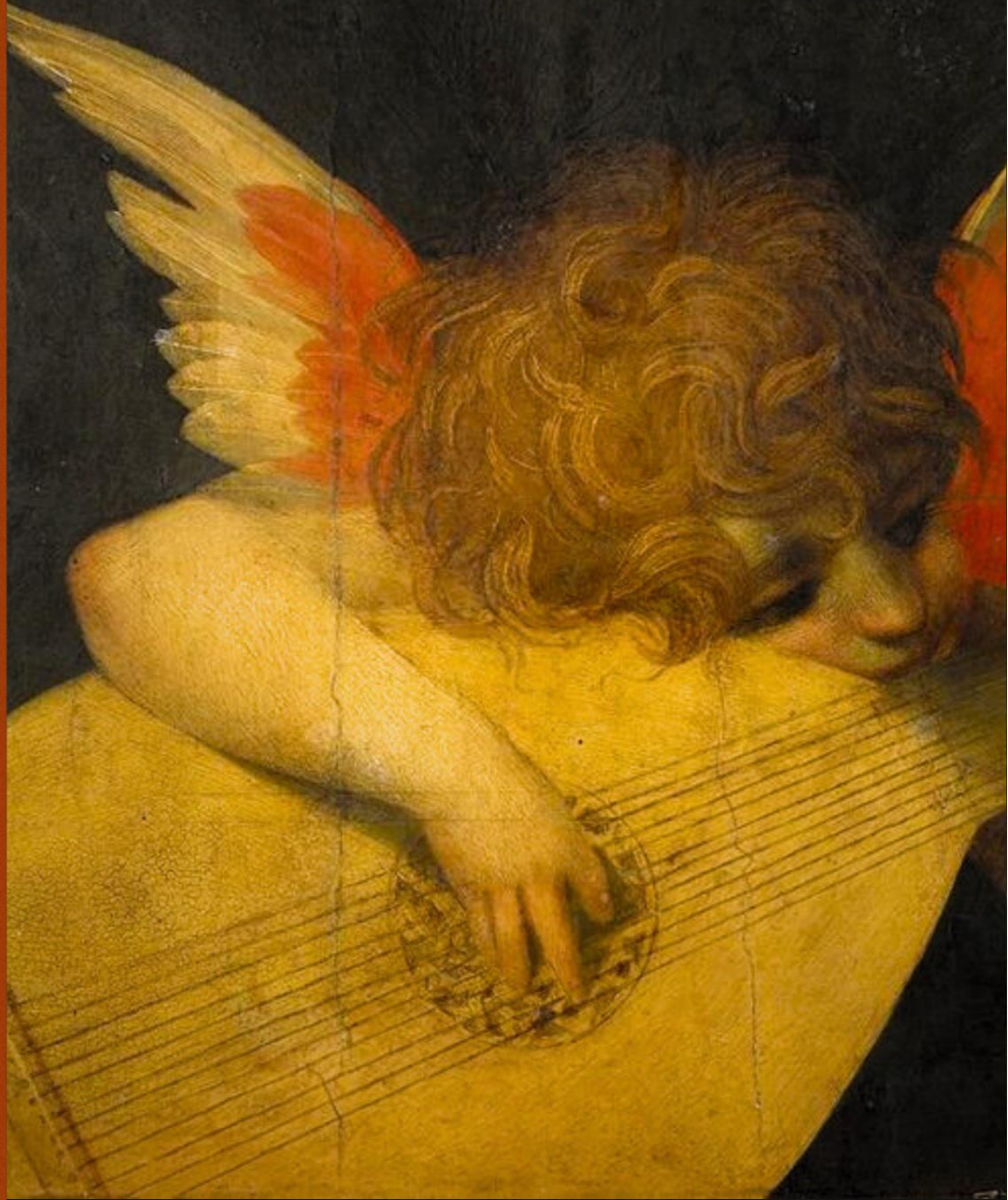


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INTRODUCTION

When the idea of founding an academic journal dedicated to connections between the premodern past and the present day was first floated around, I was excited but never believed it would come to fruition. There was much enthusiasm throughout its inception but also many intense debates about what it would look like. Coming together as a team and as a community, we decided upon the name *Noetica* and upon our journal's breadth as "Global Premodern." After a year of dedicated collaboration, we are elated to publish our first issue.

Noetica's inaugural issue perfectly encapsulates its mission to showcase quality, comparative scholarship. Within, articles ranging from philosophical dialogue and art-historical analysis to cross-cultural historical comparison will provoke critical thinking, thoughtful discussion, and the gaining of powerful knowledge, illustrating the efficacy of our journal's interdisciplinary nature. *Noetica* is affiliated with William and Mary's Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program though we do not limit ourselves to just those periods. Our articles make worthy connections between all premodern periods and the present while always emphasizing their importance and applicability to the modern world. Personally, I hope these articles both inform the reader and inspire them to gain more nuanced perspectives on the debates within all fields and areas of study so that we may successfully demonstrate that *eruditio flumen vivendi*, "knowledge is the flow of living."

Lastly, I would like to thank all the members of our Board of Editors, the Student Leadership Development, the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary, the faculty of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, and in particular our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Alexander Angelov, without whom the journal would not exist.

Best Wishes,

Editor-in-Chief

Terence Flannery



LES ANTIQUITÉS DE ROME III

BY JOACHIM DU BELLAY

*Nouveau venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome
Et rien de Rome en Rome n'aperçois,
Ces vieux palais, ces vieux arcs que tu vois,
Et ces vieux murs, c'est ce que Rome on nomme.*

*Vois quel orgueil, quelle ruine : et comme
Celle qui mit le monde sous ses lois,
Pour dompter tout, se dompta quelquefois,
Et devint proie au temps, qui tout consomme.*

*Rome de Rome est le seul monument,
Et Rome Rome a vaincu seulement.
Le Tibre seul, qui vers la mer s'enfuit,*

*Reste de Rome. Ô mondaine inconstance !
Ce qui est ferme, est par le temps détruit,
Et ce qui fuit, au temps fait résistance.*

TRANSLATION

BY SARAH RICHMAN

*Newcomer, who seeks Rome in Rome
But in Rome recognizes no Rome,
These ancient palaces, these ancient arches you see,
And these ancient walls are what we call Rome.*

*You see such pride, such ruin: and how
She who yokes the world under her laws
Dominating all, dominates herself sometimes,
And falls victim to all consuming time.*

*Rome is the only monument to Rome
And Rome alone vanquished Rome.
Only the Tiber, who flows to the sea,*

*Remains of Rome. Oh, worldly inconstance!
That which is firm, is destroyed by time,
And that which flies, resists time.*

“LE TIBRE SEUL...RESTE DE ROME”

BY SARAH RICHMAN

*The river boils in the heat,
Eroding its history,
The rough rocks smoothed by the rush
Through this course in the ruins.
Deposited sediment
Of oil, dead cells, sweat,
Is all there is to touch here
When reaching for history.
Le Tibre seul reste de Rome.*

Sarah Richman is a senior majoring in English and Medieval and Renaissance studies. Her research focuses on early modern England from 1580 to 1620, especially dramatic production. Her honors thesis, titled “Felling the ‘Princely Trunk’: Deforestation and Invasion in Shakespeare’s Plays,” works within ecocritical theory. Sarah is further interested in feminist approaches, focusing on monstrous births or (pro)creation, and the physical conditions of theatrical production, specifically the playing space and cue scripts. She wrote the poem included here after taking a French poetry course, which assigned the Joachim du Bellay poem, and visiting Rome. After graduation, she plans to take a gap year before applying to graduate school with a focus on English Renaissance drama.



THE BIG PICTURE

*How Far Do Micro-Historical and Everyday
Life History Approaches Fail to See the 'Big
Picture' of the Past?*

CAROLINE GILES '24
St. Andrews

Caroline Giles is a third-year History student in the William and Mary and University of St. Andrews Joint Degree Programme with a focus in Medieval Religious Studies. After locating to the University of St. Andrews during her second year, Caroline began taking medieval history courses with Dr. Alison Beach, a medievalist specializing in German monasteries, that inspired Caroline to pursue Medieval Studies more directly. Specific areas of study that Caroline enjoys are early medieval medicine and science, the foundation of the Catholic Church, and the early Islamic Caliphate. Caroline hopes to pursue her studies in medieval science and religion in Graduate School in the United Kingdom or in the United States.

In the 1970's and 80's, a new mode of historical research formed that differentiated itself by rejecting simple 'cause and effect' reasoning and instead turned to the agency of individuals in constructing as well as participating in major social and historical movements. In simple terms, this process of understanding history, otherwise known as microhistory, can be defined as the meticulous zooming in and out of the past in order to make sense of the overarching structures that dominate our present and potentially our future. The method of placing a magnifying glass over a particular moment in history can reveal unknown truths and understandings of our past. This 'history from below' approach sheds light on the role of the individual, a specific geographical area, and distinct familial relations in history in order to recapture the complexities of historical thought. While a painstaking process with a number of limitations on recognizing the 'big picture of the past,' microhistory is a valuable tool in order to view the role of human agency in the formation of great social and political movements.

In order to fully understand microhistory's give-and-take relationship with the 'big picture' of history, more specifically the overarching political, social, and cultural structures of the past, a brief introduction to its emergence must be expounded. Microhistory's origin begins with the initial interest of Marxist and Italian historians in the 1970's by viewing major historical changes through the eyes of the individual.¹ The preexisting French *Annales* School looked to the *longue durée*, or the study of history over long durations of time, while Marxist historians desired a return to dissecting the

role of human agency in the formation of economic and political systems. This Marxist

foundation, combined with the work of Italian scholars, led to the creation of a new method of answering historical questions. Carlo Ginzburg, one such Italian microhistorian and author of the well-known *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, proposed a theory for the major shift from the *longue durée* of the *Annales* to the reduced scope of the microhistorian:

The choice of a circumscribed and close-up perspective reveals a dissatisfaction ... with the macroscopic and quantitative model that dominated the international historiographical scene between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s, primarily through the activity of Fernand Braudel and the historians of the *Annales* school.²

The shift from macroscopic to smallerscale historical observations revealed, in microhistorian Giovanni Levi's words, "the failure of preexisting systems of study" that were proving "erroneous."³ Rather than deconstructing the entire notion of past historical study, Levi argued for a new tool to assist historians of other schools in order to emphasize the human agency of the past.

The most well-known Italian microhistorians, the previously mentioned Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg, argued the benefits of the microhistorical approach, not only because of the return to human agency but also how the gaps in history can be filled by contemporary researchers because of their unique and in-depth relationships with their sources. By filling in the gaps, the historian utilizes the signs and clues of the primary sources in order to make a general statement about past historical events or movements.⁴ In

¹ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 98.

² Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It,"

Critical Inquiry 20, no. 1. (1993): 17, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343946>.

³ Levi, "On Microhistory," 97.

⁴ Levi, "On Microhistory," 110.

a way, microhistorians may view themselves as detectives, “tracing their elusive subjects through slender records, tend[ing] to address themselves to solving small mysteries.”⁵ In a bold assertion, Levi claims, “that even the apparently minutest action of, say, somebody going to buy a loaf of bread, actually encompasses the far wider system, of the whole world’s grain markets.”⁶ While rejected by many scholars for reasons explained later, Levi attempts to illustrate how these clues and signs left for us by voices of the past are able to construct an “intelligible structure” of historical trends and cultural movements.⁷

The microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg reexamines certain facets of his subject, linking microhistory with components of ethnography, geography, and local history. According to Ginzburg, one of the best examples of local history in a microhistorical approach is the Mexican historian, Luis Gonzalez’s, work *San José de Gracia: Mexican Village in Transition*, which describes Gonzalez’s hometown in micro-precision in order to tell a local history of a seemingly unknown Mexican village.⁸ Ginzburg claims that this acknowledgment of themes not initially recognized as significant to greater historical changes, such as local history, is vital in order to reveal the formation of social structures on a large scale. This assertion leads the researcher to rely on the smaller-scale and “demonstrates that any social structure is the result of interaction and of numerous individual strategies, a fabric that can only be reconstituted from close observation.”⁹ This claim reasserts Levi’s argument that a minute exchange such as a medieval peasant purchasing a loaf of bread contributes to the

greater economic structures of Medieval Europe. Ginzburg is careful, however, reminding readers that the outcomes of the microscopic inspection of sources is not always immediately applicable to the “macroscopic sphere.”¹⁰ This understanding of the limitations of microhistory is well drawn

upon by the critics of microhistory, who identify its shortcomings by referring to the ‘big picture of history.’

The effects of placing excessive credit on the role of individuals in forming the structures of the past is, according to opponents of microhistory, restrictive of the scale of history as well as the political, social, and economic structures that dominate our past. The shift to a more microscopic view of history also concerns those scholars who place heavy emphasis on the general as it, “calls into question conventional, long-term views of historical development and associated conceptualizations of change.”¹¹ This disconnection with the ‘traditional’ or accepted mode of study resulted in *Annalist* supporting historian François Furet’s vocal opposition to the subject. In Ginzburg’s response to Furet’s critique, he claims, “I took issue with an essay by Furet in the *Annales* in which he asserted that the history of the subaltern classes in preindustrial societies can only be studied from a statistical point of view.”¹² As an *Annalist*, Furet looked toward the overarching structures of the past across centuries, removing the significance of human agency and potential narratives of historical sources. While other scholars recognize the shortcomings and limitations of

⁵ Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001): 133, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674921>.

⁶ Levi, “On Microhistory,” 100.

⁷ Levi, “On Microhistory,” 102.

⁸ Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, “Microhistory,” 12.

⁹ Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, “Microhistory,” 33.

¹⁰ Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, “Microhistory,” 33.

¹¹ Brad S. Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” review of *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* by Alf Lu dtke and William Templer; *Jeux D’Échelles. La MicroAnalyse à L’Expérience* by Jacques Revel, *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (February 1999), 104.

¹² Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, “Microhistory,” 22.

microhistorical research as Furet, there are many who acknowledge the values of microhistory as a tool to gain further insight into the preexisting historical structures across centuries.

This give-and-take argument is far more appropriate when analyzing the functionality of microhistory as a method of research as there are indeed limitations to the other historical schools. The *Annales* School, for example, experiences its own limitations as it places too much emphasis on the great political and economic structures over large periods of history while often failing to recognize the participation and agency of past individuals in those said structures. Acknowledging the limitations, historian Brad S. Gregory views historical questions as a painting that, “if examined too closely, the blotches of blended pigment in a painting obscures its coherence as a work of art, still brushstrokes enlighten us about the artist’s technique.”¹³ By acknowledging the limitations, Gregory recognizes that microhistory is not in every case the most ideal research method in answering historical questions but can be a valuable resource in understanding the individual’s role in historical changes of the past. It is necessary to recognize the shortcomings of microhistory, notably its attempts to reconstruct the beliefs, emotions, and mentalities of past individuals. It is appropriate to question how precisely notarial documents, archived sources, and property records reveal the experiences and emotions of past humans when journals and similar personal documents are not available for analysis. According to Gregory, “one ought to be cautious indeed about claims to reconstruct ‘experience’ on the basis of demographic, financial, and familial records.”¹⁴

¹³ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 100.

¹⁴ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 107.

¹⁵ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 105.

There are several instances in historical research where microhistory, however, reveals a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the historical structures of the past. Giovanni Levi proposes a theory regarding the usefulness of microhistory where he:

draws on detailed expenditure books from fifteenth and sixteenth-century Venetian families to dispute the notion of a sharp break between pre- and postindustrial consumerism. A top-down, diffusionist narrative of consumer behavior cannot account for the complexities of consumption and credit practices in early modern Europe throughout the social hierarchy.¹⁵

Essentially, Levi asserts that certain historical questions are best answered utilizing microhistorical methods in order to understand the nuanced meaning from the perspective of ‘history from below.’ Importantly, microhistorians reject the idea that people of the past were “puppets on the hands of great underlying forces of history” and instead are “regarded as active individuals, conscious actors.”¹⁶ This is an important distinction as past, everyday humans are seen as leading figures in the formation of the major structures of history, not merely inert figures worthy of only statistical value, as in the opinion of Furet. Relating to this distinction is the emphasis that microhistorians reject the idea that these smaller-scale events or people are “merely miniature copies” of the historical movements and social structures of their time.¹⁷

The study of everyday life, also known as *Alltagsgeschichte*, is another form of ‘history from below’ which focuses on the experiences of past individuals, usually those underrepresented in the historical record. Much like the methods of microhistory, *Alltagsgeschichte* highlights the “life and

¹⁶ Tamas Kisantal, review of *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* by Istvan M. Szijarto, Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, *The*

¹⁷ Kisantal, review of *What is Microhistory*, 513.

survival of those who remained largely anonymous in history—the ‘nameless’ multitudes in their workday trails and tribulations.”¹⁸ The effects of changing political and economic systems on everyday people can be understood and analyzed by utilizing *Alltagsgeschichte* in order to further question the consequences of “progress” on underrepresented individuals, families, and minorities.¹⁹ This method is especially valuable when analyzing how politics and economic systems shape the lives of minorities and specific individuals as well as the role they play in shaping future changing systems. *Alltagsgeschichte*, however, requires an

Hungarian Historical Review 4, no. 2 (2015), 513, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24575830>.

intensive restriction of scale in order to observe the everyday lives of past individuals, which can pose an immense challenge when there is an absence of journals and personal accounts. In response to many critiques of microhistory and the ‘history of everyday life,’ the emphasis on human agency and its relation to grand historical themes does not translate to an abandonment of the major structures and institutions throughout history such as religion, capitalism, and class. Instead, it attempts to “discover the agency of ordinary people in the arena of everyday life which, when examined in detail, forces a rethinking of major historical developments and reveals them to be contingent.”²⁰

Natalie Zemon Davis’s work, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, captures both the shortcomings and successes of microhistorical research by magnifying a French village’s sixteenth-century scandal. Relying on court records and witness accounts of the controversy, Davis attempts to narrate and

reimagine the court case, marriage, and disappearance of Martin Guerre, a French peasant. Davis makes clear in her prologue that, “what I offer you here is in part my invention, but held tightly in check by the voices of the past.”²¹ This disclaimer of sorts clarifies that, due to the lack of personal journals and gaps in the available primary sources, Davis chooses to examine and narrate the history of Guerre’s return from her own perspective with added literary elements. Her work studies an exceptional case in order to reveal grander themes such as “family life, marriage, gender roles, justice and religion, as well as the widely divergent social status of the learned and the common man.”²² While the text was criticized for assuming the mentalities of the people of the past, Davis emphasizes that the text is indeed “partly her invention,” an interesting point that illustrates

history as a discipline to be interpreted instead of simply copy and pasted from the historical records available.

