

**Paolo Sarpi, the Family, and “The Body”:  
Dynastic History, the Family and Constructed Kinship in the State and Church,  
and the Virtue of the Parental Nobility**

**Michael Paul Piano**

**Thesis submitted to the  
Eberly College of Arts and Sciences  
at West Virginia University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**Master of Arts  
in  
History**

**Matthew Vester, Ph.D., Chair  
Kate Kelsey Staples, Ph.D.  
Joshua Arthurs, Ph.D.**

**Department of History**

**Morgantown, West Virginia  
2011**

**Keywords: Sarpi, Venice, State, Church, Family, Body  
Copyright 2011 Michael Paul Piano**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Paolo Sarpi, the Family, and “The Body”: Dynastic History, the Family and Constructed Kinship in the State and Church, and the Virtue of the Parental Nobility**

**Michael Paul Piano**

Friar Paolo Sarpi of turn-of-the-seventeenth-century Venice portrayed states and societies throughout history as operating according to familial and bodily organic structures. Dynasticism was a primary element in the progression of history. The State and Church were arranged according to familial and bodily structures. The proper familial operation of noble households was essential to the maintenance of the Venetian state and Venetian church.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Historiography	1
Paolo Sarpi's Interpretations of Family Politics in the <i>History of the Council of Trent</i>	15
Family and Body as the Primary Social Units of Church, State, and Humanity	34
Sarpi's Noble Families, Households, Virtue, and Balance	60
Conclusion	83
Bibliography	93

### *Introduction and Historiography*

Friar Paolo Sarpi, of turn-of-the-seventeenth century Venice, is not as well known as contemporaries such as Galileo, various popes, Medici family members, or some of the great doges and dukes of the Italian city-states. Born into the mid-sixteenth-century Venetian privileged class, Sarpi entered into the Servite Order of Friars at a young age, and by the time of his later youth, he had become a priest and a noted theologian. He also versed himself in math, physics, astronomy, anatomy, physiology, and other sciences.

However he is better known for his historical, political, and political-philosophical commentary. He is best remembered for his *History of the Council of Trent*, which was printed in 1619 in England, away from the arm of the papal establishment that he had opposed so much during his time as Venice's court theologian. Politics was the driving force of Sarpi's *History*; theology and philosophy play a part but the major moments of the Tridentine Council and concurring events were determined by politics. He is therefore held to be a precursor to the secular historical attitude of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the *History of the Council*, from his position as court theologian, he wrote other histories which publically countered the fulminations that the papal court often levied against the Venetian Republic.<sup>2</sup> He wrote other works of ecclesiastical history and opinion, and some of these were written as non-public advice for the highest members of the Venetian government.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David Wootton, *Paolo Sarpi: Between Renaissance and Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1. There is a constant theme within Sarpi's works, and therefore a resurfacing theme of this thesis, that secular forces precede religious forces, either in importance or in causation.

<sup>2</sup> Paolo Sarpi, *A Fvll and Satisfactorie Answer to the late vnadvised Bull, thundered by Pope Paul the Fift, against the Renowned State of Venice*, (London: John Bill, 1606).

<sup>3</sup> These works include Paolo Sarpi, *The Maxims of the Government of Venice in an Advice to the Republic* (London: J. Morphew, 1707), which was written for the private reading of high-ranking Venetian noblemen, *The Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects* (London: Graves, King, Meadows, and Cooke, 1722), a largely ecclesiological commentary regarding the boundaries of Church and State, and *A Treatise of Beneficiary Matters: Or, A History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues*, (Westminster: J. Cluer and A. Campbell for L. Stokoe, 1727, trans. from the Italian printed at Mirandola in 1676).

This thesis seeks to explore constant “organic” structures within Sarpi’s understanding of history, politics, the State, the Church, religion, the nobility, and the common class—in short all of society. These all-penetrating structures, present in the physical and unseen worlds, are the ‘family’ and the ‘body,’ both biological and non-biological understandings thereof. Throughout his works, all power and all order can be understood as familial and bodily. Historically speaking, this is evident in the *History of the Council of Trent*. Within that writing, Sarpi understands political dynasties, family trees, genealogies, clans, etc., as a, if not the, chief political institution and historical-political force that drives the actions of various competing noble families. ‘Family’ and ‘body’ are the primary political units and the basic secular and spiritual social units, replicated on different levels. What Sarpi considers to be proper familial and “bodily” life, both within the larger state family and spiritual family and within one’s own household, is of paramount importance. The organic dimension of his social thought is expressed in his works of commentary, chiefly his *Maxims of the Government of Venice on Advice to the Republic, The Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects*, and to a lesser extent *A Treatise of Beneficiary Matters* and other writings.

As these familial and bodily phenomena are explored, it will become evident that his understanding of these organic structures is present in all of the fields of thought for which Sarpi is best remembered—chiefly philosophy, politics, ecclesiology, and religion. His formulation of ‘the family’ or ‘the body’ can contribute to larger historiographical discussions about Sarpi’s stances on various issues, such as the role of the nobility, sovereign authority, ecclesiology, political philosophy and metaphysical philosophy. This bodily and familial understanding of human society and authority was certainly common to ancients and contemporaries both in Venice and abroad. The basic framework is that the individual citizens and subjects of a state

comprise one organic body or family in a way similar to how Christians comprise the Body of Christ as Children of God, and like the Body of Christ, the State is one body composed of inter-dependent members or organs. Aside from such ‘metaphysically,’ politically, and spiritually constructed kinship, Sarpi’s discourses on household family life often are connected to his other beliefs regarding human nature, society, virtue, and the State. The worldly and secular affairs of household family life, chiefly in regard to the exclusively politically-relevant nobles, are essential in forming the personality and virtue of the nobles, whom Sarpi thought to be the ‘parents’ of the Venetian state.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, this project does not delve into Sarpi’s own family of origin; perhaps an attempt to understand how authority manifested itself in his own childhood home would be fruitful. In any case, in 1552 he was born to a father who was an ill-tempered merchant who would fall into bankruptcy; his mother was of a prestigious family of the noble class, enabling Sarpi to inherit that status. At age fourteen he joined the Servite Order of Friars. His talents as a theologian, philosopher, and canon lawyer were recognized at a young age. He was recruited by Archbishop Carlo Borromeo of Milan to help reform the administration, but Sarpi differed from the bishop on matters of religious ritual and expression, and he soon left. He became prior of the Venetian province of his order while he was only twenty-six years old, and at age thirty-five he

---

<sup>4</sup> In regard to the “body” politic, Derek Hirst in “Bodies and Interests: Toleration and the Political Imagination in the Later Seventeenth Century,” in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, 3 (Sept. 2007): 403 mentions that Aristotle made similar organic comparisons; “...Aristotle had been a zoologist as well as a political thinker...” This article contains numerous seventeenth-century Britons, such as none other than anti-royalists such as Oliver Cromwell and many Protestant Clergymen, who believed in the beyond-metaphorical existence of an organic body politic. There were practical ramifications to the interpretations of this kind of thought. As explained on page 46 of Hirst, High Anglicans sometimes accepted Catholics as members of the true Church and rejected Congregationalists as such, due to the centripetal self-conception of the former and centrifugal self-conception of the latter. In regard to the body politic in Venice being understood as a mystical body, see Jutta Sperling, “The Paradox of Perfection: Reproducing the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice,” in *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 41, 1 (Jan. 1999), page 8 especially.

was elected to the order's second highest post. During his tenure, he had to defend himself against accusations that he had contact with Jews and that he denied that the Holy Spirit helps Christians. After the turn of the seventeenth century, Sarpi began the work on his *Pensieri*, which were series of works on philosophy and religious philosophy. Their unorthodoxy certainly marked his break with Rome, according to David Wootton, who is more convinced than most other historians of Sarpi's unorthodoxy, an issue to be discussed later. During the first decade of the century, he began to encourage nobles to pursue anti-papal or anti-Roman policies. Because of his pro-Venetian spirit and regional ecclesiastical orientation, the Venetian Republic appointed him state theologian in 1606. During roughly the same time, Pope Paul V ordered an interdict, or state-wide denial of sacraments, throughout Venice, largely because many church operations had to be approved by the state. The interdict lasted a year and the pope eventually backed down. Soon after, an assassination team was sent to kill Sarpi, and it is likely that the Roman Curia was behind it. Sarpi narrowly survived, and later wrote many histories, the most famous being the aforementioned *History of the Council of Trent*, originally published in England under the somewhat obvious pseudonym Pietro Souve Polano. Also according to Wootton, he spent much of his diplomatic abilities in his later years attempting to build an alliance between Venice, France, and Protestant nations such as England to counter Roman power.<sup>5</sup>

Towards the beginning of the last century, historians were mostly concerned with the effects of his political and ecclesiastical resistance to papal authority, ramifications that this had in larger Italian and European history, and his historical outlook. About half-way through the century scholars began to examine his contributions to culture, including his personal

---

<sup>5</sup> Wootton, 8-11.

philosophy, his religious and political beliefs, and his understanding of his own time. Thus, we can say that study of Sarpi shifted from his historical and political contributions, to his political and ecclesiastic beliefs, and then to his philosophical and theological convictions.

At the beginning of the past century, Andrew Dickson White saw Sarpi's fight against papal stagnation, corruption, backwardness, and authoritarian claims over the temporal realm as a prelude to classical liberalism, the Enlightenment, progress, and thus "reason."<sup>6</sup> Francis A. Yates studied Sarpi's involvement in international and interreligious relations. James I of England was advertising his hopes to reunite the Anglican Church with Catholicism, which would have necessarily weakened papal authority. Yates believed that Sarpi wrote the *History* knowing that this was the goal of many in the English Church. Protestants in England and elsewhere were also hoping to convert the Venetian Republic, a little empire surrounded by enemies, to Protestantism.<sup>7</sup>

Gaetano Cozzi has studied not only Sarpi's influence on the international scene, but also his impact on internal affairs during the third quarter of the twentieth century. In short, Sarpi was an exemplary republican, who believed in Venice's institutions, advocated independence and protection of the Republic, and held some reformist religious sympathies.<sup>8</sup>

William Bouwsma in 1968 analyzed Sarpi's understanding of history from a particularly Venetian angle. Bouwsma described the world-view of Venice, which was modern, anti-

---

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Dickson White, *Seven Great Statesmen in the Warfare of Humanity with Unreason* (New York: The Century Co., 1919), 6. Here, Sarpi was placed alongside figures such as Cavour and Bismarck. The articles on Sarpi were originally published in *Atlantic Monthly*.

<sup>7</sup> Francis A. Yates, "Paolo Sarpi's 'History of the Council of Trent'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944): 125-28. Dennis Flynn examined how Sarpi's religious beliefs influenced the convictions of Donne, a philosopher and English friend of Sarpi. See Dennis Flynn, "Donne's Politics, 'Desperate Ambition,' and Meeting Paolo Sarpi in Venice," *Journal of English and German Philology* 99, 4 (2000): 352-53. While in Sarpi in Venice, Donne headed in a more Protestant direction due to Sarpi's ecclesiastic understanding, in which secular authorities derive their power directly from God.

<sup>8</sup> Gaetano Cozzi, "Fra Paolo Sarpi, l'anglicanesimo e la 'Historia del Concilio Tridentino'," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 64, 4 (1956): 559-619, and Gaetano Cozzi, "Paolo Paruta, Paolo Sarpi e la questione della sovranità su Ceneda," *Bollettino dell'Istituto di storia della società e dello stato veneziano* 4 (1962): 176-237.

hierarchical, republican, and focused on will as opposed to human intellect. Sarpi largely subscribed to this world-view, which was reflected by his ecclesiology.<sup>9</sup> Bouwsma also wrote of Sarpi's doubt as to the presence of God in the happenings of the council; therefore Sarpi doubted conciliarism as the answer to papal power, though this is contrary to White's praise of Sarpi for propagating the ancient right to appeal to a council.<sup>10</sup>

Frederick Lane's narrative of the Venetian Republic, compiled in the 1970s, is broad and largely political and economic, and it discusses Sarpi in regard to his political and ecclesiological importance in a treatment similar to that of earlier historians. Lane indicated that Sarpi did not want the Interdict to end in the manner in which it did because broadening the movement of anti-papal reform would have been much easier had people remained upset about the Interdict.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1970s, John Leon Lievsay worked on a series of books exploring cultural exchanges between England and Italy. In one he studied Sarpi in terms of his relations between the two countries, and proved that he was well regarded there. Sarpi's portrayal of the Council of Trent enabled Anglicans to feel as if they were the ones who had preserved the true Catholic religion while the Roman Church had changed the unchanging faith.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Lievsay emphasized Sarpi's contribution to English historiography and identity.

Peter Burke, in the mid-1960s, analyzed Sarpi's political, religious, and ecclesiastical understanding. This would begin a shift from discussing Sarpi as a political figure and theorist to an examination of him as a philosophical, theological, and religious thinker, as historians tried to clarify Sarpi's religious sympathies. Officially, Sarpi was Catholic. Burke was under the

---

<sup>9</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Venice in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 557.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 569-74, and White, *Seven Great Statesmen*, 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 397-98.

<sup>12</sup> John Leon Lievsay, *Venetian Phoenix: Paolo Sarpi and some of his English Friends* (Wichita: The University Press of Kansas, 1973), 116-18.

impression that it would be better to think of Sarpi as a Venetian “Gallican” and a proto-Jansenist due to his moral rigorism, admiration for the primitive Church, and his anti-Jesuit feelings.<sup>13</sup>

The discussion of Sarpi’s religious beliefs was shifting from ecclesiology to his personal philosophical and theological convictions, in part because of Cozzi in the 1950s. Cozzi’s earlier claim was that Sarpi had more or less accepted Calvinism; he came to this conclusion in part because he believed that Sarpi was conscious that the *History of the Council of Trent* would be used to shape Anglican identity.<sup>14</sup> Cozzi studied Sarpi’s religious beliefs not by analyzing what Sarpi said about specific doctrines or philosophical concepts, but by studying Sarpi’s conscious contribution to Protestant historiography. Perhaps the interpretation of Sarpi that considers him least unorthodox in these matters of philosophy and religion is that of David Wootton, who, based on interpretations of Sarpi’s philosophical *Pensieri*, considers the friar to have been an atheist! He thinks that Sarpi was hostile to Christianity, despite believing in the necessity of existing absolute secular authorities. While Wootton’s arguments are well-presented, he is one of the few who holds such convictions.<sup>15</sup>

It is easy to forget that besides being a writer, a political figure, a friar, a philosopher, a theologian, etc., Paolo Sarpi was also a scientist. Eileen Reeves has recently discussed the interplay of politics, religion, and science in Sarpi’s work. In contrast to Galileo, Sarpi thought that Heaven was fully removed from the physical cosmos; she claims that this correlates to his

---

<sup>13</sup> Peter Burke, “The great unmasker: Paolo Sarpi, 1551-1613,” *History Today* 15 (1965): 428-29. This is a popular work in a popular periodical, but it summarizes very well common understandings of Sarpi at the time.

<sup>14</sup> Cozzi, “Fra Paolo Sarpi, l’anglicanismo e la ‘Historia del Concilio Tridentino,’” 592-93.

<sup>15</sup> See Wootton, 1-7, in which his allegation that Sarpi was an atheist is at odds with the understanding of Romero Amerio, one of the first to study the *Pensieri* of Sarpi in his *Il Sarpi dei Pensieri filosofici indetti* (Turin: Edizioni di filosofia, 1950). John Jeffries Martin in an examination of a heretical underground in Venice, treats Sarpi as orthodox for a Venetian in that he emphasized scripture, skepticism, and resistance to Rome. See his *Venice’s Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 225.

belief that spiritual authority should be distant from secular authority.<sup>16</sup> This last scholar has to a large extent managed to touch on just about every aspect of Sarpi's thought by relating his outlook on various fields to astronomy. As Cozzi studied Sarpi's religious beliefs by analyzing Sarpi's conscious ramifications on anti-papal historiography, Reeves is able to understand Sarpi's religious understanding through astronomy.

It is proposed in this thesis to study how Sarpi understood the nature of power in regard to its familial principles. This is to be an exploration, based on some of Sarpi's historical works and some of his political works, of how Sarpi understood the operation of power within the Church, the State, families, and other 'units' of order. The examination will be about both how he understood them to operate in actuality and in ideal theory. No one has ever extensively done that with Sarpi from a familial, bodily, or organic perspective, and few have gleaned political sources to understand familial structures or values. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the relationships explored in this project will be based on theoretical ideas of the family, though not without some grounding in reality. The approach of this thesis is contrary to the below works of scholarship in that it examines historical works and political commentaries to better understand the family. While it is the case that families in Italy have been studied from different angles with different questions in mind, using different sources, no one has examined Sarpi's thought from the perspective of his assumptions regarding kinship and the body. Many existing studies of family in early modern Italy are regional studies, and one can generalize about them as follows: some studies look at peasant families and their associated networks, others look at larger super-

---

<sup>16</sup> Eileen Reeves, "Kingdoms of Heaven: Galileo and Sarpi on the Celestial," *Representations* 105, 1 (2000): 61-63, 66-68. On page 374 in the appendixes of the previously mentioned edition of the *Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects*, Sarpi in a letter written in 1609 to M. Gillot, a Protestant member of the Parlement of Paris, makes a distinction in that "The King of *France* has no diminution of power [to the gain of spiritual and apostolic authorities], because his dominion does not reach up to the seven stars. The kingdom of Heaven is further off from the *French* nation than those stars are."

familial networks that connect both common and aristocratic families, others focus more strictly on the aristocracy and their objectives, and yet others examine legalities and attitudes regarding marriage and intimacy across all classes.

Caroline Castiglione studied peasant structures, in which kinship was the premier social element, in several villages in the Roman countryside. These comprised the Stato of Monte Libretti, a fief set aside from the rest of the Papal States and governed autonomously by the Barberini family. This is a story of intelligent peasants legally and illegally striving to assert their believed ancient rights of hunting, fishing, communal work, etc., in contrast to Barberini law. They would have preferred to follow the lead of their informal family chiefs as opposed to the rules of an outside noble family. Lower officials employed by the Barberini were closely linked to the culture of the peasantry, and this is in part why the Barberini had to recognize most of the peasants' asserted rights.<sup>17</sup> Edward Muir studied the implications of one incident in a Friulian village in which the communal peasantry en masse prevented the arrest of one of their informal chiefs. Without a doubt, family clans were imagined to be an integral component of municipal life and the structure of the community.<sup>18</sup> Muir uncovered the interaction between community structures and with the noble clan networks, in particular that of the Savorgnan family during the Friulian unrest of 1511. This was part of his analysis of the many forces at work in the periodic Friulian factional crises, peasant uprisings, and vendetta violence of the sixteenth century.<sup>19</sup> The research by Castiglione and Muir suggests that a common communal

---

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Castiglione, "Adversarial Literacy: How Peasant Politics Influenced Noble governing of the Roman Countryside in the Early Modern Period," *AHR* 109, 3 (Jun. 2004): 783-804, and "Political Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italian Villages," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, 4 (Spring 2001): 523-52. For collaboration with local officials and poaching peasants, see the latter 545-49.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Muir, "The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, 1 (Spring 2002): 3.

<sup>19</sup> See Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

European ethos permeated the ruling classes and the lower orders with parallel structures, not the least of which being familial loyalty and self-identity.

The above scholars on family networks have largely looked at how the peasant networks and noble networks engaged each other, in confrontation or in cooperation. The following several scholars deal with provincial elites and their attempt to maintain their political relevance and social stations, not necessarily at the expense of those below them but sometimes in contest, sometimes in cooperation, with the emergent modern state.

Tommaso Astarita studied the situation in the Kingdom of Naples primarily from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. He paints a picture of a provincial aristocracy that retained jurisdictional functions which, elsewhere in Europe, were being taken over by the state and he offers logical reasons for why Naples was functioned differently, not merely judging Naples as backward. For one, the economy was not as vibrant as in the north, and there was not a rich urban class becoming the new aristocracy. Secondly, the populace felt they had more in common with local patrons than foreign kings or their viceroys. Astarita also gives the sense that the goals of the provincial elites were not all about attaining wealth, but rather that the elites took their paternal duties to their inferiors seriously.<sup>20</sup>

Joanne Marie Ferraro and Giovanna Benadusi both looked at the problem of provincial nobles retaining their relevance in the modern era in the Lombard Veneto and Tuscany respectively. In the Bresciano, the nobles were for the most part left alone by the Venetian government, as long as disturbances did not interfere with revenue. In Tuscany, Benadusi found that the centralizing state of the Medici did not sideline provincial nobles, but instead allowed

---

<sup>20</sup> Though certainly, Astarita realizes, the attitudes, motives, and methods of noble officers often varied from individual to individual. See Tommaso Astarita, *The Continuity of Feudal Power: The Caracciolo di Brienza in Spanish Naples* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

them service to the state in the civic militias and as minor functionaries.<sup>21</sup> Thus Benadusi's Tuscans were in a similar situation to Astarita's Neapolitans.

Emlyn Eisenach asks different questions as she studies marital life and concubinage. Her investigations largely revolve around court case testimony shedding light on the condition of women in relation to their husbands, and vice versa, and the accompanying *mentalités*. The records reflect that the patriarchal ideal propagated by commentators, in which the man of the house was absolute, was often not representative of actuality. Of course, different trends affected different levels of society, and different patterns affected marriages and other sexual arrangements between individuals of different classes. These court cases are full of dramatic stories of sexual infidelity, women on the side, angry wives, violence, but they also tells us about their concepts of honor, manliness, and womanliness. Certain things were an insult to honor and certain things could satisfy one's honor, and certain outcomes could allow one offended to walk away from a situation with one's honor intact.<sup>22</sup>

The latter codes of conduct concerning concubinage and cheating may be somewhat removed from high-level political competition between ruling families, but, according to Sarpi's imagination, the paternal concept of authority is almost always the backdrop of settings involving power on every level, from God all the way down to the private householder. There has been some investigation into Venetian attitudes toward familial politics of the upper nobility, more directly related to the work of this thesis. The topic has been commented upon by contemporaries and recent historians alike.

