of aggression – and it is a striking feature of Russian history how rarely Russia won aggressive as opposed to defensive wars, wars in defence of Orthodox Christianity…

"Bohdan was nearing his end, but once more he stood in the way of both his friends and his enemies, of both the state he had betrayed and the one he had sworn to serve. Alarmed by the rapprochement between Russia and Poland, he made an agreement with King Charles X of Sweden and the Transylvanian Prince Rakoczy to divide Poland among the three of them. A true representative of the Cossacks, who were accustomed to serve any number of customers, Bohdan had been a servant or an ally or sometimes a traitor to all the neighboring sovereigns – the King of Poland, the Tsar of Muscovy, the Khan of the Crimea, the Sultan, the ruler of Moldavia, and the Prince of Transylvania. Finally he hatched out a plan to be an independent prince of the Ukraine under Charles X, who wanted to be king both of Sweden and of Poland. It was these intrigues of the dying Bohdan that made Tsar Alexei end the war with Sweden as best he could.

"Ukraine was also responsible for involving Moscow for the first time in direct conflict with Turkey. After Bohdan's death there began an open struggle between the Cossack elders and the rank and file. His successor, Ataman Vyhovsky, went over to the Polish king, and together with the Tatars destroyed Tsar Alexei's best army at Konotop. The Poles, encouraged by this, and freed from the Swedes with Moscow's help, refused to give Muscovy any of its war gains. There began a second war with Poland, bringing with it two military disasters to Muscovy: Prince Khovansky's defeat in White Russia and Sheremetev's capitulation at Chudnovo in Volhynia because of the Cossacks' treachery. Lithuania and White Russia were lost. Vyhovsky's successors, Bohdan's two sons, Iuri and Teteria, proved to be traitors. Ukraine split into two hostile halves. The area east of the Dnieper belonged to Muscovy, and the area west of the Dnieper belonged to Poland. The King had seized almost the whole of Ukraine.

---

[722] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

"Both warring states became completely exhausted. Moscow had no money left to pay its soldiers, and issued copper coinage at the value of silver, which caused a riot in 1661. Great Poland, under the leadership of Lubomirski, rebelled against its king. Muscovy and Poland seemed prepared to drain each other to the last drop of blood. They were saved by their common enemy, Ataman Doroshenko, who surrendered himself and Ukraine west of the Dnieper to the Sultan in 1666. Menaced by a formidable enemy, Poland and Muscovy concluded an armistice at Andrusovo in 1667, and that put an end to the war. Moscow retained the Smolensk and Seversk regions and the eastern Ukraine with Kiev. It now occupied an extended front line along the Dnieper from its upper reaches down to Zaporozhye, which, true to its historical character, remained a halfway house, serving both Poland and Muscovy…"[723]

---

[723] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

49. THE SCHISM OF THE OLD RITUALISTS

The beginnings of the first major schism in Russian Church history lay in the arrival in Moscow of some educated monks from the south of Russia, which at that time was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the political yoke of Catholic Poland. They pointed to the existence of several differences between the Muscovite service books and those employed in the Greek Church. These differences concerned such matters as how the word "Jesus" was to be spelt, whether two or three "alleluias" should be chanted at certain points in the Divine services, whether the sign of the Cross should be made with two or three fingers, etc.

A group of Muscovite clergy called "the Zealots of Piety" and led by Protopriests John Neronov and Avvakum rejected these criticisms. [724] They said that the reforms contradicted the decrees of the famous *Stoglav* council of 1551, which had anathematized the three-fingered sign of the cross, and they suspected that the southerners were tainted with Latinism through their long subjection to Polish rule.

However, the *Stoglav* council, while important, was never as authoritative as the Ecumenical Councils, and certain of its provisions have never been accepted in their full force by the Russian Church - for example, its 40th chapter, which decreed that anyone who shaved his beard, and died in such a state (i.e. without repenting), should be denied a Christian burial and numbered among the unbelievers. Another controversial canon of the council was the 55th, which declared that if any patriarch had a quarrel with a metropolitan or clergyman, no other patriarch could presume to interfere or judge the matter – except the Patriarchate of Constantinople.[725] Needless to say, the ascription of such quasi-papist universal jurisdiction to the Ecumenical Patriarch was never accepted by the Orthodox Church. Moreover, in elevating merely ritual differences into an issue of dogmatic faith, the "zealots for piety" were undoubtedly displaying a Judaizing attachment to the letter of the law. In the long run it led to their rejection of the whole of Greek Orthodoxy, and therefore of the need of any agreement with the Greeks whether on rites or anything else, a rejection that threatened the foundations of the Ecumenical

---

[724] According to Hosking, the Zealots of Piety "were a group of parish priests, mainly from the Volgan region, who in the 1630s began to agitate for a programme of thorough-going church reform. They were concerned by drunkenness, debauchery and the persistence of pagan practices among the common people, and attributed these deficiencies to the low educational and spiritual level of the clergy, and to the negligent conduct of the liturgy, which they claimed hindered ordinary parishioners from attaining a real understanding of the faith. In particular they criticized the custom of *mnogoglasie*, conducting different portions of the divine service simultaneously, so that it was impossible to follow any properly (this was done because parish churches had taken over the full monastic liturgy, under which each service would otherwise have lasted several hours). The Zealots recommended heightened discipline, regular fasting, confession and communion, and the frequent preaching of sermons" (op. cit., p. 65).

[725] Dan Ioan Mureșan, "Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593)" (Heretical Rome? On the Decisions of the Moscow and Constantinople Councils (1589, 1590 and 1593)).

Church. [726] They forgot the admonition of St. Photius the Great: "'In cases where the thing disregarded is not the faith and is no falling away from any general and catholic decree, different rites and customs being observed among different people, a man who knows how to judge rightly would decide that neither do those who observe them act wrongly, nor do those who have not received them break the law."

This was the situation in 1652 when the close friend of the tsar, Metropolitan Nikon of Novgorod, was elected patriarch. He received the news of his election while he was transferring the relics of St. Philip of Moscow from Solovki to Moscow, which contained a prophetic message: just as St. Philip suffered at the hands of the tsar, so would Nikon… Knowing of the various inner divisions within Russian society caused by incipient westernism and Old Ritualism, the new patriarch demanded, and obtained a solemn oath from the tsar and all the people that they should obey him in all Church matters. The tsar was very willing to give such an oath because he regarded Nikon as his "special friend" and father, giving him the same title of "Great Sovereign" that Tsar Michael had given to his father, Patriarch Philaret. The "Zealots of Piety" were also happy to submit to Nikon because he had been a member of their circle and shared, as they thought, their views.

But Nikon had become convinced that the differences between Russian and Greek usage had to be removed. As Kliuchevsky writes, "there was no lack of reminders to confirm the conviction that such agreement was essential. Eastern hierarchs, who came to Moscow more and more often in the seventeenth century, reproachfully pointed out to the Russian clergy that these peculiarities were local innovations, and that they could break up the unity between the Orthodox churches. Something that happened shortly before Nikon's accession to the patriarchate pointed to the reality of such a danger. The monks of all the Greek monasteries on Mount Athos declared in council that it was heretical to cross oneself with two fingers, burned the Muscovite liturgical books that prescribed this, and wanted to burn as well the monk in whose possession the books were found…"[727]

In 1653 Nikon issued an order mandating the number of prostrations (four full-length and 12 to the waist) to be performed during the Prayer of St. Ephraim in Lent and the three-fingered cross. Since this was different from the current practice in Rus' (all prostrations full-length and the two-fingered cross), the Protopriest Zealots protested against the "non-prostration heresy".[728] They were exiled, and the schism began…

---

[726] Thus "Protopriests Neronov, Habbakuk, Longinus and others considered that the faith of the Greeks 'had become leprous from the Godless Turks', and that it was impossible to trust the Greeks" (Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, p. 136).

[727] Kliuchevsky, op. cit., p. 324.

[728] Dobroklonsky, op. cit., pp. 402, 406.

"Not immediately," writes Lebedev, "but after many years of thought (since 1646), and conversations with the tsar, Fr. Stefan [Bonifatiev], the Greek and Kievan scholars and Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem, [Nikon] had come to the conviction that the criterion of the rightness of the correction of Russian books and rites consisted in their correspondence with that which from ages past had been accepted by the Eastern Greek Church and handed down by it to Rus' and, consequently, must be preserved also in the ancient Russian customs and books, and that therefore for the correction of the Russian books and rites it was necessary to take the advice of contemporary Eastern authorities, although their opinion had to be approached with great caution and in a critical spirit. It was with these convictions that Nikon completed the work begun before him of the correction of the Church rites and books, finishing it completely in 1656. At that time he did not know that the correctors of the books had placed at the foundation of their work, not the ancient, but the contemporary Greek books, which had been published in the West, mainly in Venice (although in the most important cases they had nevertheless used both ancient Greek and Slavonic texts). The volume of work in the correction and publishing of books was so great that the patriarch was simply unable to check its technical side and was convinced that they were correcting them according to the ancient texts.