The Return of Martin Guerre, however, is an example of a microhistorical work that may lose itself in the ‘big picture of the past’ as it attempts to illustrate how an exceptional criminal case of fraud and identity theft “was an avenue into understanding sixteenth-century life and possibilities.”²³ Microhistory, however, claims that examining the abnormal reveals unknown facets of the historical structures dominating our past and present. The point of the Davis’s work, however, is not to criticize her narrative and literary elements as threatening to the truths of the past but to recognize that the “researcher’s point of view becomes an intrinsic part of the account” and “the limitations of documentary evidence” are

¹⁸ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 101.

¹⁹ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 101.

²⁰ Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful,” 102.

²¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 5.

²² István Szijarto and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 109.

²³ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Why I Wrote *The Return of Martin Guerre*,” letter prepared for Adam Brode, April 4, 2013.

made clear, allowing the reader to understand that there is room for error and misinterpretation.²⁴ Ginzburg himself claims that the lack of documentation or misinterpretation, “had to become a part of the account” because of their interference and overall significance during the research process.²⁵ Essentially, Davis accepts these limitations as a microhistorian and uses them to her advantage, making the unanswerable questions and misinterpretations subjects of the narrative.

of the observable structures that work to form understanding of great history.

Microhistory, however, has the ability to uncover unknown truths of the past and the experiences of people that endured and worked to produce historical structures.

Looking from above will fail to notice their

achievements and experiences, constructing an exclusive history of iconic names and events lacking the agency of everyday people and their own experiences, scandals, and patterns that can reflect the social processes of the time. Microhistory may not be applicable or the

most ideal method of study in every case, but the assertion that it completely loses the ‘big picture of the past’ is inconsistent with the goals and outcomes of microhistory. By zooming into a specific moment or individual in history, the microhistorian offers a unique perspective on the relationship between the minute and the grand structures of the past.

Microhistory and its relationship to understandings of the ‘big picture of the past’ reformulates the goal of the historian in their attempt to answer great historical questions. Instead of offering a universal truth or observable fact, microhistorians attempt to reimagine the humans of the past and their own relationship to, and role in constructing social structures. To some historians of opposing schools, predominantly the *Annales*, microhistory loses itself by focusing too closely on the quiet voices of the past instead of our

²⁴ Levi, “On Microhistory,” 110.

²⁵ Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi “Microhistory,”



THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST AND THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

*The Origin, Transformation, and Continuation
of “Moscow, the Third Rome”*

PHILLIP ELLISON '24
William & Mary

Phillip Ellison is a History and Economics double major at William and Mary, where he studies a variety of subjects within the humanities. While his academic focus is not Religious Studies, Phillip thoroughly enjoyed the course “Eastern Christianity,” taught by Professor Alexander Angelov, and it is there that he primarily worked on his submitted paper. In History, his recent research has tended toward Medieval and Byzantine history. In Economics, he will be starting an Honors Fellowship research project this summer on an early nineteenth-century French economic journalist, with a focus on his use of fables as a pedagogical tool. Phillip expects to pursue Economics as his primary area of interest into the future, but he is still exploring the potential academic or professional routes to take following graduation.

Introduction

In the last two millennia, one would be hard-pressed to find a Western nation that did not claim to be “Roman” in one sense or another. The influence of this Mediterranean civilization echoes through the political philosophy, architecture, and identity of the West. Less understood is the development of Roman inheritance in the East, a region where Roman civilization lasted into the Medieval Era via the Byzantine Empire. In this paper, I examine one particularly insistent claim of inheritance: that of Moscow, the Third Rome.

When Constantinople fell in 1453, Moscow is said to have inherited the mantle of “New Rome” and supreme Orthodox empire. This inheritance included a divine mission that granted the Russian people a particular importance and a set of responsibilities. This paper will examine the foundations of this idea, its articulation, and its transformations through time.

Before discussing the Third Rome, a concise foundation should be laid with the “First” and “Second” Romes. The First Rome is the Rome in Italy, whose mythical foundations were laid in pagan times by the tale of Romulus and Remus and later with the Aeneid. For the Second Rome, Constantinople, its creation by the Emperor Constantine gave it a Christian origin and blessing.²⁶ The evolution of the Christian traditions in the East and West created the faults that eventually caused schism; however, these differences in theology and tradition mixed with those of politics and economics to produce a confused schism.²⁷ When the Third Rome came into being, it inherited this same tendency to mix religion with politics as it defined itself apart from its predecessors.

If the development of the Third Rome claim required significant differentiation from the prior two Romes, then Moscow found itself

adequately positioned in this respect. Throughout its history, Moscow has found itself straddled between traditions: Latin and Greek (in language); Greek and Russian (in Orthodox tradition); and scholastic and mystic (in philosophical approach).²⁸ Not easily resolved, these tensions created the impetus for a unique, Russian approach. This distinctly Russian worldview would characterize the Third Rome, its uniqueness, and its mission.

Fundamentally, the Third Rome concept is messianic. Messianism is the view that a person or group is chosen for a specific purpose, which in the Russian expression of the term, refers to the view that the Russian people are both set apart from other nations in mission and in character. What will become evident is the close link between Russian messianism and notions of honorable, Christian suffering. Given Russia’s long history of suffering and struggle, the strength of this idea resonated with the Russian people.²⁹ Also notable about Russian messianism is its lack of strict ethnic claims; it prizes the empire, nation, and its people without being exclusive to a particular race.

Although some aspects of this subject can risk anachronism, the idea of messianism does not. The Russian scholars of the 19th century, attempting to shed light on the distinctiveness of Russian thought, considered the question of messianism. For example, Vladimir S. Solovyov (1853-1900 A.D.) states the following:

Outside the theological sphere, although in connection with religious ideas, in all peoples who have played an important role in history, on the awakening of their national consciousness

²⁶ Robert Lee Wolff, “The Three Romes: The Migration of an Ideology and the Making of an Autocrat,” *Daedalus* 88, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 293-294, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026497>.

²⁷ Wolff, “Three Romes,” 296.

²⁸ Nicholas Zernov, *Moscow, the Third Rome* (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 9-10

²⁹ Peter J. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1-3

there has arisen the conviction of the special advantage of the given people, as the chosen bearer and perpetrator of the historical fate of mankind.³⁰

This definition provides a useful clarification of messianism and its ubiquity. The desire for one's people to be special is a natural characteristic of nationalism. What is odd is the mixed view of religion; messianism can exist outside of the "theological sphere" while also tying into religious ideas. In this vague distinction, the unique, Russian approach to the separation of secular and religious life is implied. Specifically, there is no hard distinction between the secular and religious.

To approach the subject of messianism more directly, Nikolas Berdiaev (1874-1948) explains the fundamental distinction between missionism and messianism:

Messianism (sic) derives from Messiah, missionism from mission. Messianism is much more exacting than missionism. It is easy to assume that each nation has its particular mission, its calling in the world, corresponding to the uniqueness of its individuality. But the messianic consciousness claims an exclusive calling, a calling which is religious and universal in its significance, and sees in the given people the bearer of the messianic spirit. The given people are God's chosen people, and in this lies the Messiah.³¹

In the Russian purview, the Third Rome idea is a messianic notion that not only encompasses the function of *missionism* defined above but also injects a Christian, universal element. Even in the short quote above, the nationalist and universalist elements of messianism clash; is the nation blessed to be unique, above, and separated from all other nations, or is it called to be a universal leader that does not claim supremacy?³²

Before delving into the history of the Third Rome as an idea, certain scholarly controversies should be addressed. First,

internal disagreements over Russia's identity, including the debates between the westernizing "Intelligentsia" and the Slavophiles, have obscured the historicity of this subject.³³ More fundamentally, the study of the Third Rome concept is plagued with anachronisms. A paper by Marshall Poe, which I cite frequently, serves as a strong contrast to

the common narrative of the Third Rome. For example, many histories attempt to find the Third Rome idea in writings before the Fall of Constantinople. Although there may be some ideological foundations laid before the Fall, the Third Rome idea, by definition, cannot function while the Second Rome still lives; the Third Rome idea is a statement of inheritance, not usurpation. Therefore, it is anachronistic to "find" Third Rome texts prior to 1453.³⁴

Despite Poe's criticisms, I argue that the problematic anachronisms surrounding the Third Rome idea can be avoided if the idea is treated more broadly. Instead of attempting to find the exact formulation of Moscow as the inheritor of Constantinople, it is sufficient to look at the development of the unique customs of Russian Orthodoxy and the messianism that grew with it. It is rare for an idea to spring up without some history of development.

Moments in Third Rome History – Part 1: The Early Kievan Church and its Idiosyncrasies

I. The Conversion of the Rus' and the Kievan Saints

A Christian and messianic notion, the Third Rome idea has its roots in the conversion to Christianity of the Kievan Rus'. The first notable event in this period is the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet by Byzantine apostles, Cyril and Methodius. The importance of this event cannot be understated. With their own

³⁰ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 7

³¹ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 7.

³² Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 7-9

³³ Zernov, *Moscow*, 10-11

³⁴ M. Poe, "Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a 'Pivotal Moment,'" *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49, no. 3 (2001): 413-415.

church language, eastern European Christians could develop a unique identity, a fundamental prerequisite of the Third Rome idea. The linguistic isolation of the Slavonic Churches also provided insulation from the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation movements on one hand as well as the breadth of pre-existing Greek Orthodox scholarship on the other.³⁵ The consequences of the translation of Orthodoxy into Old Church Slavonic were in effect to create a third religious sphere, separate from those of Rome and Constantinople.

In 957 A.D., the Grand Princess Olga of Kiev converted to Orthodoxy in Constantinople.³⁶ While apostles introduced Orthodoxy to the Rus', it is notable that the Rus' sought its own conversion. While the Third Rome characterizes Russia as being anointed in the Orthodox mission, Russia appears to have been equally interested in taking on this mission before being anointed. In a similar vein, Anna, a princess of Byzantium married off to Vladimir of Kiev, played an important role in convincing her husband to convert himself and all of Rus' to Orthodoxy.¹² Anna's mission and the marriage in general implied a direct influence and connection between the Second Rome and the Third.

The Russian Orthodox Church officially began with the baptizing of Prince Vladimir of Kiev (980-1015 A.D.) in 988 A.D. Unlike his predecessors, he Christianized his pagan, Slavic kingdom by decree. One legend says that he sent envoys to evaluate all the Christian church traditions and decided that the Byzantine one was the most beautiful.³⁷ It is notable that Vladimir chose Orthodoxy primarily for aesthetic and not intellectual reasons.³⁸ One can imagine that the

19th century Slavophiles who opposed the rationalistic tendencies of the West carried on some of this aesthetic preference. This is confirmed by their preferred intellectual media of novels and poems.

While the Church of Kiev followed the same Bible, creed, and ecclesiastical structure as Byzantium, it also developed its own interpretation and adapted the fundamental concepts.³⁹ This can be seen in the stories of the first Russian saints: Vladimir's sons, Boris and Gleb. They voluntarily accepted their own

political, fratricidal deaths at the hands of their brother Sviatopolk. Despite resistance from the Greek Metropolitan of Kiev, the people of Rus' canonized the brothers, demonstrating a unique view of saintliness in the Rus'. Namely, their deaths emphasized the importance of accepting unjust suffering like Christ had done.⁴⁰ The popular acclaim for these saints combined with the vernacular translations of the Scriptures produced a vibrant, common, and original Church tradition in the Rus'.⁴¹

II. *Migration to Moscow and the Germination of the Messianic Seed*

Before considering the end of the Kievan period, an important misconception should be addressed. Scholarship on the subject often overemphasizes the degree of Byzantine influence relative to Western influence. The Rus' traded, interacted, and communicated with both the East and West, forging marriage alliances with kingdoms in both regions. Therefore, the divergence of the Russian Church from the East and West should be placed closer to the Mongol invasion and the

³⁵ Albert Leong, *The Millennium: Christianity and Russia, A.D. 988 - 1988* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 14.

³⁶ Leong, *The Millennium*, 4¹²

Leong, *The Millennium*, 5-6.

³⁷ Zernov 1971, 15-16.

³⁸ He lène Iswolsky, *Soul of Russia* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1944), 3.

³⁹ Zernov, *Moscow*, 21.

⁴⁰ Zernov, *Moscow*, 22-23.

⁴¹ Leong, *The Millennium*, 29

conquering of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204.⁴²

The Mongol invasion and sacking of the various eastern European cities, including Kiev, ended the period of Russian Church history when it existed as a satellite of Constantinople and a buffer state with the Norsemen. Because the sacking pushed the Metropolitan to move to Moscow, the center of Russian Orthodoxy became significantly more isolated, away in the Russian forests instead of central on the open Ukrainian steppe.⁴³

Several legends attributed to the Kievan Period were later used to claim a Kievan foundation for the Third Rome idea. One legend claimed that certain pieces of ceremonial regalia supposedly dated back to Vladimir of Kiev and were gifts from the Byzantines. Another stated that the Apostle Peter's older brother, Andrew, endeavored to convert the Scythians and ended up blessing Kiev, announcing that it would become the defender of the true faith in the future.⁴⁴ In summary, the Kievan Rus' period can be characterized by its development of a unique Russian Orthodox identity and Church tradition. In this differentiation came the seeds of the Third Rome, or at least its prerequisites, which then sprouted in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Moments in Third Rome History – Part 2: The Fall of Constantinople and the Rise of Moscow

I. The Council of Florence-Ferrara and the Fall of Constantinople

As previously stated, the Third Rome idea contains a mixture of politics and theology; before the Fall, Constantinople was seen as blessed by God with a divine mission to protect and promulgate the faith.²¹

At the Council of Florence-Ferrara, the Byzantine Emperor and the Ecumenical

Patriarch communed with the Roman Catholic Church to receive military aid against the advancing Ottomans. The real threat of the fall of Constantinople required explanation; a holy empire that lasts for nearly a millennium (and one that traced its history back through Rome as well) does not collapse without explanation. The two most important explanations for the Fall were mutually exclusive: (1) the Fall presaged the end of the world that would take place in 1492, the 7000th year since Creation according to an Eastern tradition; or (2) the Fall served as a punishment for Greek apostasy at the Council of Florence, and God would soon elect a new empire.⁴⁵

Although the Metropolitan of Moscow, Isidore, communed with Rome at the Council, he found himself discharged by the Muscovite

Grand Duke Basil II soon after. This decision not only defied the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople, whose sole responsibility it was to select a Metropolitan, but it also created a rift between the Muscovite Church and the rest of the Orthodox world. When Constantinople fell, the Russian Church, in its view, had been vindicated for its opposition of the Council. Moreover, the Muscovite government took the opportunity to inherit the customs and character of Byzantine rule. Specifically, Prince Ivan III married Princess Sophia Palaiologina, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor. This linkage with Constantinople coincided with great, Russian, political victories, including the overthrowing of the Mongols.⁴⁶

The foundations for this conflation of religious and political destiny can be found

⁴² Leong, *The Millennium*, 26

⁴³ Zernov, *Moscow*, 28-31

⁴⁴ Wolff, "Three Romes," 302

²¹ Zernov, *Moscow*, 33.

⁴⁵ Zernov, *Moscow*, 34.

⁴⁶ Zernov, *Moscow*, 35.

before the Fall of Constantinople. For example, the monk St. Sergius (1314-92) encouraged Prince Dmitry of Moscow (1363-89) to resist the Mongols, leading to the Russian victory at the River Don (1380), marking the beginning of the end of Mongol domination.⁴⁷ Such a crossover between a pious monk and a political leader is indicative of the forthcoming Third Rome formulation.

Moreover, with the construction of the Kremlin, Ivan III began to mimic the autocratic tendencies of the Byzantine emperor, betraying the noble-friendly traditions of the Nordic Rus'. As a result, Tsar is better characterized as an imitation of a Byzantine emperor instead of a Mongol Khan.⁴⁸

The reign of Ivan IV ("the Terrible") (1547-75) similarly contributed to the Third Rome ideology. In the early part of his reign, he extended the Russian Empire to the Pacific in the east and to Georgia in the south. Later in his reign, however, he became a cruel and sinful tsar, which coincided with Russia losing its Baltic seaports to the Poles and Swedes.⁴⁹ In this way, his immoral behavior was viewed as a cause for the territorial losses, just as the Greek apostasy had been for the fall of the Byzantine Empire.

Although scholars frequently connect the political events of the 16th century to the Third Rome, the idea cannot be discussed without considering its primary progenitor: Filofei of Pskov.