---

<sup>21</sup> See Joanne Marie Ferraro, *Family and Public Life in Brescia, 1580-1650: The Foundations of Power in the Venetian State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Giovanna Benadusi, *A Provincial Elite in Early Modern Tuscany: Family and Power in the Creation of the State* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Emlyn Eisenach, *Husbands, Wives, and Concubines: Marriage, Family, and Social Order in Sixteenth-Century Verona* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2004).

Robert Finlay, a recent historian, relies heavily on contemporary Venetian historian Marino Sanuto in understanding family politics in ducal elections, specifically that of Doge Andrea Gritti in 1523. During the last round of Venice's complex ducal election system in which the "Forty-one" made the final vote, Gritti was related, by blood or by marriage, to all but nine of the electors, and only one of those nine was a supporter of him.<sup>23</sup> Beyond all doubt, the presence, prevalence, and importance of familial relations in high politics was as relevant in the Veneto as much as anywhere else, despite its republican institutions, though doubtlessly it was manifested differently. To lament the centripetal character of the government, Sanuto a couple of months before Gritti's election criticized unnamed officials for "promoting a 'monarchy in the city;'" Finlay suspects that Sanuto was wary of specific families intermarrying and creating one great blood-based network.<sup>24</sup> The implication of Sanuto is that that monarchy has the connotation of one monolithic influential and decision-making family, as opposed to Venetian-preferred republicanism, in which such a sole web of power ought not form. Finlay and Lane both believe that there was enough constitutional restraint on Doge Gritti, for many of his projects were frustrated.<sup>25</sup>

But Venice looked warily upon a local Doge who had many sons, for Finlay says that it was feared that they would have too much influence over their father and even build their own power bases. It is said by Sanuto and Finlay that, also in 1523, candidate Domenico Trevisan "suffered from the severe liability of having six sons," and two years earlier the wealthiest man in Venice had lost that ducal election in part because he had three sons.<sup>26</sup> Gritti was not

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert Finlay, "Politics and the Family in Renaissance Venice: The Election of Doge Andrea Gritti," *Studi Veneziani* 2 (1978): 113.

<sup>24</sup> Sanuto, *I diarii*, ed. R. Fulin et al., 58 vols. (Venice: 1879-1903), 34, 5-6, qtd. in Finlay, 114.

<sup>25</sup> Finlay, 116 and Lane, 270.

<sup>26</sup> Finlay., 105.

hampered as greatly by this because his sons were illegitimate and living in Istanbul, and both reasons led electoral participants to believe that they would not be much of a problem.<sup>27</sup>

While Finlay was more or less looking at practicalities, Jutta Sperling in the 1990s was looking at both the theoretical and ideological nature of the Venetian nobility as well as practicalities, and she came to the conclusion that the complex ideological contradictions were nonsensical and even harmful to a nobility that with greater difficulty and increasing impossibility attempted to replicate itself into the eighteenth century. One of the matters in which Venetians took pride was their city's conviction that it had the most perfect constitution due to its perfect incorporation of the mystical triune powers of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, despite the obvious fact that Venice could demonstrate no manifestation of democracy whatsoever, as it has almost always been understood. Of course, its republican focus was on the aristocracy. In the eighteenth century, more laws were enacted to enforce the exclusivity of the noble order. For example, satisfying modes of dowry exchange, which was meant to justify one's credibility as a noble, became harder in a changing economy and society. Being unable to meet these fiscal requirements and others, women voluntarily entered convents instead of marrying beneath them, while men unable to satisfy their fiscal requirements secretly married women below the nobility.<sup>28</sup>

Jonathan Walker agrees with Sperling in many regards but denies that Venetian republican and noble theory was solely damaging and without utility. He believes that the Council of Ten, the most politically powerful council of Venice, was able to select or alter definitions of reality based on the ideological structure to justify their actions, such as in matters

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>28</sup> See Sperling, 31-32 for a brief summation; see 8-15 about the mixed constitution of all three layers of political power in which it is explained that Gasparo Contarini, a famous statesman, maintained that because the Great Council, comprised of all noblemen but excluding all commoners, functioned in a democratic manner the Republic had a satisfactory manifestation of democracy.

of criminal cases. The ideological structure enabled them to define people at their convenience. “Before the law, concubines became whores, political opponents became traitors, loyal retainers became hired thugs, and so on.”<sup>29</sup>

It could be worthwhile to become more familiar as to what extent Sarpi’s opinions were congruent with those of the highest levels of Venetian government, at least in this familial regard; such would give at least some indication as to what extent the Venetian mindset on family matters was, or was not, homogeneous. Because every aforementioned scholar assumes that Sarpi was a central spokesman for the Venetian cause, a ‘ringleader’ of sorts around whom others gravitated, we can in turn assume that his familial understandings were at least fairly common. Like in the above example regarding the illegitimate sons of the Doge, Sarpi talks often of people’s heirs in his *History* or in his other works. In this matter and all other family matters, and in fact all political and social matters whatsoever, he is certainly advocating the defense of a Venetian society that was noble-based and anti-papal. Despite his biases, his *History* is still a history, and he does not get bogged down in theoretical hypotheticals of proper family relations during that work. Instead, he leaves such discourses for his *Maxims and Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects* and other treatises. It would now do well to look at the significance of ruling-class family power and politics within the *History of the Council of Trent* before moving into his explicitly polemical works.

---

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Walker, “Legal and Political Discourse in Seventeenth-Century Venice,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, 4 (Oct. 2002): 800-826, quote on 823.

*Paolo Sarpi and his Interpretations of Family Politics*  
*in the History of the Council of Trent*

Sarpi's most well-known work, the *History of the Council of Trent*, is abundant in itself, being over 700 pages, and from it many nuances can be gleaned of how Sarpi saw the world. Examining the perspectives of one who adheres to the Renaissance or post-Renaissance Venetian world-view always reveals something unique in relation to most non-Venetian contemporaries. Venice, a republic, was uncomfortably surrounded by the monarchical Papal States and Habsburg realms. If a Venetian, or at least Sarpian, and republican understanding of dynasticism can be partially understood through this work, history would gain greater insight into how political and familial dynamics of early modern Italy were perceived.

Historians should also not forget that modern ways of analyzing and understanding the past were unknown to contemporaries, including contemporary historians. From time to time, scholarship needs to remember its roots. Few people in early modern Europe had, for example, something approaching a Marxist historiographical outlook, nor were there many who could study history by modern quantitative means. To people in the European early modern period, dynasticism was crucial to history, and Sarpi was exemplary of that. Thus, despite the often-echoed sentiment that Sarpi's history was ahead of its time for its secular and cynical attitudes, it still retained base assumptions of earlier times.<sup>30</sup> The following will be an examination of how Sarpi understood dynastic and family politics, and as politics to Sarpi was the driving force of his

---

<sup>30</sup> Wootton says on 116 that Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent* was original "in its perception of the role of social institutions and structures in political and ecclesiastical life." This was largely because, as Wootton claims on 114, "Sarpi's history is in the end about structures and not simply about motives," and that Sarpi has a sense of "man as being as much the creature as the creator of social institutions," yet Wootton claims that "he does not have a sense of history having its own internal motor, of the past as being different in kind from the present. Such a sense of progress in history emerges only with the Enlightenment." This thesis adds to Wootton's caution that Sarpi was not overly modern, in that Sarpi still used organic, bodily, and familial allegories in politics which were common in Western thought since Aristotle, through classical, medieval, and post-Renaissance times.

*History*, dynastic politics were often more important to the unfolding of events than theological developments.

Despite Venetian republican wariness of powerful families, Sarpi certainly believed in a level of importance of good breeding. This is evident only three pages into his *History*, when he relates that “Leo the tenth, as one whose birth and education was noble, adorned the Papacy with many good parts which he brought to it.”<sup>31</sup> What he meant by “noble” and “birth” is unclear by the *History* alone, but an understanding of the nature of the nobility can be understood from his later works.<sup>32</sup> There are other themes of Sarpi’s *History* to be considered here before moving onward into the text.

Part of Sarpi's understanding of the Reformation-era mindset, was that many Catholics understood the need for a reformation of the Catholic Church's administration in order to decrease nepotism, corruption, economically-driven indulgences, and so forth. This was especially given added impetus by the Lutheran movement. Throughout Sarpi's narrative the word “reformation” often does not mean a doctrinal reformation but a moral reworking of Church functioning. Although he does not cite his sources, only briefly mentioning some of

---

<sup>31</sup> Paolo Sarpi, *The History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Nathaniel Brent, 1619 (London: J. Maccock for Samuel Mearne, 1676), 3. The 1676 printing is practically the same, but more accessible to the modern Anglophone due to more modern spellings and use of letters. I have elected to keep the same spellings, capitalizations, punctuations, spacings, and other conventions, despite their inconsistencies, exactly as found in the text in all of the quotations in this thesis. I have also used the English translations of his works because many of them were published first in English, were roughly as historically and historiographically significant in England as in Italy, and because when comparing and analyzing concepts and metaphors spread over paragraphs, verbatim translations are not necessary as long as the larger point is understood. Further references of Sarpi’s *History of the Council of Trent* refer to this edition, unless otherwise noted. Furthermore, the shortened title *History* will refer to the *History of the Council of Trent*, as opposed to any of his other histories.

<sup>32</sup> One who believed in the divine destiny of the individual would likely believe that God assigns children to parents with certain possible futures in mind. In the above example, Sarpi also could have meant that Leo X was well-raised in a conducive environment. Sarpi’s understanding of nobility cannot be determined by the *History* alone, but such an answer would give us additional insight into his understanding of the world. His later works, do, however, attest to illegitimacy by virtue of his silence on the matter. His discussions on virtue and noble behavior indicate the importance of a noble being bred and remaining in a good, i.e. a materially sufficient and morally sound, environment. Divine intervention in the breeding of the noble class has nothing to do with it, or at least God’s hand cannot be presumed. Such will be explored later in the third section of this thesis.

them at the beginning of the work, it is clear that he wanted to convey the impression that “all men demanded reformation” of administrative behavior.<sup>33</sup>

Sarpi’s world, both the world of the generation immediately preceding his, as described in his *History*, and the early seventeenth-century world in which he was politically and historiographically prominent, can quickly be explained with a brief dynastic description, largely based a distinction between Habsburgs and non-Habsburgs. The only power other than the Turks that alone could threaten the closely allied Habsburg dynastic branches was France.

The Western European world Sarpi presents is three-fold; the Habsburgs and the French (that is, the Valois and frequently their Medici allies) are locked in a perennial off-and-on conflict, and various Italian states, especially the Papacy, vacillate to one side or the other. The reader gets the sense that contemporaries feared that the Habsburgs were always on the verge of flooding into Italy. This is likely at least in part due to Sarpi’s own Venetian heritage. Places like Poland are also on the periphery of Sarpi’s history, perhaps also because the Poles do not participate greatly in the council.<sup>34</sup> The Ottoman Turks are quite significant inasmuch as fear of them is often the motivation, or at least ostensible motivation, for peace or unification among the warring Western Europeans.<sup>35</sup> Even still, the French sometimes found ways to ally with them against the Habsburgs.<sup>36</sup> Protestantism in Germany and England enters into the equation at several points, but these places factor into the political history inasmuch as they help or hinder an

---

<sup>33</sup> See Sarpi, 235 for quotation. Cozzi, “Fra Paolo Sarpi, l’anglicanesimo et la ‘Historia del Concilio Tridentino’,” 564 says that Sarpi had acquired documents in the form of notes and other records that had been kept by Camillo Olivo, secretary of Cardinal Gonzaga and also notes and other records that had belonged to Cardinal Giambattista Castagna.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, 576. This brief moment when the Polish ambassador is received towards the end of the Council is one of that country’s few entrances into the narrative.

<sup>35</sup> Such as when Pope Paul III asked for Protestant help against the Turks. See *ibid.*, 118.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

Imperial or French alliance, with Sarpi giving the Franco-Imperial-Papal struggle more importance as a historical and military force than religion.<sup>37</sup>

While dynastic concerns and motives are scattered throughout the text, three things in particular strike the researcher of dynasticism and family politics. One is the narrative of the English Reformation. Another is how the Papacy engaged in dynasticism and was affected by it. Finally, the happenings of local Italian families affect the broader history.

Reformation English history, according to Sarpi, was driven by dynastic affairs, and theology is barely on the periphery of the discussion. The story of how Henry VIII broke from Rome, how his son Edward introduced Protestant doctrine, how Henry's daughter Mary reverted to papal obedience, and how his other daughter Elizabeth reverted to a Protestant direction is explained as a family affair. Furthermore, papal reaction to English developments shows that dynastic politics trumps spiritual matters. Sarpi does not explain the origins of Anglicanism in an especially positive light, despite the later reception of his *History* within England. The causes and motivations for the break with Rome and subsequent Protestant developments are worldly and driven by personal desires of a small few. With this considered, why his work was smuggled into England, translated into English, and for at least a century re-printed by enthused Protestants, begs an explanation.

Gaetano Cozzi in the 1950s published an article about Sarpi's impact on the Anglican world. Having heard of Sarpi through embassies, the English court of James I encouraged him to write his history. According to Cozzi, Sarpi did have Calvinist tendencies, and more or less accepted some of the main tenets of Calvinism.<sup>38</sup> It was for this reason that Sarpi was asked by the English to write, and his work became to Anglicans and other Protestants a confirmation of

---

<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, 208, when the Pope is "jealous" of growing Habsburg power and recalls Papal forces from the war against the Protestants, for only one example.

<sup>38</sup> Cozzi, "Fra Paolo Sarpi, l'anglicanismo e la 'Historia del Concilio Tridentino,'" 592-93.

their religious identity. Different currents within Anglicanism reacted to Sarpi's work in a different way, but it was enjoyed especially those who saw the Church of England as the "ancient and Holy Catholic Church, rightly reformed."<sup>39</sup> While a large investigation has been done and can further be done in this regard, it suffices for the purpose of this project to assume that Anglican dislike of the papacy, an institution which Sarpi heavily criticized from just about every conceivable angle, outweighed any reservations for Sarpi's lackluster account of the beginning of the independent Church of England. A discussion of this account and its emphasis on dynasticism follows.

"*Catherine infant of Spain, Sister to the Mother of Charles the Emperour, was married to Henry the eight, King of England, and was before, the Wife of Arthure, Prince of Wales, Henry's eldest Brother; after whose death, their Father gave her in marriage to Henry, who remained successor, by the dispensation of Pope Julio the Second.*"<sup>40</sup> Sarpi says that Henry wanted to divorce his Queen due to her failure to bring forth surviving male issue, or to displease Charles V, or for some other reason. The second reason is dynastic and is not commonly thought of as a reason for why Henry "conceived a scruple in his mind that the marriage was not good."<sup>41</sup> That Henry had a "scruple," often understood as an illogical obsession or over-cautiousness in matters of morality or rules, is less flattering of Henry than if Sarpi had written, "Henry was solidly convinced that the marriage was not good." Sarpi says that Pope Clement VII originally intended side with Henry on the matter and annul his marriage, for England and France were at that time harassing the emperor in Southern Italy, but upon realizing that he could win favor with Charles and further his own designs in Florence, he ordered his brief in Henry's favor to be

---

<sup>39</sup> F. A. Yates, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949-50), 134, qtd. in Cozzi, 587.

<sup>40</sup> Sarpi, *History of the Council of Trent*, 64.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

burned. Sarpi does not elaborate but Clement VII was a Medici and Florence was their place of origin. Sarpi even suspects Henry of bribing university scholars to side with him on what became an international debate. The narrative does not even mention Henry's apparent obsession with Leviticus' arguable ban on marrying a brother's wife. Sarpi was probably unaware of this, for there would be no reason to omit that, unless he merely forgot. It is unfortunate that Sarpi does not cite his sources to more easily determine the accuracy of Sarpi's account, but this retelling informs us that he saw that spiritual matters were brushed aside when dynastic marriage politics were at stake.<sup>42</sup>

Yet Sarpi does say that many English sympathetic to the King were correct in expressing that they ought not subject themselves to a generally called Church council, which was soon to be advertised by Pope Paul III, for their fear was that the pope would run the council. Sarpi then mentions that Rome was saddened at Henry's schism. However, Sarpi's more neutral tone ends as he calls the reaction of Rome and Pope Clement VII in particular an example of "the imbecility of human affairs," for Sarpi argues that they could have compromised with Henry and received concessions from him in the negotiations, such as territory, an alliance, and a guarantee that subsequent heirs of Henry would be dependent on the papacy for the sanctioning of legitimacy.<sup>43</sup> Here, Sarpi is being sarcastic, for he would not approve of such measures, for they would have been exemplary of spiritual authority being used for temporal gain. He suggests Rome would have had no moral inhibitions from doing so, but rather they had not been smart enough to think of it. Despite this joking criticism, Sarpi does not praise the motives of Henry,

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 64-65. Sarpi may not have mentioned some of his sources, because such grand historical events could have come to his ear in the same manner it came to other Venetian men of prominence. In other words, the general details of some events were likely common knowledge for learned and prominent men at the time. He also may not have wanted to cite his sources because he may not have wanted it to have been known who supplied him with information, for the sake of those individuals' protection.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 66.

who acted “for desire of issue male.”<sup>44</sup> It is important to remember that Henry kept, as Sarpi puts it “the residue of Catholic doctrine,” or in other words Henry kept the Church of England Catholic in all matters but papal supremacy, even directing money to the crown that otherwise would have gone to Peter’s Pence.<sup>45</sup> He has few other appearances in the *History* and the dissolution of the monasteries is not discussed at all. This also asks for an explanation, for Sarpi was a man of the cloth.

Years later when word of Henry’s passing reached Trent, Sarpi reports that there was much rejoicing. Those at the council thought that “it was a miracle that he had left a Son of but nine years of age, Edward VI, that he might not be able to tread in his father’s steps.”<sup>46</sup> Sarpi ironically states that “it is true that he did not tread in them at all,” for Edward governed by his maternal uncle Edward Seymour, the duke of Somerset, who being inclined toward Protestantism, “changed Religion.”<sup>47</sup> There is no discussion of how, when, or why Somerset decided to implement these alterations. Sarpi writes that he will discuss the matter later in the narrative, but that story does not appear.<sup>48</sup> It was likely an oversight on his part, or Sarpi may have thought the above mentioned factors would suffice for such a small explanation for England’s shift. Regardless, the point is simply made that England became Protestant because the king’s uncle and regent was Protestant. Thus, dynastic politics again drives the narrative of England’s religious affairs.

When England shifted back into Catholicism, it was likewise due to the contest of family members. In this case, interpretations of dynastic law were used to justify the claims of both sides. When Edward VI died at only fourteen years, he had arranged in his will for a paternal

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 66, 242 for quote.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 243.

first cousin once removed, Jane of Suffolk, to succeed him. In doing so, he removed Mary and Elizabeth from the succession, because they were considered illegitimate “notwithstanding that *Henry* had, in his last Will, substituted *Mary* and *Elizabeth*, which substitution he [Edward] said was pupillary, and did not binde him now he was of age.”<sup>49</sup>

In other words, Edward asserted that his own will superseded his late father’s, since his father had made his will when Edward was only nine. As Edward was (slightly) older, he had the authority to determine his own succession. Thus, Jane declared herself Queen in London. Meanwhile in Norfolk, Mary declared herself Queen, and responded to those who accused her of being illegitimate. She said that she was of “a Matrimony contracted *bona fide*, though there be a *nullity* in it, the issue is legitimate. Jane and her adherents were imprisoned.”<sup>50</sup>

Sarpi then discusses Parliament and Mary’s deliberation of three suitors, one of whom was the English Cardinal Reginald Pole, who had been an attendee of the Council of Trent but was only a deacon cardinal and had not taken Holy Orders by that time. He was stalled from reaching England by Charles V who wanted Mary to wed his son Philip. Sarpi says that, “the Queen preferred *Philip* Prince of *Spain* before these, aswel for the treaties made by her Cousin Charles the Emperour, (her affection also inclining much more to the Mothers side than to the Fathers) as because the thought she might better secure her own and the Kingdom’s peace with that Marriage.”<sup>51</sup>

Sarpi does not discuss key issues such as how Mary was able to rally sufficient support, why Jane did not have enough backing, the extent of each cousin’s religious support, or which side was preferred by the English bishops, etc. Instead Sarpi focuses solely on familial relations and dynastic legalities.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 360.

A similar narrative is given of Elizabeth's ascension and reversion to the Edwardian doctrines. She took an oath not to marry a foreigner, implying Philip, recent king of England by way of his marriage to Mary, or Charles his son, but she was crowned by a bishop in union with Rome and made no declaration of religion at that time. Sarpi believed that she meant to introduce a reformation once she was secure and confident in her station, but in the meantime she confirmed Mary's ambassador to the pope as her own and formally presented to Paul IV an account of her assumption. Paul retorted by saying that as she was declared illegitimate by two previous popes, she was ahead of herself in assuming the throne without his dispensation, as Paul claimed that England was held a fief of the Apostolic See (likely due to an agreement from the early thirteenth century with King John and Innocent III). The pope said in his reply that he would do whatever he could to help her out, but gave no promises. Sarpi wrote that "many did believe that as he spake thus by his own inclination, so he was incited by the *French King*, who fearing a marriage between her and the King of *Spain* might be made by the Popes dispensation, thought it fit to assure himself by cutting off the practices from the very beginning."<sup>52</sup> The Queen did not wait for the pope's answer, but used this incident as a means to restore the Edwardian state of religion.<sup>53</sup> Thus in Sarpi's narrative, it was likely foreign political manipulations of dynastic legalities that allowed Protestantism to resume in England. The final significant entrance of England into the narrative is when Mary, Queen of Scots sends word to Trent affirming her claim to the English throne and assuring that if she were to assume the throne, Catholicism would be preserved in both countries.<sup>54</sup>

In short, Sarpi saw that the primary mover and actor of English history during the mid-sixteenth century was the royal family. It was all about dynasty. There is no deep analysis of

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 356-57.

religious attitudes or ecclesiastical factions. There is an assumption that may be inferred that the English were by and large afraid of excessive papal power, for excessive papal power is a major theme in his work. But that is the only other possible historical current aside from dynasty. Perhaps this is because Sarpi was limited in sources and information, but one would expect a discussion of a great distrust of the papacy in England, given that Sarpi was operating under the assumption that papal power was too great.