"However, the correction of the rites was carried out completely under his supervision and was accomplished in no other way than in consultation with conciliar opinion in the Eastern Churches and with special councils of the Russian hierarchs and clergy. Instead of using two fingers in the sign of the cross, the doctrine of which had been introduced into a series of very important books under Patriarch Joseph under the influence of the party of Neronov and Avvakum, the three-fingered sign was confirmed, since it corresponded more to ancient Russian customs and the age-old practice of the Orthodox East.[729] A

---

[729] Thus Monk Ilya Muromets of the Pskov Caves monastery, identified in legend with the famous hero Ilya Muromets, died with the fingers of his right hand formed for prayer in the three-fingered sign of the cross. According to S.A. Zenkovsky, following the researches of Golubinsky, Kapterev and others, the two-fingered sign of the cross came from the Constantinopolitan (Studite) typicon, whereas the three-fingered sign was from the Jerusalem typicon of St. Sabbas. "In the 12th-13th centuries in Byzantium, the Studite typicon was for various reasons squeezed out by the Jerusalemite and at almost the same time the two-fingered sign of the cross was replaced by the three-fingered in order to emphasise the importance of the dogma of the All-Holy Trinity. Difficult relations with Byzantium during the Mongol yoke did not allow the spread of the Jerusalemite typicon in Rus' in the 13th-14th centuries. Only under Metropolitans Cyprian and Photius (end of the 14th, beginning of the 15th centuries) was the Jerusalemite typicon partly introduced into Rus' (gradually, one detail after another), but, since, after the council of Florence in 1439 Rus' had broken relations with uniate Constantinople, this reform was not carried out to the end. In the Russian typicon, therefore, a series of features of the Studite typicon – the two-fingered sign of the cross, processing in the direction of the sun, chanting alleluia twice and other features – were preserved" ("Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo" (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, p. 86.)

There is strong evidence that the Orthodox Patriarchate of Rome before the schism of 1054 used the three-fingered cross. Thus Pope Leo IV, who reposed in 855 A.D., and whom St. Photius the Great considered a Saint and the channel of many miracles, writes: "Sign the chalice and the host, with a right cross and not with circles or with a varying of the fingers, but with

series of other Church customs were changed, and all Divine service books published earlier with the help of the 'zealots' were re-published.

"As was to be expected, J. Neronov, Avvakum, Longinus, Lazarus, Daniel and some of those who thought like them rose up against the corrections made by his Holiness."[730] "Quoting from the church's *Book of Faith* of 1648, they charged Nikon with 'destroying the ancient native piety' and 'introducing the alien Roman abomination'. 'To make the sign of the cross with three fingers', they protested, 'is a Latin tradition and the mark of the Antichrist'."[731]

This was not true, and Epiphany Slavinetsky, one of the main correctors of the books, responded with some justice: "Blind ignoramuses, hardly able to read one syllable at a time, having no understanding of grammar, not to mention rhetoric, philosophy, or theology, people who have not even tasted of study, dare to interpret divine writings, or, rather, to distort them, and slander and judge men well-versed in Slavonic and Greek languages. The ignoramuses cannot see that we did not correct the dogmas of faith, but only some expressions which had been altered through the carelessness and errors of uneducated scribes, or through the ignorance of correctors at the Printing Office". And he compared the Old Ritualists (also known as Old Believers) to Korah and Abiram, who had rebelled against Moses.[732]

Unfortunately, however, mistakes had also been made on the Church's side. Thus in 1655 Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, during a visit to Russia, was asked by Patriarch Nikon to give his opinion on the question of the sign of the cross. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, "during the anathemas, Macarius stood before the crowd, put the three large fingers of his hand together 'in the image of the most holy and undivided Trinity, and said: 'Every Orthodox Christian must make the sign of the Cross on his face with these three first fingers: and if anyone does it based on the writing of Theodoret and on false tradition, let him be anathema!' The anathemas were then repeated by Gabriel and Gregory. Nikon further obtained written condemnations of the two-fingered sign of the Cross from all these foreign bishops.

"On April 23, a new council was called in Moscow…

"The significance of this council lies chiefly in its formal condemnation of those who rejected the three-fingered sign of the Cross – and, by extension, those who rejected the Greek model – as heretics. For those who make the sign

---

two fingers stretched out and the thumb hidden within them, by which the Trinity is symbolized. Take heed to make this sign rightly, for otherwise you can bless nothing" (see Georgi, "Liturg. Rom. Pont.", III) Sounds to me like the sign of the Cross made by laymen in the Orthodox Church today. In any case, it is not the Old Ritualists' sign of the Cross because the thumb has to be attached to the two fingers to make it three fingers, not two.

[730] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 36-37.

[731] Hosking, op. cit., p. 69.

[732] Epiphany, in Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual & Reform*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991, p. 113).

of the Cross by folding their thumb together with their two small fingers 'are demonstrating the inequality of the Holy Trinity, which is Arianism', or 'Nestorianism'. By branding his opponents as heretics, Nikon was making schism inevitable."[733]

Whether it made schism inevitable or not, it was certainly a serious mistake – a mistake that Nikon corrected, but not before much damage had been done. Together with the Old Ritualists' blasphemous rejection of the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, on the one hand, and the over-strict police measures of the State against them, on the other, it contributed to the hardening of the schism. Paradoxically, this mistake was the same mistake as that made by the Old Ritualists. That is, like the Old Ritualists, Nikon was asserting that differences in rite, and in particular in the making of the sign of the cross, reflected differences in faith. But this was not so, as had been pointed out to Nikon by Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople and his Synod the previous year. And while Nikon himself backed away from implementing the decisions of the 1656 council, the fact is that they remained on the statute books. Moreover, they were confirmed – again with the active connivance of Greek hierarchs – at the council of 1667. Only later, with the *Yedinoverie* of 1801, was it officially permitted to be a member of the Russian Church and serve on the old books.

"The anathema supported by the secular power blew up minor liturgical problems not just into major theological issues but into criteria of a person's whole attitude to church and state. As Robert Crumney has remarked, 'Once opposition to the liturgical reform and all its implications carried the Old Believers into opposition to the Russian state, their movement became a rallying point for the discontented and dispossessed of Muscovite society. That included those who objected to the fixation of serfdom, Cossacks defending their ancient liberty, local communities losing their self-governing powers to voevodas and their agents, townsfolk fixed to their communes by "mutual responsibility" and heavy taxation, as well as parishes who found that the Council of 1666 had also curtailed their power to choose their own priest.'"[734]

"To its credit," writes Paul Meyendorff, "the Russian Church [but not the Russian state] appears to have realized its tactical error and tried to repair the damage. As early as 1656, Nikon made peace with Neronov, one of the leading opponents of the reform, and permitted him to remain in Moscow and even to use the old books at the Cathedral of the Dormition. After Nikon left the patriarchal throne in 1658, Tsar Alexis made repeated attempts to pacify the future Old-Believers, insisting only that they cease condemning the new books, but willing to allow the continued use of the old. This was the only demand made of the Old-Believers at the 1666 Moscow Council. Only after all these attempts to restore peace had failed did the 1667 Council, with Greek bishops

---

[733] Meyendorff, op. cit., pp. 61, 62.
[734] Hosking, op. cit., p. 69.

present, condemn the old books and revoke the 1551 'Stoglav (Hundred Chapters)' Council."[735]

Again, Sergei Firsov writes: "At the end of his patriarchy Nikon said about the old and new (corrected) church-service books: 'Both the ones and the others are good; it doesn't matter, serve according to whichever books you want'. In citing these words, V.O. Klyuchevsky noted: 'This means that the matter was not one of rites, but of resistance to ecclesiastical authority'. The Old Believers' refusal to submit was taken by the church hierarchy and the state authorities as a rebellion, and at the Council of 1666-1667 the disobedient were excommunicated from the Church and cursed 'for their resistance to the canonical authority of the pastors of the Church'."[736]

*

The Old Ritualist schism threatened the project of Moscow the Third Rome which had been approved by the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II, and which was realistically the only hope for the survival of Orthodox Romanity. For, as Lebedev writes, the differences between the Orthodox and the Old Ritualists were not only "with regard to the correction of books and rites. The point was the deep differences in perception of the ideas forming the basis of the conception of 'the third Rome', and in the contradictions of the Russian Church's self-consciousness at the time…"[737]

---

[735] Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 33. Lebedev confirms this judgement: "Patriarch Nikon took all the necessary measures that this should not happen. In particular, on condition of their obedience to the Church, he permitted those who wished it (J. Neronov) to serve according to the old books and rites, in this way allowing a variety of opinions and practices in Church matters that did not touch the essence of the faith. [In this tolerance Nikon followed the wise advice of Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople.]This gave the Church historian Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) a basis on which to assert, with justice, that 'if Nikon had not left his see and his administration had continued, there would have been no schism in the Russian Church.'" (*Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 37) See also Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, p. 161.