II. Filofei, Third Rome, and Holy Rus'

The famous epistle from the monk Filofei to the Muscovite Prince Basil III ("the Great"): The Church of Old Rome fell because of the impiety of the Apollinarian heresy; the Church of the Second Rome, Constantinople, was smitten under the battle-axes of the Agarenes [Muslims; people of Hagar]; but this present

Church of the Third, New Rome, of Thy sovereign empire: the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church...shines in the whole universe more resplendent than the sun. And let it be known to Thy Lordship, O pious Czar, that all the empires of the Orthodox Christian Faith have conveyed into Thine one empire. Thou art the sole Emperor of all the Christians in the whole universe...For two Romes have fallen, and the Third stands, and a fourth shall never be, for Thy Christian Empire shall never dissolve upon others.⁵⁰

As a foundation for an ideology, one should be careful with overinterpreting this text. Given the audience, one should expect eloquence, flattery, and frequent comparisons to Rome (as was common in pre-16th century epistles). At the same time, it states a specific creed that differentiates itself from common flattery. One of the most notable parts of the epistle is the emphasis that there could be no Fourth Rome. This serves as a subtle threat; if the prince let Orthodoxy fall in Moscow, the world would end.⁵¹

An important question to consider regarding Filofei would be "How influential were his writings?" The best evidence comes from the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1589. The installation charter states almost verbatim what Filofei claimed in his famous epistle to Basil III. Given the Patriarch of Constantinople would not appreciate being seen in the light of the fallen Second Rome, it likely took a great deal of ecclesiastical diplomacy to obtain the Patriarchate and approval of the Third Rome doctrine.⁵²

With the role of patriarch opposite of the tsar, one would wonder what characterized the political dynamic between the two positions.

⁴⁷ Zernov, *Moscow*, 38.

⁴⁸ Wolff, "Three Romes," 305-6.

⁴⁹ Zernov, *Moscow*, 47-8.

⁵⁰ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 11.

⁵¹ Poe, "Pivotal Moment," 417.

⁵² Zernov, *Moscow*, 48-49.

In short, the church-state relationship that developed out of this period was oddly coequal; the tsar shared the responsibility of caring for the pious people with the patriarch. In this, the tsar was a dignitary or prelate. It is notable that the tsar wore ecclesiastical instead of military garb because it implied a view of an emperor that contrasted that of the West. Despite the strong, common, religious element, the church and state kept to their own jurisdictions, yet each domain's laws were seen as being equal in importance.⁵³

Alongside the development of the Third Rome idea came a view that emphasized the divine mission of the people (as opposed to the state). Called "Holy Rus,'" it claimed that the Russian people and land were holy. The expression of this worldview came out in the various peasant revolts of the 17th century, which usually demanded that the Tsar remain true to the conservative values of the Holy Rus',⁵⁴

III. Third Rome to the Exterior

In the 17th century, there is some evidence that Russia received external approbation of its claim to being the proper ruler of the Orthodox world. For one, anecdotes from visitors to Russia detail the generous alms given by the Russian people without concern for fraud or swindling. In this way, Russia is admired for its spiritual virtue. At a political level, the Patriarchs of Constantinople began including the tsar's name where the Byzantine emperor's name had been in the divine liturgy. Also, in 1649, the Patriarch of Jerusalem appealed to Tsar Alexis for military aid, coming from a place of respect and supplication.⁵⁵ At the same time, Russian Orthodox practice also drew criticism from the rest of Orthodox

world. In particular, the Greeks disdained the backwards practices of the Russian Church, which had not evolved alongside the Greeks. This conflict culminated in an internal strife between three groups: the "Old Believers" who wished to preserve the Russian traditions; Patriarch Nikon, who pursued a radical reform program to bring the Russian Church in line with that of the Greeks; and the nobles and Greek sympathizers who subverted the other two factions.⁵⁶ The Church Council of 1666-7, which condemned Nikon and the Old Believers alike, notably denounced the argument that Constantinople fell because of the Council of Florence, attempting to subdue the Third Rome idea.⁵⁷ The result of ostracizing both Nikon and the Old Believers, according to the scholar Zernov, was a vacuum of national spirit, which provided the opportunity for Peter I to bring in Western ideas.⁵⁸

Peter I ("the Great") made several reforms that diminished the influence of the Third Rome idea. Namely, he changed the office of Tsar from ecclesiastical prelate to German-style military leader. In 1721, he dealt a decisive blow to the independence of the Church by abolishing the Patriarchate in favor of a Synod that he controlled. Most symbolically, he moved the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1703.⁵⁹ Subtly, his

controversial reforms turned the state against the nation and church, which dismantled the ideal of the Third Rome—a society and state united in their faith and mission.⁶⁰ At this point, the Third Rome idea transformed from a reality to an idealized past. The bifurcation of the government and culture created the future

⁵³ Zernov, *Moscow*, 50-51.

⁵⁴ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 15.

⁵⁵ Zernov, *Moscow*, 55-56.

⁵⁶ Zernov, *Moscow*, 63-74.

⁵⁷ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 13.

⁵⁸ Zernov, *Moscow*, 75-76.

⁵⁹ Zernov, *Moscow*, 76.

⁶⁰ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 15.

opportunity to juxtapose the westernized St. Petersburg with traditional Moscow.⁶¹

Poe provides valuable criticism in this area, too. He argues that the readiness of the government to submit themselves to the Patriarch of Constantinople as well as to reject Old Believer conceptions of the Third Rome indicates the idea's lack of sway in government.⁶² A fair conclusion to draw from this might be that the Third Rome ideology existed more in religious circles than political ones, insofar as the clergy cared to justify or condemn the government.

Fundamentally, Peter I's program of westernization injected new modes of thought into the Russian intellectual space that would be adopted and appropriated by Russian thinkers, statesmen, and people.

Moments in Third Rome History – Part 3: The Spirit of the Third Rome in the Modern Milieu

I. Slavophilism: Intellectual Messianism

The westernization wrought by Peter I laid the groundwork for several new factions, which slowly formed in the 19th century. For example, the westernized conservatives constituted the nobility and tsars who modeled themselves after the Prussian state. Westernized liberals, on the other hand, adopted revolutionary values such as those expressed in the French Revolution as well as Western socialism. Finally, there were national radicals, so-called Slavophiles who advocated political and social reform modeled by the Church.⁶³ These burgeoning intellectual movements derived, in part, from anxiety about falling behind the West.⁶⁴

Among the intellectual movements, is the Slavophiles who invoked the character of the Third Rome the most. In general, these

scholars had strong ties to Moscow in upbringing and education often praised the pious Orthodox people in contrast with the West and the westernizing tsars. The various Slavophiles—Khomiakov, Kireevsky the Akssakov brothers, and others—articulated several characterizations of the Russian religion, intellect, and people that validated the anointed image painted by the Holy Rus' idea.⁶⁵ In this way, the Third Rome ideology saw itself transformed into a more complex and intellectual statement about national consciousness and character.

To qualify this characterization, Poe argues that explicit references to the Third Rome are minimal in the writings of the early 19th-century Slavophiles, indicating their lack of familiarity with Filofei. By the time of Vladimir Soloviev, however, explicit references to the Third Rome served to fuse the preexisting, Slavophilic ideas with the messianism of the past.⁶⁶ One example of significant continuity in the Third Rome idea comes from the poet Tiutchev, who envisaged a panSlavonic tsar who would reclaim Constantinople. This view combined the Third Rome of the past with Slavic nationalism of the current day. At the same time, however, some thinkers like Chaadaev (1793-1856) used messianism to argue that Russia was meant to be a late but great modernizer,⁶⁷ complicating the black-and-white claim that the Third Rome idea only served Slavophilism.

II. Messianic Marxism

With the development and growth of western influence in Russia, the early 20th

⁶¹ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 19.

⁶² Poe, "Pivotal Moment," 417-419.

⁶³ Zernov, *Moscow*, 78-79.

⁶⁴ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 16.

⁶⁵ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 22-24.

⁶⁶ Poe, "Pivotal Moment," 423-424.

⁶⁷ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 21.

century appears, at first glance, to display an abandonment of Third Rome religious messianism. The Bolshevik Revolution can be seen in one sense as being a completely western conflict: western liberals (socialists) versus western conservatives (the tsar and the nobility). However, the success of the Revolution required making various concessions to the peasants, including moving the capital back to Moscow, restoring local customs that had been stripped away early in the Revolution, and the continued existence of the Church, despite heavy regulation.⁶⁸ Certain tenets of Holy Rus' simply could not be violated by the Communists.

Even in considering Marxism, the classic enemy of Russian Orthodoxy, there exists the same problem of nationalism and universalism. While the final state of the proletariat would be unified under a global banner, socialist thinkers ended up deciding that there would need to be a leading, national proletariat.⁶⁹ The Russian messianism that had animated the Third Rome and Holy Rus' appears to be contained in Soviet Marxism as well.

In a more direct way, the Third Rome idea influenced Soviet historians and propagandists. Berdiaev argued, early in the Soviet Era, that the Bolsheviks had successfully justified and adapted the Third Rome idea. As evidence, he asserted that the independent assertions of 16th century Moscow could be interpreted as sharing the same spirit of defying the imperialist Western powers.⁷⁰

The events of the early Russian Revolution and pre-Revolution exposed a connection between the Third Rome and revolutionary ideologies. For one, the Patriarchate was reinstated in 1917. Undoing Peter's reforms, Lenin and Trotsky chose to live in the Kremlin and moved the capital back to Moscow.

⁶⁸ Zernov, *Moscow*, 80-81.

⁶⁹ Duncan *Russian Messianism*, 49-51.

⁷⁰ Poe, "Pivotal Moment," 425-426.

⁷¹ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 53-54.

Ultimately, the conflict that followed between Trotsky and Stalin came down to the universalist versus nationalist emphases of Marxism; Stalin won in the end by promoting a messianic, nationalist view of the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Given the subjugation of the Church to the Soviet state, the Russian clergy laid on Stalin copious amounts of praise. In a similar vein to Filofei and Basil III, the Church treated him as a divinely appointed ruler: "[he] [,] whom Divine Providence chose [,] God placed to lead our Fatherland on the path of prosperity and glory." The suffering but ultimate success of the nation during World War II legitimized Stalin's divine favor, harkening back to the military victories against the Mongols and their divine explanation.⁷²

On the other hand, the Church, under the oppression of the Soviets, intensified the Third Rome messianic myth. In this lamentation, the Church saw the beacon of the Third Rome stifled, suffering. However, like Jesus the Messiah, the Third Rome would suffer, die, then be resurrected.⁷³ In this way, the meaningful suffering that characterized the Christianity of the Kievan Rus' reappeared in the experience of Russian Orthodox Christians one millennium later. The survival of Orthodoxy into the post-Soviet era would then be seen as proof that the Russian people were, at their core, Orthodox Christians; people of the Holy Rus'.⁷⁴

III. *Post-Soviet Russia and Contemporary Implications*

The post-Soviet era saw the arrival of the "Russian idea", the view that Russia had a

⁷² Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 59-60.

⁷³ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 87.

⁷⁴ N.A. Struve, *Christians in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Scribner, 1967), 175.

“third way” approach that it should follow as a nation, different from both the West and East.⁷⁵ Although this idea includes the restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church, its premise contains a nationalist foundation. After a millennium of change, the spirit of the messianic Third Rome has been distilled into this much broader message about Russian purpose.

To properly understand the continued importance of the Third Rome concept in modern Russia, one can turn to the words of the current Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill—an appropriate name given the importance of the Cyrillic alphabet in the Russian Church history. Even 500 years later, the Russian Church continues to reflect on the importance of the Council of Florence-Ferrara and the Fall of Constantinople:

Mark of Ephesus is a person who alone saved Orthodoxy from the Union [with the Roman Catholic Church].

Although its precision and religious strength has oscillated over the last millennium, its essential character has not changed. The emphasis on nationalist, Christian

messianism, rooted in the unique tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church, remains intact. In much of the scholarship on the subject, the Third Rome concept is often treated as a cause of Russia’s odd national character. Given the

exploration into the idea’s prehistory, it seems much more likely that the pre-existing cultural character of the Kievan Rus’ and personality of its first Christian converts—Olga, Anna, and Vladimir—laid the foundations for the doctrine articulated by Filofei in the 16th century.

In viewing this history broadly, the idea of the Third Rome found its inflection point in the 16th century, a time when its

When Constantinople was weakened, the emperor of Constantinople believed that the answer lay in the military forces of western countries, and that they would save Constantinople from attack. But without the blessing from the pope of Rome, no one wanted to go to protect Constantinople. And to save Constantinople, the emperor decided to submit the Orthodox Church to Rome. The Patriarch of Constantinople agreed with most of the bishops, and they went to the Italian cities of Ferrara and Florence where the Council was held. At this council, the Patriarch and bishops signed union with Rome. Only Mark of Ephesus did not sign. He believed that there can be no union under fear. There can be no union because of pragmatism. Most important, there can be no union under threat of schism. They united with Rome and crushed the unity of the Orthodox world. Saint Mark endured all that misery that fell on Orthodoxy. He remained brave at that Council and did not sign the union...I am here to protect the purity of Orthodox Faith and to oppose any heresy and any shame. We are obligated to protect Orthodoxy...as Saint Mark of Ephesus did.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Akin to the nearly two millennia-long life of Rome, the idea of Moscow, the Third Rome, has had a remarkably long shelf-life.

⁷⁵ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 133.

⁷⁶ "Moscow Orthodox Patriarch Criticizes Union with Rome," Orthodox Church, March 21, 2016, video, 0:04:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGN3pz0oKuo>. This speech was recorded and published as a Youtube video. I am

relying on the subtitle translations inserted by the uploader. There were numerous grammatical errors that I have corrected for smoother reading.

prophecy and its policy implications were most fully realized. After this point, the arrival of modernity and westernization obscured the doctrine but also transformed it into a form that found itself smuggled into the intellectual movements of the last two centuries. It is this slightly odd component that makes the movements of these periods so unique to Russia: Slavophilism, Marxism, state-controlled Orthodoxy, state-resistant Orthodoxy, and others. Finally, in the contemporary world, the Third Rome sees its revival in the new system of the Russian Federation, where both the government and church attempt to walk in lockstep on a route taken by no other nation.



BALL, BEDREDDIN, AND BEDLAM

*Comparative Perspectives on Leaders of Contemporaneous
Religious and Socioeconomic Discontents in England and the
Ottoman State*

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Establishing Comparisons

Comparisons of the general tensions in European religious practice have been omnipresent since the establishment of the first Christian doctrines of the Church. What has not been so clearly analyzed to the same degree are the connections in religious discontents in Christian Europe to those of the surrounding lands in the pre-Reformation European context. There is an existing body of literature on the subject, especially with how it pertains to apocalyptic prophecy and the universal imperial aspirations of Charles V and Suleiman the Magnificent. This however is too late a recognition when there were a series of armed discontents across the breadth of Europe generations earlier. In placing the revolt of Seyh Bedreddin in context with John Ball's participation in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England, there are observable similarities in religious heterodoxy, contemporary peasant grievances from trends in rural and urban economic development, and the challenges sustained by rulers of the time whose grips on their thrones were by no means secure. Another issue faced when reckoning with the respective revolts is the underlying economic situation of the English and Ottoman realms, which do not immediately engender a lot of parallels. However, the comparative lack of development towards modern economics with regard to the rest of continental Europe is something that both areas share, and which appears to have had some influence on the revolts.

Analysis of the Peasants' Revolt is not a novel idea in the English-speaking world: much less panegyrics on the thought of John Ball, which were a mainstay of English historical fiction and literature for centuries prior to "modern" historiography. Complicating the comparison is the fact that studies on Seyh Bedreddin are scarce in most historical circles. Bedreddin has become an

obscure figure outside of the modern Turkish left, which draws its roots in large part from

his movement, and outside the work of historiographers focused on that Ottoman era that can read the Turkish sources. Treatments on Bedreddin alone are rare enough in English and the specific juxtaposition of the revolts has never been addressed before in an academic work. I aim to rectify this for the purpose of greater understanding on the place and variations of religious heterodoxy in the annals of the medieval European world, as well as the economic factors that festered in the background to spark discontent that Ball and Bedreddin exploited. Neither these particular religious thoughts nor economic trends have been unknown to other authors, but there is little precedent for establishing a transEuropean connection of peasants' revolts that includes those in the Ottoman domains as well. To this end, considerable time will be devoted to recapitulating and contextualizing the revolts and their leaders and the ideas behind them.

Religious discontents in the medieval European world had been simmering for some time before the latter half of the fourteenth century. To put many centuries of heretical and heterodox thinking simply: on both some points of theology and especially the role of the Catholic Church, there was a great deal of disagreement within the Christian sphere.⁷⁷ The Church, especially with its wealth and power, was not always viewed as the most faithful arbiter of the faith of a poor, charitable social reformer. Many of the Christian heresies such as the Cathars, Waldensians, and Bogomils were advocating for interpretations of Christianity that centered around the reduction in Church power and often in any form of temporal clerical power. In addition to the mounting range of finer theological points, broad apocalyptic predictions, first centered around 1000 AD, had become increasingly

⁷⁷ The impact of apocalypticism on the Eastern Church was not as important to this study: a potential source of the thought

common. The time of the Black Death only accelerated these feelings: by the mid-1300s when John Ball was active, Western Christendom was engulfed with millenarian, chiliastic thinking. John of Rupecissa was one

from Catholics entering the Orthodox Balkans is discussed on the next page.

noted apocalyptic 'messenger,' who claimed that misfortunes like the plague had come to Europe because he was sent from God to warn humanity. He specifically noted that popular revolts would ensue, anti-clerical and against the church's largesse, a common target of both reformers and these thinkers at the time.⁷⁸ The Franciscan chronicler John of Winterthur claimed that many Germans thought similarly by 1348, predicting the reform of the Church, the end of its corruption, and earthly abuses of the wealthy. However, these thoughts were around before the Black Death had reached all of Europe, indicating that the apocalyptic thinking was rather only exacerbated by the plague's ravages.⁷⁹ The Black Death does not appear to have created new apocalyptic thinking, but rather just led to a renewal of interest in a branch of eschatology that was well-tread by the 1300s.