More notable in Sarpi's historiographical understanding was a more or less identical display of papal dynastic politics. The curia, by its own choice, was entwined in the same game as the English court. Sarpi is much more critical of the popes, and like in England, the dynastic entanglements into which the See of Peter was drawn determined religious affairs.

Almost all of the popes at this time were of Italian noble families, and Sarpi clearly envisioned that popes were intrinsically a part of such family factions and networks of patronage; that is not surprising and likely would not have been very controversial at the time. Yet one may have thought that men of the cloth would not be able to engage in dynastic politics fully since they were not supposed to have children. And if they did have illegitimates they would not be married into other noble houses as if they were princes, nor would their father, the Holy Father, go through great lengths to acquire domains in Italy for them. One may even think that if they did have illegitimate offspring, they would be given a minor fief on the outskirts of Rome or hold a minor administrative post. However, these children served a function identical to that of their legitimate counterparts from the rest of Europe, and Sarpi implicitly criticizes of the papacy's employment of illegitimate scions in such a manner, especially the Farnese.

One of the first actions by Pope Farnese, or Paul III, was to make peace with “the *Turk*,” as the Ottoman Empire, or perhaps the Sultan, is often called in the narrative.<sup>55</sup> “Besides these publick businesses, the Cardinal had one private for his own house.”<sup>56</sup>

He elevated two grand-children to the College of Cardinals. Both of them were children of then-Cardinal Farnese's illegitimate children. One of the new cardinals was Alexander Farnese, who was only fourteen at the time, the son of his own illegitimate son Peter Aloisus, also known as Pier Luigi. The other was Guido Ascanius Sforza, fifteen years old, whose father was of an influential Italian family. Sarpi says that their extreme youth and illegitimate descent dashed contemporary hopes for reforming the College. He recounts that, “To those that told him of their youth, he answered, that his own decrepit old age did supply it. The hope of reforming the Cardinals, and the fear of some of them vanished immediately, because it did not appear how it could begin, but from the age, and lawful birth of those which were to be created.”<sup>57</sup>

Sarpi’s weariness of the pope’s sons, and by extension their own children, could possibly be derived from his own experience of living within the Venetian political system, which feared multiple sons of doges, as has been said above.

While retelling a discussion of the council which took place in 1547 concerning benefices, variations thereof, and the issue of plurality, Sarpi takes a digression into a brief history of a certain type of benefice, a commendatary, and recalls when Clement VII of the Medici family in 1534 “was not ashamed” to give his nephew Hippolitus, a cardinal, benefices of every type.<sup>58</sup> It is noteworthy here that, while Hippolitus was of illegitimate birth, he was not a descendent of the pope himself, and yet Sarpi was still critical of his assumption of properties.

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 235.

Sarpi is not overtly opinionated, however, at the point in the narrative when he speaks of a marriage arrangement made in 1547 between the papal family and the French royal family of Henry II. Orazio Farnese, an illegitimate son of Pier Luigi Farnese, the pope's own illegitimate son, was contracted to marry Diana, the king of France's illegitimate daughter. This relates to Sarpi's narrative of the council because the French King decided to send prelates to the council as part of this marriage agreement between the pope and him.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps Sarpi is not openly critical here because he would have had no problem with papal families engaging in some level of marital alliances, and/or because both of the future spouses were illegitimate, and thus of a similar status. What Sarpi is critical of is that French participation in the council came about because of dynastic interests and not because of spiritual concerns.

A drama that frequently manifests itself in the first half of the *History* and sometimes drives the narrative of the history of the council, is that of Pope Farnese's illegitimate son being given the duchy of Parma and Piacenza and how that determines the fate of the family. According to Sarpi, Pope Farnese was more concerned in 1545 with enfeoffing his son Pier Luigi with Parma and Piacenza than with the resumption of the council, which was on hiatus at the time. Sarpi does not speculate as to the pope's reasoning, but describes how a "general murmuring" indicated the dissatisfaction of those, including the emperor, who opposed the enfeoffment of one born of a "damned Conjunction," especially since it was anticipated that a goal of the council was to reform precisely this kind of corruption in the Church.<sup>60</sup> Sarpi is certainly taking a side here, since he might otherwise have been able to justify the pope's action by pointing to a legitimate interest in gaining resources, recruit-able men, and a northern buffer

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 256. In the 1676 edition of the translation by Brent, the text reads that Horatius[Orazio] Farnese was the Pope's "Nephew." This is likely an error on Brent's part because in Italian *nipote* could mean either nephew or grandson. Also, the text reads "Dania" instead of Diana or Diane.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 121.

territory to counter the emperor, whose power Sarpi constantly describes as nearly overwhelming.

Having been instated in the duchy, Pier Luigi's life would soon end tragically. The new duke was assaulted in his palace on September 10, 1547 and died a few hours later. A few hours after that, troops of the vice-duke of Milan, Ferrandus Gonzaga, acquired the city. The pope believed that the emperor knew of it. Prelates in Germany wrote to the pope wishing for the council to be moved back to Trent, as it was currently in Bologna, with "mixed prayers and threats."<sup>61</sup> According to Sarpi, the Cardinal of Trent himself suggested to the pope in the form of a thinly veiled threat that moving the Council back to Trent would be best to safeguard his "inheritance"--or rather, the lives of his posterity.<sup>62</sup>

Immediately thereafter both sides began negotiating; the pope wanted Parma and Piacenza restored to his family while the emperor wished to retain it for his supporters. According to Sarpi, the pope, "...making use of the interests of the Emperor's Daughter, wife to Duke *Octavian*; Son of him that was dead."<sup>63</sup> Pope Farnese was therefore relying on her fortunes being bound to the fate of the family. However, the emperor kept making counter-offers for his son-in-law, none of which included the desired area of Parma and Piacenza, and the emperor hoped that Pope Farnese would die in the meantime, as he was of advanced age. Because of this disagreement and others, the council, still officially in Bologna, remained on hold.<sup>64</sup>

Ironically, Sarpi says that Ottavio Farnese inadvertently killed Pope Farnese when Ottavio sent word that he had negotiated with Ferrandus Gonzaga to take Parma. "[The Pope]

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 270.

was so assaulted with perturbation of mind and anger, that he swooned, and, after some few hours, coming to himself, he fell into a Fever, whereof he died within three days.”<sup>65</sup> His successor, Julius III, was able to restore the duchy peaceably to Ottavio through diplomacy and negotiation, which he had promised to do in the conclave shortly before he became pope. A French garrison was brought in to secure Parma and Piacenza from the emperor, and Sarpi credits this partly to Ottavio's brother Orazio being the son-in-law of the French King Henry II.<sup>66</sup>

The preceding shows that dynastic involvement could get the better of the papal establishment. The following shows that outside dynasties could use obligations of friendship to resist the papacy. There was once an incident in 1563, recorded in the *History*, when Pius IV publicly censured the queen of Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, for making agreements between the Catholics and the Protestants. Jeanne was a leader of the Protestant movement in France, although married to a man who was a re-convert to Catholicism. King Charles IX of France, disgruntled at the notion of the pope attempting to hinder peace within his own kingdom, sent word to Henry Clutin, Lord d'Oysel, to relay the reasons for his displeasure at Pius's censuring of the queen. The discussion of the queen was really a platform by which both sides criticized the other, and dynastic traditions were used by King Charles and Henry Clutin to present their case for the queen's defense. The queen had become a widow and her children fatherless because her husband Anthony died in war on the side of the Catholic cause. For this reason and because the queen was related to him by both lines, the king was obligated to protect her, and the pope should have known to speak to Charles about the matter first. They made known their suspicion that the public censure levied against the queen was for political purposes, perhaps in part because the pope was upset over ecclesiastical revenues in France. Although Sarpi does not

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 280. The narratives does not say if Ottavio knew that Pier Luigi was to be assassinated or not.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 292.

say that they suggested that that was the real motive, the issue is presented as having taken place concurrently with the disagreement of ecclesiastical revenues. Furthermore, Charles and Henry argued, it was foolhardy to be at constant war with others solely on matters of religion, and the kingdoms of Spain and France were put close to war over the matter of the queen. These latter two reasons were the real matter at stake, pertinent to the safety of half of Europe, not just one widow. The pope soon relented.<sup>67</sup> Sarpi describes the king's ambassador's retort in detail, and in doing so gives the reader sympathy for the king's argument. Once again in Sarpi's narrative, spiritual discussion is secondary to political development; in this case spiritual discussion was only a cover for a political end. But this incident also shows that assertion of familial responsibilities could have been used to defy the pope.

While Sarpi imagined that family politics was a driving force in English, Papal, and other politics, he also saw similar structures operating throughout Italy. Within the Papal States, Sarpi saw many clans in operation that often contested with the papal family. He recalls the seizures of Rome in the 1520s from not only an international point-of-view but also with acknowledgment that local clan rivalry greatly impacted the outcomes.

Pope Clement VII (r. 1523-34) was of the Medici family, and thus had pro-French sympathies, while a Cardinal Colonna, of an influential local aristocratic family, had Imperial tendencies. Sarpi believed that the pope feared the calling of a much clamored-for general council, because recent Imperial victories would mean that a council would be used to solidify the emperor's position at the expense of the pope. One of those calling for a council was Cardinal Colonna. The pope asserted that Colonna was stepping ahead of himself, and for this and other reasons he issued sanctions against Colonna's family. He felt pressured into calling for a council anyway, even though no one believed that he truly desired one. Fearing the emperor,

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 739-41.

the pope brought himself closer to the French. The emperor meanwhile pushed hard for a council, and went as far as saying that one should be summoned even if the pope were to refuse. The pope began to arm his supporters despite the emperor's command to stand down.<sup>68</sup>

The Colonnese struck first and seized Rome in September 1526, one year before Rome's more famous seizure. The Orsini came to the pope's rescue as he was held up in a Roman fortification. A truce was then made, and the pope recalled soldiers from Lombardy, and once he felt safe, he quickly excommunicated some Colonnese, declaring them religious heretics and schismatics, and removed the red hat from the cardinal. When the next year came, Sarpi says that the viceroy of Naples caused the March on Rome by pretending that the pope was mobilizing against the Colonnese. General Charles de Bourbon, who despite his surname was with the Habsburgs, also brought his mostly Lutheran troops from the north, as Lutheranism had penetrated the Imperial army. Sarpi says that Bourbon was motivated by the prospect of spoils, and this is likely fully true, given that when a truce was made between the Pope and the Colonnese to the latter's gain, Bourbon unleashed his men on Rome anyway, although he was killed in the assault.<sup>69</sup>

What is strikingly missing here in the account of Rome's factional civil strife and its sacking is any discussion of the political ideologies of either side. According to Quentin Skinner, the sack of Rome was one of the moments in the Renaissance when republicanism suffered a major setback.<sup>70</sup> Civil disturbances in Rome were a periodic occurrence in the late Renaissance, and Skinner says that both the Orsini and their long-time rivals the Colonnese "devoted themselves to fermenting popular disturbances, their main ambition being to prevent

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 36-39.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 39-41.

<sup>70</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Renaissance*, vol. 1, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1978), 186.

the Papacy from gaining any control over the city's government."<sup>71</sup> To name but a few of these disturbances, the Colonesi backed a republican uprising in 1434, and roused the populace in what Skinner calls a "republican insurrection" in 1511.<sup>72</sup>

Francesco Guicciardini, a contemporary to the 1511 and 1527 events, said in his *History of Italy* that Pompeo Colonna, the leader of the anti-Papal faction, had roused the populace with a fiery speech, denouncing the "priestly tyranny" of the Popes and called on the people "to awake from so deep a slumber" and fight for their ancient liberties.<sup>73</sup> However, there was nothing in Sarpi's narrative about the House of Colonna being influenced by republicanism or popular political sympathies or at least using that to their advantage. Instead, they armed themselves in 1526 and marched on the city because they were "not trusting the Popes promises, or [they were upset] for some other cause... which amazed very much the Popes Family."<sup>74</sup>

There could be many reasons to speculate why Sarpi passed over any reference to political ideology. The explanation could be practical. He could have realized that he was getting into a very lengthy multi-book volume that would consist of perhaps almost a thousand pages, as would be the case, and he decided to not complicate the narrative anymore than he had to. It is unlikely he would have not known these details being a well-learned Italian political theorist a generation after these events transpired. More than likely it was because Sarpi was using this incident to exemplify Papal abuse of spiritual power.

The beginning of the paragraph which starts the account says that "while the Pope sought revenge with his Arms, and with the Arms of so many Princes, that he might use spiritual remedies, after he had made some temporal foundation," those of the Colonna family began to

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 114 and 143 for quote.

<sup>73</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. Sidney Alexander (New York: Collier Books, 1969), 231, qtd. in Skinner, 1: 143.

<sup>74</sup> Sarpi, *History of the Council of Trent*, 39.

arm themselves for their march.<sup>75</sup> He is referring to the situation described on the proceeding page in which Clement VII invited Francis I to attack the Emperor, and Sarpi in no uncertain terms was morally disgusted that a man of the cloth and Pope would have wanted to attack Charles V at that time.<sup>76</sup> Because Sarpi tells of the attack of the House of Colonna after referring again to his shameful bellicose plans, and it could be implied that the Colonna were giving the Pope what he deserved. Possibly Sarpi thought it was divine intervention, but Sarpi does not go that far in the text. The point is that the issues of republicanism or populist sympathy are not mentioned while the issue of Papal corruption and abuse of spiritual power is. The latter is a major point of the *History*, not the discussion of political ideology, even though it historically did factor into some of the events he described.

This last story exemplifies the main elements of the political understanding of Sarpi: family politics, ecclesiology, and the dichotomy of the Habsburgs and the rest of the West. This world was at the time divided into three: the Habsburgs, the French state, be they Valois or Medici magnates, and everyone else who could join one side or the other. It was these three actors in a constant exchange that drove history.

The above examinations affirm what has been claimed by Wootton; Sarpi's historiography was unique in its acknowledgement of institutions and structures as primary elements of history, but Sarpi does not have a sense of history in which the past operates on different motors than in the present. Instead, the idea that history's forces, actors, and structures change over time does not emerge until the Enlightenment.<sup>77</sup> This thesis affirms Wootton's statement in that Sarpi acknowledged family politics and dynasticism as a primary institutional and structural element. Yet at the same time, due to Sarpi's assumptions of the power of these

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>77</sup> See Wootton, 116 and footnote 30 of this thesis.

dynastic structures, he still lacks much of the more modern means of understanding events in which other actors, beside the family unit or an individual's relation to family structures, drive the unfolding of history. Familial structures, organic analogies, and bodily metaphors are the focus of the next section of this thesis. Organic 'units' will be explored, not necessarily confined to their relation to history per se, but to the extent that they fit into the framework of present or perennial states, churches, and classes of society, especially Venetian society.

*Family and Body as the Primary Social Units  
of Church, State, and Humanity*

In the first part of this thesis, it has been shown that dynasticism was central to the historiographical understanding of Paolo Sarpi in his *History of the Council of Trent*. Dynastic history and competition between families was so great as to eclipse the importance of competing government structures, ecclesiology, and theology. Likewise according to Sarpi in his *Maxims of the Government of Venice in an Advice to the Republic*, the *Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects*, *A Treatise of Beneficiary Matters*, and other works, the family is and ought to be the primary political, spiritual, and therefore social, unit.<sup>78</sup> The common lay biological and household understanding of family is replicated and duplicated on different levels of society, chiefly the state, the local church, the universal Church, and all mankind. These larger families are often thought of as bodies, and the comparisons go beyond mere allegory, even within the *Pensieri*, his private journals on matters theological, political, religious, ecclesiological, societal, etc. Within Sarpi's texts, states are presented as growing and aging entities, just as the human race as a collective whole is thought to undergo the same processes of waning and waxing vitality. Order and authority operate along a continuum of a replicated organic structure from God, to the Church and to the State, and finally to the household man. This continuum of power operates in a manner which can be described as familial, and also as bodily. One body part, such as the head, makes decisions and commands the other members, such as the limbs. However, this divine or philosophical sanction of power is neither absolute nor guaranteed, but it is dependent on practicalities, the worldly state of affairs, and material factors. In fact, these divine or philosophical structures operate more like recognitions of practical conditions. This is another

---

<sup>78</sup> All of these works, and a plethora of others, were translated into English in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

example of how within Sarpian thought, the worldly, secular, and material take causal precedence before the philosophical or divine.

The conclusions I draw herein are based on works that do not purposely propagate Sarpi's belief in organic units, structures, or frameworks. After having gleaned the *History* for Sarpi's dynastic understandings, I briefly glanced at the *Maxims*, in which I found Sarpi discussing generalities regarding kinship and noble status, such as the problems brothers of the ruling prince may pose, why marriages between nobles and plebeians may be tolerated, why noble families should refrain from merchandizing, and why a noble father should instruct his children in the use of secrecy.<sup>79</sup> I also quickly found that in the *Rights* he discusses the error of a king who fears that a distant direct paternal ancestor was a peasant. This anecdote is back-dropped by a proto-social contract theory, in which he expresses the folly in attempting to go back into history with absolute reverence for temporal sanctions of power.<sup>80</sup> From these examples, I rightly guessed that I could delve into them and by gleaning from his use of organic language and comparisons, conclusions could be drawn regarding Sarpi's organic thought, which could be related to broader themes. A factor which I had to take into consideration is that Sarpi at times may be using such organic, familial, and bodily allegories simply to better reach his readership, but due to the prevalence of these metaphors and the centrality of them in his arguments, Sarpi no doubt had these structures well-conceived in his imagination, which strongly suggests that he indeed does believe in them.

---

<sup>79</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, see 10 for brothers, 20 for inter-class marriage, 33 for noble merchandizing, and 37 for secrecy.

<sup>80</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, see 351-52 for the above mentioned examples. It is somewhat surprising that Sarpi is not often remembered as a social contract theorist in common Anglophone historiography, despite his works preceding those of Hobbes and Locke by decades. This could be because Sarpi devotes but a few laconic sentences on the matter; see 351, "Every man by nature is born free, and would be so always, if the civil law did not put him under a restraint; for the divine law never set a king over a people, if they themselves had not desir'd him."

This current section will therefore be arranged by exploring these organic structures as described in the State, the Church, Christendom, all mankind, as well as how the same properties and phenomena interact where different levels of order and authority meet. Finally, it is important to be aware that, for Sarpi, despite the existence of these unseen organic structures, practicality is still the test of one's right to rule the family or bodily unit. The works to be explored here most thoroughly in which Sarpi uses organic language are his *Maxims* and *Rights*. These works are more theoretical and address larger issues; therefore they more directly convey his understanding of the believed-to-be true nature of things, and the ideal nature of things, as opposed to some of his other works. Some of these other writings were histories or specific tracts that were written to explain a historical progression or to press a certain ecclesiological issue, while others were meant for private reflection. However, smaller excerpts from some of these works of his vast corpus will be used to corroborate his organic convictions which are explained in more detail in the *Maxims* and *Rights*. Sarpi used organic language in these two works and others to assert that the Venetian Republic's empire is a legitimate state that manifests the above-mentioned familial and bodily properties. Sarpi rebuffs perceived notions that Venice is not a legitimate state due to its supposed lack of parental authority in the person of a singular monarch. Instead a collective and parental nobility run the Venetian family, and the children-subjects are therefore legitimate and the Venetian state ought to be considered a sovereignty equal to any other.

Both within and without the Venetian state, Sarpi envisions the family and the body to be the primary political, religious, and social unit. In other words, the family is the primary secular and spiritual unit. This unit is central not only within the world of the living, but it is valid as a Heavenly unit. Whether it be the Kingdom of Heaven, the Church on Earth, a small yet

independent principedom, the Venetian Republic, or a local bishopric, each unit is led or ruled by a patriarch or family “head,” which commands the family members or organic members, such as “limbs.” These patriarchs include anyone from the private householder to none other than God himself.

Sarpi certainly did imagine the state as an individual body. Constant allegories to the state as a body are common in his works, in which he uses analogies to progress his argument. In his *Maxims*, Sarpi cautions against noble engagement in trade. He claims with organic justification that “in the beginning of the Republick, trading was necessary to redeem it from Poverty, but now it is become suspected as a Fomenter of too great Riches. Milk, which is good Food for a Child, is not so proper for a Stomach that can bear with a stronger Diet. Cities likewise have their own Periods; what is fit for them in their Infancy, is not proper in a riper Age.”<sup>81</sup>

Another bodily example is to be found in regard to the years immediately after the interdict, when Sarpi was upset that the victory had not been final. The erstwhile mounting tensions had not been released; Sarpi had hoped that this would have brought about perpetual liberty from the Curia for many years to come. He notes that although the soldiers were dismissed, the nuncio was in Venice, and the Venetian ambassador was in Rome, the prudent knew that “the omission of certain particulars in the settlement only concealed new tumults. It was well said by the learned physician that the unpurged residues of diseases customarily bring about relapses.”<sup>82</sup> The purging he desired well could have been war, for he in one letter laments

---

<sup>81</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 34. Also, it can be said that comparing trade with actions of the body in a negative manner is not unique to Sarpi. Years after his passing, the poet John Dryden, a contemporary to the Restoration and an advocate of accepting James II as head of a kingdom of universal toleration, compared trade to the brothel in *The Hind and the Panther, II*, lines 556-75, referenced in Hirst, 424.