[736] Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh – 1918 gg.) (*The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918)), Moscow, 2002, p. 252. However, at the Preconciliar Convention in 1906, the section on the Old Ritual, presided over by Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), decreed: "Bearing in mind the benefit to the Holy Church, the pacification of those praying with the two-fingered cross and the lightening of the difficulties encountered by missionaries in explaining the curses on those praying with the two-fingered cross pronounced by Patriarch Macarius of Antioch and a Council of Russian hierarchs in 1656, - to petition the All-Russian Council to remove the indicated curses, as imposed out of 'not good understanding' (cf. Canon 12 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council) by Patriarch Macarius of the meaning of our two-fingered cross, which misunderstanding was caused in the patriarch by his getting to know an incorrect edition of the so-called 'Theodorit's Word', which was printed in our books in the middle of the 17th century…, just as the Council of 1667 'destroyed' the curse of the *Stoglav* Counil laid on those not baptised with the two-fingered cross." (Rklitsky, op. cit., p. 175) The All-Russian Council did not get round to removing the curses in 1917-1918. But in 1974 the Russian Church Abroad did remove the anathemas on the Old Rite (as did the sergianist Moscow Patriarchate).

[737] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia,* p. 37.

The differences over the concept of the Third Rome, on the one hand, and over books and rites, on the other hand, were linked… After consolidating itself in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Russian State was now ready to go on the offensive against Catholic Poland, and rescue the Orthodox Christians who were being persecuted by the Polish and uniate authorities. In 1654 Eastern Ukraine was wrested from Poland and came within the bounds of Russia again. But the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine had been under the jurisdiction of Constantinople and employed Greek practices, which, as we have seen, differed somewhat from those in the Muscovite Russian Church. So if Moscow was to be the Third Rome in the sense of the protector of all Orthodox Christians, it was necessary that the faith and practice of the Moscow Patriarchate should be in harmony with the faith and practice of the Orthodox Church as a whole. That is why Patriarch Nikon, supported by the Grecophile Tsar Alexis, encouraged the reform of the service-books to bring them into line with the practices of the Greek Church.

In pursuing this policy the Tsar and the Patriarch were continuing the work of St. Maximus the Greek, who both worked hard to carry out translations from Greek into Russian and correct the Russian service books against the Greek originals, and spoke in favour of the healing of the schism between the Greek and Russian Churches. For this, as we have seen, he was persecuted by Metropolitan Daniel. And yet "the mistakes in the Russian Divine service books were so great," writes Professor N.N. Pokrovsky, "that the Russian Church finally had to agree with Maximus' corrections – true, some 120 years after his trial, under Patriarch Nikon (for example, in the Symbol of the faith)."[738]

Paradoxically, the Old Ritualists cited St. Maximus the Greek in their support because he made no objection to the two-fingered sign. However, Professor Pokrovsky has shown that he probably passed over this as being of secondary importance by comparison with his main task, which was to broaden the horizons of the Russian Church and State, making it less nationalist in spirit – and more sympathetic to the pleas for help of the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans. On more important issues – for example, the text of the Symbol of faith, the canonical subjection of the Russian metropolitan to the Ecumenical Patriarch, and a more balanced relationship between Church and State – he made no concessions.

Like their opponents, the Old Ritualists believed in the ideology of the Third Rome, but understood it differently. First, they resented the lead that the patriarch was taking in this affair. In their opinion, the initiative in such matters should come from the tsar insofar as it was the tsar, rather than the hierarchs, who had defended the Church from heresies in the fifteenth century. Here they

---

[738] Pokrovsky, *Puteshestvia za redkimi knigami (Journeys for rare books),* Moscow, 1988; http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=779. The mistake in the Creed consisted in adding the word "true" after "and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord".

were thinking of the Russian Church's struggle against the false council of Florence and the Judaizing heresy, when the great prince did indeed take a leading role in the defence of Orthodoxy while some of the hierarchs fell away from the truth. However, they ignored the no less frequent cases – most recently, in the Time of Troubles – when it had been the Orthodox hierarchs who had defended the Church against apostate tsars.

Secondly, whereas for the Grecophiles of the "Greco-Russian Church" Moscow the Third Rome was the continuation of Christian Rome, which implied no break with Greek Orthodoxy, for the Old Ritualists the influence of the Greeks, who had betrayed Orthodoxy at the council of Florence, could only be harmful. They believed that the Russian Church did not need help from, or agreement with, the Greeks; she was self-sufficient. Moreover, the Greeks could not be Orthodox, according to the Old Ritualists, not only because they had apostasized at the council of Florence, but also because they were "powerless", that is, without an emperor. And when Russia, too, in their view, became "powerless" through the tsar's "apostasy", they prepared for the end of the world. For, as V.M. Lourié writes, "the Nikonite reforms were perceived by Old Ritualism as apostasy from Orthodoxy, and consequently… as the end of the last (Roman) Empire, which was to come immediately before the end of the world." [739]

This nationalist, anti-Greek attitude of the Old Ritualists represented a serious threat to the ideal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. It was exemplified especially by Archpriest Avvakum, who wrote from his prison cell to Tsar Alexis: "Say in good Russian 'Lord have mercy on me'. Leave all those Kyrie Eleisons to the Greeks: that's their language, spit on them! You are Russian, Alexei, not Greek. Speak your mother tongue and be not ashamed of it, either in church or at home!" And in the trial of 1667, Avvakum told the Greek bishops: "You, ecumenical teachers! Rome has long since fallen, and lies on the ground, and the Poles have gone under with her, for to the present day they have been enemies of the Christians. But with you, too, Orthodoxy became a varied mixture under the violence of the Turkish Mohammed. Nor is that surprising: you have become powerless. From now on you must come to us to learn: through God's grace we have the autocracy. Before the apostate Nikon the whole of Orthodoxy was pure and spotless in our Russia under the pious rulers and tsars, and the Church knew no rebellion. But the wolf Nikon along with the devil introduced the tradition that one had to cross oneself with three fingers…"

*

It was this attempt to force the Russian Church into schism from the Greeks that was the real sin of the Old Ritualists. And it was against this narrow, nationalistic and state-centred conception of "Moscow – the Third Rome", that Patriarch Nikon erected a more universalistic, Church-centred conception

---

[739] Lourié, "O Vozmozhnosti", op. cit., p. 14.

which stressed the living unity of the Russian Church with the Churches of the East.

For "in the idea of 'the Third Rome'," writes Lebedev, "his Holiness saw first of all its ecclesiastical, spiritual content, which was also expressed in the still more ancient idea of 'the Russian land – the New Jerusalem'. This idea was to a large degree synonymous with 'the Third Rome'. To a large extent, but not completely! It placed the accent on the Christian striving of Holy Rus' for the world on high.

"In calling Rus' to this great idea, Patriarch Nikon successively created a series of architectural complexes in which was laid the idea of the pan-human, universal significance of Holy Rus'. These were the Valdai Iveron church, and the Kii Cross monastery, but especially the Resurrection New-Jerusalem monastery, which was deliberately populated with an Orthodox, but multi-racial brotherhood (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Germans, Jews, Poles and Greeks).

"This monastery, together with the complex of 'Greater Muscovite Palestine', was in the process of creation from 1656 to 1666, and was then completed after the death of the patriarch towards the end of the 17th century. As has been clarified only comparatively recently, this whole complex, including in itself Jordan, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Ramah, Bethany, Tabor, Hermon, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, etc., was basically a monastery, and in it the Resurrection cathedral, built in the likeness of the church of the Lord's Sepulchre in Jerusalem with Golgotha and the Saviour's Sepulchre, was a double image – an icon of the historical 'promised land' of Palestine and at the same time an icon of the promised land of the Heavenly Kingdom, 'the New Jerusalem'.

"In this way it turned out that the true union of the representatives of all the peoples (pan-human unity) in Christ on earth and in heaven can be realised only on the basis of Orthodoxy, and, moreover, by the will of God, in its Russian expression. This was a clear, almost demonstrative opposition of the union of mankind in the Church of Christ to its unity in the anti-church of 'the great architect of nature' with its aim of constructing the tower of Babylon. But it also turned out that 'Greater Muscovite Palestine' with its centre in the New Jerusalem became the spiritual focus of the whole of World Orthodoxy. At the same time that the tsar was only just beginning to dream of becoming the master of the East, Patriarch Nikon as the archimandrite of New Jerusalem had already become the central figure of the Universal Church.