Regarding Eastern Christianity and the Balkans, the impetus for apocalyptic thinking came from the Ottoman threat to the crumbling Byzantine Empire. The ruin of the Emperors, the Vicegerents of God on Earth, described since Constantine I as "halfway to heaven," would have been undoubtedly alarming to the Christians of the Balkans. Many would indeed later accept the Ottoman rule as punishment for attempted reunification with the Catholic Church. Stoyanov additionally ruminates on the possibility of further apocalyptic ideas being transferred from Italy

by way of exiled Franciscan Joachimites, who traveled to the Aegean and further east. Their ideals had been characterized by distrust of the Papacy, contemplative monasticism, and clerical poverty.⁸⁰ This, however, does not comport with the established literary and oral

traditions known to have been passed through the Sufi lodges in Anatolia and across the intellectual network in which Bedreddin participated. It seems rather more likely that this influenced the Christians that would later flock to Bedreddin and his disciples and did not significantly change mystical thought already existent in Islam.⁸¹

Şeyh Bedreddin

The world of Bedreddin's revolt is relatively unknown to the Western history student, an alien world astride the crumbling Byzantine Empire, but inexorably linked to it as well. The Seljuk victories at Manzikert in 1074 and at Myriokephalon just over a century later in 1176 started and then confirmed the arrival of the Turks to the Anatolian interior. From the beginning, Anatolia would become a 'frontier,' a place of religious intermingling and coexistence as much as it was a place of internecine conflict. Kafadar notes the comparisons between the Reconquista-era Iberian Peninsula taifas and the patchwork of Turkish beyliks in Anatolia, with both being called *Mulu k al-T awa 'if* by some Muslim historians, and the contemporaneous final ends of the Christian Anatolian and Rumeli kingdoms in 1453, 1460, and 1461 versus the

⁷⁸ Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 231.

⁷⁹ Robert E. Lerner, "The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *The American Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (1981): 544.

⁸⁰ Yuri Stoyanov, "Christian Heretical Participation in the

Rebellion of Bo rkluce Mustafa and Sheikh Bedreddin – Reappraising the Evidence," *Studia Ceranea* 11 (2021): 455 – 56, <https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.11.22>.

⁸¹ Bedreddin's interactions with apocalypticism in Islam will suffice for this work: an exhaustive treatment of Islamic apocalypticism is beyond its scope, and I contextualized the Christian view due to the lack of clarity on John Ball's personal views, compared to the extensive writings of Bedreddin.

fall of Granada in 1492.⁸² Just as Christian Europe was in some sense built on the foundation of Roman successor states striving to reclaim classical glories, the Anatolian frontier was shaped by several intersecting legacies, those being the Greek imperial tradition, the Seljuk inheritance of Islamic political leadership confirmed by the Abbasid Caliph, and indeed the spiritual leadership of the Caliph that was broken by the Mongols. The Genghisid succession and Persicate influences were also present, but legitimation on those lines was present more so in the 'mature' Ottoman period, after the conquest of Constantinople. Sufi thought had also been scattered by the Mongol invasion, with a man like Bedreddin keeping the old religious traditions alive as well as claiming the temporal power of the Seljuk Sultan, appealing to an older and more illustrious dynasty to which the House of Osman themselves claimed legitimate descent. Around the time of Bedreddin's revolt, it is likely that the first Ottoman 'ilm-i ha l (manual on faith) was written in 1403, in Iznik, the city of Bedreddin's later exile and one of the centers of his revolt.⁸³ The conversion of the Rumeli area and even more recently Christian-controlled lands in Anatolia was an ongoing process in the years before Bedreddin's revolt, with this fundamentally being a case of a man born of the frontier in a stereotype as clear as Americans would cast Daniel Boone who would then lead a popular revolt from the frontier to defend their peculiar traditions and to oppose centralization from the great urban centers.

A crucial point of context to Bedreddin's revolt is the history of socioeconomic relations in Rumeli (Ottoman

Balkans) prior to his lifetime. In the years when the Byzantines had still ruled the land, income inequality had drastically grown in both rural and urban areas, and rural peasants were bound like serfs throughout much of Europe to the lands they worked. However, the urban centers had fostered the development of workers' guilds, which organized resistance to Emperor John VI in the 1340s as he attempted to concentrate even more wealth in the hands

of the urban elite. Salgırlı notes that much of the resistance to John VI came in the city of Serres, a later center of Bedreddin's revolt and where he was executed.⁸⁴ This is not an accident: Bedreddin's support came from the economically immobile worker as much as it did Sufi sects, timariot (professional cavalry) frontier raiders, and Christians and Jews. The situation had not changed more than half a century later, and this situation was playing out all throughout the development of Europe, broadly.

Regarding the position of the Christians and Jews within the Ottoman state,⁸⁵ Heath Lowry argued that there was a distinct conflict between the segments of the Ottoman state that were in favor of mandating adherence to Islam and those that were promoting religious harmony if not outright syncretism, which he cites as present in Bursa in the reign of Bayezid, even as the former capital and a great center of Islamic learning.⁸⁶ Traditionally, the view advocated by Wittek of the timariot gazis plundering all Christians nearby would have been complicated, but as Lowry and Kafadar have found, the use of the term gazi to mean 'holy warrior' was by no means universal.⁸⁷ It is likely that Bedreddin's

⁸² Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 20-21.

⁸³ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 29.

⁸⁴ Saygın Salgırlı, "The Rebellion of 1416: Recontextualizing an Ottoman Social Movement," *Journal of the Economic and Social*

History of the Orient 55, no. 1 (2012): 37 - 38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41445741>.

⁸⁵ Little is said of the Jews, but conversions to and dialogue with Islam have been recorded, often in the form of Jewish converts

⁸⁶ Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 135.

⁸⁷ This is a very contentious word: gazi traditionally is meant to mean "holy warrior" of Islam, but more recent studies by

support then was genuinely augmented by syncretists as well as the frontier raiders. Bedreddin benefited from both the Sufi mystical orders present in the region as well as the heterodoxical Muslims and Christians alike, all of whom were opposed for some reason or another to the project of the Ottoman state in its trend away from the general religious tolerance of its foundation, when Osman I had ridden with Christian potentates in a quest for plunder and conquest. Kafadar relates how the gazis felt

debating Christians: it is at least known that they were sympathetic to Bedreddin in general.

alienated by the centralizing tendencies of the Ottoman state as early as the 1370s with the move from a raiding society to a sedentary feudal state, an economic condition that imposed restrictions on their plunder that would make many hostile to the central government of the Sultan in the future, whether they were Christian or Muslim. Their loot had been partially appropriated by the Sultan from this time on, and some of the Sultans did not allow the raids against Christian neighbors at all.⁸⁸ In the case of Bedreddin, his revolt came against a Sultan that wanted fewer raids: it is evident enough the material reasons why the timariot class would have felt disenchanting.

In addition to the general background of the Anatolian and Rumeli social conditions around Bedreddin's lifetime, it is necessary to divert into the opening of the Ottoman Civil War, for which Bedreddin was not in the region. His later involvement in the war and his base of support coming from the hotly contested Rumeli region make it essential to examine the war. Timur defeated Yıldırım Bayezid I at the battle of Ankara in 1402, after the Ottoman Sultan had threatened some other

Turkish potentates in Anatolia who were nominally Timurid vassals. The defeat was crushing: Bayezid had previously swept all opposition before him, bringing the Ottomans to the verge of destroying the Byzantine Empire and to the great victory at Nicopolis in 1396.

Timur however benefited from the defection of many Turkish allies of Bayezid: with the sudden break in his armies, Bayezid's armies were scattered, and he was taken prisoner by Timur. Two of his sons were captured by Timur, while three escaped to claim their own rights to rule over the Ottoman state. Mehmet Çelebi, Emir

Su leyman, and I sa were the three that escaped, with Su leyman assuming control over the majority of Bayezid's army, court, and Rumeli.⁸⁹ I sa dominated the Anatolian coastline along the Aegean, and Mehmet what remained of Ottoman power in Central Anatolia. Timur had partitioned the Ottoman conquests of the previous decades in Central and Eastern Anatolia in particular back into the old beyliks, restoring the beys of Aydın, Canık, Germiyan, Karaman, Menteşe, and Saruhan to power as his vassals, with the Karamanid realm enlarged to serve as a check on the sons of Bayezid, who were also nominally his vassals.⁹⁰ The Ottoman princes jockeyed for power, with Musa being released to Mehmet in 1406, by which time he had defeated I sa but could not break Su leyman's hold on Rumeli. Musa was sent over to Rumeli to wage a second front in Bedreddin's own homeland, by way of a ship from Sinop, perhaps with the assistance of Prince Mircea of Wallachia. He ended up defeating and executing Su leyman, seizing Rumeli and the nominal rule of the Ottoman state for himself.

Kafadar, Lowry, and others have emphasized that it is also sometimes just a raider with evident records of would-be Christian gaza.

⁸⁸ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 125-126.

⁸⁹ Sometimes all the princes are named Çelebi: I have used the contemporary Ottoman convention of reserving it for Mehmet and Musa.

⁹⁰ Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402- 1413* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 44.

It is in Musa's regime in Rumeli that Bedreddin enters political life in full, and it has been noted by several scholars that Musa enjoyed similar classes of support for his rule to who would later rise behind Bedreddin, something that will be addressed later.⁹¹

Seyh Bedreddin was born in 1359 according to the chronicle of his grandson, though years spanning from 1339 to 1368 have been suggested. A lot of propaganda, mostly on the part of his aforementioned grandson Hafiz Halil, dealt with the idea that Bedreddin was a Seljuk heir through his father, though it is certainly known that his father was the military commander of the town Simavna and a gazi, while his mother was the daughter of the old Byzantine commandant. This is notably a recurring motif in many Anatolian frontier stories such as that of Kan Turali and Princess Saljan in the Book of Dede Korkut, the preeminent epic of the Oghuz Turks from which many Anatolian Turks descended. The idea of Bedreddin being the offspring of a mixed marriage between the faiths would have lent credence to his father's credentials as a holy warrior of Islam, as well as Bedreddin's own claims to good understandings with the Christians and Jews of his area. In the greater context of the political ascendancy of the Ottomans, they first crossed the Dardanelles in 1352 and had seized Gallipoli in 1354 after being invited by the Byzantine Emperor John VI. Bedreddin's father would have been among the first wave of Ottoman and other Turkish settlers of Thrace, and Bedreddin part of the first generation of Muslims in the Balkans. Edirne (formerly Adrianople) was made the Ottoman capital over Bursa in 1363, and Ottoman expansion in the Balkans would continue.

An issue that is present in the biography of Bedreddin by his grandson Hafiz

Halil is that by every indication, Halil wrote under some form of patronage from Sultan Mehmet II. He went to lengths as a result to paint Bedreddin as strictly a misunderstood cleric that harbored no political claims against the House of Osman, and who did not cause the Revolts of 1416 himself. It is a biased biography: not just because it is a hagiography of his grandfather but also because it was made with the purpose of rehabilitating him to an audience that would have supported centralization and the House of Osman, each of which Bedreddin fought against. Halil is the main source at most points for events in Bedreddin's life, but care must be taken with regard to the abundance of outside evidence that Bedreddin did indeed stand against the Ottoman state.

Bedreddin's education was completed at Edirne under Koca Efendi after some

instruction by his father, and he studied grammar at the Ottoman capital for a time.⁹² He would later study logic and astronomy at Konya, then hadith at Jerusalem, and finally went to Cairo for the culmination of his studies in logic and philosophy. There he fell into the circle of Sayyid Akhlati, an influential occultist that had helped establish a great intellectual network across the Islamic world during the time through his role as alchemist and physician for the Mamluk Sultan Barquq. Much of Bedreddin's life at the time is shrouded in mystery, though it is clear that he was a very worldly man compared to the average frontier qadi of the time, who would have traveled to a major city for scholarly learning once, but then stuck to the Anatolian or Thracian heartlands of new Muslim converts. He had become one of the scholars enveloped in the great exchange of learning which stretched from Cairo to Samarkand

⁹¹ Antonis Anastasopoulos and Dimitri Kastritsis, "The Revolt of Seyh Bedreddin in the Context of the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-13, in *Political Initiatives 'From the Bottom Up' in the Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete VII: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2009* (Rethymno, Greece: Crete University Press, 2012), 235.

⁹² Bilal Dindar, "Bedreddin Simavi," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV Center for Islamic Studies, 1992), <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/bedreddin-simavi>.

across the breadth of the Islamic world that was made possible by the conquests of Timur.

Bedreddin and Akhlati were married each to one of Sultan Barquq's concubines. To this point, Bedreddin had not been a Sufi, though he had certainly been exposed to Hurufism, but Akhlati's wife Mariye convinced him through a night of discussion on mysticism, which she had learned from Akhlati.⁹³ Bedreddin's son by his wife Mariye had been born the same day, but spending the night in contemplation, he found himself ecstatic and compared himself as a "spike" to Mariye's "rose."⁹⁴ Bedreddin would turn fully to mysticism from here- he had already been a learned man of great reputation and letters, but now he would increasingly advocate for views associated with Sufism. Bedreddin's immersion in mysticism would soon result in his becoming ill, refusing to eat or drink and even throwing his books in the Nile River.

Akhlati sent Bedreddin off to Tabriz for his health, where he would receive generous offers from Timur, including to be the great conqueror's son-in-law and a sheikh al-Islam for his domains, but Akhlati intended for Bedreddin to succeed him as the leader of his Cairo intellectual circle, and so Bedreddin returned. Akhlati, Bedreddin, and seven others went into seclusion due to Akhlati being gravely ill, and after ninety days Bedreddin and Akhlati spoke together. Bedreddin saw the spirit of Muhammad in Akhlati, which declared Bedreddin the rightful Caliph, and Akhlati died during the next Friday's services.¹⁹ Bedreddin ran affairs in Cairo for a while, but he was not popular among the remaining students of Akhlati, and left to return home. Bedreddin traveled through the Karamanid and Germiyanid domains, apparently collecting political contacts. It is possible that at this point he had already fomented his political opposition to

the Ottoman state- or at least to Mehmet's regime in Anatolia. Among his travels in western Anatolia on the way, Hafiz Halil reports that he stopped in Izmir, traveled to the island of Sakiz, and convinced local Christians that he was the Second Coming of Jesus thanks to astrological calculations, even inducing some priests to convert to Islam.²⁰

His next prominent appearance came in 1411, with the ascendancy of Musa Çelebi in the Ottoman Civil War. Musa recruited him as his kadiasker, or chief military judge. Bedreddin's personal assistant at the time was Bozkurt Mustafa, who later led the most successful segment of the revolts.²¹ Bedreddin had traveled to Musa's base in the Balkans, Bedreddin's own homeland, by way of a ship from Sinop, perhaps with the assistance of Prince Mircea of Wallachia. Paul Wittek erroneously characterized Musa's regime as "revolutionary" and notably tolerant of Christians without any supporting evidence,

¹⁹ Iker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Din 'Ali Yazdi and the Islamic Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 127-128.

²⁰ Yavuz, Fatma Betül. "The Making of a Sufi Order between Heresy and Legitimacy: Bayrami-Malamis in the Ottoman Empire" (Thesis, Rice University, 2013), 24.

²¹ Recep Çigdem, "A Life in Banishment in Iznik: Sheikh Badreddin Simawni" (paper presentation, Uluslararası Iznik Sempozyumu, Iznik Municipality Cultural Publications, 2005), 458,

claiming that Bedreddin already promoted such views at the time. In fact, he acknowledges that Musa increased the gazi raids against the surrounding Christian states and mostly ruled like his father Bayezid, which runs contradictory to the ideology of what he claims Bedreddin was allowed to impose.⁹⁵ Indeed, it was Emir Süleyman, whom Musa had overthrown, of the sons of Bayezid vying for the Sultanate that had cooperated the most with Christian powers during his ascendancy in Rumeli and ended the gazi raids

⁹³ Dindar, "Bedreddin SIMAVI."

⁹⁴ Michel Balivet, *Islam Mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans Ottomans: Vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le "hallağ des Turcs" (1358/59-1416)* (Istanbul: Les Éditions Isis, 1995), 46

⁹⁵ Colin Imber, "Paul Wittek's 'De La De faite D'ANKARA A La Prise De Constantinople.'" *Studies in Ottoman History and Law V* (1986): 67.

temporarily.⁹⁶ The misconception that Musa was a revolutionary comes in part from the fact that similar elements of the Turkish Rumelian society supported both Musa and Bedreddin respectively against Mehmet, however this is a case where the influence of material conditions for many of their supporters are understated versus the idea that they hold coherent ideological views. Bedreddin was plainly clear about overthrowing the House of Osman: Musa wanted to press his own claim to its patrimony, not to destroy it. There is also no indication that Musa held esoteric views like Bedreddin; his scholarly reputation was reason enough for him to have been Musa's chief military judge.

During his time as kadiasker, Bedreddin was well-known for critiquing the judgements of earlier Muslim judges, arguing that he was working with better information with their examples to follow and so while he could not surpass them, he could interpret things in a superior way. His *Varidat*, likely composed in some form by this time, remains one of the most studied pieces of Sufi literature to this day. The *Varidat* notably included the idea that traditional Muslim predictions of the apocalypse, namely the separation of the

<http://ktp2.isam.org.tr/detayilhmklzt.php?navdil=eng&midno=66716250&Dergivalkod=0689>.

believers into paradise and everlasting punishment for the rest, were inaccurate. Bedreddin instead maintained that the Mahdi would appear as a messianic figure and confirm that the mystical divine oneness is indeed the true nature of things and that all people would be able to then meditate to that conclusion.⁹⁷ Essentially, the Sufi orders would be revealed as keeping absolute truths instead

⁹⁶ Kastritsis, Dimitris J. *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413*. 124.