<sup>82</sup> Sarpi, From the fragmentary continuation of his *Istoria dell'Interdetto e altri scritti editi ed inediti*, ed. Giovanni Gambarin, 3 vols. (Bari: G. Laterza, 1940), 1: 225, qtd. in Bouwsma, 484. While Sarpi was upset that the disorder or disease caused by the unfinished nature of conflict with the Curia, the pro-Papal opposition diagnosed Venice

that “this republic desires peace and avoids war as a sick man avoids medicine.”<sup>83</sup> Although other Venetians have made mystical comparisons between a human being and Venice, the historiographical implications of Sarpi’s statement are still very noteworthy when corroborated with analogies to be discussed shortly.<sup>84</sup>

Of the misfortunes on par with sickness to befall a creature of any sort, is dismemberment; Sarpi also speaks with bodily language when he speaks of one being severed from one’s own polity. When discussing exile and banishment, Sarpi sounds as if he could be speaking of excommunication, largely in part due to his description of the political body as an organic body.

[If it be ] necessary for the Government to proceed to Outlawry, and Banishment, let that be done with utmost Severity...But there ought to be no less Rigour used in [not] receiving them back again into the Republick; because they being of themselves rotten Members, cut off from the Body of Society, it is not expedient to deform the Body, by patching to it anew those corrupt and putrefied Members.<sup>85</sup>

This is somewhat reminiscent of St. Paul’s discussions of the Body of Christ and excommunication.<sup>86</sup> The motif of many people comprising one body was so common in religious and political thought from St. Paul to contemporary Anglicans and Venetians, that one could be led to speculate from this evidence alone that Sarpi may not have been merely

---

likewise, but for their continual tendency to oppose them. See Cardinal Borghese’s letter to the nuncio to Venice in Turin, May 5, 1607, in *Carlo Emanuele I e la contesa fra la Repubblica Veneta e Paolo V (1605-1607): documenti*, ed. Carlo Pio de Magistris (Turin, 1941), 506, as briefly qtd. and referenced in Bouwsma, 487.

<sup>83</sup> Sarpi, Letter to Leschassier, May 9, 1610, in *Lettere ai Gallicani*, Boris Ulianich, ed. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1961), 83, qtd. in Bouwsma, 528.

<sup>84</sup> Venetian historians and patriots Giovanni Botero, in *Relatione della Repubblica venetiana* (Venice, 1605), pp. 6v-7r, and Marino Sanuto in "Vitae Ducum Venetorum italice scriptae ab origine urbis, sive ab Anno CCCCXXI usque ad Annum MCCCCXCIII auctore Marino Sanuto, Leonardi Filio, Patricio Veneto," *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Ludovicus Antonius Muratorius ed., vol. 22 (Milan, 1733), 406-7, and others claimed that Venice was “born” on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 421, which not accidentally was the same day Jesus was thought to have been conceived and crucified, as referenced in Sperling, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> See St. Paul in 1 Cor. 6:12, 12:12, Eph. 4:16, 5:22-23, and many other passages clearly state that the believers are of one body. 1 Cor. 5:3-5 and 1 Tim. 1:20 speak of the practice of delivering one to Satan, which was later articulated as excommunication. Also see 1 Cor. 10:16-17 for the significance attributed to the Sacrament of Communion, i.e. one bread and one body.

metaphorical in this sense, but rather that Sarpi believed human bodies were metaphysically joined.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to a bodily model of the state, there is also the familial model. Perhaps the familial model is most relevant to Sarpi and those today studying political theory because of its parental model of authority. First it must be noted that within Sarpi's mind, and certainly within the mind of most of his contemporary commentators, one had a moral and religious obligation to obey the state. This may seem obvious; there are plenty of Biblical passages used to justify the authority of the state, but one of them most important for Sarpi is the Commandment to honor one's father and mother, which to him means the imaginative parents of the noble order. "Now, there is not a catholic expositor upon earth, but [other than he who], by the words of father and mother, understands and includes the spiritual and temporal nobility in such a sense, that a man is oblig'd, by the divine law, to honour his legal father, that is to say, his prince, or his prelate, as much as his carnal father..."<sup>88</sup> The prince here is the entire Republic of Venice, which includes the Council of Ten, other high councils, the doge, the rank-and-file membership of the Senate, and the Great Council. Together, these men of the nobility are fathers to the subjects of the empire.

It may be easier to imagine a singular monarch, especially a male one, as the parent of the nation, rather than a collective and diffused "father" of some kind, for that parental authority would be comprised of multiple individuals. Yet the republic prided itself on anti-monarchical sentiments. Therefore it may seem ironic that statesmen habitually referred to its leading bodies as a singular prince. Giovanni Marsilio, another Venetian theologian and former Jesuit, once had to inform Cardinal Bellarmine, a generally pro-papal Jesuit who was later sainted, that "the doge

---

<sup>87</sup> See footnotes 4 and 191.

<sup>88</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 168.

is only head of the republic, [the latter of] which is the true prince...the word *prince* is generic to signify emperors and kings as well as republics.”<sup>89</sup>

While it would be pretentious for a modern person to say that the contemporary Marsilio was wrong in defining “prince” as a generic term, one need not stop from speculating as to why the word was still used despite its alleged generic nature. Maybe there was still a chivalric or romantic connotation with the word “prince,” yet that would have to be an assessment based on literary research or other research into ways that a prince was represented culturally. But following the understandings of Sarpi as explained above, this word was used to reinforce the idea that Venetian citizenry were not bastardized by lacking a conventional monarch. They could have preferred “Sovereign Council” or “Most August Body,” which some people doubtlessly used but not with the same regularity as “prince,” which was a standard form of address. Calling the republic, i.e. the Great Council, “the prince” legitimated the government and its subjects. This word was not used whimsically or because they could not think of another word for “sovereign body.”

One of Sarpi’s complaints was the lack of respect given to Venice for not having a singular monarch, chiefly by the papacy. He wanted Venice to be able to choose a cardinal, to obtain other ecclesiastical privileges and concessions enjoyed by other sovereignties, and he desired that the doge be addressed by the pope as “most affectionate” or “most beloved,” as he

---

<sup>89</sup> Giovanni Marsilio, *Difesa a favore della risposta dell’otto propositioni contro la quale ha scritto l’illustrissimo et reverendissimo sig. cardinal Bellarmino* (Venice, 1606), included in the *Raccolta degli Scritti usciti fuori in istampa, e scritti a mano, nella causa del P. Paolo V. co’ signori venetiani. Secondo le stampe di Venetia, di Roma, & d’altri luoghi* (Coire, 1607), 2: 271-72, qtd. in Bouwsma, 435. Antonio Quirini uses the same schematics in *Avviso delle ragioni della serenissima repubblica di Venezia intorno alle difficoltà, che le sono promosse dalla Santità di Papa Paolo V* (Venice, 1607), in the *Raccolta*, 1: 26 as referenced in Bouwsma, 435.

addressed kings.<sup>90</sup> He lamented that Venice was treated by the papacy as “a middle sort of State between Kings and Dukes.”<sup>91</sup>

This schematic debate did have practical ramifications, and Sarpi would defend his conception of the Venetian Senate by treating it as one body in a physical sense. Much to Sarpi’s annoyance, the papacy felt it appropriate to treat the entire Venetian Senate as part of one prince, lacking the individuality of its members, when it excommunicated all of them, and for that matter put the entire Venetian populace under interdict, in the spring of 1606. The interdict lasted one year.<sup>92</sup> In a situation in which Sarpi would have wanted Rome to make a distinction between monarchical sovereignty and republican sovereignty, Rome did not. According to him in his *Rights*, if a singular monarch does something worthy of excommunication or personal interdict, it is relatively easy to know who was behind the unjust act—the said monarch. However, if a senate or a sovereignty comprised of multiple individuals were to pass a resolution worthy to bring excommunication or interdict upon those responsible, it would be difficult to distinguish who is responsible and who is not, unless the vote, measure, or action was passed by known unanimous assent. He describes the differentiation between monarchies and republics in a biological allegory. Firstly, to clarify that different individual members of a sovereign body are of the same sovereign body, he recalls a discussion by Hippocrates in which the ancient doctor observed that “ ‘Tis the same thing to draw blood from one vein as from another.’ ”<sup>93</sup> This means in practical terms that it is sometimes necessary to deal with all members of the council equally. Sarpi continues to elaborate himself that,

---

<sup>90</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 40-42, quote on 42.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>92</sup> It was promulgated on April 17, 1606, went into effect in May, and continued until April 21, 1607. Months afterwards, on the evening of October 5, 1607, an assassination team, almost certainly sent by someone high in the Roman curia, unsuccessfully attempted to kill Sarpi. See Bouwsma, 372, 374 for the dates of the interdict and 492 for a brief account of the attempt on Sarpi’s life.

<sup>93</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 162-64, Hippocrates qtd. on 163.

...The same form of government holds in a free state, in which there are various Councils ; but they all receive motion from the will of the sovereign, who, like a heart to the body, diffuses spirits, blood, and such other alterations as is suitable to his own disposition. But the model of a republic is different, because every member, which makes a part of that body, has its operations independent on the sentiments of the other parts ; and every one of them may be consider'd distinctly as a microcosm of the whole sphere, of which he is really but a part. Tho' one citizen, or subject, may have more power, or parts, than another, it does not follow that he has a right to compel the other...[unless he were to use violence which would be a breach of the law]<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, Sarpi continues, the power with the authority to spiritually reprimand sovereigns, i.e. the papacy due to its sovereignty over the Church on Earth, ought not excommunicate the whole lot, for “*Christ* has told us, that it be better to pardon a hundred criminals than to punish one innocent person.” If the papacy must do something, then it would be better to lay the sovereign body under the interdict, “because it does not deprive believers of those helps that are necessary to their salvation.”<sup>95</sup>

Thus Sarpi was annoyed that foreigners were not recognizing the collective paternal nobility of Venice as a sovereign authority, except when it befitted them to treat all senators as one monolithic group. Likewise, he would have been concerned if Venice’s own subjects, or even noblemen, did not believe in such parental similarities. Such a scenario would have been cause for concern to Sarpi on a practical level; Sarpi would have thought that such thinking could have tempted subjects away from their commitment to obedience to the Venetian sovereignty.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 164. See pages 159-62 for the distinction between an interdict and an excommunication. An interdict is often thought of as a nation or state-wide excommunication, but thought interdicts were sometimes fulminated against entire polities, one under an interdict would be subject to less sacramental bars than almost total sacramental and spiritual severance as one would receive under excommunication. As Sarpi says on 27-28, only the Papacy would have the right to issue an excommunication upon a sovereign prince, be he a singular person or multiple individuals, because only the Papacy is sovereign in a spiritual sense. Because the sovereign Papacy is on par with a sovereign prince, the Papacy is therefore able to excommunicate him (only if the offense is worthy of such a reprimand, of course). A co-issuing regular prelate must first gain the approval of the Pope to excommunicate a sovereign prince. Sarpi does not mention the sanction of an interdict in this discussion, only excommunication, yet it may be that Sarpi would not have allowed for even the lesser of the two sanctions from a non-sovereign prelate against a sovereign prince.

<sup>96</sup> There is no evidence from the works of Sarpi examined in this thesis that Venetians themselves, either nobles or subjects, doubted this model. Also from the works examined, there is also little reason to assume that the lower

These organic structures are again replicated in the spiritual hierarchies, by means of the same logic. Obedience to Holy Mother Church is presented in the same familial fashion.

The great respect we owe our parents, is the rule that, which all Christians ought to bear to the Church. This precept of the decalogue enjoying filial duty, has been religiously observed even by the idolaters[pagans], who, tho' they never saw the glorious beams of divine reason, have learnt from nature itself how much they are oblig'd to obey and honour their parents...if we consider what the Church is, we must acknowledge her to be a very affectionate mother.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, in a discussion concerning the beginnings of ecclesiastical freedom, the Apostles are chosen "to sow the seed of the word of God, which was follow'd with a wonderful harvest, for the field was water'd with the blood of the divine husbandman."<sup>98</sup> The word husbandman more so means farmer or planter, master of an agricultural house, and God is often referred to as such in the parables of Christ, but the word does have marital connotations, for it means "the head of the house" and the English word used by the translator includes within it the word "husband," for the translator likely perceived that Sarpi here imagines Christ as God's heir, wed to Holy Mother Church.<sup>99</sup>

Speaking of Christ, it is through him that the entire Christian Church is thought to be of one body and family. It is worth remembering here also in digression, that Sarpi imagined the state not only as one fictive family, but also as one physical body, as when Sarpi recalls Hippocrates' medical account. It can be said with confidence that some organic property permeates both analogies. The following is Sarpi emphasizing a common description of a body politic, during a discussion about how ecclesiastics are still subjects of their secular sovereign.

---

orders, not educated in the same manner, even imagined the Senate as a father figure. What can be said for sure is that even common people would have heard of the Body of Christ, and other religious models of governance, such as the Old Testament kingdoms. For that matter, they also would have known that they were to be Children of God.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 126-27.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>99</sup> In the Douay-Rheims Bible, in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 5 includes the verses: "<sup>22</sup> Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: <sup>23</sup> Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the saviour of his body."

“There needs no more than to reflect, that, in order to form the body politic, the prince must constitute the head, and all the subjects the members.”<sup>100</sup> This bodily language was so important to Sarpi that he had difficulty reconciling Peter’s dual descriptions as both the rock or foundation of the Church and the head of the Church, at one point deciding that *the rock* was not always synonymous with Peter.<sup>101</sup>

There are two final organic categories or layers of society in which living human beings can be classified. One layer of human society in which organic parallels are drawn, is Christendom as a whole, i.e. the Church on Earth, and the other is all of mankind, including non-believers, i.e. the human race from its birth to its inevitable death. He once wrote to a Protestant acquaintance lamenting the current state of the body of believers:

Christendom is a body so full of bad humors, that although its external parts are strong enough to contain them, so that for the present no abscess is flowing, it will not long be able to maintain this appearance of health. Indeed, I am afraid that the longer it delays bursting out in some evil issue, the worse it must produce... [The doctors have treated the patient] with good foods but no medicine, forgetting the warning of Hippocrates that the more sickly bodies are nourished, the worse they get... in the parts which were already infirm the disease has taken such hold that it has passed into nature, the neutral members are sickened, and the good weakened.<sup>102</sup>

Thus Sarpi conveyed imagery of the Church on Earth being one organic unit. Yet still Sarpi replicates the organic analogy on an even grander scale and presents his largest organic unit, the entire human race. It reveals that Sarpi claims to believe in a cyclical view of history, that empires rise and fall as all human endeavors wax and wane, just as the human body grows to strength and then deteriorates. Perhaps even more importantly, as the following quote shows, the human race on this earth is collectively going through the same process, and Sarpi, arguably pessimistically, believes the collective human body in his time to be past its prime. In the

---

<sup>100</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 189.

<sup>101</sup> Id., *Apologia*, in *Istoria dell’Interdetto e altri scritti editi ed inediti*, 3: 151, referenced in Bouwsma, 455.

<sup>102</sup> Id., Letter to Groslot, April 1, 1608, in *Letter ai Protestanti*, ed. Manlio Diulio Busnelli, 2 vols. (Bari, 1931), 1: 11, qtd. in Bouwsma, 516-17.

following quote, which due to its content must be replicated at length here, Sarpi expresses his bafflement that papal power had been increasing, while

all other things of this world, whether created or generated, lose their vigour in the process of time ; but the Pope's authority is far from losing, that it always gains ; and, which is very miraculous, is more vigorous in its old age than its youth. If we cast our eyes on the productions of nature, and the ordinary generation of things, we find them declining with age, and destitute of their former vigour. Men do not live for many months now, as hitherto they did years. The brute creatures are not so capable of fatigues as they were formerly. The fruits of the earth have not the same favour, sweetness, and substance, and are more dangerous to the constitution. Then as to bodies politic ; those, which were once famed for their wisdom and power, are become weak and supine ; and the subjects, who formerly burned with zeal and duty to their sovereigns, upon all occasions, are now become cold and indifferent : The arts and sciences suffer the same diminutions as ; where is there now an *Apelles*, a *Phidias*, and a *Polictetus* ? Our age has no *Aristotle*, *Plato*, nor *Socrates* in the schools, nor no *Achilles*, *Alexander*, and *Hannibal* in the field. The *Turkish* empire is a farther proof of this vicissitude ; this empire, founded upon the slavery of the people, and their blind obedience to the sovereign ; which they think honourable in this life, and meritorious in the next ; how it is fallen from its ancient splendour ! The *Mahometans*, who now see thro' all the whimsies of the *Alcoran*, and find how contrary its laws are generally to the preservation and advantages of society, have not that faith which their ancestors had in *Mahomet*. These decays are all natural, and there's nothing in this world in which they are not visible. In my opinion, this final argument might have convinc'd *Aristotle* that the world would have an end, which he absolutely deny'd, because, said he, experience taught him, that corruption is the cause of generation ; so that he thought it impossible for the world to cease, considering the daily resurrection of individuals.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Id., *Rights*, 93-94. Although Sarpi does not claim this, it could be that the papal temporal power was growing, while all other nations and the strength of men declined, because temporal power was more of a weakness to the larger human sovereignties around it, than a true sovereignty of its own. By "whether created or generated," Sarpi could mean "made or begotten." In the Nicene Creed in Catholic churches in the United States today, it is professed that Christ was "begotten not made," and in Italy today, it is professed that Christ was "generated not created." I do not know what the language was in prior times. By "miraculous," Sarpi clearly does not mean that papal power has grown by means of miracles sent with the favor of God, for Sarpi is against the historical aggrandizement of papal power, and imagines such power as detrimental to God's intentions. Notice Sarpi's, or at least his translator's, somewhat older use of the word "constitution" to refer to the health of the body, a sense that has been mostly lost in modern political discourse when discussing a polity's written constitution. Probably no political connotation was intended. By the decrease in the ages of men, Sarpi must be referring to the Book of Genesis, in which the lifespans of men were hundreds of years long before the deluge of Noah's time. He mentions in *Rights*, 307 that though Adam's sin caused him to die, his death was deferred 930 years and due to his repentance, he triumphed over it. In fact, his above lament that the fruits of the earth are not as bountiful, could be, at least in part, a reference to the Garden of Eden. Perhaps he understood the Fall of Man and its consequences, as presented in the Bible, as an ancient folk-interpretation or legend that was meant to encapsulate this gradual deterioration of man's spirit, body, and the fertility of the Earth.

Note that Sarpi talks about all three parts of the human being, mind, body, and spirit, and the correlating deterioration of the arts and sciences, physical prowess, and the Muslim faith in the Turkish Empire. Certainly, Sarpi was not advocating sympathy for the Muslim faith, but noting the weakening ability of human beings to have an interior strength, drive, or passion. In regard to his own religion, he continues to put forth that the amount of holiness and spiritual strength of the papacy lessens from time to time, but conversely papal power was growing.<sup>104</sup> While this was his purpose for this digression into the waning of all other human and thus bodily powers over time, it is worth pondering if he would have committed this much effort if he did not have some belief in these organic structures.

Not only did Sarpi profess the existence of these structures, but he used logic by taking properties applicable to authorities and, by virtue of this continuum of organic and familial structures, he was able to apply those properties to others. Psychology could be applied to social or cultural consciousness. The rights of a householder could apply to the rights of a sovereign. The state is interpreted as a physician or master of a household family.

The first example of this kind explored here is one that Wootton interprets as a complex propaganda tactic to subtly plant the seeds for a secular society of moral atheists, in which the propagandist acts as a physician. If Wootton is correct that Sarpi was irreligious, an atheist of sorts as briefly mentioned in the introduction, then it might perhaps follow that Sarpi did not believe in true unseen organic structures. The degree of Sarpi's religiosity or irreligion cannot be dissected here, though the conclusion will discuss some of these matters. But Wootton's reading of Sarpi can help us explain how similar organic phenomena manifested themselves in differing levels of human existence, whether on the single individual level or throughout a society at large,

---

<sup>104</sup> Id., *Rights*, 94.

such that what could be structurally true for one man could be structurally true for a society, and what could affect one man could affect society in a similar fashion.

This alleged scheme of Sarpi depends on the validity of a certain organic comparison; as recounted by Wootton, the *Pensieri filosofici* argue that both the state and religion are inventions to be medicine to the defects in man's character. The healthy man would have need of neither of them, but if one or both were to be taken away from the unhealthy man, then he would be in harm. Likewise, if one who is sick is given food fit for a healthy man, harm will also come, so claims Hippocrates. Sarpi continues by establishing that the food fit for a healthy man is philosophy, to which religion is only an additional remedy which under an ideal circumstance would not be used. The point of this writing is that because the state is the primary institution which makes social life possible, religion must therefore be an institution that gives support to the state, ergo, the Church must be subject to the state.<sup>105</sup> This is a further example of how within Sarpian thought, secular matters, in this case the utility of secular philosophy, take precedence in importance before religious matters, in this case the utility of propaganda and religious belief and devotion.