"This also laid a beginning to the disharmony between the tsar and the patriarch, between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in Russia. Alexis Mikhailovich, at first inwardly, but then also outwardly, was against Nikon's plans for the New Jerusalem. He insisted that only his capital, Moscow, was the image of the heavenly city, and that the Russian tsar (and not the patriarch) was the head of the whole Orthodox world. From 1657 there began the quarrels

between the tsar and the patriarch, in which the tsar revealed a clear striving to take into his hands the administration of Church affairs, for he made himself the chief person responsible for them."[740]

Tsar and patriarch had previously had a good, almost ideal, relationship. On becoming patriarch in 1652, Nikon had secured from the Tsar, his boyars and the bishops a solemn oath to the effect that they would keep the sacred laws of the Church and State "and promise… to obey us as your chief pastor and supreme father in all things which I shall announce to you out of the divine commandments and laws." There followed a short, but remarkable period in which, as Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, "the undivided, although unconfused, union of state and ecclesiastical powers constituted the natural basis of public life of Russia. The spiritual leadership in this belonged, of course, to the Church, but this leadership was precisely spiritual and was never turned into political leadership. In his turn the tsar… never used his political autocracy for arbitrariness in relation to the Church, since the final meaning of life for the whole of Russian society consisted in acquiring temporal and eternal union with God in and through the Church…"[741]

This relationship was characterized in a service book published in Moscow in 1653, as "the diarchy, complementary, God-chosen"[742]… Although the patriarch had complete control of Church administration and services, and the appointment and judgement of clerics in ecclesiastical matters, "Church possessions and financial resources were considered a pan-national inheritance. In cases of special need (for example, war) the tsar could take as much of the resources of the Church as he needed without paying them back. The diocesan and monastic authorities could spend only strictly determined sums on their everyday needs. All unforeseen and major expenses were made only with the permission of the tsar. In all monastic and diocesan administrations state officials were constantly present; ecclesiastical properties and resources were under their watchful control. And they judged ecclesiastical peasants and other people in civil and criminal matters. A special *Monastirskij Prikaz* [or "Ministry of Monasticism"], established in Moscow in accordance with the *Ulozhenie* [legal code] of 1649, was in charge of the whole clergy, except the patriarch, in civil and criminal matters. Although in 1649 Nikon as archimandrite together with all the others had put his signature to the *Ulozhenie*, inwardly he was not in agreement with it, and on becoming patriarch declared this opinion openly. He was most of all disturbed by the fact that secular people – the boyars of the *Monastirskij Prikaz* – had the right to judge clergy in civil suits. He considered this situation radically unecclesiastical and unchristian. When Nikon had still been Metropolitan of Novgorod, the tsar, knowing his views, had given him a 'document of exemption' for the whole metropolia, in accordance with which all the affairs of people subject to the

---

[740] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia,* pp. 40-41.

[741] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia,* p. 87.

[742] Fr. Sergei Hackel, "Questions of Church and State in 'Holy Russia': some attitudes of the Romanov period", *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, no. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 8.

Church, except for affairs of 'murder, robbery and theft', were transferred from the administration of the *Monastirskij Prikaz* to the metropolitan's court. On becoming patriarch, Nikon obtained a similar exemption from the *Monastirskij Prikaz* for his patriarchal diocese (at that time the patriarch, like all the ruling bishops, had his own special diocese consisting of Moscow and spacious lands adjacent to it). As if to counteract the *Ulozhenie* of 1649, Nikon published 'The Rudder', which contains the holy canons of the Church and various enactments concerning the Church of the ancient pious Greek emperors. As we shall see, until the end of his patriarchy Nikon did not cease to fight against the *Monastirskij Prikaz*. It should be pointed out that this was not a struggle for the complete 'freedom' of the Church from the State (which was impossible in Russia at that time), but only for the re-establishment of the canonical authority of the patriarch and the whole clergy in strictly spiritual matters, and also for such a broadening of the right of the ecclesiastical authorities over people subject to them in civil matters as was permitted by conditions in Russia."[743]

From May, 1654 to January, 1657, while the tsar was away from the capital fighting the Poles, the patriarch acted as regent, a duty he carried out with great distinction. Some later saw in this evidence of the political ambitions of the patriarch. However, he undertook this duty only at the request of the tsar, and was very glad to return the reins of political administration when the tsar returned. Nevertheless, from 1656, the boyars succeeded in undermining the tsar's confidence in the patriarch, falsely insinuating that the tsar's authority was being undermined by Nikon's ambition. And they began to apply the *Ulozhenie* in Church affairs, even increasing the rights given by the *Ulozhenie* to the *Monastirskij Prikaz*. Another bone of contention was the tsar's desire to appoint Silvester Kossov as Metropolitan of Kiev, which Nikon considered uncanonical in that the Kievan Metropolitan was in the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople at that time.[744]

---

[743] Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia,* pp. 88-89.
[744] M.V. Zyzykin, *Pariarkh Nikon,* Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part II, p. 101.

CONCLUSION. CHURCH-STATE SYMPHONY IN THE THIRD ROME

Since Byzantium fell, according to the prophecy, because there was no true "symphony" between Church and State, but rather the subordination of strictly ecclesiastical interests to those of the State, it is necessary to examine Church-State relations in Muscovy. But first let us ask the question: what kind of state was Muscovy?

"The Muscovite political system," writes Hosking, "represented in reality (though not in symbolism) a compromise between the grand prince and his principal servitors. It is worth stressing this, since both contemporaries and historians have given the impression that by the sixteenth century the grand prince/tsar was an absolute autocrat, able to have the lightest whim obeyed throughout his realm. Herberstein wrote, for example, in the early sixteenth century: 'In the sway which he holds over his people, he surpasses the monarchs of the whole world.' This interpretation was reasserted with elegance and force in the 1970s by Richard Pipes, who used the term 'patrimonial monarchy' to described the tsar's authority. Pipes construed it as a uniquely oppressive form of absolute monarchy, in which there is no distinction between sovereignty and ownership, so that the monarch's subjects are literally his slaves.

"It is true that the Russian term for the state, *gosudarstvo,* means literally 'lordship', and so does not distinguish ownership from political authority. All the same, Pipes's understanding seems to me to rest on a misinterpretation of the term *votchina*, which Pipes translates as *dominium*, in the Roman sense of 'absolute ownership excluding all other appropriation and involving the right to use, abuse and destroy at will.' Actually the holder of a votchina had no such rights, especially not those of abusing or destroying. He was bound by a whole range of obligations to use the land to the benefit of his family, and the peasants who lived on it had certain customary expectations too. In general the concept of ownership was much more diffuse in fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century Muscovy than it became in later centuries, and was compatible with multiple intersecting rights.

"The testaments of the grand princes show that they saw their patrimonies as having been entrusted to them by God and as entailing various responsibilities. In making their wills, they would invoke the blessing of the current metropolitan, to show that they acknowledged the church as a joint stake-holder in the destiny of the realm. Thus Vasily II opened his testament in 1461 or 1482: 'In the name of the holy and lifegiving Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and with the blessing of our father Feodosy, Metropolitan of all Rus: lo I, the much-sinning, poor slave of God, Vasily, while and of sound mind, write this testament.' Then followed a list of his territories as they were to be divided between his sons and his widow, emphasizing the obligations they had towards each other and noting where subordinate princes also had

the right to rule without interference. Similarly, Ivan III in his testament of 1504 specifically noted that his boyars and princes had their own patrimonies and purchased lands, with which his son Vasili should not interfere.

"The term *votchina*, in short, was a complex concept and cannot simply be equated with freehold ownership. It was part of a religious, moral and customary order, one which lacked the explicit legal and institutional underpinning that characterized, say, French feudalism at its higher levels, but still one which had its own accepted restraints."[745]

*

By accepting restraints from above, the power of the Muscovite Great Princes up to and including the first half of the reign of Ivan the Terrible was autocratic rather than despotic in that it acknowledged another power beyond itself that limited their own power, making it less than absolute. That power could be called Russian Orthodox tradition in the broadest sense – a tradition that, as befitted a Christian state, was religious in essence. It could be partially characterized in a series of admonitions or commands, but was to a large extent uncodified and unwritten.

"So," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "the term 'patrimonial monarchy' is best interpreted not as an extreme form of absolutism, but rather as a system designed to enable local elites to mobilize resources by any means they deemed expedient. It was a kind of 'statization of personal power'. The symbols of absolute sovereignty were deployed to back up the personal power, even personal whim, of local landowners and urban elites. These symbols enabled ordinary people to conceptualize the state, or at least sovereign authority, in the form necessary to make the grand prince's power effective at all. After all, because of its size and vulnerability, Muscovy had to accomplish the massive mobilization of the population at a much earlier stage in its institutional history than any other European state. Since it did not have the bureaucratic sinews for these tasks, it had to project and make credible its authority in any way it could. The statization of personal power was the only way to achieve it at the time. If you like, this was 'statization before the state', analogous to the way in which, as Ernest Gellner tells us, nationalism preceded the nation.