⁹⁷ Fatma Betül Yavuz, "The Making of a Sufi Order between Heresy and Legitimacy: Bayrami-Malâmis in the Ottoman Empire" (Thesis, Rice University, 2013), 29-30.

⁹⁸ Saygın Salgırlı, "The Rebellion of 1416: Recontextualizing an

of esoteric wisdom, in a way that all people would see, for the end of the world.

Another important part of Bedreddin's tenure under Musa was his role in the awarding of fiefs.⁹⁸ This and other duties were hardly out of the ordinary for the average Ottoman bureaucrat: he showed no symptom of revolt in his work. There is however the possibility that some of the men that came to him in revolt felt a sense of loyalty to him for actions during the rule of Musa, and it is notable as well that he exempted some monasteries from taxation when considering the question of whether he received Christian support.

After Musa was defeated at the Battle of Çamarlı in 1413 by Mehmet Çelebi, ending the Ottoman Civil War, Bedreddin was forced into exile in Iznik. There is some element of debate as to whether Bedreddin himself was involved in the Rebellion of 1416, though the majority of scholars have concluded that he led part of it personally. He appears to have rode to each site right before his disciples rose in revolt, which should be a clear enough indication that he at least incited the uprisings.⁹⁹ Bedreddin encouraged Boşnak Mustafa to start gathering forces in Aydın and to spread propaganda. It has been suggested

by Kastritsis that the Byzantine chronicler Doukas, who was the main authority on the rebellion of Mustafa, omitted Bedreddin from his record entirely by accident and really meant Bedreddin when he said Mustafa on some occasions.¹⁰⁰ He at first won two large battles against the Ottoman armies: it is thought that these were ambushes of Ottoman armies moving through the heart of the revolt near forests around Iznik, where the guerilla

Ottoman Social Movement," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 1 (2012): 54 – 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41445741>.

⁹⁹ Cemal Kafadar, "Simavnalı Bedreddin (İngilizce Altyazılı)," produced by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, documentary, October 29, 2006, 52:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhIGvAmVEws>.

¹⁰⁰ Anastasopoulos and Kastritsis, "Şeyh Bedreddin," 232.

armies would have had easy cover. The last battle, however, likely took place on an open plain close to I zmir.¹⁰¹ It is notable with Mustafa's segment of the revolt that he was extremely clear that property should be held in common and that the entire existing social order had to be done away with for the revolt. He attracted notable Christian support in the area, something that is unconfirmed for Bedreddin's rising in Rumeli due to the lack of documentary evidence on the revolt.¹⁰² In any case, Mustafa was duly executed, and the other follower of Bedreddin that had rebelled in Anatolia, Torlak Kemal, was easily crushed by Ottoman authorities. It is recorded that at this point in 1416, Bedreddin was in collusion with "allies," namely the supporters of Musa, some of the other beyliks such as Germiyan (which he had passed through and potentially kept up communication with), as well as the Ottoman claimant Du zme Mustafa, the last of Sultan Bayezid's sons, freshly released to Anatolia by Timur's son Shah Rukh.¹⁰³ It is known for sure that Bedreddin returned to Rumeli by way of Sinop on the northern coast of Anatolia, where he sailed to Mircea of Wallachia as Musa had once done, and as Du zme Mustafa had recently done.¹⁰⁴ However, there is a lot of speculation around who exactly aided Bedreddin, and little documented evidence, not the least because Hafiz Halil did not acknowledge his grandfather as having risen in revolt.

Bedreddin started the revolt a few months later, declaring himself the Caliph and Sultan under the Seljuk title. He was eventually caught: the rising in Deliorman (northeastern Bulgaria) was subdued. Bedreddin's followers in this were largely the religious followers of

Sufism, the Christians of Chios from whom he received support, perhaps even some on Crete, and the partisans of Musa and himself from his days as a kadiasker.³² There is an apocryphal story about Bedreddin hiding in a forest, which Sultan Mehmet ordered burnt to the ground, only for Bedreddin to miraculously appear right in front of the men sent to burn the forest, to spare it. When he said they should capture him instead of burning the forest, he chided them twice for not restraining him properly as each time he broke free- the men eventually agreed to just lead him away.¹⁰⁵ The mystical powers attributed to Bedreddin were immense: even his disciple Mustafa had been said to have done his own miracles such as walking on water. On his capture, regardless of the supernatural circumstances, he was taken to Serres. A court was summoned to try him, and he was found guilty of rebellion, notably not heresy. He was hanged in Serres in 1420. The statesman sent to interrogate Bedreddin right before his execution reportedly sympathized with him after their conversation, and Yilmaz notes that the Sufi orders gained more and more mainstream acceptance in the Ottoman government and even among the Sultans in the years after his death- his philosophy was not unpopular in some sense among learned men, probably because of his own reputation.¹⁰⁶ These later

figures managed to disassociate him with the revolutionary project, whether accurately or inaccurately. There is reason to think Bedreddin's supporters fought for decentralization, Sufi mysticism, religious toleration and even syncretism, economic

¹⁰¹ Saygın Salgırlı, "Architectural Anatomy of an Ottoman Execution," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, no. 3 (2013): 304, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2013.72.3.301>.

¹⁰² Stoyanov, "Rebellion of Bo rkluce Mustafa and Sheikh Bedreddin," 448.

¹⁰³ "Du zme" is a later appellation that refers to him as a false Mustafa, an impersonator of Bayezid's son. This gained traction later on with Sultan Murad II, who also faced his revolts. I have used it just to clarify his difference from Bedreddin's disciple. It

is also notably later reported that he may have become a dervish.

¹⁰⁴ Balivet, *Islam Mystique*, 80-81.

³² Balivet, *Islam Mystique*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ Kadafar, "Simavnalı Bedreddin."

¹⁰⁶ Hu seyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 128.

equality, and even radical social reform: the unifying trend here only being the charisma of the man and his disciples, as well as the congealing effect he had on all the tendencies opposed by the “orthopraxy” of Ottoman statecraft.

John Ball

The historical John Ball is more of an enigmatic figure. He is thought to have been born around 1338, and it is not clear beyond speculation who his parents were or whether any records of him exist before his time as a priest. It is thought that he entered the priesthood at York from St. Mary’s Abbey, though it is unclear at what time he took orders. James Crossley cites the Calendar of the Patent Rolls in showing that Edward III granted Ball “special protection” for a time from his enemies, as Ball had already apparently made some enemies as a traveling preacher. He had been excommunicated in 1364 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, a constant opponent of Ball that would mark him as a problem just before the 1381 revolt.¹⁰⁷

John Ball’s ideas were why he had run so afoul of church authorities: he preached the equality of all men and reportedly, abolishing the entire church hierarchy besides himself. The danger of his itinerant preaching to the hierarchy of the church was grave, with his ability to raise a mob with commentary that one would mostly find in a church sermon.¹⁰⁸

Clerical poverty was a great crusade of his: for two decades or more he had traveled the English countryside while his nemesis the Archbishop Sudbury had risen to Chancellor of England. He would even argue these points right at churches, which is probably why he was easily arrested on more than one occasion.

John Ball would call for the later Revolt to be the death of the lords and all other oppressors of the peasants and the inauguration of the time of all men being equal and free, an apocalyptic view that saw the birth of a new world in England by the end of property and inequality.¹⁰⁹

The Peasants’ Revolt itself was not entirely caused by John Ball’s radical ideas but rather the financial burden of the Hundred Years’ War. The war had started in 1337 over the claim of King Edward III to the throne of France over the new Valois dynasty (in the person of Charles IV of France) and had continued intermittently since then. The English had won great victories like Poitiers 15 years earlier, capturing Jean II of France, but by 1381 the French had recovered most of the land lost in the previous few decades. At this point in the war, the English coastlines were constantly being raided by Castilian and French navies, with an additional decline in the wool trade profits from across the Channel due to Burgundian subjugation of the Dutch provinces. As well, the English army in France was unable to support their garrisons properly, with at least 20 weeks (about four and a half months) of missing pay across their armies and as high as six months in the army of the Earl of Buckingham.¹¹⁰ The crown jewels were pawned, and the Commons had no desire to appropriate further money, responding to this with a staggered income-based poll tax on almost all people in the kingdom. The tax was devastating: the Black Death had already ravaged the peasant populace, with Norman

Davies citing a casualty total of 1.4 - 2 million in England as being critical in the end of feudalism and serfdom.¹¹¹ The social order

¹⁰⁷ James Crossley, “John Ball and the Peasant’s Revolt,” in *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*, 15 January 2021, www.cdamm.org/articles/john-ball.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Firth Green, “John Ball’s Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature,” in *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 187 – 188, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt6q6.14>.

¹⁰⁹ Crossley, “Peasants’ Revolt.”

¹¹⁰ Desmond Seward, *A Brief History of the Hundred Years’ War: The English in France, 1337 – 1453* (London: Robinson, 2003), 128.

¹¹¹ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 412.

was perfectly primed to listen to a man like John Ball preaching the equality of all men and the end of the feudal power structure. While there was not an outbreak of plague immediately around 1381 and the revolt itself, there were repeated outbreaks in the years prior for a few decades according to the obituary records of churches.¹¹² Englishmen that survived the plague had become more economically mobile by default in many cases, with the market becoming more competitive from a surplus in money and a lack of peasant labor, for which the nobility were forced to pay more. Average income and cheaper land also came about as a result of this, which would lead to overall a better quality of life for the English peasant in the long run.¹¹³ In the short term, the nobility would resent and resist these changes, as explained later. The English government had attempted to address the effects of the Black Death by enacting the Statute of Labourers in 1351, which attempted to cap wages at 1346 levels and to force all peasants under sixty years old to work, though there were many loopholes to this exploited, and the problem of labor continued.¹¹⁴ The economic disruption and social trauma had reached a boiling point due to the taxes, but John Ball would have been preaching to an English working society already devastated and economically destitute. The Earl of Buckingham had been embarrassed severely in his campaign to besiege Nantes just before the Peasants' Revolt, but this alone would not have been a cause of discontent to the peasants in the context of the existing poll tax and the depredations of the plague.

Review 15, no. 3 (1963): 430,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2592917>.

¹¹² J. M. W. Bean, "Plague, Population, and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages," *The Economic History*

¹¹³ William A. Pelz, "The King's in His Castle... All's Right with the World: All's Right with the World," in *A People's History of Modern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 11.

Complaints against the government of the country also stretched back to years earlier. The 'Good Parliament' of 1376 had demanded inquiries into the conduct of King Edward III's ministers and mistress Alice Perrers, alleging widespread misuse and misrule as he had increasingly withdrawn from the active rule of his youth.¹¹⁵ A direct criticism of the King's inner circle of ministers as being profligate in evil was unprecedented since the previous century and the barons revolting against King John Lackland, and funding for the war effort was completely hamstrung. The 'Bad Parliament' the following year undid many of the investigations and instead implemented a poll tax, with many historians attributing this to the influence of John of Gaunt, effectively the ruler of England due to the illness of Edward III and the death of the Black Prince. John of Gaunt was the largest landholder in the realm and accrued many detractors due to heavy-handed, callous treatment of the poor and failures in securing peace in the Hundred Years' War at Bruges. On the death of Edward III, Richard II was crowned, and John withdrew from active participation in the government, declining to serve as a regent and giving up some of his power. He did not escape public acrimony nonetheless- his vast wealth would leave him as a looming symbol to many in England of corruption. The new government seized some of his possessions and restored some of the acts of the Good Parliament but was forced to prosecute the war further.¹¹⁶

Economically, the battle lines of the Peasants' Revolt were drawn clearly enough. Unchanging until the seizure of the monasteries by Henry VIII over a century later, the Church still controlled vast wealth in England. The richer merchants of the wool and other trades with Brabant and the other great

¹¹⁴ Mark A. Sean, "English Life and Law in the Time of the Black Death," *Real Property, Probate and Trust Journal* 38, no. 3 (2003): 573 - 574, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20785740>.

¹¹⁵ Robert Tombs, *The English and Their History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2016), 120.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War Vol. 3: Divided Houses* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 298.

international markets as far afield as Italy and the Hansa would also side with the nobility,

despite their more recent introduction into the fold of the wealthy. The nobility, of whom John of Gaunt was simply the most obvious target, were always going to endure the most of any economic anger “from below.” The English “middle class” of smaller merchants and traders was split largely along self-interest, with a great many that resented their being pushed out of international trade by larger competitors, and others pragmatically seeking to profit from the war.¹¹⁷ This would all amount to a dizzying array of different occupations counted among the rebels of the Peasants’ Revolt, rather erroneously named in this regard. The economic frustration was indeed worst for poorer Englishmen, but the ripples upwards are what made the revolt particularly potent in the sympathetic eye it would gain from men of a higher station in life.

The Peasants’ Revolt started with a poll tax from Parliament convened at Northampton. Archbishop Sudbury, the old enemy of Ball, told the Commons that the crown required 160,000 pounds for the continuation of the war after the catastrophe of the Earl of Buckingham’s invasion. The Lords settled on a graduated three groat per person poll tax on every man in England besides beggars, which the Commons approved out of what Oman interpreted as a sense that the peasants of England were getting off easy. Other proposals would have been harsher on the merchants and nobility respectively, so they were defeated.¹¹⁸ Over the next few months, there would be a realization that close to a third of the revenue from the poll tax of 1377 was not to be found, although that

of 1381 only differed by including fifteen-year-olds and older instead of all fourteen and older. It was realized by Parliament that there was tax dodging going on, and by May, efforts to force the collection of the tax were reaching a boiling point. In Essex, men began to physically resist the imposition of the tax, and this spread to Kent with apparent communication between the towns. It is thought that the King’s justices arriving on the scene further inflamed fears of the tax.¹¹⁹

By June, there was open conflict. The rebels would march on Canterbury by June 10th, and on the 7th, Wat Tyler emerged as the leader of most of their forces. He was likely a veteran of the Hundred Years’ War, and his military experience would have served as an easy way to assume control, though it is clear that he did not ideologically or physically start the revolt.¹²⁰ The rebels would make out their demands to the King after he sent a messenger: namely it was the removal of many of his advisors and clergy in the government. Throughout the revolt, there was never harm directed at the King, who was considered blameless versus the ministers whose corruption had accumulated for years. Chancellor Sudbury and others associated with the poll tax were marked out very specifically by what otherwise would have appeared to be disorganized mobs- the peasants and other malcontents were not uninformed about the source of their woes.¹²¹ A day later, John Ball was released from prison in the same area, where he had been held on the Chancellor’s old charges against him since April. Ball had for the first time in his life free rein to preach outside the law and Sudbury’s wrath, and it struck him to continue. His greatest speech came on June 12th, with the famed “Whan Adam dalf, and Eve span/Wo was

¹¹⁷ Margaret Schlauch, “The Revolt of 1381 in England,” *Science & Society* 4, no. 4 (1940): 419, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40399356>.

¹¹⁸ Charles Oman, *The Great Revolt of 1381* (Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche 2001), 21 – 22.

¹¹⁹ Rodney H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London: Routledge, 2003), 138.

¹²⁰ Oman, *The Great Revolt*, 28 – 29.

¹²¹ W. M. Ormrod, “The Peasant’s Revolt and the Government of England,” *Journal of British Studies* 29, no. 1 (1990): 4, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/175483>.

panne a gentilman?" ("When Adam dug and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?").¹²² He was now calling for the complete end of serfdom and the replacement of the existing government with ecclesiastical authority purified of corrupt influences (led by him). The servitude of one man to another was against human nature in Ball's view, illustrated

in this Biblical allusion. He then also exhorted the rebels to follow a single leader to defeat the evil men running England, this likely being an implicit endorsement of Wat Tyler. There was also an episode during this time when the King's mother fell into the power of the rebels, who treated her well and let her go, likely as a sign of good faith to the King so he would support them.

The following day was ostentatious to more Englishmen than just the rebels, for it was the Feast of Corpus Christi. This had been created two centuries prior by Pope Urban IV for the celebration of the miracle of the Eucharist with its own feast day. There is reason to think also that the rebels had different priorities that day, as while many went to church, many others burnt John of Gaunt's infamous Savoy Palace in London and other buildings that represented the hated nobility.¹²³ The day was potentially chosen for its religious significance to conduct these events, as it would have drawn more peasants into towns for concentrated actions. John Ball also personally seems to have seen it as an opportune day for divine intervention in history, from which a new England would arise. Meanwhile, Richard II was dissuaded from negotiating a few days earlier by Sudbury and his other advisors but decided to come to terms the next day. That same day, the Tower of London was stormed, and Sudbury beheaded along with other government

officials, and ironically clerks had already begun to write concessions on the poll taxes to the rebels as soon as tensions had reached a boiling point.¹²⁴ The rest of the day saw an outpouring of violence in London, especially against foreigners and hated nobles.

The next day in London, Richard II and his advisors finally left to meet the rebels at Smithfield. Richard had agreed to the abolition of serfdom, the end of feudal services, and virtually every other demand that Wat Tyler brought up as spokesman the day before, with only the rebels' fervor for punishing Sudbury and the others immediately preventing further violence. At their second interview, Tyler claimed that there were still more demands the rebels had, and Richard maintained that he intended to accept as many as possible without jeopardizing his own authority. Notably in Tyler's demands there was a request that the "bishopricks should be abolished all save one," a likely indication of John Ball's stature in the revolt as presumably the one Bishop that would remain.¹²⁵ The scene that followed was infamous: Tyler was evidently parched from all his talking on a hot June day, and it led him to anger when a man in the rebel ranks insulted him, whom he slew on the spot. The Mayor of London immediately jumped forward to arrest him for drawing his sword in front of the King, and after a short fight, a squire stabbed Tyler through the chest. He died after an attempt to flee on horseback, and Richard II was left alone with thousands of rebels. They followed him out into the countryside, where they talked as the Mayor of London mustered forces to rescue the King. On seeing these troops, Richard pardoned the rebels and allowed them to leave, to which many were incredibly grateful considering the army now standing at their back.¹²⁶

¹²² Crossley, "The Peasants' Revolt."