Wootton claims to understand part of the justification for Sarpi's alleged duplicity in his propaganda —i.e. pretending to sympathize with anti-papal Christianity, be it Protestantism or a kind of "reformed" Catholicism when in truth he was an infidel—in bodily terms. In what has been dubbed the *Pensieri medico-morali*, Sarpi notes that one cannot give a sick person food fit

---

<sup>105</sup> Id., *Pensieri*, ed. G. and L. Cozzi (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1976), nos. 380, 403, 404, referenced in Wootton., 20. Bouwsma on pages 536-37 also references *Pensieri* 403 and 405 to the same effect. But Wootton explains in detail that one word that Sarpi re-invents and uses for his purposes is *tora*, as in the Torah of the Old Testament. Sarpi uses this word as shorthand for laws supposedly of divine origin, be they of any religion on the globe. On pages 22-23 of Wootton, it is clarified that although the *tora* aids in the stability and sociability of society, it is not true that the *tora* sustains the state, and it is likewise not true that without the *tora* the state will collapse. Sarpi here professes not to believe that fear in hell and belief in judgment in the afterlife is necessary to sustain social stability. The idea is that people who fear judgment would be sociable people anyways and people who are bold enough to be detrimental to society would likewise be bold enough to not fear judgment and hell. To paraphrase Wootton paraphrasing Sarpi, religion is like a "bonus" with which human society could possibly do without.

for a healthy person. This is true for sicknesses of body and in sickness of mind, in other words false belief. Yet if these beliefs are not harmful, it is best to let these beliefs be, but if they do cause harm, such as allowing papal and Church secular power to expand at the expense of the rights of state authority, then one must be tactful in combating such a societal illness. As a physician cannot prescribe a sick person with food for a healthy person, one seeking to correct a sick man's conviction may not, or cannot, be able to use straightforward truth. Such straightforwardness may not resonate with the individual. As a physically sick man's health is revived by restoring the proper balance of humors, a man sick in belief is restored to the health of truth by contrasting opinions, some of which may be intentionally false. These contrasting opinions exercise the mind and present new opinions to counter-balance the old opinions. Eventually, both the old set of opinions and the new set of opinions will both lose credibility until finally the individual is ready to receive the truth. What may work with one individual may be replicated at a societal level, thus an individual's body and mind are linked in some fashion to the larger bodily society and society of mentalities.<sup>106</sup> This is another instance of the replication of these organic structures.

The practical relevance of this to Sarpi's work is that, if Wootton is to be believed, Sarpi's secret advocacy of Protestantism and hope for an open military alliance with Protestant states against Rome was not done because he preferred Protestantism over Catholicism. Instead, it was likely done because Sarpi was hoping to use the intra-Christian conflict to advance the *politique* mindset. The *politique* mindset in France, the non-confrontational attitude in regard to differing Christian creeds which gained political currency after their costly religious wars, was something Sarpi could publically advocate without seeming to be so original so as to have his

---

<sup>106</sup> See Wootton, 37 in which he references P. Sarpi, *Opere*, ed. G. and L. Cozzi (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1969), 73-77.

propaganda fall on deaf ears. This *politique* mindset was the closest acceptable mentality to his ultimate goal of realizing a society in which secular thinking had sole relevance in secular matters. It has even been thought by historians that the effects of the French Wars of Religion included not only the spread of *politique* thinking but also moral atheism.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, even if Sarpi did not hold a belief in the Christian Body of Christ, a belief can remain in a permeation of an organic structure throughout human society, for one could believe that Sarpi used a rather complex tactic to spread disbelief by virtue of replicating an individual's thought processes on a larger scale. In this case, it is a mental structure.

In any case, Wootton's reflection on the *Pensieri* is an example of how complex Sarpi's ability was to work with this structure to press his arguments, moving from the individual to a larger social unit. Sarpi, in the example to be shown below, while ostensibly speaking honestly, incorporates many layers of social authority and treats them all the same with an organic property in order to press his argument. A critical assumption by Sarpi is that the nature of all authority is akin to the authority which is exercised in a private home or a private family. Thus obedience to the State and the Church is imagined as a familial obligation by Sarpi. Thus, despite Venice being "modern," there is still an understanding of the large public state being a run by the same principles as a single private household.<sup>108</sup> This is connected to Sarpi's understanding of power and dominion.

Power and dominion are thought of as operating on the same template from God down to the common man. In discussing God's relation to his Church's temporal property, he references Genesis 14 and Psalm 23, in which

---

<sup>107</sup> Wootton, 38. See Wootton, 5 for a definition of a "moral atheist," one who believes that God does not judge one's morality in the afterlife; "they may act morally, or they may not."

<sup>108</sup> A classic work in modern historiography on this concept, not particular to Venice but rather Austria, is Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship* (1939; reprint, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992) in which he discusses the idea of "Hausherrschaft."

*the Earth and all that is contain'd therein is the LORD's (a).* But in this Sense the Goods of the Church are no more GOD Almighty's, than everything else in the World. / The Dominion of God is universal, but a Sovereign Prince hath another Dominion, which, according to *Seneca*, may be call'd the Dominion of Power (b) ; or according to Lawyers the Dominion of Protection and Jurisdiction (c). Every Man also hath his Dominion, which is that of Property, and the Subject of our present Inquiry.<sup>109</sup>

Some of Sarpi's fellow Servites, not from Venice but from Perugia, often used the same language, but in order to counter Sarpi. During the interdict crisis, they felt obliged to counter their second-in-command and to express their papal loyalties. They put forth that:

The order that shines through in all the works of God is also found in every human congregation. For because order cannot exist without chief and head, since the principle of order consists in this, it happens that in every multitude gathered together, insofar as order exists, there is a chief and a head on which the ordered multitude depends. This appears in families, in armies, and in all other regulated assemblies. In the same way most beauteous order appears in this holy congregation of the faithful, which is the Christian church, as in the family, or an army, or even, as Saint Paul suggests, a human body...[It is necessary] that there should be one head and chief, and in consequence levels of authority and subjection. Because in every ordered assembly it is necessary that some should rule and others should be subject; some should command and others obey; some should give laws and others observe them, and with their observance direct and conduct themselves to the destined end.<sup>110</sup>

In this model in which state powers mimic the powers of the private household man, the State becomes somewhat of a hyper- or super-private household man and at the same time a mini-god. Another pro-papal adversary of Sarpi imagined that order in the various realities of existence operated along the same duplicative framework, this time in language more organic. In one of these tracts, a frequent critic of Venetian thought, the Jesuit Possevino, claims that, "the heart, the brain, the liver administer motion, heat, and life to the body...[yet they do

---

<sup>109</sup>Sarpi, *Of Beneficiary Matters*, 73. The footnotes are commentary and references of Amelot de la Houssaie, which were translated from the French into English by Cluer, Campbell, and Stokoe or one of their employees. It suffices to say that footnote (a) quotes Gen. 14 and Psalm 23, footnote (b) quotes Seneca and Pliny the Younger, and footnote (c) quotes Simmacus, a classical Biblical translator.

<sup>110</sup>*Difesa delle censure pubblicate da N. S. Paolo Papa V nella causa de' Signori Venetiani fatta da alcuni theology della religion de' Servi in risposta alle considerationi di F. Paolo da Venetia*, (Perusia, 1607), 42, qtd. in Bouwsma, 421.

not]... suffice to keep man alive, because the intellectual soul is necessary... In heaven there are, equally, various hierarchies.”<sup>111</sup>

Sarpi was thus in conflict with others using the same intellectual framework as he, but Sarpi was skillful enough to articulate his organic system of order even when different levels of order and authority converged. He was able to imagine the plethora of systems, and within his own mind he was able to reconcile the powers in light of the issues of the day and produce an answer that made sense based on his organic framework. In a very unexpected manner, Sarpi manages to relate three layers, the bodily individual, the sovereign, and God, to defend a law which mandated all that the superiors of all friaries be natural born Venetians. Firstly, he begins with an organic comparison.

[Illegible] always hold true that a physician, who has been afflicted with many distempers himself, knows better than another how to cure them in his patients; it must be granted that *Venetian* friars are cannot be better govern'd than by a *Venetian* superior; who knowing the customs of the country, together with the tempers and the blind fides of his countrymen, better than any other, knows best what are the proper measures to be taken.<sup>112</sup>

From the comparison of physical well-being and doctors to spiritual well-being and spiritual ministers, Sarpi moves to a comparison of God to the superiors. While addressing the same argument, the defense of the right of Venice to ensure that all superiors of friars be Venetian by birth, he applies a Biblical passage to not only God, but the superiors. “Therefore *Christ* said, according to *St. John*, *He that entreth not by the door of the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entreth in by the door, is the shepherd of*

---

<sup>111</sup> Antonio Possevino, *Risposta di Teodoro Eugenio di Famagosta all'avisio mandato fuori dal sig. Antonio Quirino senator veneto, circa le ragioni che hanno mosso la Sanità di Paolo V pontefice a publicare l'Interdetto sopra tutto il dominio venetiano* (Bologna, 1607), 39, qtd. in Bouwsma, 421.

<sup>112</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 278. Sarpi was a high-ranking Servite, and it would seem unusual to compare his leadership role to that of a physician, but spiritual ministry had often been compared to physical medicine, as sinners are compared to physically sick. See Mt. 9:10-13 and Lk. 5:27-32. Sarpi also mentions on the same page that, at least in some places, penitents were required to confess to their parochial pastor, who was thought to know the nature of his penitents better than a strange confessor.

*the sheep ; to him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*”<sup>113</sup> The rest of the passage, which Sarpi only begins, is the parable of the Good Shepherd, in which Christ says, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”<sup>114</sup> It is clear this passage is comparing the shepherd to Christ, but Sarpi is comparing the shepherd to the superior, who, being of the same nationality or locality, as the sheep, has an easier time leading them. The final levels of authority are soon brought into the argument in the following pages. “...methinks a prince ought at least to have as much liberty as a private person ; now, where is that master of a family who does not appoint what steward he pleases ?”<sup>115</sup>

Therefore, the prince ought to function as a hyper-private household man, but the household man ought not function as a mini-prince in the same way. In other words, the prince, as one might expect, enjoys greater liberties of power. Therefore the prince can be compared to a private person when it adds to his authority but he need not fear the limitations particular to a private man. Sarpi’s definition of sovereignty makes this distinction:

No one will deny to the prince the power over the area, the surface, and the land of his whole empire, and over the private persons who possess it, because this is *de iure divino*, as is manifest in sacred scripture and as the doctors attest. This power of the prince, which they call *majesty* or *sovereignty*, is distinct from the dominion which the private person possesses, as Seneca noted; and it is so superior to it that the prince can take away dominion from the private person, but the private person cannot in any respect prejudice the power of the prince...the prince can dispose of any thing and person according to the necessity and utility of the public good. On the other hand the private person cannot do anything against the prohibition of the prince.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 278, Sarpi quoting Luke 10:1-3. His later editor and translator was probably using the King James Version but the Douay-Rheims Version are identical, other than a few words in the first verse that Sarpi omitted.

<sup>114</sup> Lk. 10:11, King James Version. The Douay-Rheims version is identical, except it is two sentences not joined by a colon.

<sup>115</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 280. Sarpi on the same page makes note that since Adrian VI who was elevated in 1522, all Popes had been Italian, so why should they complain that Venetian superiors are Venetian? Not until the 1970s was there was another non-Italian Pope in the person of John Paul II.

<sup>116</sup> Id., *Difesa di due ordinazioni della serenissima repubblica*, in *Istoria dell’Interdetto e altri scritti editi ed inediti*, 2:12, qtd. in Bouwsma, 436.

The pro-papal Servite writers use the same structural framework to advance their goal, which is to advocate for a state limited in its operations, chiefly in its operations regarding property, specifically ecclesiastical property. They do not believe that a prince ought to hold all of the powers of a private man, as Sarpi does. In regard to property they claim that “the private person has proprietary power over it; the prince has jurisdictional power. For this reason the private person can dispose of it as he pleases; the prince cannot, except for the common good and public utility.”<sup>117</sup>

At about the same time during the interdict, Sarpi used the same concept of authority to press the opposing side of the argument. The controversial Venetian law that disallowed anyone from building

Churches without license [from the state], is not (as the Pope objecteth) to exercise a power over the Church ; but rather the ground, floare, or superficial part, where one may build ; which no man can denie to be purely and meerely secular. No priuate man that should forbid an Ecclesiasticall person to build a Church vpon his ground, could be said to ordaine any thing against the Church... That which may be built, is not called a Church ; but that which is readie dedicated : euerie priuate man hath power ouer his owne freehold, and the Prince hath a greater power ouer all the ground and freeholds of his dominion.<sup>118</sup>

This argument may seem to fall on shaky ground, as if it is merely a stretch-of-logic justification, taking advantage of technicalities of language, to give his goal of limiting Church property some kind of sophistic grounding. It may even seem as if Sarpi is not being serious but taking some satisfaction in annoying his opponents with a witty answer. But based on how fundamental Sarpi is throughout his works as to the extent of *earthly* power, he may well believe exactly in that justification.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> *Difesa de' Servi*, 86, qtd. in Bouwsma, 440.

<sup>118</sup> Sarpi, *A Fvll and Satisfactorie Answer*, 12-13.

<sup>119</sup> Sarpi on Ibid., 13 also writes that, “the Prince has prerogatiue over the soil” and that, if he found it necessary, he could bar Churches from using oak in their construction because such timbers could be used for military purposes, the building of bridges, or other uses. He continues his discussion of these matters onto page 14, in which he claims

The above examples show that the rhetoric that princely power was akin to parental household authority was not without its practical justifications, therefore both sides utilized these analogies. In the same fashion, Sarpi used an organic analogy of the sick and a physician to press his argument while incorporating every level of authority and obedience: the private man, the State, God, the superiors, and the laymen. Power and dominion, no matter at what level exercised, are of the same cosmic property or at least must be justified on the same pattern. However, these religious, spiritual, metaphysical, and on the other hand corporal, bodily, and familial identifications of power are not enough to justify the exercise of power.

The following will be but one area in Sarpi's thought in which the mundane, the earthly, and practical conditions must be met before a divine, metaphysical, or familial sanction of power is given. As for the legitimacy of states being run by a single household, a single family, and thus a single patriarch, Sarpi cautions that such familial political legitimacy is not absolute. Sarpi tells a parable of a king and a genealogist, though the story is probably fictitious, as he names no specific king.

A learn'd genealogist offer'd his service to certain king to draw a genealogical tree of his family. He demonstrated that the first king of his royal family was the son of a duke, he the son of a prince, the prince the son of a marquis, the marquis the son of a count ; and so on ; but the king tore his draught in pieces, and forbad him to raise his tree any higher, saying, he feared that if he went on, he would come at last to a peasant. Every man by nature is born free, and would be so always, if the civil law did not put him under a restraint ; for the divine law never set a king over a people, if they themselves had not desir'd him.<sup>120</sup>

The point of the story is that history can never give a timeless sense of legitimation of any state or authority, because if one goes back far enough, one will always find a point where

---

that the prince's dominion is over all things temporal, thus when something physical, such as Church building material or the ground on which it is to stand, is to become hallowed and pass into the hands of the spiritual authority and therefore outside of his control, the prince therefore has the right to approve of the transaction. There is a strong bond, therefore, between the secular sovereign and the land.

<sup>120</sup> Id., *Rights*, 351. This statement predates similar, if not for all intents and purposes identical, but more celebrated statements by Locke and Hobbes.

there was a usurpation or a war or some other alteration of previous political agreements, which in a technical sense could easily be thought of as highly illegal. But sometimes in history, agreements result in a structured state of some kind to which those born afterwards are bound. For centuries before Sarpi's time, the English and French states had based their legitimacy on the succession of their monarchs. "The *Salic* law in *France*, and the Natural Law in England, are look'd upon as sacred; nevertheless, what are they founded on but custom, and the power of their sovereigns?"<sup>121</sup>

The above parable of the genealogist and the king and the other historical examples are found in the midst of Sarpi's defense of Venice having sole sovereignty over the Adriatic. Despite the papacy preaching that the Donation of Constantine gave them some rights to the sea, Sarpi retorts that the Venetians have "have prov'd the said right more than once by the thunder of their cannon" whereas the other polities and empires surrounding them, have lost their authority over the sea because Venice for a long time was the only one able to withstand and combat corsairs.<sup>122</sup>

He likewise claims, "there's not one [prince] upon earth that can produce legal proofs of his dominion, and that the only title of all sovereigns is immemorial possession; for ancient possession is proof that there have been sufficient forces to maintain that possession, and forces are the best arguments that a sovereign can give of the validity of his rights."<sup>123</sup> Sarpi recalls when Philip II, pretender to the crown of Portugal, had a committee draw up his rights to the throne. A witty member closed his report by saying that "king *Philip's* title would certainly have

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 350.

been deem'd valid, provided it had been back'd by thirty thousand Foot, and six thousand horse."<sup>124</sup>

The papal argument, which Sarpi claims to be rebuking, is that the Donation of Constantine allotted the pope certain territories in Italy and therefore to have some sovereignty over the bordering Adriatic. Sarpi says that the written Donation, instead of being an outright lie, must have been lost by time or decay or some other incident, but any agreement would have been contingent on their ability to hold the sea. Furthermore, it would be an error to assume a sanction by a Roman Emperor would give one an absolute right to the sea years later. For Constantine was a successor of Ceasar, who became sovereign of a republic instead of remaining a mere subject, and the Roman Republic was nothing but the spoils of first Latium, then all Italy, then much of the world.<sup>125</sup>

The basis of every territorial right cannot be a series of usurpations and conquests. Sarpi says that many princes in the world and just about every prince in Christendom today "enjoy their estates *bona fida*...nevertheless, if their estates were to be traced back to their origin, they would appear to have been gotten by usurpation," and what credit is there in just that?<sup>126</sup> In any case, every time one polity seizes land of another, some distant historical connection is found, making it folly to use distant history when by the same token others can just as easily use history to make counter-claims.<sup>127</sup>

The relevance of this argument of Sarpi to the nature of noble family can easily be ascertained by applying the nature of power as outlined in this discussion from royal and sovereign power to republican and noble power. The right, the warrant, the justification, and the

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 350-51.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 351-52.

authority of any given unit of power is based on actuality, not formulaic formalities based in sacred sanctions of power that are believed to have binding power centuries upon centuries later. It is the position, the means, and the years of tenure that give a noble family the right to exercise its authority, and that outweighs any obsolescent law codes that may be occasionally discovered in some archive or library and brought to the floor of the Great Assembly for debate. Sarpi would have considered his line-of-thought practical as opposed to philosophical. More of this adherence to the principles of practicality in regard to noble families will be discussed in the next section.

Perhaps it is fitting to end this section with an arguably comical argument of Sarpi that entails both a familial and biological concept of power that is based on practical means. Again in regard to the Adriatic, Sarpi explains in detail what exactly the “marriage” of Venice and the sea actually means. One cannot be certain if Sarpi realized that one could find it tedious, ironic, or even funny, but he seriously makes distinctions about a so-called marriage between an inanimate object as opposed to marriage with a human female. Obviously he was not talking about biology but of the nature of power.

The point of this discussion was to reiterate that despite papal approval and papal instigation of the ceremony of marriage to the sea, the republic did not hold the sea as a fief of the papacy. Rather, Pope Alexander III, then in conflict with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, recognized Venice’s mastery over the sea by virtue of Venice’s own right.<sup>128</sup> During this discussion of historical events and the significance of ritualistic symbolism, Sarpi goes out of his way, somewhat comically to a modern reader and perhaps to early modern readers, to say that

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 333, 337-39.

the yearly ceremony of the doge marrying the sea as per his function of “Lord of the Sea” was not a sacramental marriage.<sup>129</sup>

Sarpi elaborates that “absolute authority, or dominion, does not follow from that marriage; for other kings do not marry their dominions, yet they possess them.”<sup>130</sup> He further goes on to say that the doge does not marry his dominions, although he is the master of them (in conjuncture with the Great Council, of course, for the doge is not sovereign in himself), and the pope does not marry the Papal See, though he is master of that territory. Rather, both parties must consent to marriage for the sacrament to be present.<sup>131</sup> Seeing how the sea has no will and is not human, Venice needs not any agreement to justify its power over the sea. The implication is that Venice’s sailors and cannons are justification enough.

For the purposes of understanding how Sarpi understood family power and the shared features between familial authority and sovereign authority, it is useful to realize that Sarpi went out of his way to say that the marriage between the doge and the sea was not sacramental. Sarpi did not go out of his way to say that the sovereign’s fatherhood over the children subjects is symbolic or not real, but rather he did the opposite and made a point to say that those bonds of imaginative kinship are very real. Perhaps it may be suggested, that Sarpi’s belief that secular authority was on a continuum from the private household family master, to the familial state above him, and to God above the parental family-run state, was reflective of Sarpi’s religious and spiritual training. The same can be said of how properties of these structures also operated on parallels. In this mindset, he imagined God as the divine Father and Great Shepherd, with little fathers and little shepherds below him, who were also children and sheep, and the lay

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 340, 388 for quotation. If it were a sacramental marriage, the pope could claim some sort of authority over it.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 340-42.

children of God and flock below them. Even a human body, or a human mind, acted like a state and, on an even grander scale, the entire human race from its beginning to end. On both vertical ladders of authority and order, each step is and ought to be somewhat reflective of the step above and/or below it.

*Sarpi's Noble Families, Households, Virtue, and Balance*

While Sarpi presents macro structures of organization, authority, and obedience as operating on a familial and bodily pattern, his primary Venetian political unit is the noble class, or the noble body comprised of noble families. He emphasizes the importance of proper family and household maintenance and functioning among the parental Venetian nobility, for such proper material conditions lead to cultivated virtue, which is critical to the operation of the larger society. Therefore, the secular and worldly state of the nobles directly and greatly influenced the domestic rearing, character, and virtue of the nobles. This is evident in his *Maxims*, which was not meant for the commoners' eyes but rather those of the highest echelons of the Council of Ten and various other circles of high nobles.<sup>132</sup> This process of the nurturing of virtue is another example of how within Sarpian thought, the material and secular factors not only outweigh but also take causal precedence before religious or moral factors. The 'noble' virtue and 'noble' goodness of the patrician class are not primarily resultant or dependent on descent or the divine, but rather these descent-based or divinely-instituted structures, which allow nobles their exclusive ruling prerogative, function more as recognitions and sanctions of the status quo than causal properties. Within Sarpi's writings, how noble families operate internally and with other families or classes, noble or ignoble, is at the heart of the survival of the state and the upkeep of the public good, which for him was a Spartan, non-frivolous, minimalist, stable, safe, and secure society. In short, virtuous noble families are to be supreme among all lesser households, yet balanced among each other, while conducting themselves in ways conducive to statecraft.