"In the long run, however, this premature form of 'state-building' impeded the later fashioning of more mature and stable structures. It obstructed the development of law and the establishment of durable institutions, as well as the appearance of any distinction between the public and private spheres. The center was strong, and local communities were strong, but there was little other than the personal caprice of powerful placemen to mediate the relations between them.

---

[745] Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra, *The Synaxarion,* Ormylia, 2005, vol. VI, p. 553.

"Above all, the Muscovite grand prince relied implicitly on the cooperation of the great boyar clans, heirs to a dignity not much less imposing than his own. (The term *boyar* originally meant 'great man', 'rich man', or 'warrior'.) They were the indispensable stake-holders in the Muscovite enterprise: without their unswerving support and loyalty there was little the prince could achieve, and nothing of lasting significance. He had to accommodate their susceptibilities, for all sorts of reasons, but not least because a generation or two earlier their forefathers had been free warriors, able to attach themselves with their retainers to whichever sovereign lord they wished – and then to leave him for another should his terms of office prove insufficiently rewarding. The erosion of his 'right of withdrawal' had been gradual and hesitant, for no grand prince had any wish to provoke an armed revolt.

"Conversely, however, the boyar clans also needed the grand prince, for the custom of dividing their land among all heirs ineluctably reduced and fragmented their estates if they were not periodically awarded more. Besides, without a stable and strong ruler, feuding among boyar clans always threatened to get out of control and in the end to divide the realm. The chronicles were written partly in order to remind everyone that such had been the lamentable fate of Kievan Rus. As a result, by the late fifteenth century grand prince and boyars had a common interest in projecting the myth of absolute monarchical authority. This is the key to understanding the Muscovite political system…"[746]

It follows that the relationship between grand prince and boyars is the key to understanding Muscovite history until the emergence of Peter the Great…

*

The other key relationship was between Church and State. While the Church remained formally an independent institution throughout this period, the general trend was for increasing integration of the Church into the State, and subordination of the interests of the Church to those of the State, which the West calls "caesaropapism". This subordination reached a first peak during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, who murdered Metropolitan Philip of Moscow[747], and a second during the reign of Alexis Mikhailovich, who secured the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow. In between there were periods of greater ecclesiastical independence.

---

[746] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 91-92.

[747] St. Philaret of New York, in his sermon on St. Philip's day, says that Philip "indicates to us the correct attitude of the Church of Christ to politics. How must the Church relate to political questions? An exact Christian reply is: without interfering in them directly, the Church must enlighten them with the rays of God's righteousness, of Christ's evangelical law!"

As Archbishop Mark (Arndt) says in relation to preaching: "Quite a few Russian metropolitans in the 15th and 16th centuries were condemned to silence by the clearly expressed bans on preaching by the tsars."[748]

In order to understand this process better, we need to compare the periods before and after the fall of Constantinople in 1453; for it was after the fall of the Byzantine autocracy that the Russian began to degenerate. A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: "The previously established link between the Church and the State became still stronger from the 13th to the 16th centuries. You constantly encounter facts that indicate the influence of the former on the latter and vice-versa. But in the history of their mutual relations the increasing dominance of the State over the Church is noticeable. Before the State was only organized and brought together under the tutelage of the Church. But now it passes from the anarchic life of the principalities to the concentration of power around the Muscovite throne in the north and around the Polish throne in the south-west of Russia. And at the same time it not only removes from itself the tutelage of the Church, but places her in subjection to itself. This goes in tandem with the exaltation of the secular power. Therefore between the beginning of the given period, when there still existed independent principalities, and the metropolitan acted as the centre unifying Russians amidst their scatteredness, and the end [of the period], when the principalities ceased to exist and the Muscovite sovereign and the Polish king were exalted to autocratic status, a large difference in the relationship of the secular power to the ecclesiastical power and ecclesiastical life is noticeable.

"The influence of the secular power on ecclesiastical life is expressed in the given period in the most varied activities in all branches of ecclesiastical life. The princes in the north of Russia cared for the instalment of Christianity in the newly-acquired regions and for the Christian enlightenment of the newly converted. But in the south the Polish king, under the influence of the Catholic party, tried to weaken the power of Orthodox Christianity and help Catholic propaganda. The Russian princes themselves built churches and monasteries, opened dioceses, defined their boundaries, gave money for the upkeep of sees and churches, themselves influenced the election of clergy, and in the course of time even chose the highest representatives of ecclesiastical power on their own. In the south of Russia this became one of the rights of the king, but in the north at the end of the 15th century and during the 16th it was practised so frequently that it became a normal phenomenon. The secular authorities deposed hierarchs in the same arbitrary manner in which they had elevated them: the Polish king even ascribed judgement over them to himself, as his right. In the inner life of the Church the influence of the secular authorities was no less. It issued decrees defining the rights of the clergy, the character of ecclesiastical administration and courts;... it interfered in the administration of

---

[748] Arndt, "Mitropolit Moskovskij Filaret (Drozdov) i ego mesto v kontekste russkoj propovedi" (Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow and his place in the context of Russian preaching), in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, Jordanville; The Variable Press, 2003, p. 82.

monasteries…; it ascribed to itself the right of court of highest appeal in doubtful cases of local arbitration; it checked the monasteries' accounts; it sometimes confiscated monastic property; it often convened councils, where it pointed out ecclesiastical deficiencies and suggested that the hierarchs remove them; it confirmed with its own seals important decisions of the metropolitan; it accepted reports from the bishops on ecclesiastical issues; it investigated heresies, and itself sometimes fought with heretics (for example, at the Council of 1503); it itself sometimes entered into negotiations with the Patriarch of Constantinople on the needs of the Church (for example, the letters of Basil Vasilievich in the case of the election of Jonah); it even sometimes of itself abolished ecclesiastical deficiencies (for example, Ioann IV wrote decrees to the Cyrillo-Beloozersk monastery against the disorders that were taking place there); finally it itself imposed various restrictions on the hierarchs of the Church, even in their private way of life, for example, interfering in their selection of assistants in the administration of houses and dioceses. It is difficult to say where the pressure of the central secular authorities on Church life was stronger – in the south, or in the north of Russia; but there is no doubt that the local officials restricted it more, and the abuses were greater as a result of the interference of the secular authorities in Church life, in the south of Russia. The decrees often issued by the princes and kings concerning the inviolability of Church administration and courts were for the most part voices crying in the wilderness: in the south of Russia the regional officials did not obey them, and the kings themselves did not observe them strictly; while in the north, if the former feared to violate them, the Great Princes themselves often got round them.

"In such a situation the ecclesiastical authorities were more and more subsumed under the power of the secular authorities and acted on their initiative; it manifested comparatively greater independence either at the beginning of the period, when the secular authorities were not so strong, or at the end, when the sovereigns were still underage or not yet firmly established in power. Correspondingly, the level of the influence of the ecclesiastical authorities on the course of secular affairs varied at different times. Under the system of the principalities and *veches* the bishops blessed and 'installed' the princes on their thrones; it was with their blessing that the princes issued letters patent, they were invited to be present at the writing of their spiritual wills, they were given tutelage over underage children; they were sent by them to conduct negotiations on the inheritance and the dividing up of lands and in general for mutual explanations; they were often ambassadors in the drawing up of peace treaties, and advisors and reprovers of the prince… Among the bishops the bishop of Novgorod had, as before, a particular significance. His name was placed above the name not only of the posadnik but also of the prince… When the system of principalities fell, and there were no longer any appanage princes, the bishops in the cities occupied a leading position. For that reason one can see their names at the head of the conspiracy when this or that town rose up against the Muscovite sovereign with the aim of recovering their independence. For example, Theophilus of Novgorod entered into negotiations with Casimir [of Poland] under Ioann III, and Barsanuphius of Smolensk – with