¹²³ Margaret Aston, "Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: Heresy and the Peasants' Revolt," *Past & Present*, no. 143 (1994): 4 – 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651160>.

¹²⁴ Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 139.

¹²⁵ Oman, *The Great Revolt*, 52.

¹²⁶ Oman, *The Great Revolt*, 54 – 55.

This was the last act of clemency. The Mayor of London would assume dictatorial power over the city at Richard II's request, and the remaining rebels in the city were brutally suppressed. The revolt had petered out in any meaningful form, and Richard II was able to denounce all that he had agreed to by June 20th, erasing all rebel gains. John Ball fled the scene in London like most other rebels, as risings continued for another month or so in some force around Cambridge but were mostly suppressed easily. The Battle of North Walsham marked the last significant resistance of any rebels in late June, and the

Peasants' Revolt was already over with few battles fought, but many government officials, peasants, nobility, and foreigners dead.

John Ball was captured in Coventry after the rebels that had gathered around him left, and he was trialed, where he was unusually allowed to speak. Regardless, he was found guilty and executed by hanging, drawing, and quartering at St Albans on July 15, 1381, with Richard II present. In the time immediately after his death, there was not yet great attention placed on him. This would change in the 18th century with shifts in the educated British population's views on liberty and the slow advent of proto-socialist thinking into some circles. Flurries of writers started to cover John Ball by the 19th century, whereas previously the Peasants' Revolt had mainly been remarked on without him as the end of English feudalism, and little else.

Comparisons and Conclusions

The visualization of these two men as proto-communist revolutionaries faces more problems than just the obvious anachronisms: most strands of that left-wing thought have not been in favor of theocratic rule over people. Indeed, Ball and Bedreddin both called for the

destruction of the existing social order and brought genuine revolutionaries into their list of admirers, and it is certainly hard to deny that Mustafa was a revolutionary.¹²⁷ However, these radicals were both still themselves clergymen in their societies, and a major part of their transformation of society was for the clergy to reestablish control over the people in precisely their own heterodoxic ways as opposed to what most clergymen had been doing. John Ball was very clear that he wanted the clergy to stay around after the end of the English monarchy, and for them to guide (through him) the English people to a popularly supported benevolent monarchy, something like the romanticized ideal of King Richard I in the story of Robin Hood versus King John Lackland, in this case the boy-king Richard II and his cruel advisors. Indeed, many elements of the Peasants' Revolt were very favorable to Richard in the time preceding Wat Tyler's meeting the King, blaming the men around him for their troubles and looking to him for salvation. Bedreddin on the other hand attempted to claim the mantle of Seljuk inheritance over the royal line of Osman, while calling for the equality of man and religious freedom.

A grave issue with analyzing the intentions of these men comes with the scant historical sources for their lives. Bedreddin suffers from the historiography of his lifetime being scattered and heavily biased at best, and with the only somewhat contemporary biography of him coming from his grandson. The Byzantine chroniclers and Ottoman sources often openly disagree on even what years events of the Ottoman Civil War occurred in. This is due in part to the biased nature of the Ottoman sources to the eventual victor Mehmet I, as well as the Christian chroniclers' misunderstandings of events deep in Turkish Anatolia. The famous expedition of the Castilian ambassador Clavijo to Timur in 1402-

¹²⁷ Anachronistic perhaps, but he advocated for revolutionary social changes. This does not make him a communist despite some debates that have occurred.

1406 is one of the only accounts of the region from further west than mercantile records in Venice. Meanwhile for John Ball, there is scarcely any way of telling who his parents were, or what went on in his life before he was ordained, or to even say with absolute certainty that he was ordained in York as is thought. English historiography benefits from some of the best medieval records in the world, and yet one of the central figures of one of its greatest disturbances is rather mysterious.

Two clergymen, both who preached social reform, theocratic apocalypticism, generally heterodox views, and the end of the established state order and its replacement with something they would lead: the parallels are substantial. The revolts they were part of continued with their followers, who would have an even more radical social message and come from the peasantry. There is a distinction: Bedreddin appears to have directed Mustafa's campaign and directly incited revolts, while Ball had no such disciple that is known, only a general popularity among the peasants that did revolt—there is no evidence that Wat Tyler was his student. Bedreddin also made grandiose claims to temporal power in his capacity as both the Mahdi and supposed descendant of the Seljuks, directly contesting the right of the Ottoman Sultan to rule against this older claim, the same way the Ottomans themselves would legitimate in the Seljuk, Byzantine, and Genghisid traditions before and afterwards. On the other hand, John Ball focused his criticisms on the clergy and the men surrounding the King, but the young Richard II himself was regarded by Ball and most of the rebels as genuinely benevolent, a wise King misguided by corrupt advisors in the Biblical tradition.¹²⁸ This would explain Wat Tyler's initially cordial meeting with the King later. Bedreddin commanded respect from the Sultan's advisors, but only because they knew of his great scholarship as a qadi and how

welltraveled he was, and additionally because they spoke to him before his execution.

A key underlying factor of both revolts were the economic tensions felt by the peasants and downwardly mobile elites. The poll tax shares great similarities to the restriction of gazi plunder with the Sultan's share, and the increased tenant power of great landholders in the Ottoman state resembles John of Gaunt's massive estates that were a primary target of the rebels of 1381. While there was not an outbreak of plague in Rumeli or the Anatolian areas of Bedreddin's revolt, the areas would have undoubtedly been affected by the Ottoman Civil War and the previous Byzantine-Ottoman conflicts. It serves to show however that the Black Death in England was just one factor that pushed peasants to an economic breaking point: any kind of economic social upheaval was conducive for a widespread revolt.

It is clear that Ball and Bedreddin both sought self-aggrandizement in their participation in and incitement of social revolt, but their goals differed. Bedreddin likely wanted to lead a new political entity as both Sultan and Caliph, while Ball was joining others in preaching an end to the corruption of the English government and clergy. Both men shared apocalyptic religious views for which many religious dissenters and heathens followed their banner but were primarily supported by those who were mostly economically tied to the fate of the revolts. Both men stood against what they viewed as corrupt central authorities, while they had acquired followers as charismatic traveling clergymen in the rural countryside of their realms. This is only half the story for the worldly, urbane Bedreddin, but is representative of his frontier origins. The rulers of the lands in which these men rose in revolt were young when they first took the throne, and dynastic tensions simmered beneath the surface of both realms. These tensions had just been inflamed in the Ottoman

¹²⁸ 56 Crossley, "The Peasants' Revolt."

state and then again later the same year as Bedreddin's revolt with the release of the final son of Bayezid I, Mustafa, while the Wars of the Roses loomed over England as Richard II's grandfather Edward III had created duchies for all of his sons, which left the young King as only one of several powerful men in England with claims to the throne, alongside John of Gaunt and Henry Bolingbroke, who would later depose him. Both Mehmet and Richard struggled to assert their authority against their rivals in their own families, who were emboldened by military setbacks that had not been their own defeats.

The most striking difference in the two revolts is the sheer number of different tendencies of thought united behind Bedreddin: Ball's supporters were downwardly mobile peasants and religious dissenters, while Bedreddin enveloped virtually anyone with some sort of grievance against the Sultan. Ironically also, though farther removed from his own time in Ball's case, both men would go on to be the subject of writing and inquiry in future centuries. The learned English and Ottomans alike would continue to reference the works and thoughts of these men, usually regarding their religious commentary rather than the social. In this there is a common thread of "aristocratic" fear of the social radicalism these men and their followers preached. John Ball's apotheosis being mostly delayed to the advent of protosocialist thought in the 18th century may very well be attributed to the lack of a hagiography like Bedreddin had due to his grandson Hafiz Halil, bent on reconciling his grandfather's memory to the Ottoman state he served.

With the obvious lack of any direct connective tissue between Ball and Bedreddin, there is only room to conclude that future consideration of medieval social upheavals should be taken in a wider context than their immediate realms when dynamic religious and socioeconomic factors appear to have been present on opposite ends of the European continent. Critically, while the economic facets

of the rebellions appear to have been the most driving force behind armed revolt, they were still welded together by religious charisma into a movement, in the absence of class consciousness as it has sometimes been anachronistically argued existed in medieval times. The shared European landscape of trans-confessional socioeconomic change is a largely unstudied area, with the indistinguishability of rural and urban discontents a common theme that merits further inquiry.

NEW YER DE TRIBUS

A DANCE RECONSTRUCTION BY HEIDI ZMICK

In 1984, prominent medieval musicologist David Fallows, the scholar who eventually announced to the academic community the existence of the Gresley Dance Manuscript, received xeroxes of four pages of dance melodies from the Derbyshire Records Office. It would not be until eleven years later that he reexamined these pages and realized that they constituted the earliest known documented choreographies of English dance. This manuscript, retrospectively entitled the Gresley Dance Manuscript, as it was discovered amongst the Gresley family papers, records the names of ninety-two dances, the choreography for twenty-six dances, and the music for fourteen dances. These dances were likely recorded sometime between 1480 and 1520. The following is a reconstruction of *New Yer de tribus*, at which you may try your hand (or should I say, foot). This dance is to be performed by three dancers, arranged either in a column (as depicted in the above figures) or in a line. Try paring the dance with your favorite song in 4/4 musical time. Happy Dancing!

[No. 18] New yer de t[rib]us – doble tre[ce] [New Yer is a dance for three people in a line or a column.] [Single – a single step forward]		
After the end of the tre[ce] the firste ma[n] iii forth the 2d the same the 3d the same	1 three singles away from set 2 does the same to follow 1 3 does the same to follow 2	
Then altogeder halfe torne three tymes	All turn halfway three times (should end facing opposite direction than at the start of the dance)	
Then the last thre forth the sec[o]nd the same the 3d the same	3 three singles away from set 2 does the same to follow 3 1 does the same to follow 2	

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THE BAZAAR OF BELLINI

Blurring the Lines of Time and Space in *St. Mark
Preaching in Alexandria*

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The Renaissance was a period of great cultural exchange during which trade networks of both goods and ideas flourished. Since the time of the Crusades, Christians and Muslims had established open trading networks between their worlds.¹²⁹ Art historian Jerry Brotton likens these “fluid transactions” between nations to a bazaar setting, explaining that “Europe began to define itself by purchasing and emulating the opulence and cultured sophistication of the cities, merchants, scholars, and empires of the Ottomans, the Persians and the Egyptian Mamluks.”¹³⁰ Venetian artist Gentile Bellini drew on a vast variety of sources, both Eastern and European, in his early sixteenth-century painting *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.



[fig 1] The painting not only blends together Italian, Egyptian, Byzantine, and Ottoman elements, creating a multicultural space symbolic of cultural exchange, it also compresses time by depicting a scene that occurred in the first century AD, with St. Mark dressed in ancient garments, in a contemporary sixteenth century setting, as seen in the garments and architecture surrounding Mark. By blurring the distinctions between time and space, Bellini creates a piece that symbolizes the cultural exchange between the East and the West, both in ancient and contemporary times, and also visually connects contemporary Venice with the roots of its religious identity.

¹²⁹ Brotton, Jerry, *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 1-2.

¹³⁰ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 1.

During the Renaissance era, a central part of facilitating trade networks and

maintaining peaceful relationships was sending artists to foreign lands as a type of diplomatic exchange. Bellini was one of the artists that participated in this exchange, working as a court painter in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul in 1479-1480.¹³¹ Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II reached out to Venice to request an Italian court painter, and Gentile Bellini was deemed the person for the job. Mehmed had a deep respect for classical culture and contemporary humanism, and he employed several Western artists and scholars in his court. His attendants “read to the Sultan daily from ancient historians such as Laertius, Herodotus, Livy and Quintus Curtius and from chronicles of the popes and the Lombard kings.”¹³² Like the Byzantine empire before them, the Ottomans felt themselves to be the successors of the Greco-Roman world.¹³³ Mehmed felt that because of their common classical Mediterranean heritage, Ottomans and Italians had more in common than they recognized.

Bellini did his job well; the Sultan was thrilled with his work, specifically the portrait



Bellini painted of the Sultan himself. [fig 2]

Bellini’s fellow artist and historian Giorgio Vasari later wrote that “Gentile had been there [in

Constantinople] no long time when he portrayed the Emperor Mehmed

from the life so well, that it was

¹³¹ Miles Unger, “Hi, Venice? It’s Istanbul. Can You Send a Painter?” *The New York Times*, December 11, 2005.

¹³² Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 50.

¹³³ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 50.

held a miracle.”¹³⁴ Bellini’s art from this period demonstrates a deep respect and admiration for Ottoman culture, as seen in the beautiful *Seated Scribe* he painted during his time there.

¹³⁴ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 52.



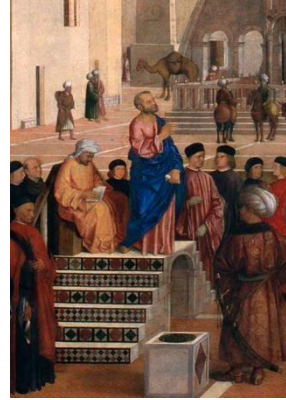
There is no feeling of condescension. [fig 3] Bellini's fascination with Eastern culture is evident in the way he brings in elements into his later paintings. Besides his

court-commissioned portraits he painted, Bellini also made countless sketches of the people and places he encountered in Istanbul. Bellini never visited Alexandria, so these sketches were one of his main sources for the Eastern costume and architecture of *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.¹³⁵

St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria was commissioned by the Scuola di San Marco to decorate its meeting room. Scuole, or schools, such as San Marco were religious brotherhoods known as confraternities. The painting, which was done between 1504 and 1507, depicts a scene of St. Mark, a significant figure in the early Christian church, preaching the gospel to a multiethnic audience that includes veiled women, Mamluk janissaries, and Venetian men.¹³⁶ In the Bible, Mark accompanies church leaders Paul and Barnabas on some of their missional journeys.¹³⁷ During his life, he spent time in the city of Alexandria to spread the gospel, and tradition holds that he was martyred there.¹³⁸ He is considered to be the founder of the Egyptian church, as well as the patron saint of

Venice; thus, the connection between the two locations in Bellini's painting.¹³⁹

The figure of Mark is on the right side of the painting; he stands out because of the



bright pink and blue robes he wears, which are brighter than the dress of most of the crowd. [fig 4]

Centered above Mark's head is a large Egyptian obelisk, which both draws attention to him and points to heaven, signifying his divine mission.¹⁴⁰ The curved buttress of the large, basilica-like building in the background also points directly to Mark, singling him out as the main character of the painting's narrative.¹⁴¹ The fact that he is actively preaching places him in an apostolic context, which is something that any contemporary Christian can understand and relate to.¹⁴² The pulpit he stands on, which exhibits beautiful Eastern tilework, is shaped like a bridge, possibly symbolizing a bridge between the two cities and time periods.¹⁴³ Behind Mark sits a man dressed in an orange robe and a turban who appears to be a scribe. This man is presumably Ananias, Mark's eventual successor as Bishop

¹³⁵ Unger, "Hi, Venice?"

¹³⁶ Monica Adele Shenouda. "The Image of Alexandria in Renaissance Venice," PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2009), 90.

¹³⁷ "Saint Mark." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 29, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Mark-theEvangelist>.

¹³⁸ "Saint Mark."

¹³⁹ "Saint Mark."

¹⁴⁰ Phyllis Williams Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit and Its Reflections in Gentile Bellini and Hieronymus Bosch* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, 1977), 5.

¹⁴¹ Caroline Campbell, *Bellini and the East* (London: National Gallery Co., 2005), 24.

¹⁴² Shenouda, "Image of Alexandria," 89.

¹⁴³ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 5 – 6, 7.

of Alexandria.¹⁴⁴ His action and body position parallels Bellini's earlier painting of the *Seated Scribe* from his time in Istanbul. [fig 5]



Another reason Mark stands out from the crowd is that he is dressed in the ancient Roman style dress that he would have worn during his life, while the audience he addresses is dressed in contemporary sixteenth-century clothing characteristic of the Renaissance. This anachronism seems odd at first, but it serves to connect ancient Alexandria and contemporary Venice across time and space. Venice appropriated St. Mark, and by extension Egypt, as a symbol of Venetian identity.¹⁴⁵ Bellini condenses time and space in order to draw parallels between the two places and to paint Venice as a type of “new Alexandria,” according to art historian Monica Shenouda.¹⁴⁶

The diversity of the crowd accurately represents the multicultural, cosmopolitan nature of both ancient Alexandria and sixteenth-century Venice.¹⁴⁷ Although Bellini never visited Alexandria, many Venetians would have, so it would have been a somewhat familiar setting for them. The Italian and Mamluk people depicted represent a variety of social statuses, but they mingle freely throughout the crowd and interact with each other.¹⁴⁸ This relationship represents on a small scale the wider cultural interactions in

the Mediterranean world: “different cultures confronted each other with bewilderment and suspicion, but often delight and fascination as well.”¹⁴⁹ In Bellini's Alexandria, there is little sign of bewilderment and suspicion, and all the conversations seem to be friendly and civil. The companion book to the 2005 Bellini exhibit at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston recognizes that in *St. Mark Preaching*, “the figures possess an air of calm composure that was a hallmark of Gentile's studio.”¹⁵⁰

Though some of the calm faces in the crowd were likely portraits, both of the Italians

and of some of the Mamluks, art historian Otto Pacht draws attention to their stiff, architecture-like bodies. He writes,

The majority of his figures, clad in long, kafta-like cloaks reaching right down to the ground, look almost like pointed clothes-stands bereft of organic life under their cloaks—walking architectural columns.¹⁵¹

This circumstance makes sense when considering that most of these figures were taken from sketches and costume studies made while Bellini was in Istanbul. Many of the fifteenth-century Ottoman costumes he would have seen were geometric and structured, and gave the wearer an almost conical appearance.¹⁵² The figures are meant to be taken as a whole, rather than individually, as Pacht later writes:

The overall form of the crowd, the mass of figures, precedes the individual. Human beings are primarily seen as social creatures, as members of a group or class - hence the significance of costume! - and only secondarily as individuals.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁴ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Shenouda, “Image of Alexandria,” 1.