Firstly, it is imperative to understand his definitions of virtue and nobility, and also his understanding of what the nobles were to preserve, i.e. the public good. Despite the uncompromising emphasis on the exclusive political relevance of nobles, Sarpi's belief in the

---

<sup>132</sup> This work was not published until after Sarpi had passed away.

right of a noble to succeed his father, and thus for a noble family to perpetuate itself and its functions, is derived more from practicality than from divine right. Sarpi believes that circumstance makes the man. He does not mention divine intervention in the process of conceiving and rearing an heir, but the personal, political, and lifestyle-situations of the nobility fit them into a formula in which they are by nature directed to the benefit of the public good. Sarpi believes that nobles are virtuous and perhaps intelligent, but their virtue is derived from their personal environment and circumstance, not primarily the other way around. Constitutionality, law, and practice must therefore come together to ensure that noble families are nurtured and set among each other in a position of balance, while the lower orders are properly contained from interfering in the sphere of their betters by appeasement and even intra-class discord.

The ultimate end of this noble-based arrangement of the system of the state was the preservation of the public good. That definition warrants an explanation here; Sarpi's writings were obsessed with state security and a stable society. The republic and her dominions in Italy and abroad were to be maintained. The common folk were also to have enough food and just enough money for the upkeep of their well-being and to escape poverty, and enough of them were to be employed by the state to bolster loyalty in the subject class. Within the noble families, power among the upper-classes was not to be either too centralized or too dispersed, but balanced. Avarice for either wealth or power was to be avoided for the sake of the public good by commoners and nobles alike.<sup>133</sup> This very Spartan definition of the public good is somewhat

---

<sup>133</sup> These themes repeat themselves often in the *Maxims* and his other works, and they will be discussed in much greater detail in due order below. These themes can all be understood as the public good. In the popular mind, the Venetian Republic is usually associated with trade, exploration, ships, etc. But Sarpi mentions little if anything of such trademark Venetian commodities as spices and silk. The commodity most concerning to him is probably grain. Sarpi, despite allowing for wealth and believing in the benefits of wealth to the nobility, considered too much wealth and material possessions to be decadent. Perhaps this is partially derived from his own monastic experience. See Sarpi, *Maxims*, 33-34 for his caution about trading, and 30-31 for his somewhat practical rather than humanitarian

reflected in his Machiavellian pieces of advice, to be discussed in due course below. Therefore, the Spartan nature of the end goals largely reflects the uncompromising nature of Sarpi's means, the ideal system and practices.

The public good hinges upon the ability of the nobles to act virtuously; virtue is rare for Sarpi, and one could only hope to have a good chance of finding it among the nobility. This is what gives the nobility its warrant to lead the people, whom Sarpi is not above treating differently. The nobility comprised the sovereign fatherhood of the people.<sup>134</sup> Sarpi, in his works, speaks unapologetically highly of the upper nobility, while mistrusting the lower nobility and the ignoble. The justification for the nobles' exclusive right to rule is twofold. He believes that nobles were by birth more likely to be inheritors of virtue, and he believed that by virtue of their position and personal situations their desires would be more inclined to the public benefit. Before discussing this in more detail, Sarpi's definition of 'nobility' will be examined.

There is ample evidence that Sarpi imagines an interior difference between the nobles and ignoble. When discussing the punishment of crimes in regard to social rank, he professes that a subject, or non-noble, upon offending a noble, should be punished with utmost severity so the "Patrician Order" is not often offended by the ignoble, and that public opinion may remember that "our Nobility is come of sacred and venerable Blood."<sup>135</sup> Also to avoid embarrassment of the government and nobility, Sarpi suggests that nobles be executed privately or that they should end their days in prison.<sup>136</sup> He does not say that the ignoble are made of non-sacred or non-venerable blood, and religiously-speaking all blood is sacred. Yet Sarpi wants the

---

desire for the commoners to have more grain and sufficient government employment. It is possible in regard to the bread issue that his language may only be feigning to be practical instead of humanitarian for fear that a humanitarian appeal would not have appeal to his aristocratic audience. In regards to the security of the Republic from exterior threats, many of the latter sections of the *Maxims* deal with hypotheticals regarding potential allies and enemies.

<sup>134</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 168.

<sup>135</sup> Id., *Maxims*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 8.

idea to be perpetuated that there is something of a divine sanction or of a divine blessing within the blood of the nobility.

The question is whether Sarpi actually professes to believe in such a special property of noble being, or whether he merely wants this to be believed by the common masses, regardless of his own personal convictions. Assuming that he was representing his true feelings in his *Rights* and *Maxims*, Sarpi did believe that the nobility was distinct from the lesser citizens and commoners not only in that they alone held the charge of ruling but also in that they as a group were inherently better suited for such duties. The *Maxims* were not public until many years after his death, giving evidence that he likely was speaking his true mind. On the other hand, they were written for the highest of nobles, which means that he could have been trying to conform his presentation to their sensibilities. In any case, he barely has anything good to say about the non-nobles. He does say that among the non-noble virtue must still be encouraged, and those of the ignoble rank who manifest virtue ought to be highly valued “and encouraged to live among us; for his own Merit makes him Noble sufficiently, and all Hereditary Nobility has its rise from some Personal Virtue.”<sup>137</sup>

Nonetheless, Sarpi does not advise promoting these virtuous commoners, for that would throw the caste system out of balance, balance being a key component of stability, as will later be shown.<sup>138</sup> Rather, the significance of the above quotes is that virtue, though occasionally surfacing among the lesser ranks, is primarily passed down from parents, either biologically, or by rearing. Sarpi does not trust humans to achieve great virtue by power of their own choice, but

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 50. Sarpi in the *Rights* on page 2 refers to himself as a nobleman (for he had inherited the rank from his mother), hence his use of the word “us.”

<sup>138</sup> Id., *Maxims*, 20. Paolo Paruta, a prominent member of the bellicose *giovani* faction among the nobility, the same party as Sarpi and a contemporary of his, likewise did not advocate promotions into the nobility. His reasoning, however, was different than Sarpi’s, for Paruta believed Neo-Platonically that the nobility was a magnificent manifestation of Platonic beauty. See Sperling, 19-20.

by circumstance. He believes environment is a factor in rearing one with virtue, observing “there is nothing that debases the Spirit more than Poverty.”<sup>139</sup> If the circumstances of noble families could be arranged for their benefit, then they would be more virtuous. Sarpi is in this regard opposed to many Christian commentators who praise the Spartan and humbling aspects of poverty. This is especially interesting because having been a friar himself, Sarpi would have been living a life of at least theoretical poverty. Perhaps it was that Sarpi thought that only some people were fit for the austere test of poverty, such as friars, monks, and the occasional laymen, but that it was not conducive to virtue when spread across large segments of society.

One of the situations in which virtue in a common man must be recognized is during the selection of the Chancellor of the Republic. According to the London publisher of Sarpi’s *Maxims*, J. Morpew, it was the Chancellor’s function to be not only the chief of the three classes of non-noble secretaries for the state government and bureaucracy, but also the head or “Doge” of all non-noble citizens in the Republic.<sup>140</sup> The men who must be found for the job must be, according to Sarpi, qualified and good people, “for there are but few Persons capable of doing good, and every one is able to do mischief;” this is a somewhat pessimistic view of human nature.<sup>141</sup>

This view is partly a result of Sarpi’s belief that people get caught in the vices of their passions, usually material desires and improper drives to aggrandize one’s own political power. It is therefore slightly ironic that Sarpi thought that material circumstances of a child’s rearing enabled him to be a paternal figure in a divinely sanctioned order. It was not spiritual or mystical circumstances of his or her conception that enabled the offspring of a noble family to

---

<sup>139</sup> Id., *Maxims*, 20.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 18, see very extensive footnote by editor that begins on the previous page. See Bouwsma, 60 for a brief description of the rights and responsibilities of the *cittadini originari*, which though not a noble class, was still an exclusive and limited designation in Venetian society.

<sup>141</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 19.

function in the political and communal order. Sarpi in the works herein described makes no reference to constant divine intervention in the conception and rearing of young nobles, nor does he ever speak ill of illegitimacy. Illegitimate status was a common bar to a political career throughout the early modern period due to the belief that illegitimate children did not arise from a divinely sanctioned agreement between God, man, and woman. What matters more plainly to Sarpi is whether the child were taught to be noble and whether he lived like a virtuous noble. In regard to conception, the above quote regarding virtuous commoners is the closest hint that he believes in some kind of inherited virtue that may be passed on physically. He certainly did not believe that such marital agreements between a ruling monarch and his or her consort was an absolutely necessity for every polity to perpetuate its sovereign.<sup>142</sup> If he did, he would have advised the doge to form himself into a hereditary king, or some kind of hereditary head official. As it was, Sarpi did not advise anything of the kind, and Venetians were historically wary of the sons of doges.<sup>143</sup>

Ironically, Sarpi calls upon the story of the beginning of Israel's kingship to justify his belief that republics may and do have divine approval. The best example of this is probably the most profound kingship beginning with profane origins. An aristocracy of sorts governed the ancient Israelites, but the people wanted a king, despite the warnings of the prophet Samuel. But they asked, and so they received. Erstwhile their non-royal form of government had enjoyed divine blessing.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> To the ire of the supporters of the papal monarchy, Venetian writers often said that the Church in its true form was founded as a republic, and even still the pope is elected. They compared the Venetian republic as a reflection of the Church's true lost republican form, with the doge mirroring the pope. See Bouwsma, 463-65.

<sup>143</sup> Finlay, 105.

<sup>144</sup> See Sarpi, *Rights*, 351, briefly referenced in the previous section in regard to its relevance to social-contract theory, where Sarpi says that "...the divine law had never set a king over a people, if they themselves had not desired him." Although Sarpi does not write so here, he surely must have been thinking of the Book of Samuel. The implications of God not even forcing a king upon people such as the Israelites is not merely political, but theological. God's plan of Salvation involves Jesus being the head of the body of believers (much as Sarpi believed

With the public good, virtue, and the nobility thus defined, it can then be understood how the nobility set about to preserve the public good. It must be ensured that authority rests in nobility that live in good conditions which produce virtue, as partially explained already, and that the power and influence of the greater nobility is balanced among their houses and families exclusively. There were certain practical and philosophical phenomena that have to be met for the nobility to justify its sanction. The following advice of Sarpi will, at least partially, answer the following questions: how greater noble families are to remain supreme among all lesser households, how the same noble families are to remain balanced in respect to each other, and how they are to conduct themselves in manners and ways conducive to statecraft.

Statecraft itself is the prerogative of the nobility, as has been explained earlier in this thesis; therefore, the greater nobles ought to be wise to maintain their exclusive practice of politics without allowing the influence of lesser nobles to infringe on their operation of the sovereignty. To this effect, Sarpi's advice encourages slyness, dishonesty, and secrecy, or in other words, Machiavellianism or *Realpolitik*. He puts the "craft" in statecraft.

Firstly, the commonality has to be restrained. They are to be given enough bread and enough public employment, as has been mentioned earlier.<sup>145</sup> However, it perhaps would not be unwise, Sarpi suggests, "to imitate *Cato*, who fomented Discord among the Slaves of his own Family, and to entertain our Commonality in continual Divisions and Jarrings among themselves

---

the sovereign to be the head of his body politic) as the King of the Israelites, and therefore the new Israelites, i.e. the Christians, and the New Jerusalem. Jesus called himself a son of David by virtue of his adopted descent from his father Joseph, as Sarpi remembers on page 156 of the *Rights* (this must be the greatest example in Western history of one claiming to be adopted into a royal family claiming the kingship, in a way like Augustus and his adopted father Caesar.). Sarpi must have figured that if the ancient Israelites did not elect to have a monarchy, then God would have found some other way to make Jesus King, but as things were believed by Sarpi to have unfolded, God, who never forced a kingship on any people, foresaw that the Israelites, of their own freewill, would elect to have a monarchy, despite the warnings of Samuel. This, however, is true only if Sarpi believed in the paradox of God knowing what humans will do before they do it, despite humans having freewill. As to if Sarpi believed in God's ability to see the future, this research cannot determine.

<sup>145</sup> See footnote 130 and id., *Maxims*, 30-31.

; for which end it was, that our Ancestors permitted the little pitch'd Battles among the People<sup>h</sup>.<sup>146</sup> Apparently, the ever pragmatic priest and friar, Fra Paolo, did not mind the occasional street fight. Sarpi's means of keeping the commonality content was to give them the ancient Roman recipe of bread and the circuses, except the only differences were that the rowdy commoners were the competitors themselves and that another means of "bread" was government employ. These measures were advised to prevent perhaps the most ultimate travesty; the seizure of power from the nobility by the ignoble.

There must have been some opinion in the Venetian Senate or among the Venetian notables that governments, by which he means various households, judges, and officials, should have been given greater incomes.

There is an Abuse that is mightily talk'd of, and truly in appearance is one ; for it being a Duty to afford[allot] Means of Living to those that have it not, the putting Persons into Governments that have such a poor Revenue, puts them in the way, not to live, but to Plunder. However, I would not advise augmenting the Profits of these Governments, because there arises from them a much greater Benefit to the Publick, which is keeping the lower Nobility always in a low condition, which is like to the Viper, that is not able in the cold to use its Poison...these [lesser] Nobles, who are discontented in their own Minds...[if they could] would set [themselves] up as Competitors to the Nobility of the first Rank; and, by the Strength of their Number, they would be able to play some mad prank in the State of the Republick.<sup>147</sup>

Sarpi's harsh allegories at the expense of the lesser nobles do not end there. He further advises the Senate to remember and put faith in "the [upper] Nobility, who never fail to clip the Wings of those that attempt to soar aloft."<sup>148</sup> Also in regard to the lesser nobles, Sarpi says that due to their dependence on the proper nobles for their living, "they are in reality Subjects, and

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 13. Footnote h by J. Morphew describes at some length, how within Venice, two factions of his current time, the *Castellans* and the *Nicolots*, were allowed to fight. Within this note on page 13, he claims that their children were allowed to "fight it out at Fisty-cuffs," only stopped when one party drew blood, and that "The Senate sometimes allows these Parties to try their Strength in pitch'd Battels at Handy-blows, under the pretense of giving Diversion[fun or entertainment] to Foreign Princes and Ambassadors...but in reality, that they may keep up the Animosity and Spite that is between the two Factions." See Robert Davis, *The War of the Fists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 7.

have only the appearance of Nobles.”<sup>149</sup> Therefore, to curtail their power, Sarpi is willing that they not be given much income for their duties, making it inevitable that they take more than their required incomes and fees from the *de jure* subjects below them. He suggests “that the search into the Mismanagements of their Government ought not be very rigid,” but always more concerned with avoiding public disturbance than having justice served impartially, he adds “except when the Abuses committed by them are so very excessive as to give Scandal to all the Subjects.”<sup>150</sup> Sarpi is willing to allow the privatization of revenues assumed by nobles acting in the capacity of their public function. In more critical language, one could say that Sarpi was willing to avert his gaze from poorer nobles sustaining their houses or supplementing their incomes by bribery, extortion, requesting non-existent fees, etc., for it would be a better alternative to paying these officers more and thereby making them more powerful.

In the meantime, he foresees that some people would criticize his approach, for they may say that he places too much trust in the upper nobility. But Sarpi would dismiss such a claim, arguing that “I do not foresee the Danger there is from the greater Nobility ; which yet ought to be of greater Consideration, because they are more powerful, both in Wealth and Alliances,” and because constitutional arrangements give each greater noble so much authority that they would not cede power to a despot.<sup>151</sup> That even brothers would not allow one of their own to be raised to a throne will be discussed later here when his concept of balance among the nobility is to be explained.

Sarpi even suggests mending the constitution by shifting all of the relevant authority that remained vested in the Great Council to the Senate. As Sarpi’s *Maxims* explain in his following pieces of advice, the Great Council was comprised of every Venetian nobleman, while the

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 9-10. See 9 for quote.

senate, Council of Ten, dogeship, and other high-ranking offices were almost exclusively occupied by what Sarpi considers the greater nobility, the richest and most well-connected. His logic for centralizing power into the hands of the greater nobility alone is as follows. He believes that commonwealths, or republics, are more liable to political corruption than other forms of government, because they are comprised of many individuals:

so that the Defect increases with the number of Members...The Defect of our Republick is in being too numerous<sup>f</sup>...it would be convenient to procure...the Great Council to delegate a Share of its Authority to the Senate, and to the Council of Ten ; but in such a hidden and secret manner, as that it may not be discover'd, till after it is done...It cannot be denied, but[that] the Great Council favours a little of the Mob, and that it is, for this reason, subject to the impetuous Deliberations, and that the Affairs of which are laid before it, are not always so maturely weigh'd and consider'd, as Matters of Importance deserve. And truly I stand amazed, when I consider that our Ancestors, who were men of great Judgment, and zealous for the publick Good, did not...make one step further in reforming our Constitution...at least in continuing the Senators longer in their Offices than from Year to Year, without a new Confirmation from the Great Council...[The current practice] seems to guard us against...against the Tyranny of the Grandees ; so[but] it exposes us...to the Tyranny of the lower Nobility, which is so much the more odious, because they are more in number, and have less Experience in publick Affairs.<sup>152</sup>

The above quote is, characteristically of Sarpi in his non-public writings, straightforward and bold. Of course, he is addressing only the highest nobles, probably ones with whom he had already discussed these topics, even though after the interdict he steadily found his opinions less valued by the leading men. Nonetheless, his language, even though having been translated into English here, does not show any sign of reserve or diplomatic wording in regard to the lesser orders. One or more of four things can be inferred: that the nobles reading this would not find his treatment of the lesser orders shocking, that he was confident that the people reading this

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 22-26 In-text footnote f on page 22 is by the editor and printer J. Morphew or one of his subordinates, who explains at some length, passing through several pages, the numbers of the noblemen, the numbers present in the Great Council, Senate, other councils and offices, and their functions. He claims that there were 4,500 nobles, almost undoubtedly he means males nobles with political privileges, but due to the extinction of many families, their number dwindled to less than 2,000. Therefore, whereas 1,500 or 1,600 noblemen were often assembled in the Great Council, by the time of his printing, he claims that only rarely do more than 800 or 900 assemble. It can be inferred here that far less than the allowed number presented themselves to the Great Council's meetings at any given time. About 300 comprised the Senate, though some of them did not vote though for they held other offices. Other councils included the Councils of Forty, and most significantly, the Council of Ten.

would not mention to lesser nobles that Sarpi thought that they were potential collective tyrants, that if a lesser noble or one sympathetic to them heard of Sarpi's attitude that they would cause a stir, and/or that Sarpi just did not care what one or more of these above-mentioned people would have thought. On the converse, one could argue that Sarpi is exaggerating his distaste of the lesser nobility in order for his readers to take him more seriously, but that would be unlike Sarpi, who historically did not mind being an outspoken character. In any case, this is one of the more characteristic passages of Sarpi's works.

His to-the-point discourse on how to preserve the greater nobility against their lesser counterparts and commoners continues onto the next several pages. He advises that the office of the Avogadors, who, as footnote g by the editor explains, are akin to attorney generals but with greater powers including law enforcement, "ought to be given to Persons of the Greatest Rank.... [They must] be of a noble and high spirit, such as [to] scorn to creep and crouch to the multitude of the Great Council." They had an interest in supporting "the Dignity of the Senate" for if they courted the popularity of the lower nobility, or were "either of a low mean Spirit ; or if they are of brisk lively Parts...[they are] such whose Reputation is not altogether entire, but blemish'd with the Imputation of Sordidness...[with them] an Avogador that has...Malice, may easily set fire to the four Corners of the Republick."<sup>153</sup> Evidently, Sarpi believes, or at least wishes to convey, that the lesser nobles are not just an annoying lot who, due to their lack of experience, ignorantly work to the detriment of the goals of the greater nobility, but they are immoral almost by definition and actually could bring the end of the state itself, if their betters do not continually maintain their superior position.

For similar reasons and concerns, Sarpi advises that the authority of the three Councils of Forty, one of which being a criminal tribunal of sorts, should be diminished, because they are

---

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 26-28.

“too popular,” or in other words, too greatly oriented towards the popular element of the more numerous lesser nobility.<sup>154</sup> Any corrector of this flaw could be compared to a physician. Sarpi realizes that altering the nature of the Councils of Forty could cause some disruption in the government, but by means of comparison he claims that “the Physitian to the body deserves to be excused, if to heal the Liver he offends the Stomach.”<sup>155</sup> In fact, Sarpi believes that it would be best if the republic could find a way to outright abolish the councils, but he would not want to create instability among the lower nobility by doing so, “for such a number of idle and indigent Nobles, as are employed in these Councils.”<sup>156</sup> But in the meantime, Sarpi looks

upon it as a great piece of service done to the Country, if every Family of the ancient and rich Nobility did always appoint one of the Brothers to be employed in these Councils of Forty, that they might hinder the poor Nobility from getting into them in so great numbers, which would be a way to keep them more easily under. And all imaginable Care ought to be taken to find out some specious Pretext, for taking away from the inferior Nobility in Criminal Matters ; and this would be a means to make them lose, in a great measure, their Privilege of Nobility. I should be very well pleas'd likewise to see them excluded from the Senate ; but this is a thing more desired, than expected.<sup>157</sup>

Sarpi also allows for marital or breeding strategies to bolster the standing of the greater nobility, with little concern for the aggrandizement of their power if it possibly occurs at the expense of the lesser. He advises that:

marriages between the Nobility, and Women of an inferior Rank, may be tolerated, especially when the Women carry great Portions along with them.... The Labours and of many Plebeians for several Ages, go to enrich one Noble Family...it adds to the greatness of the [noble] Order, and fortifies it...Nor is it to be fear'd, that the Offspring of such Marriage will prove low and mean spirited, for there is nothing that debases the Spirit more than Poverty.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 20. It was common for Venetian nobles, especially those without much money, to marry lower-class wives so that their financial power could support their political influence. See Bouwsma, 59.