Sigismund [of Poland] under Basil III. But for that very reason the Moscow princes dealt with the bishops as if they were representatives of the city – they exiled them and imprisoned them, as, for example, with the above-mentioned Barsanuphius and Theophilus. For the same reason, finally, if the metropolitans wanted to enlist the help of some city for the Muscovite prince or suppress a rebellion there, they sometimes acted through the local bishop and the clergy subject to him. The role played in political affairs by bishops was sometimes taken upon themselves by archimandrites, abbots and city priests both on their own initiative and on the orders of the prince or bishop. With the ending of the principality system, and the subjection of the cities to the Muscovite Great Prince and the introduction everywhere of definite civil forms, the bishops lost their political significance. Only in council did they boldly express their opinions, and that only if the prince gave them leave, or if it was to please the Great Prince. Thus, for example, at the 'Hundred Chapters' Council they expressed themselves in favour of the sudebnik of Ioann IV, and in 1447, in an accusatory letter to Demetrius Yuryevich Shemyak, they expressed themselves in favour of the new order of succession that was being installed in Moscow. The cases when the bishops dared on their own to give political advice to the Great Prince without knowing how the latter would take it, were exceptional: the bishops were afraid to do this and presented their opinions to the metropolitan. An exception was Bishop Bassian Rylo of Rostov's reproaching Great Prince Ioann III for his cowardice in the struggle with Khan Ahmed; but it should be noted that Bassian was the prince's spiritual father and was respected by him. The metropolitan's sphere of political activities was much broader. He was the head of the Russian Church and for that reason could extend her influence over all spheres; he was closer to the Great Prince and for that reason could more easily influence the very heart of civil life. The metropolitans interfered into the principalities' quarrels and by all means tried to stop them. For example, when in 1270 the citizens of Novgorod expelled Prince Yaroslav Yaroslavich and sent their army against him, Metropolitan Cyril III sent them a letter in which among other things he said: 'God entrusted with the archiepiscopate in the Russian land, and you must listen to God and to me and not shed blood; I can vouch that Yaroslav has cast aside all ill will; but if you kiss the cross against him, I will take upon myself the penance for your breaking of your vows and will answer for this before God'. The Novgorodians followed his advice and were reconciled with the prince. When Boris took Nizhny Novgorod from his brother Demetrius of Suzdal, Metropolitan Alexis sent St. Sergei of Radonezh to Nizhny Novgorod to persuade Boris to make concessions to his brother, and there he closed all the churches and stopped the services. The metropolitan then deprived Bishop Alexis, who had been supporting Boris, of the Nizhny region that belonged to him (1365). Boris had to humble himself. When in 1328 the citizens of Pskov hid amongst themselves Prince Alexander Mikhailovich of Tver, who was being summoned to the Horde, and did not want to give him up, Metropolitan Theognostus 'sent a curse and excommunication' on Prince Alexander and the Pskovians, so that they had to give way. The metropolitan acted in this way in the given case because he was afraid that the wrath of the Khan would fall on the whole of Russia because of Prince Alexander's non-appearance at the

Horde, and in this way he obliquely protected the prosperity of Russia. But we know of a case when the metropolitan acted directly for this purpose. When Berdibek, who had killed his father Chanibek, became the Khan of the Horde, he demanded fresh tribute from all the Russian princes and began to prepare for war against them. At the request of the Great Prince Metropolitan Alexis set off for the Horde, calmed the wrath of the Khan and diverted the woes that were expected for Russia (1357). When the Muscovite princes had to fight with the Tatars, the metropolitans would try and persuade the appanage princes to set about this task. Thus, for example, Metropolitan Jonah sent a decree with Bishop Gerontius of Kolomna to Prince Ivan Andreyevich of Mozhaisk; but he also called on Prince Boris Alexandrovich of Tver to help through the local Bishop Elias. The metropolitan would intercede for defeated princes, and this how they regarded him. The metropolitans did still more in the interests of the Muscovite Great Prince. They supported him in his struggles with his enemies, and tried to draw all the Russian regions towards Moscow. They were exhorted to this by the prince himself, and as well as by their own interests, since the secular unity of Russia contributed to the great subjection of the dioceses to the power of the metropolitan of Moscow. In 1364 Metropolitan Alexis was a mediator in securing a treaty between Great Prince Dmetrius Ivanovich and his cousin Vladimir Andreyevich; several years later the same metropolitan excommunicated Prince Svyatoslav of Smolensk and other princes for breaking their oaths in going with the army of Olgerd [of Lithuania] against Demetrius Ivanovich. Metropolitan Photius himself travelled to Galich in order to try and persuade Prince Yury Dimitrievich of Zvenigorod to be reconciled with his new, Prince Basil Vasilyevich of Moscow; but when he refused to give in, the metropolitan departed, blessing neither him nor the city. Finally he attained his aim. Yury caught up with him on the road and promised not to lay hands on his nephew (1425). While Basil Vasilyevich was prince, Metropolitan Jonah took a lively participation in his struggle with Demetrius Vasilyevich Shemyaka. In his encyclical letter (1448) the holy hierarch tried to persuade all the sons of Russia to recognise Prince Basil as the lawful Great Prince, and not to support Demetrius, whose supporters he exhorted to submit to the Great Prince and cease the bloodshed, threatening them in the opposite case with the closure of the churches in their country. The next year the metropolitan even travelled with the Great Prince to Kostroma and by his personal exhortations persuaded Shemyaka to conclude peace. But the reconciliation turned out to be insincere; several months later Shemyaka rose up again in Galich and, defeated by the prince, established himself in Novgorod. Jonah several times sent his messengers and missives there, trying to persuade the Novgorodians not to keep Prince Demetrius amongst themselves and not to proceed with him to the shedding of blood. He also tried to persuade Archbishop Euthymius to act, if he could, on Demetrius, incline him to give way, but if did not succeed, to have no communion with him as with a person excommunicated from the Church (1452-1453)…. In helping the Muscovite Great Prince to be exalted above the other princes, the metropolitans took part in the internal political affairs of the Moscow Great Princedom. Sometimes this participation was made evident only in the blessing of the metropolitan, sometimes in advice, instruction and rebukes, but sometimes also in external activity. The metropolitan by his

blessing strengthened the agreements of the Great Prince, while by his signature and seal he witnessed the spiritual wills of the prince. The princes asked for his blessing in important civil affairs: we often find 'in accordance with the blessing of our metropolitan' in important princely documents – not only at the beginning, but also at the end. For example, even such a tsar as Ioann IV, who could not stand the interference of others in his affairs and their influence on him, nevertheless secured the blessing of the metropolitan and the council when he published his *sudebnik* (1549 and 1551) or when he was wavering about war with Poland (1551). The metropolitans were counsellors of the Great Prince. This was directly expressed by many princes. For example, Simeon Ivanovich in his will to his brothers commanded them to 'obey' Metropolitan Alexis as a father; Basil Vasilyevich in one of his letters to the Patriarch of Constantinople declares that the prince had to talk things over with the metropolitan about civil – sometimes secret - matters also. After the terrible Moscow fire of 1547 Ioann IV publicly addressed Metropolitan Macarius with these words: 'I beseech you, holy Vladyko, be my helper and champion in love'. There are very many cases when the metropolitans really were the counsellors and helpers of the Great Prince. Metropolitan Alexis, who had been entrusted by the dying Prince Simeon with the direction of his young brothers, was the chief director of Ivan Ivanovich and after him – of Demetrius Ivanovich; and while the latter was underage he stood at the head of the Boyar Duma. Although Metropolitan Gerontius did not have a great influence on civil affairs, he nevertheless counselled Great Prince Ioann III. Thus when, in 1480, Ahmed moved into the confines of Russia, and the Great Prince, at the instigation of some of the boyars, was ready to remove himself to some safe place, the metropolitan with Archbishop Bassian of Rostov and the clergy applied all their efforts to arouse the prince to open warfare with the Tatars. He did in fact set out with his army and positioned it where he considered fitting; but then he returned to Moscow. The metropolitan and Bassian met him there with reproaches, suggesting that he was a coward.[749] But when he set off for the battle, the metropolitan blessed him; but on hearing that the Great Prince was ready to conclude peace with Ahmed, he sent him an epistle in the name of the whole of the clergy in which he tried to persuade the prince to enter into a decisive battle with the Tatars and invoked the blessing of God on the endeavour. During the struggle of Ivan III with Novgorod, Metropolitan Gerontius was on the side of the prince and agreed to send a new archbishop to Novgorod in the place of Theophilus. Finally, he also sent epistles to Vyatka,

---

[749] "Let me remind the reader of the situation in 1480. A military alliance had been formed between Poland and the Horde against Moscow, which yet again illustrates the theory of 'the defence of Europe' [by Moscow from the Tatars]. The Tatar Khan Ahmed, counting on this alliance, moved towards Moscow, but not from the East, as he usually did, but to meet his ally at the headwaters of the Oka. Ivan III waited for the enemy on the traditional routes of the Tatars to Moscow, and when Ahmed turned up on the Ugra, Tsar Ivan III, after standing opposite the Tatar camp for a long time, returned to Moscow.