¹⁴⁶ Shenouda, “Image of Alexandria,” 93.

¹⁴⁷ Shenouda, “Image of Alexandria,” 90.

¹⁴⁸ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Campbell, *Bellini and the East*, 99.

¹⁵¹ Otto Pacht, *Venetian Painting in the 15th Century: Jacopo, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini and Andrea Mantegna* (London: Harvey Miller, 2003), 137.

¹⁵² Pacht, *Venetian Painting*, 137.

¹⁵³ Pacht, *Venetian Painting*, 138.

The figures that stand together in large, homogeneously dressed groups, such as the women in the front or the rows of Venetians behind Mark, are especially striking. With the exception of Mark himself, the figures are meant to blend in, not stand out.

In the front of the crowd, directly in front of Mark, there is a crowd of white-veiled women whose costume is especially important since their bodies and faces are not seen at all. Though their bodies are physically hidden, they are given a prominent place in the center of the painting and their stark white outfits stand out against the dark and muted colors of the crowd of men surrounding them. The figure standing next to the pulpit wearing a gold and black striped dress under her veil stands out from among the female figures.



[fig 6] There are several theories as to what Bellini's inspiration or reference was for her. It is likely that she is loosely based on Bellini's own sketch of a young Greek woman done during his time in Istanbul.¹⁵⁴ [fig 7] Her clothing has been altered to reflect Mamluk style, but her bearing and posture are similar to the Alexandrian veiled woman. Bellini's woman is even more similar, however, to Vittorio Carpaccio's drawing of *Two Standing Women, One in Mamluk Dress*, completed at the same time that Bellini was painting *St. Mark Preaching*.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Campbell, *Bellini and the East*, 119.

¹⁵⁵ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 6.



[fig 8] From the style of dress to the position of her hands, Carpaccio's Mamluk woman is nearly identical to Bellini's. Carpaccio's drawing, in turn, was modeled after a woodcut illustration in the 1486 book *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam, or Pilgrimage to the Holy*

Land, which described German Politician Bernhard von Breydenbach's 1480s trip to Jerusalem.¹⁵⁶ [fig 9] Considered the first illustrated travelog, the book became popular and influential in the late fifteenth-century.

Thus, it makes sense that illustrations modeled on these sources would have made their way to Bellini's studio.



Another figure in the painting that is worthy of discussion is the red-robed Venetian closest to the viewer in the group to the left.

[fig 10] This figure is believed to be a portrait of Gentile Bellini himself. Bellini actually died before the painting was completely finished, but in his will he asked his younger brother Giovanni to finish it for him.¹⁵⁷ Giovanni finished it the same year. There is some debate as to whether Gentile had always intended to include a selfportrait in the finished painting,

¹⁵⁶ Vittorio Carpaccio, *Two Standing Women, One in Mamluk Dress*, Princeton University Art Museum Collections Online, <https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/4802>.

¹⁵⁷ Shenouda, "Image of Alexandria," 87.

or whether Giovanni decided to add him in as a tribute to his late brother. Unlike with the rest of the painting, there is no detectable underdrawing for the figure of Gentile, suggesting that it may have been a late addition.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, since it is a profile portrait, it seems likely that someone else painted it, rather than Gentile with a mirror. However, many Renaissance painters used a setup of multiple mirrors to paint profile self-portraits, so it is certainly possible.¹⁵⁹

Scholars have determined it is in fact Gentile both by his facial features and the distinctive medal he wears. The facial features map directly to a bronze medallion made by Vittorio Gambello, also called Camelio, of Gentile in 1500.¹⁶⁰



[fig 11] This is contemporary with the time Bellini was working on the painting, towards the end of his life. The distinctive features, particularly the

prominent nose and receding chin, are present in both the Camelio medallion and *St. Mark Preaching*. The other identifying feature of the red-clad figure is the large medal he wears around his neck. It was presented to him by Mehmed II during his term as Ottoman court painter.¹⁶¹ The pride with which Gentile wears the medal indicates that he sees Mehmed's patronage as a mark of distinction, confirming his deep respect for the Ottoman sultan and his culture.¹⁶²

Aside from all the people in the painting, the background also gives great insight into the connections Bellini draws between the East and the West. Alexandria was a foothold for Venetian trade, so it makes sense that there

would be Venetian influences in the architecture.³⁵ The fictionalized Alexandria Bellini creates is simultaneously Eastern and Western; an imaginary setting that is “not quite Venice and not quite Alexandria.”¹⁶³ The square where Mark preaches in the painting looks suspiciously like the Piazza San Marco in Venice, from the stone pattern on the ground to the looming basilica in the background. Though the setting is not Venice, Bellini ties the piazza to its namesake and draws yet another parallel between Venice and Alexandria: both cities claim St. Mark as an important part of their religious identity.

The large, fantastical basilica-like structure in the background of *St. Mark Preaching* is the most striking element of the scene.



[fig 12] Taking up the majority of the space and placed directly in the center, the structure arrests the viewer's attention before it moves to the figures below, or even to St. Mark himself. The building is structurally similar to St. Mark's Basilica, the focal point of the Venetian square that was Bellini's inspiration for the scene.

¹⁵⁸ Campbell, *Bellini and the East*, 116.

¹⁵⁹ Campbell, *Bellini and the East*, 120.

¹⁶⁰ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 6; Vettor Gambello (called Camelio), *Gentile Bellini, 1429-1507, Venetian Painter [obverse]*, Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-objectpage.44580.html#bibliography>.

¹⁶¹ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 6.

¹⁶² Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 52.

³⁵ Shenouda, “Image of Alexandria,” 1.

¹⁶³ Shenouda, “Image of Alexandria,” 85.



[fig 13] The arched design, the domed roofs, and the long balcony walkway are all elements seen in both St. Mark's Basilica and Bellini's painting. However, Bellini's version also brings in Byzantine and Egyptian architectural influence.¹⁶⁴ Some scholars have pointed out similarities to the Hagia Sophia, an important Byzantine structure that was built as a church and then later turned into a mosque after the Ottoman empire took over Constantinople in 1453.¹⁶⁵ One of the most significant and interesting elements of the building in *St. Mark Preaching* are the large curved buttresses that give the whole building a semicircular silhouette. Besides drawing the viewer's attention to St. Mark, the central figure in the narrative, they also lend a sense of exoticism and fantasy to an otherwise familiar-looking building to Venetians.

There are no clear characteristics to define this building's purpose—is it a church? A mosque? There appear to be minarets on the building, but any explicit Islamic symbolism such as minarets would be anachronistic to the time of the event being depicted, which was 600 years before the advent of Islam.¹⁶⁶ Still, Bellini has proven that he is not afraid of mixing time periods, as seen in the attire of the crowd. Shenouda writes, "Like Venice, the building is an amalgamation of different architectural styles without a clear

provenance."¹⁶⁷ Bellini purposely leaves the setting ambiguous in order to let the viewer place it within the context of their own experience.

The buildings surrounding the central structure all appear to be more standard-looking contemporary buildings. The decorative tile borders, the arcaded walkway, and the rooftop terraces are all characteristic of sixteenth-century Islamic architecture, not to mention the Oriental rugs hanging from many of the windows. The obelisk to the right of the central structure, which as I mentioned before points from Mark towards heaven, was most likely inspired by the Obelisk of Theodosius in Istanbul.¹⁶⁸ Byzantine emperor Theodosius I took the obelisk from Egypt and reconstructed it in Constantinople in the fourth century AD. The Egyptian artifact likely would have captured Bellini's imagination, and it most likely made it into his numerous sketches that later served as the inspiration for the Eastern elements of *St. Mark Preaching*.

The final important "exotic" element Bellini includes in *St. Mark Preaching* are the African and Middle Eastern animals, particularly the two camels and a giraffe in the background. Alexandria's strategic location made it a hub of trade between the East and

the West, so the city would have boasted a vast array of foreign goods for sale or for display. Objects from places as far-flung as Moorish Spain, Persia, and even China all ended up in Alexandria for Egyptians, Ottomans and Europeans alike to peruse.¹⁶⁹ Although he never visited Egypt, Bellini would have had access to many of these objects both during his time in Istanbul and at home in Venice.

Bellini likely would have seen camels while in Istanbul, but he probably never saw a giraffe in person. Thus, Bellini had to rely on

¹⁶⁴ Shenouda, "Image of Alexandria," 96.

¹⁶⁵ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 36.

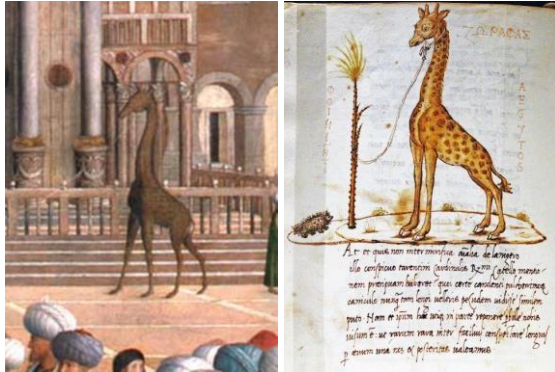
¹⁶⁶ Shenouda, "Image of Alexandria," 96.

¹⁶⁷ Shenouda, "Image of Alexandria," 85.

¹⁶⁸ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*, 8; see also, Pacht, *Venetian Painting*, 135.

¹⁶⁹ Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 1.

travel accounts and illustrations for reference. One source he likely used was the fifteenth-century travel accounts of the Italian Cyriacus of Ancona. Cyriacus traveled a great deal in Egypt, and he wrote detailed descriptions of all he saw in his accounts.¹⁷⁰ Bellini almost certainly based the giraffe in his painting on the illustration of a giraffe in Cyriacus' account.



[fig 14, 15] Bellini carefully matched the “proportions and contour” of the illustration.¹⁷¹ Bellini’s inclusion of Eastern animals that may or may not have been known to Venetians lends to the blending of “familiar and exotic elements” in the scene: the Italian audience would have simultaneously felt at home in the piazza while also feeling like they were peeking into another place and time.

When Bellini was commissioned to paint a narrative painting of St. Mark for the Scuola di San Marco, he could have created an authentic first-century Egyptian scene.

Instead, he chose to blend St. Mark’s world with his own and created an imagined, fantastical, exotic setting that both Italian and Eastern viewers would have been able to relate to. Brotton argues that “this is a familiar feature of Renaissance art and literature: ...dressing the contemporary world up in the clothes of the past as a way of understanding the present.”¹⁷² With *St. Mark Preaching*, the

opposite is true as well: Bellini places a figure from the past in a contemporary setting, to the same effect. Placing a story that may have felt distant or far-removed for a contemporary audience into a setting that they would have been immediately familiar with challenges them to consider the parallels between Mark’s time and their own. Both periods were a time of trade and travel among diverse cultures; first through the Roman Empire and later through widespread international networks. Through the blending of time and space in his painting, Bellini proves that the first century and the sixteenth century, as well as the Eastern world and the Western world, have more in common than first appears on the surface

1. Gentile Bellini and Giovanni Bellini, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*, 1504-1507, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

2. Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Mehmed II*, 1480, National Gallery, London.

¹⁷⁰ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona’s Egyptian Visit*, 9.

¹⁷¹ Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona’s Egyptian Visit*, 10.

¹⁷² Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, 36.

3. Gentile Bellini, *Seated Scribe*, 1479-1480, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.
4. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.
5. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*; Bellini, *Seated Scribe*.
6. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.
7. Gentile Bellini, *Young Greek Woman*, 1479-1480.
8. Vittorio Carpaccio, *Two Standing Women, One in Mamluk Dress*, 1501-1508, Princeton University Art Museum.
9. Bernhard von Breydenbach, woodcut illustration, 1486, in *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*.
10. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.
11. Vettor Gambello (called Camelio), *Gentile Bellini, 1429-1507, Venetian Painter [obverse]*, Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art.
12. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*.
13. St. Mark's Basilica, Venice, Italy.
14. Detail, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria*
15. Illustration from Cyriacus of Ancona's *Egyptian Voyage*, 15th century



WILLING TO DO, WILLING TO BE

Comparing Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death* and St. John Climacus' *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*

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When the reader of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* sees on its title page that it is written under the pseudonym "Anti-Climacus," he may ask this question: How does Anti-Climacus relate to seventh-century Christian monk St. John Climacus, whose name Kierkegaard borrows for the pseudonym? How does the author of the existentialist exposition *The Sickness unto Death* relate to the author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, a guide to Christian asceticism, if at all? Kierkegaard does not provide a clear answer. Most scholars agree that Anti-Climacus relates to St. John Climacus through another of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, Johannes Climacus. Kierkegaard wrote *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* as Johannes Climacus, who admits he is not a Christian.¹⁷³ Johnson argues that Johannes Climacus's non-Christian perspective stands opposite to Anti-Climacus's Christian perspective;¹⁷⁴ it is perhaps for this reason that Anti-Climacus's name is "against Climacus."¹⁷⁵ But why does Kierkegaard associate the non-Christian perspective with the name of Climacus in the first place? Hannay notes that one of Kierkegaard's journal entries "refers to Hegel as a Climacus who thought he could scale Heaven on a ladder of arguments."¹⁷⁶ In other words, Kierkegaard compares Climacus with Hegel, to whose rationalist philosophy Kierkegaard objected. Indeed, Kierkegaard, a Christian himself, was anti-rationalist and held that Christianity cannot be contained by reason;¹⁷⁷ he thus

regarded any Hegelian attempt to reduce the Christian faith to pure reason as non-Christian.

Therefore, Kierkegaard associates Climacus with the non-Christian perspective because he associates Climacus with Hegel, which, according to Johnson, reveals Kierkegaard's negative opinion of the real monk's "programmatically" approach to spirituality.¹⁷⁸ Still, it seems that Anti-Climacus is foremostly in dialogue with Johannes Climacus and not with St. John. For, as Magnússon argues, there is little evidence to suggest that Kierkegaard studied St. John's writings beyond cursory readings.¹⁷⁹ It seems most likely that Johannes Climacus is so named in direct relation to St. John as a metaphor for Hegel, and that Anti-Climacus is so named in direct relation to Johannes Climacus and in relation to St. John only through Johannes Climacus.

This does not mean, however, that Anti-Climacus and St. John bear no substantial direct relationship. For example, Johnson meaningfully compares the theme of silence in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* and Kierkegaard's work, including *The Sickness unto Death*, although comparisons between *The Sickness unto Death* and *The Ladder* are scarce in the literature. I contend, however, that it is worthwhile to compare the two as works of personal spiritual literature with a similar attention to the reader's spiritual development. Furthermore, I argue that *The Sickness unto Death* and *The Ladder* share a

¹⁷³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D.F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), 528, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvd58t7q>.

¹⁷⁴ Christopher D.L. Johnson, "'The Silent Tone of the Eternal': Søren Kierkegaard and John Climacus on Silence," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 19, no. 2 (2019): 204, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2019.0027>.

¹⁷⁵ Others give different explanations while still maintaining that Anti-Climacus responds to Johannes Climacus. For example, see Sebastian Hutsch and Klaus Viertbauer, "Anti-Climacus and the Demoralization of Sin," *The Monist* 105, no. 3 (July 2022): 370, <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onac006>.

¹⁷⁶ Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2001), 129.

¹⁷⁷ Régis Jolivet, *Introduction to Kierkegaard*, trans. W.H. Barber (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1970), 94.

¹⁷⁸ Johnson, "'The Silent Tone,'" 205.

¹⁷⁹ Agust Magnússon, "Kierkegaard in Light of the East: A Critical Comparison of the Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard with Orthodox Christian Philosophy and Thought," (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2016), 142 note 90.

common understanding of sin as a sickness afflicting the human person. Yet, I also argue that the two identify different cures for sin, namely faith and virtue. Because Kierkegaard's pseudonymous voices often disagree with each other, in this comparison I will consider only Anti-Climacus as the author of *The Sickness unto Death* to avoid any hermeneutic issue that arises from conflating the authorial voices of Kierkegaard's works.