As discussed earlier, here again does Sarpi show that material conditions, such as poverty, affect matters of the spirit, virtue, or character, and in short, make one noble. Also here Sarpi allows for this practice of greater noble empowerment at the expense of the lesser nobility, for it can be assumed that if a lesser noblewoman marries a man of the lesser nobility then the resources and influence will stay within that lesser class, and not be shifted into the ruling class.

Thus are Sarpi's means by which the greater nobles' position as the rulers of the state are justified both by political theory, practicality, and material means. So, partially by placating the commoners with sufficient bread and employment, diverting their aggression among themselves, and isolating the lesser nobility from significant positions, would the aristocratic manifestation of power within the greater noble families continue to maintain the public good, i.e. a secure state. The premise for this kind of thinking is Sarpi's fear that "the natural inclination of all men [is] to command as much as they can."<sup>159</sup> This axiom not only refers to threats to noble power along a vertical axis, but also on a horizontal axis within the noble families themselves.

The answer to this constant obstacle was balance. The competing families of the nobility, having monopolized power among themselves, needed to be balanced against each other. They were not to suffer one of their own aggrandizing too much power.

Sarpi believed that historically, Venetians had a tradition of such prudence. In his discussion in the *Rights* against papal claims that the Holy See holds an amount of sovereignty over the Adriatic, Sarpi recalls one of the high points in Venetian political and military history when much authority over the Adriatic was extended. He recalls the early thirteenth-century expedition against a ruler whom he deemed a regicidal pretender to the Eastern Empire. Having killed the pretender, and after the true emperor, Alexis, was killed, the Venetians, French,

---

<sup>159</sup> Id., *Sopra l'ufficio dell'inquisizione*, in *Scritti giurisdizionalistici*, ed. Giovanni Gambarin (Bari: Laterza, 1958), 167, 206, qtd. in Bouwsma, 551; unsure from which page derives the quote. Sarpi wrote this line in regard to the Roman Curia, not Venetian noble families.

Flemish, and Italian princes had to find a new emperor. With the ancient line of emperors extinct a committee of fifteen men, some of them clergy, some lay, some princes, was appointed to raise a new emperor, who would become what came to be known in history as the Latin Byzantine Emperor. The Venetian Doge and five nobles were on the committee. Sarpi believes that the Venetians were wise in exhibiting an “exceedingly remarkable” level “moderation” and “prudence” in not choosing one of their own to be emperor, for it would change the “aristocratical constitution of the republic.”<sup>160</sup> Sarpi believes that there was a good chance that they could have found a Venetian, but purposely avoided such an outcome. A Fleming found himself emperor in Constantinople, and a significant amount of territory was given to the Venetians as fiefs, many of them near the Adriatic.<sup>161</sup>

The above example involves nobles preventing other nobles from become too great, while the following involves nobles preventing other nobles from becoming too poor. Yet at the same time, if a noble were to have difficulty in paying his taxes on time,

it would be convenient industriously to give the Noble the Benefit of Time ; and altho’ after this Indulgence they should still continue backward in paying, yet it would not be proper to have recourse to the Rigor of the Law, to force them to it. The reason why I advise these tender Methods to be used in levying Taxes on the Nobility, is, that Noblemens Estates may always be preserv’d entire to the Families. For extremes are always dangerous, and the Commonwealth may suffer as much from too poor a Nobility, as one that is too rich.<sup>162</sup>

As can be inferred from his earlier-discussed and very harsh treatment of the lower nobility and this quote, he fears that impoverished nobles, having lost their means and therefore their

---

<sup>160</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 342-45, quotes on 344. The conflict described here is the sacking of Zara, which Sarpi deems to be a rebellious subject of Venice, and the detour of the Fourth Crusade. Sarpi does not mention here, and little if at all elsewhere, that Venice once prided itself on a Byzantine heritage, based on its earlier history. Sarpi not only believes that such ancient connections to the distant past for contemporary political justifications are often hollow (see the end of previous section of this thesis.), but he is frequently hesitant to admit that Venice at any point admitted to any greater authority, rather portraying Venice as having emerged independently during the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 344-45.

<sup>162</sup> *Id.*, *Maxims*, 5-6.

standing, would become dangerous in their attempts to regain their former status, often by plotting with low company.

Sarpi furthermore believes that balance also has a preservative factor even within the confines of a family in which competition can be healthy for the larger noble order, and therefore, the entire state. This is one of the rare situations in which he presents competition as a force acting within a family. He goes so far as to add to his point that Venice ought not to worry about the upper nobility ceding authority to one of their own as a king. He is confident that brothers of the same family, if in such a position to make one of themselves a dictator, would not do so, because they would rather “share authority with a hundred others than be Princes of the Royal Blood, and Brothers to the King.”<sup>163</sup>

It could be hard to believe in the absolute validity of Sarpi’s postulate. He may have suspected that some brothers would rather wield informal power as a sort of second-in-command to one of his brothers than share greatly diluted formal power with a hundred, or hundreds of, other men. However, as history unfolded Venice never did transform into a monarchy by internal means. In any case, he believed the authority given to the Venetian upper nobility in the constitution was sufficient to guard against monarchism, even to the point that kinsmen of potential royal candidates would support the existing constitution over their family.

In medieval and Renaissance Italian history, there was a constant pattern of republics, commonwealths, and other council-run city-states converting into monarchies or principalities. The Venetian Republic did not cease to exist because of a coup or a constitutional re-alignment to monarchy, but the doge abdicated and senate voted itself and the republic out of existence, due to the republic’s inability to secure themselves against the warring Napoleonic France and Habsburg Austria at the end of the eighteenth century. Therefore, Sarpi was correct when he

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 10.

said, “I dare be bold to prophesy, that the Republick of Venice will never suffer the same Fate which has been the end of all other Commonwealths; that is, that the Authority of many having been reduced to into the Hands of a few Persons, and from the few into the Hands of one, all Commonwealths have ended in a Monarchy.”<sup>164</sup>

Having discussed above the means by which the greater nobility must secure itself against the lower orders and while confident that internal balance will keep the position of the upper nobility secure, Sarpi then encourages greater nobles to maintain noble discipline among themselves. This involves reinforcing values that include secrecy and deception, but also restraint, fairness, abstention from business in conflict with noble duties, and deference to the public prerogative. The following pieces of advice regarding behavior are crucial to the running and preservation of the state and society. These are not just matters of courtesy, social sophistication, or piety. The nobility as a whole must behave this way not for the sake of the moral position itself, but for the sake of the perpetuation of their class and for the sake of every Venetian.

Perhaps most obviously to the point of fairness, and to the aforementioned point of balance among the nobility, Sarpi suggests lightly taxing the nobility, so that no family loses its estate and so they do not become poor and seize resources by illegitimate means. The nobility should be taxed as well as the subjects to spread the burden of taxation, “because the Tax is less burdensome, when it is universal; and it is more just, when it is laid on without partiality. There is no doubt, but the making of the Nobility subject to taxes lessens their Splendor;” this part of Sarpi’s suggestions is perhaps quite understandable for a modern reader.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 4. Sarpi continues to say that nobles from other governments of the republic who do not comprise the sovereignty, i.e., nobles from subject and vassal cities of the Venetian Empires, are often exempted from taxes in exchange for paying for defense out of their own pockets. Sarpi suggests allowing this practice to continue as he

The above attempts to best position the noble order deal largely with the quantitative aspect of financial wealth, but not the qualitative aspect—i.e., whence the money comes. It is Sarpi's opinion that merchandizing is unbecoming of a nobleman because of two reasons, both foreign and domestic. "If the Noblemen trade, the Merchants will be afraid of being cheated," and will not be enticed to come to the city or to remain there.<sup>166</sup> A nobleman ought not to be a trader for "the Merchant is of necessity a Foreigner, he having Commerce and Interest in other Nations; whereas a Nobleman ought have his affections no where but in his own Country."<sup>167</sup> It cannot be confirmed here whether or not Venetians living abroad would likely waver in their affection, or even outright conspire, against their home country, but research by Eric Dursteler has confirmed that "national" identities or "state" identities were often fluid and blurred among people of all classes involved in the world of trading, commerce, and transportation in the Eastern Mediterranean, significantly so in international hubs like Ottoman Constantinople.<sup>168</sup>

Another reason for his dislike of trading is because of his commitment to the previously discussed concept of balance. Sarpi, who usually cares little for the dangers of the aggrandizement of the ruling nobility, fears in this case that the unpredictability of the profits could destabilize the position of the noble families, and thus the equilibrium of the state-at-large. "Trade may in a short time either excessively enrich, or extremely impoverish a Family, and neither one, nor the other is expedient in a Commonwealth."<sup>169</sup> This is one of the few times in which Sarpi cautions against opportunities to aggrandize the wealth of nobles, but it would seem

---

does not want any change of practice to alienate the provincial nobility. Perhaps the most pivotal sign of progress in state-building is the centralization of state-levied and state-run military forces. If this can be a gage for the "modernization" of the state of the republic, then the Venetian state was a mix of the old and the modern.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>168</sup> For the complexities and fluidity of defining a "Venetian" abroad, See Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>169</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 33.

as if chances for such fortune were slim. In the years before, during, and after the interdict, Venice had long been experiencing economic decline in trade as well as most every other sector.<sup>170</sup> Therefore many nobles were desperately looking to alternate means of income, whether that be the exchange of non-traditional commodities or the acquisition of land. If he is advising nobles to avoid trade, then he must be advising them to invest in land as an alternative.

To defend his conception of the ideal Venetian nobility, Sarpi invokes Spanish concepts of nobility. This is one of the few instances in which Sarpi uses the thoughts of Venice's adversaries to promote his claim. According to him, "the *Spaniards*, who bear no good Will to the *Venetians*, have not a more odious Title to give *Venice*, than by calling it a Republick of Merchants. By the ancient Law, a Nobleman, whose blood was tainted with Merchandize, could not enter into the Tournament, as not being reputed an equal to Gentlemen."<sup>171</sup>

Regardless of whether the Venetian noble caste had been heeding his advice or not, Sarpi knew that his conviction could legitimately be seen as contrary to historical Venetian precedent. Venice's initial strength, which caused the city to grow almost *ex nihilo* out of the collapse of Western and Eastern Imperial authority in the region, was its trading prowess. Therefore, Sarpi needed to use logic or at least an allegory to reconcile this paradox. He did so by comparing trade to milk and a city to a baby. Once the city grows, milk is no longer fit for it. He has been cited on this matter previously in this thesis in regard to his biological conception of a state.<sup>172</sup>

Immediately after mentioning the Spanish attitude, he deflects the criticism of the Spaniards to the Genoese, a mercantile and maritime polity in many ways a counterpart and rival to Venice. "The *Genoese*, who retain this Custom of Trading [among the nobility], are but little

---

<sup>170</sup> See Bouwsma, 341-42 and 508-09 for a brief explanation.

<sup>171</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 33.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. See footnote 78.

respected among other Princes; they are more regarded one by one, than all in a Body together.”<sup>173</sup>

Another destabilizing factor that Sarpi sees in the nobility is excess of fashion and luxury.

He advises to

let all excessive Pomp be banish'd...this Magnificence in Apparel and Equipage were practis'd only by the rich, it might well be profitable to the Commonwealth ; because it would be a means of evacuating the Blood of those [nobles] that are of too sanguine a Complexion ; but the Emulation among the Citizens [*cittadini originari*] to out-do one another, would make many Families ruin themselves, to keep up the same Grandeur with others. If this Distinction [between nobles and *cittadini originari*] could be introduced, it would be a continual Purge for the bad Humours of the State ; but there being [is] no possibility of bringing it about.<sup>174</sup>

Therefore, he does not believe that nobles ought to have freedom of material acquisition or some sort of inalienable freedom to spend their money the way they see fit. It could be argued that such freedoms, which would thereby allow the irresponsible to go bankrupt and therefore be unable to maintain a household and a state office, could be a good way to thin the ranks of the unworthy citizenry. But Sarpi, once again not trusting the decision-making intelligence of people, would rather simply make a law to avoid the problem altogether and thus stifle the passions of the noble class as well as the citizen class. He would rather have the temptation not be available to the nobles and the citizenry than to have them put to the test of their character, inasmuch as fashion is concerned.

The above pieces of advice in regard to nobles engaging in trade, home decoration, and personal fashion show a more old-fashioned side of Sarpi, for lack of a better term. He was an ally of the *giovani* faction, who were originally named so due to their membership initially

---

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 34. Again, Sarpi or his translator uses the word “Body” instead of “Group” or “Whole.” This could have been meant for its biological connotations because he earlier on page 33 just compared young cities to babies.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 34-35. Again, he ends with comparisons to the human body. Why Sarpi does not believe that excessive fashion can be banned solely among the citizen class yet be allowed for the noble class must be left to speculation, but he may have figured that the citizen class would have found it to be an insult.

comprising younger nobles during their formation in the 1580s. These men were less afraid of war, less willing to compromise with the papacy, and they sought to sustain Venice's trading capacity as much as they could.<sup>175</sup>

Sarpi agreed with them on most matters but the last one. He uses Spanish temperaments and old notions of chivalric nobility, as opposed to urban nobility, to advance his argument. There had been sumptuary laws passed in Venice for centuries, and it seems as if there had always been a conflict between the people who wanted to wear more "fashionable" or "colorful" clothing as opposed to the ones who wore more somber attire.<sup>176</sup> It could be possible that Sarpi's monastic experiences and education led him to have a dislike for material or visual indulgences of any kind. It also could have just been his personality; many people throughout the centuries often do not appreciate the trends of the day. But it can be said with confidence that Sarpi's views on these issues were intended to preserve the nobles as a uniform, stable, and dignified force with as little temptations and distractions as possible.

There are two more significant pieces of advice from the *Maxims* that warrant attention. Both deal with the virtue of restraint, and the second one also addresses the necessity for a respect of the prerogative of the public judicial functions of the state at the expense of a noble's private authority.

The first reads in its entirety, "Let the [married] Women be kept chaste, and in order that, let them live retir'd from the World ; it being certain that all open Lewdness has had its first rise from a Salutation, from a Smile."<sup>177</sup> To modern ears, this certainly sounds unnecessarily

---

<sup>175</sup> Bouwsma, 193-94 for a brief explanation of the formation of the *giovani* and 509-12 for their decline.

<sup>176</sup> See Sperling, 23-25 for sumptuary laws and their reasoning, part of which was to hamper elite circles from forming among the nobility, to distance the nobility from the non-noble rich, and to, by a roundabout way, affect marriage pairings.

<sup>177</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 31. The 1707 publication does not say "married" but a slightly different interpretation is found in the 1693 English translation by Dr. Aglionbt, entitled *Advice Given to the Republick of Venice. How they ought to Govern themselves, to have perpetual Dominion.*, printed in London by both R. Bentley, in *Russel-Street in Covent-*

restrictive, but to be fair, one really cannot infer much specific advice from this brief sentence, but only a general caution. However, it is also often true that adultery could begin in such a manner. Of course, he was addressing noblemen, and it can be inferred that this advice was meant in regard to noble women. Sarpi was probably concerned about adultery within any social group, but what most preoccupied him here was stability. It could likely have been disastrous and deadly if two great noble families were involved in a feud, potentially a violent one, over one's wife.<sup>178</sup> Sarpi would have considered an affair with a married woman dangerous, but "as to whoredom, 'tis a crime that offends one's neighbour only by ill example...at which every one is most certainly scandaliz'd," and as Sarpi continues in regards to this and other crimes that do not harm anyone other than the sinner, he writes that "If every crime a man commits against his conscience...were to be punished...there would be a necessity in establishing a perpetual tribunal...[and] the whole world would be the prison of such a tribunal, and the judge of it himself would not be free from such censure ; for a man scarce holds his integrity more than seven years."<sup>179</sup>

Evidently Sarpi does not think highly of men or women's ability to restrain themselves sexually. Even so, he urges them to exercise restraint in their reach of authority over commoners, and to defer all matters accorded to the state courts to those proper authorities. He advises that

---

*Garden*, and *Christopher Nobbes*, at the Sign of the *Olive-Tree*, in the Inner-Walk above stairs in the *New Exchange*, which reads on page 23, "And for the Married Women of the City, let there be care taken to keep them honest ; and to have them so, they must be kept retir'd, remembering, that the Beginnings of all Corruption in that kind are slight, and proceed from a Look or a Salute."

<sup>178</sup> The married noblemen seeking adultery almost always did so with unmarried women of lower classes according to Emlyn Eisenach in *Husbands, Wives, and Concubines: Marriage, Family, and Social Order in Sixteenth-Century Verona*. Married noblewomen were reserved for their husbands, but even illicit relationships with lesser women could turn violent, especially if an upper-class and lower-class male competed for the same woman.

<sup>179</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 306-07. I cannot presume from where he estimates a period of seven years. In *id.*, *Maxims*, 35, he mentions in passing that "It is said, that Gold is a trial of the Chastity of Women." He seems to have imagined prostitution or sexual relationships in which money was a central factor to have been a common occurrence.

“care must be taken to repress the Abuse that is lately crept in among us, by Noblemen’s taking upon them to be Judges of private Differences between Man and Man, and forcing the Subjects to make Peace, to pay Debts, to contract Marriages, and to desist from prosecuting their Rights in the Ordinary Courts of Justice. For this is the greatest subject that the Subject can be liable to, and is able to produce another *Sicilian Vespers*, and not unlikely to set the Noblemen themselves together by the Ears, in the defense of their several Clients.”<sup>180</sup>

Nobles must also practice restraint in a more specific fashion, the use of secrecy. He reminds them that at one time in the past 300 judges, probably the entire assembled senate, kept safe the news of a condemnation, and also that when Doge Foscarini was deposed, his condemnation was concealed from his own brother. He states that “it would be necessary that every Father of a Noble Family, at the same time that he instructs his Children in the Christian Religion, should teach them likewise the use of Secrecy.”<sup>181</sup>

So it is that Sarpi advises and bids nobles to employ secrecy, restraint, tolerance, fairness, allowance, denial, balance, leniency, and sternness: characteristics that could be said to be contradictory in some cases. The underlining factor of all of these is practicality, i.e. the consequences of actions. The relevant morality here is determined by those consequences, not by a morally normative standard that is the business of God and the offender. This is reflective of how practicality in the first place is the warrant for the ruling prerogative of the ruling greater nobility. The notion that the nobility is a divinely sanctioned order is dependent on the existence of such practical means.

Few have the intellectual power to break free of the dictates of their passions, and although this might be easier for the nobility, the law still ought not to trust them to employ

---

<sup>180</sup> Id., *Maxims*, 31-32. It was also common for nobles not only to subtract from the state by having commoners ignore the state system, but nobles, especially rectors sent to administer provinces of the empire, also used the state system to illegally establish networks of patronage and reciprocity, as Monique O’Connell has demonstrated in *Men of Empire: Power and Negotiation in Venice’s Maritime State* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

<sup>181</sup> Sarpi, *Maxims*, 37.

whatever resources they wish (on luxury goods, for example). Although Venice was a republic, modern readers ought not to err by thinking that Sarpi was not an absolutist, as Wootton and others have put forth. Sarpi's Venetian sense of republicanism, which to him meant little more than divided authority and stability among the upper nobility, sought to subject politics to the collective will of a select hereditary aristocracy. The decisions of the ruling families were to be without possibility of external appeal, with total control over the Venetian Empire, not hesitating to use clever caste-based *Realpolitik* for a Spartan understanding of the public good. In short, Sarpi thought that not only stable personal circumstances, but also proper constitutional arrangements, proper political practices, and a myriad of noble values would preserve and advance the state and society.

### *Conclusion*

According to Sarpi, family is central in every facet of the human drama. History and politics are determined most often by dynasticism. The family and the body are cosmic structures that manifest the cohesive fabric and bounds between God and Man, State and denizens, Church and worshippers, nobles and subjects--therefore every level of society. The familial force manifests itself most noticeably, as far as Venetian secular authority is concerned, among the nobles. But for all of these organic structures such as the body politic that largely is a subset of the Body of Christ and collective human race, practicality and material power are the factors that test the legitimacy of all secular authority. The nobles therefore must be produced in material circumstances that are conducive to their familial function, which is to rule according to certain guidelines and principles that are often Machiavellian, with the end goal of a safe and secure society (with acquisition in wealth or luxury being secondary).

The complexities of matters regarding the nature, structure, and operation of the state and the means to secure the public good can be explained by secular philosophy, but religion provides a good bonus. Religious thought is only exclusively relevant when discussing matters of pure spirituality or theology. A well-learned individual could understand, explain, and carry out the worldly functions of the state with worldly philosophy alone, if he were savvy enough. In regards to matters of any temporal importance, theology ought to function as a bonus of sorts, a confirmation and reinforcement of philosophical truths and practical endeavors. Divine intervention is not at all to be presumed, since it is outside of human reckoning; if God were to intervene, humans would not know when, let alone how or why. To sum this up in a manner that may be easy to remember: practicality precedes philosophy; philosophy precedes Providence.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> Sarpi wrote that “essence and universality are works of the mind,” as reproduced in Romano Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri filosofici inediti* (Turin: Edizioni di filosofia, 1950), *Pensiero* 371, qtd. in Bouwsma, 520. He also writes

This little maxim describes how things are and how things should be; it describes both patterns of causation and legitimation. In the *History of the Council of Trent*, Sarpi constantly criticizes the papal faction for abusing this fact by denying that their motives are secular but instead veiling their true intentions, oftentimes the aggrandizement of their dynastic influence, with religious rhetoric. That is an abuse of the pattern. The cynicism of Sarpi's *History* is largely due to religious arguments justifying dynastic motives or dynastic history determining religious history.