"Moscow met him exceptionally rudely. Bishop Bassian of Rostov called him a 'deserter', the plebs was angry, and the Great Prince literally could find no way through: he was pushed in the street and his beard was pulled, and this was the first *officially* autocratic sovereign of Moscow..." (Solonevich, op. cit., p. 313) (V.M.)

exhorting the inhabitants to submit to the Great Prince and not to devastate his inherited estates. Metropolitan Daniel enjoyed the unflagging favour of Basil Ivanovich, although the latter was bought at the price of concessions on the part of the metropolitan; and when he was dying, Basil Ivanovich even 'ordered' his young son and heir, Ivan IV to Metropolitan Daniel - i.e., entrusted him to his care. The latter immediately on the death of his benefactor led the boyars and the members of the royal family to swear allegiance to the new sovereign and the regent, his mother Helena. A short time later he blessed Ivan to ascend the princely throne and, while his mother was alive, took part in the affairs of external and internal politics: he frequented the Duma, blessed the war against Lithuania, and mediated in the reconciliation between Ivan IV and his uncle Andrew Ivanovich. But after the death of Helena, when war broke out between the Belskys and the Shuiskys, the metropolitan, standing on the side of the former, on their fall had to abandon his see. It was taken by Metropolitan Joasaph (1539). He supported the Belskys and, together with Ivan Belsky, was for a time the person closest to the tsar and his 'first counsellor'. His concern was to bring peace to the fatherland. But soon, in 1542, the Shuiskys again gained the upper hand and the Belskys fell: Joasaph was imprisoned. Metropolitan Makary was elected. He had a great influence on State life and the tsar himself; this influence continued, in spite of the severity and capriciousness of the tsar, throughout Makary's life. The tsar ran to him when he had to defend Vorontsov from the Shuiskys, who wanted to kill him; he asked his advice and discussed the question of his entering into marriage with him for a long time; he opened his soul before him and gave a vow to correct himself after the fire (1547); in the period that followed he asked for his help and direction. Only [the priest] Sylvester and Adashev could rival him for a time in their influence on the tsar. When he set out on his expedition to Kazan, the tsar asked for the prayers and blessing of the metropolitan; during the expedition he corresponded with him several times; and he attributed the success of the expedition to the prayers of the metropolitan. During his departure from the capital, the tsar left the State and his family in the care of Makary: 'You, my father, to the extent God gives you, must take care for the supervision of all the affairs of the kingdom, while you must instruct our brother and the boyars who remain here in everything; also show spiritual care for my wife, the Tsaritsa Anastasia', said the tsar to the metropolitan on leaving Moscow. Knowing the influence that the metropolitan had on the tsar, the Lithuanian landowners often turned to the intercession of Metropolitan Makary to get what they wanted; and Russians who were in disgrace with the tsar usually turned to him with their pleas, obtaining the tsar's reprieve 'for the sake of my father Metropolitan Makary'. His influence on the tsar was so powerful that he restrained him from those excesses that he began to commit later. [But] with the death of Makary there as it were came to an end the time when the metropolitans could interfere in the secular administration. Ivan IV himself began to declare that the clergy headed by the metropolitan were sheltering those boyars who were guilty of treason by their intercession, and that 'it is not fitting for priests to take upon themselves the affairs of the tsar'. With the establishment of the *oprichnina* in 1565, the tsar declared the clergy together with the boyars to be in disgrace because they were sheltering the

boyars who were worthy of death. It is understandable that the position of the metropolitan was restricted by this; every advice of his concerning secular affairs might appear to be an encroachment on his power to the suspicious tsar. For that reason Metropolitan Athanasius had to look on the beginning of the *oprichnina*'s activities in silence; for some reason Herman, who had been elected in his place, was removed before he could be installed. For that reason, too, Philip II on his instalment in the metropolitan's see received from the tsar, among other things, the demand that he 'not interfere in the *oprichnina* and the tsar's everyday life at home', and, when he did so, he was subjected to imprisonment and a martyric end. For the same reason, finally, Cyril IV and Anthony were not only silent witnesses of the deeds of the Terrible one, but also his 'indulgers', in Kurbsky's expression. It would have been possible for Metropolitan Dionysius to influence the course of civil affairs under Tsar Theodore, and he tried, but he could do nothing against the powerful upstart Boris Godunov…"[750]

*

What should be the relationship of an Orthodox King to the Orthodox Church within his dominions? "There is no question," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "that the Orthodox Sovereign cares for the Orthodox Church, defends her, protects her, takes part in all her most important affairs. But not he in the first place; and not he mainly. The Church has her own head under Christ on earth – the Patriarch." There was even a ritual that seemed to imply (although this is not certain) the superiority of the Patriarch (or Metropolitan) to the Tsar. Thus in 1558 the Englishman Anthony Jenkinson witnessed a Palm Sunday procession in which the Metropolitan sat on a horse, symbolizing Christ, while in front of him, "leading the horse, in the middle of the huge procession, was the tsar himself, on foot, a palm frond in the hand that did not hold the reins…"[751]

Relations between the head of the state and the head of the Church in Russia, beginning from the holy equal-to-the-apostles Great Prince Vladimir and his hierarchs, and continuing until Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon, were always formed in a spirit of symphony.

"Not without exceptions, but, as a rule, this symphony was not broken and constituted the basis of the inner spiritual strength of the whole of Rus', the whole of the Russian state and society. The complexity of the symphony consisted in the fact that the Tsar and Patriarch were identically responsible for everything that took place in the people, in society, in the state. But at the same time the Tsar especially answered for worldly matters, matters of state, while the Patriarch especially answered for Church and spiritual affairs. In council they both decided literally everything. But in worldly affairs the last word lay

---

[750] Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, pp. 149-155.

[751] Jenkinson, in Catherine Merridale, *Red Fortress,* New York: Picador, 2013, p. 89.

with the Tsar; and in Church and spiritual affairs – with the Patriarch. The Patriarch unfailingly took part in the sessions of the State Duma, that is, of the government. The Tsar unfailingly took part in the Church Councils. In the State Duma the last word was with the Sovereign, and in the Church Councils – with the Patriarch. This common responsibility for everything and special responsibility for the state and the Church with the Tsar and the Patriarch was the principle of symphony or agreement."[752]

That Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich sincerely believed this, the Orthodox teaching on Church-State relations, is clear from his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: "The most important task of the Orthodox Tsar is care for the faith, the Church, and all the affairs of the Church." However, it was he who introduced the *Ulozhenie*, the first serious breach in Church-State symphony. And it was he who in effect deposed Patriarch Nikon…

Therefore while it is customary to date the breakdown of Church-State symphony or agreement in Russia to the time of Peter the Great, the foundations of Holy Russia had been undermined already in the time of his father, Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich.

As M.V. Zyzykin writes, "in Church-State questions, Nikon fought with the same corruption that had crept into Muscovite political ideas after the middle of the 15th century and emerged as political Old Ritualism, which defended the tendency towards caesaropapism that had established itself. The fact that the guardian of Orthodoxy, at the time of the falling away of the Constantinopolitan Emperor and Patriarch and the Russian Metropolitan into the unia, turned out to be the Muscovite Great Prince, had too great an influence on the exaltation of his significance in the Church. And if we remember that at that time, shortly after the unia, the Muscovite Great Prince took the place of the Byzantine Emperor, and that with the establishment of the *de facto* independence of the Russian Church from the Constantinopolitan Patriarch the Muscovite first-hierarchs lost a support for their ecclesiastical independence from the Great Princes, then it will become clear to us that the Muscovite Great Prince became *de facto* one of the chief factors in Church affairs, having the opportunity to impose his authority on the hierarchy."[753]

Patriarch Nikon corrected the caesaropapist bias of the Russian Church, as expressed especially by Ligarides, in his work *Razzorenie* ("Refutation" or "Destruction"), in which he defined the rights and duties of the tsar as follows: "The tsar undoubtedly has power to give rights and honours, but within the limits set by God; he cannot give spiritual power to Bishops and archimandrites and other spiritual persons: spiritual things belong to the decision of God, and earthly things to the king" (I, 555).[754]

[752] Lebedev, "Razmyshlenia vozle sten novogo Ierusalima" ("Thoughts next to the Walls of New Jerusalem"), *Vozvrashchenie* (Return), NN 12-13, 1999, p. 60.

[753] Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 9.

[754] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon,* Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part II, p. 15

"The main duty of the tsar is to care for the Church, for the dominion of the tsar can never be firmly established and prosperous when his mother, the Church of God, is not strongly established, for the Church of God, most glorious tsar, is thy mother, and if thou art obliged to honour thy natural mother, who gave thee birth, then all the more art thou obliged to love thy spiritual mother, who gave birth to thee in Holy Baptism and anointed thee to the kingdom with the oil and chrism of gladness."[755]

Indeed, "none of the kings won victory without the prayers of the priests" (I, 187).[756] For "Bishops are the successors of the Apostles and the servants of God, so that the honour accorded to them is given to God Himself."[757] "It was when the evangelical faith began to shine that the Episcopate was venerated; but when the spite of pride spread, the honour of the Episcopate was betrayed."

"The tsar is entrusted with the bodies, but the priests with the souls of men. The tsar remits money debts, but the priests – sins. The one compels, the other comforts. The one wars with enemies, the other with the princes and rulers of the darkness of this world. Therefore the priesthood is much higher than the kingdom."[758]

The superiority of the priesthood is proved by the fact that the tsar is anointed by the patriarch and not vice-versa. "The highest authority of the priesthood was not received from the tsars, but the tsars are anointed to the kingdom through the priesthood… We know no other lawgiver than Christ, Who gave the power to bind and to loose. What power did the tsar give me? This one? No, but he himself seized it for himself… Know that even he who is distinguished by the diadem is subject to the power of the priest, and he who is bound by him will be bound also in the heavens."[759]

"The kingdom is given by God to the world, but in wrath, and it is given through anointing from the priests with a material oil, but the priesthood is a direct anointing from the Holy Spirit, as also our Lord Jesus Christ was raised to the high-priesthood directly by the Holy Spirit, as were the Apostles. Therefore, at the consecration to the episcopate, the consecrator holds an open Gospel over the head of him who is being consecrated" (I, 234, 235)… There is no human judgement over the tsar, but there is a warning from the pastors of the Church and the judgement of God."[760]

---

[755] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 16.

[756] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 41

[757] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 91.

[758] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 17.

[759] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 30, 32.

[760] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 41. As Zyzykin says, Nikon "not only does not call for human sanctions against the abuses of tsarist power, but definitely says that there is no human power [that can act] against them, but there is the wrath of God, as in the words of Samuel to Saul: 'It is not I that turn away from thee, in that thou hast rejected the Word of

However, the fact that the tsar cannot be judged by man shows that the kingdom is given him directly by God, and not by man. "For even if he was not crowned, he would still be king." But he can only be called an Orthodox, anointed king if he is crowned by the Bishop. Thus "he receives and retains his royal power by the sword *de facto*. But the name of king (that is, the name of a consecrated and Christian or Orthodox king) he receives from the Episcopal consecration, for which the Bishop is the accomplisher and source."[761]

We see here how far Nikon is from the papocaesarism of a Pope Gregory VII, who claimed to be able to depose kings precisely "as kings". And yet he acquired a reputation for papocaesarism because of his fearless exposure of the caesaropapism of the Russian tsar: "Everyone should know his measure. Saul offered the sacrifice, but lost his kingdom; Uzziah, who burned incense in the temple, became a leper. Although thou art tsar, remain within thy limits. Wilt thou say that the heart of the king is in the hand of God? Yes, but the heart of the king is in the hand of God [only] when the king remains within the boundaries set for him by God."[762]

In another passage Nikon combines the metaphor of the two swords with that of the sun and moon. The latter metaphor had been used by Pope Innocent III; but Nikon's development of it is Orthodox and does not exalt the power of the priesthood any more than did the Fathers of the fourth century: "The all-powerful God, in creating the heaven and the earth, ordered the two great luminaries – the sun and the moon – to shine upon the earth in their course; by one of them – the sun - He prefigured the episcopal power, while by the other – the moon – He prefigured the tsarist power. For the sun is the greater luminary, it shines by day, like the Bishop who enlightens the soul. But the lesser luminary shines by night, by which we must understand the body. As the moon borrows its light from the sun, and in proportion to its distance from it receives a fuller radiance, so the tsar derives his consecration, anointing and coronation (but not power) from the Bishop, and, having received it, has his own light, that it, his consecrated power and authority. The similarity between these two persons in every Christian society is exactly the same as that between the sun and the moon in the material world. For the episcopal power shines by day, that is, over souls; while the tsarist power shines in the things of this world. And this power, which is the tsarist sword, must be ready to act against the enemies of the Orthodox faith. The episcopate and all the clergy need this defence from all unrighteousness and violence. This is what the secular power is obliged to do. For secular people are in need of freedom for their souls, while spiritual people are in need of secular people for the defence of their bodies.

---

the Lord, but the Lord has rejected thee, that thou shouldest not be king over Israel' (I Kings 15.26)" (op. cit., part II, p. 17).

[761] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 55, I, 254.

[762] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 19-20.

And so in this neither of them is higher than the other, but each has power from God."[763]

But Nikon insists that when the tsar encroaches on the Church he loses his power. For "there is in fact no man more powerless than he who attacks the Divine laws, and there is nothing more powerful than a man who fights for them. For he who commits sin is the slave of sin, even if he bears a thousand crowns on his head, but he who does righteous deeds is greater than the tsar himself, even if he is the last of all."[764]

So a tsar who himself chooses patriarchs and metropolitans, breaking his oath to the patriarch "is unworthy even to enter the church, but he must spend his whole life in repentance, and only at the hour of death can he be admitted to communion…

"Chrysostom forbade every one who breaks his oath … from crossing the threshold of the church, even if he were the tsar himself."[765]

Nikon comes very close to identifying the caesaropapist tsar with the Antichrist. For, as Zyzykin points out, "Nikon looked on the apostasy of the State law from Church norms (i.e. their destruction) as the worship by the State of the Antichrist, 'This antichrist is not satan, but a man, who will receive from satan the whole power of his energy. A man will be revealed who will be raised above God, and he will be the opponent of God and will destroy all gods and will order that people worship him instead of God, and he will sit, not in the temple of Jerusalem, but in the Churches, giving himself out as God. As the Median empire was destroyed by Babylon, and the Babylonian by the Persian, and the Persian by the Macedonian, and the Macedonian by the Roman, thus must the Roman empire be destroyed by the antichrist, and he – by Christ. This is revealed to us by the Prophet Daniel. The divine Apostle warned us about things to come, and they have come for us through you and your evil deeds (he is speaking to the author of the *Ulozhenie*, Prince Odoyevsky) Has not the apostasy from the Holy Gospel and the traditions of the Holy Apostles and holy fathers appeared? (Nikon has in mind the invasion by the secular authorities into the administration of the Church through the *Ulozhenie*). Has not the man of sin been discovered - the son of destruction, who will exalt himself about everything that is called God, or that is worshipped? And what can be more destructive than abandoning God and His commandments, as they have preferred the traditions of men, that is, their codex full of spite and cunning? But who is this? Satan? No. This is a man, who has received the work of Satan, who has united to himself many others like you, composer of lies, and your comrades. Sitting in the temple of God does not mean in the temple of Jerusalem, but everywhere in the Churches. And sitting not literally in all the Churches, but as exerting power over all the Churches. The Church is not stone

[763] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 59.

[764] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 62.

[765] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 63-64.

walls, but the ecclesiastical laws and the pastors, against whom thou, apostate, hast arisen, in accordance with the work of satan, and in the *Ulozhenie* thou hast presented secular people with jurisdiction over the Patriarch, the Metropolitans, the Archbishops, the Bishops, and over all the clergy, without thinking about the work of God. As the Lord said on one occasion: 'Depart from Me, satan, for thou thinkest not about what is pleasing to God, but about what is pleasing to men.' 'Ye are of your father the devil and you carry out his lusts.' Concerning such Churches Christ said: 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you will make it a den of thieves'; as Jeremiah says (7.4): 'Do not rely on deceiving words of those who say to you: here is the temple of the Lord.' How can it be the temple of God if it is under the power of the tsar and his subjects, and they order whatever they want in it? Such a Church is no longer the temple of God, but the house of those who have power over it, for, if it were the temple of God, nobody, out of fear of God, would be capable of usurping power over it or taking anything away from it. But as far as the persecution of the Church is concerned, God has revealed about this to His beloved disciple and best theologian John (I, 403-408),… [who] witnesses, saying that the Antichrist is already in the world. But nobody has seen or heard him perceptibly, that is, the secular authorities will begin to rule over the Churches of God in transgression of the commandments of God.' For the word 'throne' signifies having ecclesiastical authority, and not simply sitting… And he will command people to bow down to him not externally or perceptibly, but in the same way as now the Bishops, abandoning their priestly dignity and honour, bow down to the tsars as to their masters. And they ask them for everything and seek honours from them" (I, 193)." [766] For "there is apostasy also in the fact that the Bishops, abandoning their dignity, bow down before the tsar as their master in spiritual matters, and seek honours from him."[767]

The power of the Roman emperors, of which the Russian tsardom is the lawful successor, is "that which restraineth" the coming of the Antichrist. And yet "the mystery of iniquity is already being accomplished" in the shape of those kings, such as Nero, who ascribed to themselves divine worship.[768]

The warning was clear: that which restrains the antichrist can be swiftly transformed into the antichrist himself. Even the present tsar could suffer such a transformation; for "what is more iniquitous than for a tsar to judge bishops, taking to himself a power which has not been given him by God?…

"This is apostasy from God."[769]

In all ages, ancient and modern, the surest sign of despotism is the ruler's assumption to himself of that which is God's – the priesthood, the governance

---

[766] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 24-25, 28.

[767] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 27.

[768] Nikon, *Razzorenie,* in Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 48.

[769] Patriarch Nikon, in Fr. Sergei Hackel, "Questions of Church and State in 'Holy Russia': some attitudes of the Romanov period", *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, no. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 9.

of the Church, just as the surest sign of the true autocrat is his respect for the autonomy of the spiritual sphere.