However, it would be incorrect to have a fully cynical, nihilistic, or anti-philosophical understanding of Sarpi, despite his allegations that others use of philosophy to conceal their true motives. Sarpi believed in unseen bonds. He believed in a cosmic body or a universal family. That means that he must have believed either in God, or in some philosophical and metaphysical principle that sustained those structures.<sup>183</sup> Wootton writes that Sarpi “seems to have considered belief in a [non-providential] God of some sort as being almost impossible to eradicate.”<sup>184</sup> The familial evidence in this thesis argues that within the above statement, the “seems” and “almost”

---

that God “acts without discourse,” in his *Pensiero* 270. This may lead one to believe that Sarpi had no care for the metaphysics, or unseen forces in general. Certainly, he had reservations about the study of the metaphysics and its importance in Church articulation of doctrine, see Bouwsma, 524-25, 575, but, according to the arguments of this current thesis, that does not mean that Sarpi denied the existence of all such unseen forms or concepts. I believe that Sarpi identified God in the operation of unseen structures that he created or at least enabled to function, many of them organic in some way or another. Yet God has no need to articulate these phenomena to himself or explain them to mankind. Humans should attempt to define neither God's unseen yet created patterns of operation in the world, nor God's own omnipotent operations so narrowly. In regard to Providence, Sarpi professes that “surely it is a pious and religious thought to attribute the disposition of every event, to the Providence of God: but to determine to what end those events are directed, by that highest Wisdom, is not far from presumption,” in regard to Catholic celebration over the death in battle of Zwingli, which exacerbated the rift between the two sides, on page 57 of his *History of the Council of Trent*. Also, one of only a handful of such occurrences in which Sarpi attributes an event to Providence, is on pages 67-68 of his *Maxims* while he contests the right of popes to deprive a sovereign of his kingdom; he claims that, “Julius IId...excommunicated...King John [III of Navarre], and made over his Kingdom to the first Possessor. And were it not that Providence reserved for them the Succession to the Crown of *France* [in the person of Henry IV], there would not at this time be so much as a mention made of a King of *Navarre*.” Henry IV was highly regarded among Venetians, including Sarpi, as a friend to the republic, and his assassination caused great worry, as is relayed briefly in Bouwsma, 506.

<sup>183</sup> See Wootton, 130-31 for the aforementioned letter to Badoer that Wootton takes as evidence for Sarpi not believing in a providential God, in which Sarpi idolizes Socrates. Bouwsma on page 520 says that Socrates was “one of the few ancients who generally commanded [Sarpi's] respect.”

<sup>184</sup> Wootton, 24.

can be omitted; unless one can believe in unseen structures or metaphysics without believing in some type of ‘God,’ Sarpi did believe in a God of some sort. Also, the parallels between the communal state family, the collective human body, both of which wane and wax over time, and the Body of Christ are hard to ignore, giving evidence to the argument that he must have been a Christian. This thesis here has operated with the impression that Sarpi was either a Christian or something near to it, inasmuch as the collective human race is concerned.

Perhaps research into Sarpi’s personal and day-to-day life, if any new evidence can still be found, will uncover more evidence regarding his true beliefs, or about Sarpi’s familiars and family. Understanding how power operated in his family of origin, with his ill-tempered father, could help history understand his views on larger social and spiritual families. Sarpi himself was unique in many ways almost by default. Not often within Venice was the upper clergy born from the citizenry; the patricians did not frequently enter the clergy.<sup>185</sup> He was one of the few in a position of parental authority in both domains.<sup>186</sup>

Along the vertical twin mirroring structures of worldly and spiritual authority, a replicated structure manifests itself in horizontal parallels. Along these two vertical lines of social units, each position embodies the same type of order and authority, in greater or lesser levels, than the positions above and below. Along both the secular and spiritual lines of authority, God is at the top and the individual man is at the bottom. It is argued here that according to Sarpi and many of his contemporaries, this universal organic structure is sometimes referred to as a body, sometimes as a family, but it is always the same, for according to the

---

<sup>185</sup> Venice, of all states in Christendom, likely had the least amount of nobles entering the clergy. According to B.S. Pullman, in “The occupations and investments of the Venetian nobility in the middle and late sixteenth century,” in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J.R. Hale (London, 1973), 399, as referenced in Wootton, 53, only 4% of noblemen were clerics from 1615-1620 and 12% in 1760. If one were to consider the upper clergy, not limited to bishops, as nobles, then Sarpi was somewhat uncommon for being a member of both nobilities.

<sup>186</sup> Of course, many of Sarpi’s secular noble duties and privileges may have been sacrificed upon his entrance into the monastic life.

concept, family is nothing more than a shared body, all members sharing the same blood. The state, therefore, was similar to other articulations of fictive or imaginative kinship, such as adoption, godparenthood, and the relationships between laymen and clergy, and clergy and their superiors.

It could be speculated that this interpretation of the nobility and ruling sovereignty as a parental figure could be connected with ancient or primitive beliefs of Western peoples who credited the founding of their nation, tribe, or ethnic or lingual group, to a common ancestor or common chief of an extended household, including non-biologically related servants and slaves. While there are certainly ancient Greek mythological progenitors, perhaps more relevant due to its religious significance are the people of “Father” Abraham. He is said to have had with him servants and slaves, both houseborn and acquired from foreigners, who had to be circumcised and therefore integrated to a large extent into the people.<sup>187</sup> It can be presumed that the former were likely non-kin and the latter almost certainly non-kin. With some imagination they can be analogous to the Venetian subject-commoner class, subject to the noble families, or in the Biblical case, Abraham’s bloodline. If Abraham’s underlings remained with his biological family for centuries, they would have become considered a part of the people and sons and daughters of Abraham, and with intermarriage they certainly would have been descended from him.<sup>188</sup>

This research makes it clear that these stories were relevant for late Renaissance theorists like Sarpi. He was well-versed in the Old Testament lore and used the corpus of Old Testament

---

<sup>187</sup> See Gn. 17.

<sup>188</sup> The Exodus account contains instructions from God in which the Israelites can either circumcise aliens travelling with them and bring them under the same law or disallow them from partaking in the Passover meal. See Ex. 12.

books to find precedents for his arguments.<sup>189</sup> His entire Catholic sovereign society, Venice, would have been quite familiar with the Old Testament, and would have recognized in it claims of a divine Providence present among the kings of Israel. Whether or not they believed in the accounts of miracles, events, prophets, etc., cannot be determined here, but they were familiar with them. People may have had in their minds that miracles and divine intervention were more common among the rulers and great moments of history of the ancient Israelites because it was a special time and place in the history of God's revelation. Nonetheless, Venice did have its fair share of religious legend, such as the finding of the remains of St. Mark.<sup>190</sup> Anyway, this again cannot be speculated here, but the point is that they were aware that the Biblical familial-tribal state was a precedent, at least to some extent, of any Christian state, including their own.

Sarpi advocated a familial state, as much as an independent, aristocratic, and secular one. His state was not a religious state per se, in the sense of its functioning, but it was sanctioned by practicality and religion, with religious roots and a religious society. The following is a Sarpian and Venetian understanding of the cosmos presented in familial and bodily concepts.

At the lowest level of Sarpi's state one finds the common subject class. By themselves, they would be doomed, cut off from the rest of the body and left to wither. But instead they are members attached to a body and head, which is the nobility. The nobles themselves are of a smaller body, especially those in the Senate, the sovereign collective person. Collectively this sub-body is the head of the larger body and father of the family. In no way are the Venetian

---

<sup>189</sup> The following is but one example using Old Testament precedents that is central to his argument for disallowing those holding priestly functions from also holding temporal functions. Sarpi states that Moses was the leader of the Israelites operating the functions of sovereignty, aside from God that is, yet Moses was not a priest, even though he had the gift of prophecy; his brother Aaron was instead in charge of the priestly operations of the people. The divide continued through David's time, even though Jesus styled himself as a son of David. Sarpi is convinced that God separated these functions for the charge of both the temporal and the spiritual authorities would be too great a temptation for any man. See Sarpi, *Rights*, 155-157.

<sup>190</sup> See Bouwsma, 72-4 for a brief summation of beliefs that Venice was divinely protected, and under the patronage of St. Mark.

people collectively in the same secular philosophical manner connected to other living commoners or noblemen who are part of other bodies or families, such as those in Milan, Austria, Naples, etc., any more than they are connected to the immortal, but not eternal, organic force of man.<sup>191</sup> But as members of their specific Venetian state, they are subject to the same forces of aging that affect their state, primarily growth, age, and decay; thus when acting as a whole, they are in a way connected to the dead Venetians, or at least affected by the aging of their state.

Somewhat analogous to this physical and temporal body is the spiritual body, which was less “bodily” and more “spirit,” unlike the temporal counterpart. Here, bodily or secular nobility is irrelevant to one’s position in the Body of Christ, i.e., the Church. Spiritual sovereignty is really in God alone, but within the Church on Earth the pope functions on sovereign footing in relation to the numerous temporal sovereigns, which ideally should not include himself, having the authority to excommunicate them.<sup>192</sup> Below him are bishops, who function as the spiritual nobility, and also the ordained priests, abbots, and possibly mother superiors, who function as lesser parents, who may or may not be considered noble. All others are children, and in fact,

---

<sup>191</sup> A problem with this is that the distinction between a non-citizen Venetian and a foreigner living in Venice was hard to define. In fact, Venetian commoners had no legal device to define them as Venetian. This problem and the complexities and fluidity of defining a “Venetian” abroad feature in Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*. Much of this work deals with the Venetian embassy in Ottoman Constantinople, where often petitioners of all stations of society would come to them claiming Venetian identity in order to seek their aid in various matters, especially commerce. Sarpi would likely have made practicality the judge as to if one was a member of the Venetian state family in body. Perhaps he would consider one practically, and therefore truthfully, a Venetian if he had lived in Venice most of his life, planned to stay there, had a family in Venice, worked with native-born Venetians, etc. Another question is how Sarpi understood the relation between people from Venice and Cretans, Brescians, and others within the Venetian Empire, some of whom retained local nobilities.

<sup>192</sup> Sarpi, *Rights*, 27-28. Sarpi considers laymen equally capable of discussing matters of theology and doctrine as well as practice and prayer, for laymen “are taken in by adoption by the heavenly Father, called sons of God, brothers of Christ, participants in the heavenly kingdom, made worthy by the divine grace of baptism, of the communion, of the body of Christ, and what other spiritual things are there beyond these?” See Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, ed. Giovanni Gambarin, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1935), 2: 105 in Bouwsma, 579 for the quote which Bouwsma translates. Therefore, Sarpi conveyed dislike at the lack of laymen present at the council to make the council truly universal. See Sarpi, *Concilio di Trento*, 1: 224, referenced in Bouwsma, 578. Laymen, though not part of the episcopacy nor possessing the authority of the magisterium, are therefore just as capable as regular priests and religious to comment on spiritual matters.

everyone is a child of God. These two “bodies” are a larger macrocosm of the human body and spirit, respectively, thus the two essences form one person.

Thus, spiritual and secular authority are both streamlined, simplified, and concentrated. No bishop can truly outrank another bishop, other than the pope. Sarpi would no doubt have agreed with a fellow Venetian historian from the later fifteenth century, Bernardo Giustiniani, regarding Venetian cardinals. According to him, Venice was the true parent of the cardinals; the institutional Roman Church was merely a stepmother.<sup>193</sup> The most significant higher jurisdiction should be the collection of bishops within the same state in conjuncture with the prince.

The state is likewise simply arranged, the sovereign authority, in Venice’s case the collective nobility, function as the parents of the family and head of the body. Within Venice, there may be lesser parental figures such as non-noble Venetian citizen-officials, large householders, and provincial noblemen, the latter of which Sarpi does not think too highly; these are not sovereign parents. They cannot take away from the authority of the Great Council, i.e. the sovereign father who is the collective “Prince.” There is no room for a kind of proto-federalism or sovereignties of sovereignties or additional horizontal branches of government that create checks and balances. If a political organ is not considered a head or a parent, then it has no checks on the ones that are. This streamlined, simple, and patriarchal organic approach to structures of human order and power can help historians correlate or base their understanding of Sarpi’s absolutism.

Thus a re-occurring underlying theme in Sarpi’s work is the imagining and defining of the Venetian state along family lines. Within common historiographic imagination, the medieval period is characterized by the sovereign not imagining a separation between his personal

---

<sup>193</sup> In his “*Responsio ad sacrum collegium cardinalium*” (May 28, 1483), cited by Patricia Hochschild, “Bernardo Giustiniani: a Venetian of the Quattrocento,” unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, Mass., 1957, 419, having since been published in 1969, referenced in Bouwsma, 77.

patrimony--i.e. his family and fiefs--and a public function exterior to his own business as head of a state which exists exterior to his own personal possessions, family, and household. Simply put, there was not a divide between one's public function and one's private functions, as a modern statesman would understand things. Often, one's personal funds and public funds were in the same coffer. Later, according to this interpretation, a modern distinction arose defining the boundaries between a sovereign's private and public functions.<sup>194</sup> But, the identification of the public as part of the sovereign's family, as in seventeenth-century Venice in which there are common families subject to the noble families, shows that the shift into a modern separation between private affairs and public business, was not complete in the imagination. This shift was not yet complete within the imagination of an early modern republic nor within the imagination of Sarpi, even though he is considered to be a more modern historian.

This organic take on the structure of the Venetian Republic can help us better understand the development of republicanism. The United States were founded roughly one-hundred and fifty years after Sarpi's time. They were commonwealths and republican states which each composed a larger federal republic. In the Declaration of Independence, God, though not an explicitly or exclusively Christian, in his function as Creator has set forth rules of human society for which the rebels were fighting. As within Sarpi's thought, there are existing unseen structures that justify the existence of a republic. Also, within both Revolutionary American thought and late Renaissance Venetian thought, there is the three-fold system of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. However, the United States collectively formed one sovereignty

---

<sup>194</sup> On the evolution of the word "state," which earlier more often had the connotation of one's private state of affairs and later had the more modern political connotation of a public polity, see Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 352-58. See also Jürgen Habermas, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997). The familial importance has not all gone away, for in my own life there have been religious people, in this case Catholics in the United States, who imagine the nation as being defined ultimately as a group of families.

comprised of thirteen sovereign states. Sarpi would not have allowed for competing sovereignties and would have seen such an arrangement as disorder.<sup>195</sup> There has already been much work in tracing republicanism's development, and there must be many angles to approach these grand questions from an organic standpoint.<sup>196</sup>

The Anglophone world has since lost interest in Sarpi. Such an assertion can only be made subjectively, but during Sarpi's time and for perhaps a century after his passing he was a figure central to English political and religious identity. That may seem to be a grandiose statement, but Sarpi contributed to, or manifested, the self-justification of the soul of the British nation. He gave credibility to a nation that had positioned itself against the papacy. Yet at the same time, as one who at least wore the Catholic designation, he gave a sense of universality to an Anglican Church that considered itself Apostolic.<sup>197</sup> One would expect him to be more prominent in accounts of the development of British thought and political culture than he has been over the past century. Aside from his contribution to British self-identity, there is much room for further exploration of Sarpi, his Venetian influences, and his understanding of history.

Sarpian thought is highly complex and historians could possibly find many different directions in which to research and compare his thought to other thinkers. In regard to familial thought, one could look at his ecclesiological works, such as *Of Beneficiary Matters* to see what forms of nepotism he criticized the most. One could also compare his views on benefices to his

---

<sup>195</sup> Sarpi's caution against such shared sovereignty would have seemed well-placed to him, especially if he had been told that the future United States would constantly battle the meaning of such shared sovereignty, including the literal battles of the American Civil War and just about every major political debate into the twenty-first century.

<sup>196</sup> One of the major works on the progression of republican thought is J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>197</sup> This was understood in a bodily manner by Interregnum and Restoration Englishmen, such as John Owen, a dissenter who was one of the foremost advocates of religious toleration. He had difficulties in his thought reconciling the universality of the Body of all Christian believers with the impurities of Papism. He claimed that "The pope is head of their church; several nations of Europe are members of it. Have we not seen that head taking his flesh in his teeth, tearing his body and his limbs to pieces?" referenced and qtd. in Hirst, 410. I do not know if Owen read Sarpi, but it can be said safely that many of his contemporaries and influences did.

belief that the Church is supposed to act as a surrogate parent or husband to orphans and widows, the least and most needy of people, who were also defined by their familial status.<sup>198</sup> This thesis mostly was in the direction of his secular works, and his ecclesiastical works were mostly consulted in regard to his organic understanding of sovereignty. An organic investigation into his understanding of authority and order within the structures of the Church could be complimentary to this attempt to analyze the organic structures of this world.

---

<sup>198</sup> Widows and orphans frequently appear together as a special prerogative of the Church throughout his *Of Beneficiary Matters*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Astarita, Tommaso. *The Continuity of Feudal Power: The Caracciolo di Brienza in Spanish Naples*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Benadusi, Giovanna. *A Provincial Elite in Early Modern Tuscany: Family and Power in the Creation of the State*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Bouwsma, William J. *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Venice in the Age of the Counter Reformation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968.
- Burke, Peter. "The great unmasker: Paolo Sarpi, 1551-1613." *History Today* 15 (1965): 428-29.
- Castiglione, Caroline. "Adversarial Literacy: How Peasant Politics Influenced Noble governing of the Roman Countryside in the Early Modern Period." *American Historical Review* 109, 3 (June 2004): 783-804.
- Castiglione, Caroline. "Political Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italian Villages." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, 4 (Spring 2001): 523-52.
- Cozzi, Gaetano. "Fra Paolo Sarpi, l'anglicanesimo e la 'Historia del Concilio Tridentino'." *Rivista Storica Italiana* 64, 4 (1956): 559-619.
- Cozzi, Gaetano. "Paolo Paruta, Paolo Sarpi e la questione della sovranità su Ceneda." *Bollettino dell'Istituto di storia della società e dello stato veneziano* 4 (1962): 176-237.
- Dursteler, Eric. *Venetians in Constantinople: nation, identity, and coexistence in the early modern Mediterranean*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.
- Eisenach, Emlyn. *Husbands, Wives, and Concubines: Marriage, Family, and Social Order in Sixteenth-Century Verona*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2004.
- Ferraro, Joanne Marie. *Family and Public Life in Brescia, 1580-1650: the Foundations of Power in the Venetian State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Finlay, Robert. "Politics and the Family in Renaissance Venice: The Election of Doge Andrea Gritti." *Studi Veneziani* 2 (1978): 97-117.
- Flynn, Dennis. "Donne's Politics, 'Desperate Ambition,' and Meeting Paolo Sarpi in Venice." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99, 4 (2000): 352-53
- Hirst, Derek. "Bodies and Interests: Toleration and the Political Imagination in the Later Seventeenth Century." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, 3 (September 2007): 401-26.

- Leon Lievsay, John Leon. *Venetian Phoenix: Paolo Sarpi and some of his English Friends*. Wichita: The University Press of Kansas, 1973.
- Lane, Frederic C. *Venice: A Maritime Republic*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- Martin, John Jeffries. *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.
- Muir, Edward. *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Muir, Edward. "The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy." *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, 1 (Spring 2002): 3-21.
- Reeves, Eileen. "Kingdoms of Heaven: Galileo and Sarpi on the Celestial." *Representations* 105, 1 (2000): 61-85.
- Sarpi, Paolo. *A Fvll and Satisfactorie Answer to the late vnadvised Bull, thundered by Pope Paul the Fift, against the Renowned State of Venice*. London: John Bill, 1606.
- Id. *The History of the Council of Trent*. Translated by Nathaniel Brandt, 1619. London: J. Macock for Samuel Mearne, 1676.
- Id. *The Maxims of the Government of Venice in an Advice to the Republic*. London: J. Morpew, 1707. Another edition is known as *Advice Given to the Republick of Venice. How they ought to Govern themselves, to have perpetual Dominion*. Translated by Dr. Aglionbt. London: R. Bentley, in *Russel-Street in Covent-Garden*, and *Christopher Nobbes*, at the Sign of the *Olive-Tree*, in the Inner-Walk above stairs in the *New Exchange*, 1693.
- Id. *The Rights of Sovereigns and Subjects*. London: Graves, King, Meadows, and Cooke, 1722.
- Id. *A Treatise of Beneficiary Matters: Or, A History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues*. Westminster: J. Cluer and A. Campbell for L. Stokoe, 1727, translated from the Italian printed at Mirandola: 1676.
- Skinner, Quentin. *The Renaissance*. Vol. 1 of *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1978.
- Sperling, Jutta. "The Paradox of Perfection: Reproducing the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice." *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 41, 1 (January 1999): 3-32.
- White, Andrew Dickson. *Seven Great Statesmen in the Warfare of Humanity with Unreason*. New York: The Century Co., 1919.

Walker, Jonathan. "Legal and Political Discourse in Seventeenth-Century Venice."  
*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, 4 (October 2002): 800-826.

Wootton, David. *Paolo Sarpi: Between Renaissance and Enlightenment*. New York:  
Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Francis A. Yates. "Paolo Sarpi's 'History of the Council of Trent'." *Journal of the Warburg  
and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944): 125-43.