The purpose of both *The Ladder* and *The Sickness unto Death* is, broadly speaking, to uplift the individual's spiritual condition. St. John, abbot at the monastery at Mount Sinai, wrote *The Ladder* to encourage monks on their spiritual journeys, providing the framework of a metaphorical, heavenward ladder, whose thirty rungs signify thirty stages of putting to death vices and exhibiting virtues. It is meant to be read not as a theoretical, theological treatise but as a guide to the ascetic life, one that emphasizes a personal encounter with God beyond correct understanding of doctrine.¹⁸⁰ St. John writes, "We will not be accused of having failed to be theologians or contemplatives. But we will certainly have some explanation to offer to God for not having mourned unceasingly."¹⁸¹ St. John desires foremostly for his reader the religious experience—albeit an uncompromising one, full of suffering and a denial of the body—rather than a lifeless knowledge of the faith, though he certainly does not deny that good theology and practice are inextricable. This religious experience, one's ascent of the ladder or *apotheosis* ("putting aside" in St. John's language¹⁸²), is spiritually uplifting in a literal sense. At the bottom of the ladder, the soul is enslaved to its base passions; it is caught up in the world. At the top of the ladder, the soul has

stripped away these passions and is divinely unified with God; it is in its most blissful state. St. John, as architect of this ladder, hopes that others may ascend and experience love, which he calls the "inebriation of the soul."¹⁸³

However, St. John does not build the ladder as a rigid architecture to be climbed identically by everyone; instead, he understands the particular needs of each individual. For instance, on the fifth step of the ladder "On Penitence," St. John describes a monastery known as "The Prison," in which penitent monks mourn, starve themselves, and beat their breasts until they cough up blood.¹⁸⁴ Rather than recommending such extreme selfdenial to all, St. John realizes this scene may cause many to despair and advises them to ignore his sayings.¹⁸⁵ He only presents the conditions of this monastery to encourage the spiritual progress of those who are prepared for and require this degree of bodily selfdenial. Indeed, Kallistos Ware notes that St. John offers "not regulations but a path of initiation,"¹⁸⁶ that his goal is "to impart a living personal experience."¹⁸⁷ In other words, St. John prioritizes the condition of his reader's soul over rules for monks in general. Recognizing this personal approach, Ware further remarks, "[*The Ladder*] is an existential work, and only those who read it existentially will appreciate its true value."¹⁸⁸ In this way, St. John attends to the self in much the same spirit that Kierkegaard, one of the first existentialists, does in *The Sickness unto Death*. To see a similar attention to the spiritual uplift of the individual in *The Sickness unto Death*, one need only read the book's subtitle: "A Christian Psychological Exposition for

¹⁸⁰ Kallistos Ware, introduction to *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John Climacus, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 7.

¹⁸¹ John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 145.

¹⁸² Ware, introduction, 52.

¹⁸³ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 286.

¹⁸⁴ Climacus, *The Ladder* 128-29.

¹⁸⁵ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 129.

¹⁸⁶ Ware, introduction, 9.

¹⁸⁷ Ware, introduction, 9.

¹⁸⁸ Ware, introduction, 8.

Edification and Awakening.”¹⁸⁹ Anti-Climacus desires to edify, to build up, and to wake up the reader; he desires to make the individual aware of his desperate condition and to provide the path to ridding himself of despair, which Anti-Climacus accomplishes through a Christian lens. Unlike *The Ladder*, *The Sickness unto Death* is more expository than pastoral. Yet, like *The Ladder*, *The Sickness unto Death* is not systematic theology. In fact, Anti-Climacus is explicit about his disdain for rational defense of Christianity,¹⁹⁰ and he suggests that logic and metaphysical statements are insufficient to grasp theological truth, which is chiefly personal.¹⁹¹ In keeping with this personal approach, Anti-Climacus writes for the individual, not the general. And with the individual self he associates the main point of discussion in *The Sickness unto Death*, which is despair.

Anti-Climacus calls despair the “sickness unto death.”¹⁹² It is a sickness of the self, an affliction that prevents the self from becoming what the self ought to be. He borrows the phrase from Jesus in the Gospel of John, who says, speaking of Lazarus’s illness, “This sickness is not unto death”¹⁹³ before Lazarus dies two days later. The death of which Jesus speaks, argues Anti-Climacus, is not bodily death but the eternal, self-consuming spiritual state of a man who rejects the eternal life offered by God.¹⁹⁴ Despair is the downward path that leads to this death, the path down which Anti-Climacus claims most, if not all, individuals walk.¹⁹⁵ In explicating the many forms of despair, Anti-Climacus notes their spiritually dim, even demoniacal character. For

instance, he warns against a despair characterized by melancholy over one’s sin that appears to be penitent sorrow but is actually unwillingness to accept forgiveness.¹⁹⁶ In another instance, he describes the despair of a demoniac spirit that, in spiteful rage at God, refuses His aid and resigns itself to

torment.¹⁹⁷ On the contrary, Anti-Climacus states that the Christian accepts God’s forgiveness and experiences its joy. Ridding oneself of this despair, then, is naturally uplifting. Indeed, the individual cured of despair is a true Christian, one who has not the sinful gloom that proceeds from despair, but one who is in harmonious relationship with himself and with God. As Lazarus ascends from the dead, likewise, does the individual from despair.

Anti-Climacus arranges forms of despair in order of increasing intensity,¹⁹⁸ and at the top of this hierarchy is sin. He calls sin the potentiation of despair,¹⁹⁹ although this description is certainly not universal in Christendom. Scripture, for instance, uses several metaphors to describe sin, among them are transgression of law,²⁰⁰ monetary debt,²⁰¹ enslavement,²⁰² and sickness.²⁰³ I contend that both Anti-Climacus and St. John describe sin primarily as sickness.

In *The Sickness unto Death*, this description of sin is evident. As sin is potentiated despair, and despair is a sickness of the self, sin is also a sickness of the self. Anti-Climacus fully defines it: “Sin is, after having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then before

¹⁸⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death in Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 141.

¹⁹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 218.

¹⁹¹ Jolivet, *Introduction*, 99.

¹⁹² Kierkegaard, *Sickness* 146.

¹⁹³ John 11:4 KJV.

¹⁹⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 151.

¹⁹⁵ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 155.

¹⁹⁶ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 242-43.

¹⁹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 205.

¹⁹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 175.

¹⁹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 208.

²⁰⁰ See 1 John 3:4.

²⁰¹ See Luke 7:40-50.

²⁰² See Rom. 8:12-15.

²⁰³ See Mark 2:17.

God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.”²⁰⁴ It is helpful to understand this definition piecewise. The first clause, “after having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is,” signifies that sin is not ignorance. AntiClimacus thus rejects the Socratic definition of sin, which claims that an individual does wrong because he does not know what is right. No, sin is not from ignorance but from conscious will. The sinner may *will* to be ignorant of what is good, but this act still resides in the will and not in the intellect.²⁰⁵

Now consider the phrases “in despair not to will to be oneself” and “in despair to will to be oneself.” Despairingly not willing to be oneself is the “despair of weakness.”²⁰⁶ In this despair, the self is too weak to will to be itself properly; it knows it despairs yet has not the strength to escape it, though it may try with all might.²⁰⁷ Despairingly willing to be oneself, on the other hand, is “defiance.”²⁰⁸ In this despair, the self is defiant such that it does not accept itself properly; in an act of will it asserts itself against its true self and so despairs. AntiClimacus ascribes this despair to the man who finds his life and loses it, when he needs to lose his life in order to gain it.²⁰⁹

Lastly consider the phrase “before God.” That the self exists directly before God and recognizes this fact potentiates ordinary despair and makes it sin. From the Christian perspective, behind all the obscuring smoke of the world, every individual stands in the throne-room of God before Him; in this direct relationship, the self is a “theological self.”²¹⁰

The self’s relation to God is one of the self’s three main aspects,²¹¹ for Anti-Climacus states that a self cannot be itself truly except “by relating itself to that Power [God] which constituted the whole relation [the self].”²¹² It is, in other words, a relationship essential to the nature of the self.

And this theological aspect of the self, the God-relation, seems to be higher than the other two aspects. To illustrate this point, in his commentary, Glenn associates the three aspects of the self with Kierkegaard’s three stages of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the

religious. These stages are hierarchical in that the religious encompasses a fuller reality than and is above the ethical, and the ethical encompasses a fuller reality than and is above the aesthetic.²¹³ Roughly speaking, the aesthetic deals with pleasure,²¹⁴ the ethical with general moral duty,²¹⁵ and the religious with the subjective relationship to God.²¹⁶ It is natural, then, that Glenn corresponds the religious stage to the self’s relation to God, for the two really deal with one and the same relation. Furthermore, as the religious is the fullest reality and encompasses the ethical and the aesthetic (which are associated with the other two aspects of the self), Glenn argues that “the self’s God relation ... both mirrors and illuminates the whole definition of the self.”²¹⁷ The God-relation seems preeminent; that the whole self may be mirrored by this single aspect suggests a “higher” status of the God-relation. After all, Anti-Climacus is clear that this theological aspect of the self is the very thing that transforms ordinary despair into its

²⁰⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 227.

²⁰⁵ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 227.

²⁰⁶ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 182.

²⁰⁷ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 188.

²⁰⁸ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 200.

²⁰⁹ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 201.

²¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 210.

²¹¹ The other two aspects of the self are synthesis and selfrelation. John D. Glenn, Jr., “The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard’s Work,” in *International Kierkegaard*

²¹² Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 147.

²¹³ Jolivet, *Introduction*, 114.

²¹⁴ Jolivet, *Introduction*, 124.

²¹⁵ Jolivet, *Introduction*, 134.

²¹⁶ Jolivet, *Introduction*, 169.

²¹⁷ Glenn, “Definition of the Self,” 18.

higher counterpart, sin. The Godrelation is thus essential to Anti-Climacus's notion of sin.

Anti-Climacus's definition of sin is thus understood. To recapitulate, when the self sins, it is conscious of its God-relation yet either wills to be what it is not or does not will to be what it is before God. In both weakness and defiance, the self is not as God has constituted it and thus relates to God improperly. And, because the God-relation is an intrinsic aspect of the self, the sinning self is not whole; it deprives itself of the well-being that a proper relation to God brings. Therefore, the self suffers in sin and, if left to sin, perishes apart from God. In this way, sin is sickness.

Commentary: The Sickness unto Death, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press: 1987), 6, 11, 18.

In *The Ladder*, St. John also recognizes that sin afflicts the individual. As Ware notes of the role of sin in *The Ladder*, "Sin is disease."²¹⁸ Rather than providing an explicit definition of sin, St. John implies that sin is sickness through metaphorical language and through the structure of the ladder itself. For example, St. John tells his reader, "if you discover that the doctors and the workers in that [hospital] can cure you of your ailments and, especially, of the spiritual pride that weighs you down, then go to them, buy your healing with the gold of humility."²¹⁹ Here, the hospital is a monastery, its doctors are spiritual fathers, the illness is pride, and its cure comes through humility. Pride must be cured above all else; the soul is sick with pride and is healthy when it humbles itself with the aid of those spiritual doctors at monasteries. In later instances, St. John compares moral failings to wounds needing "treatment, surgery, bandaging, and cauterization,"²²⁰ and he states that "the patients [those afflicted with passions] will get the right cure from the hands of God and from their spiritual doctors."²²¹ These examples of

medical metaphors express St. John's conviction that sin harms the soul in the same way that illness harms the body.

But does this language prove that St. John conceives sin primarily as sickness and not as another thing, like debt or enslavement? Perhaps it does not in itself, since St. John uses other imagery. For instance, he describes the sinner as a slave bound by chains, and he calls God a judge provoked to anger by sin.²²² Yet, even if the abundance of medical imagery does not establish St. John's conception of sin as sickness, this conception is inherent to *The Ladder* itself. Briefly note the structure of St. John's ladder. In the first three steps, the ascending soul withdraws from the world. In steps four through twenty-six, it practices virtue by repenting of and putting aside its

vices. In steps twenty-seven through thirty, it becomes unified with God.²²³ In other words, the soul far beneath the summit of the ladder is separated from God and still wrestles with the passions that draw it away from heaven. Such a soul is unwell precisely because it stands on the ladder's lower rungs, and it becomes healthy only when it climbs atop the ladder. Of course, sin in itself certainly causes suffering. For example, St. John calls malice (or remembrance of wrongs) "the poison of the soul," a "nail piercing the soul," and a "pleasureless feeling cherished in the sweetness of bitterness."⁵² Malice injures the soul in its own right; without relation to the structure of the ladder, it embitters the soul with a hatred of others. Yet, the essential function of sin like malice in *The Ladder* is to hinder the soul from unity with God. Relative to the structure of the ladder, malice deprives the soul of its health because it keeps the soul from climbing to the top of the ladder. I stated

²¹⁸ Ware, introduction, 39.

²¹⁹ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 112.

²²⁰ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 130.

²²¹ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 150.

²²² Climacus, *The Ladder*, 150.

²²³ Ware, introduction, 12-13.

⁵² Climacus, *The Ladder*, 152.

earlier that St. John is primarily concerned with the condition of the soul; it is precisely sin that worsens the soul's condition and denies the spiritual uplift that St. John desires for his reader.

Given that sin is a sickness in *The Ladder* and *The Sickness unto Death*, what is its cure? Its cure is faith, answers Anti-Climacus. He states, "The opposite of sin is not virtue but faith."²²⁴ Consistent with Kierkegaard's ethical/religious distinction, Anti-Climacus separates virtue and faith. The virtues of charity, temperance, kindness, etc. are the moral aspirations of all people. They contain the ethical duties demanded of the crowd, without exception to any individual. Pagan or Christian, anyone can be and ought to be virtuous. In other words, the virtues belong to the ethical stage because they are concerned with the universal rather than the individual. Faith, on the other hand, belongs to the religious stage. The religious contains the individual's subjective relationship with God; it abolishes general mankind and affirms the particular man as he exists directly before God. Unlike moral duty, religious duty cannot be abstracted to the general.

To illustrate this point, allow me to briefly consider the writing of Johannes de Silentio, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*. Johannes de Silentio praises Abraham for his faith when he obeys God's commandment to sacrifice his son Isaac.²²⁵ Ethically speaking, one may consider this sacrifice immoral because the father violates his duty to love his son more than himself,²²⁶ and yet another may consider this sacrifice moral because the man fulfills his duty to a higher authority.²²⁷ In either case, the sacrifice relates to God only through general moral principles, and it thus belongs to the ethical. Religiously speaking, however,

Abraham as an individual stands in absolute relation to God without relation to the ethical. Faith elevates the individual above the general, allowing him to exist before God without the ethical mediating the relationship.²²⁸ In other words, Abraham does not serve the virtue of his sacrifice but God Himself.

In agreement with Johannes de Silentio, Anti-Climacus holds that faith deals with the individual's relation to God. And what is faith precisely? Anti-Climacus states, "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God."²²⁹ In this definition, the faithful self's being is in accord with its will: it *wills* to be what it *is* truly. And because a proper God-relation is necessary for a self to be itself truly, the faithful self must be in accord with God and must be conscious of its God-relation—that is, the faithful self is "grounded transparently in God." Faith, then, is the precise opposite of sin,

because the faithful self no longer wills to be what it is not or does not will to be what it is before God. As sin dwells in the religious stage for its emphasis on the self's God-relation, so too does faith.

Yet, Anti-Climacus does not believe sin and faith are unrelated to virtue. He notes, "Is it not also self-assertion against God when one is disobedient and defies His commandment?"²³⁰ In other words, are not the forms of disobedience of God's law—murder, adultery, theft, etc.—contained in the category of self-assertion before God, i.e., the potentiated despair of defiance? On the other hand, are not these forms of disobedience often caused by weaknesses of the flesh—anger, lust, greed, etc.—and thus contained in the category of the potentiated despair of weakness? Indeed, these sins are subsumed

²²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 213.

²²⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling in Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 34-37.

²²⁶ Kierkegaard, *Trembling*, 67.

²²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Trembling*, 89.

²²⁸ Kierkegaard, *Trembling*, 66.

²²⁹ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 213.

²³⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 212.

under Anti-Climacus's notion of sin. Further, the virtues are likewise subsumed under faith according to Anti-Climacus's definitions, although he is silent on this point. Yet it is not difficult to see that the man of faith, who no longer asserts himself against God or fails to obey Him, is virtuous. This man, in full obedience to God's commandments, loves his neighbor, suffers patiently, and humbles himself before God. Surely, every form of virtue flows from Anti-Climacus's notion of faith.

To St. John, on the other hand, there does not exist such a qualitative gulf between faith and virtue. Instead, faith is a lofty virtue among virtues, all of which rid oneself of sin. Most of the sins on the ladder's rungs have an opposite virtue. For instance, Step Eleven, "On Talkativeness and Silence" places the passion of idle conversation opposite to the virtue of silence.²³¹ The vice of gluttony in Step Fourteen is contrasted with the virtue of chastity in Step Fifteen,²³² the vice of avarice in Step Sixteen is contrasted with the virtue of poverty in Step Seventeen,²³³ etc. With this frequent vice/virtue opposition, St. John suggests that the soul rids itself of sins when the soul replaces it with its respective virtue. But does St. John consider the virtues to be purely ethical, in Kierkegaard's sense of the word? If this were the case, then Anti-Climacus would certainly disagree with such an appeal to ethics and never to the subjective relationship with God. On the contrary, the virtues in *The Ladder* are not ethical but ethical-religious, forgoing any sharp distinction between the two stages. The ethical dimension of the virtues lies in the fact that they are, of course, universal moral principles. Yet, to St. John there coexists an inseparable religious dimension of the virtues, and this lies in the fact that the virtues constitute the rungs of the ladder. By construction, the ladder relates individual to God, and for this reason, the climb is

intrinsically religious. The soul attaining virtue always stands in relation to God beneath Him; if one removes the religious aspect of the virtues that constitute the ladder, he removes the top of the ladder from God, and the structure collapses. Furthermore, St. John affirms that the virtues are gifts from God. For instance, on chastity, he states, "When nature is overcome, it should be admitted that this is due to Him Who is above nature."²³⁴ Only by God and in relation to Him can the monk begin and sustain virtuous life. In other words, St. John does seem to oppose Anti-Climacus by suggesting that the opposite of sin is virtue. However, without making an ethical/religious distinction, St. John holds that virtue primarily affects the soul's relation to God and thus also belongs to the religious, in Kierkegaard's sense of the word.

I have thus argued that St. John and Anti-Climacus, both taking a personal approach to *The Ladder* and *The Sickness unto Death*, similarly identify sin as a sickness in the individual yet identify different cures of sin.

Whereas Anti-Climacus rejects the premise

that the opposite of sin is virtue, St. John seems to affirm it, although his idea of virtue differs from Anti-Climacus's purely ethical concept. Regarding this cure for sin, there is a difference in emphasis that coheres each author's thought, which I can best summarize as a contrast of being and doing. In Anti-Climacus is the notion of willing to *be*. The self no longer sins when it wills to *be* itself truly before God. In its essence, faith repairs the sinner's disfigured existence and restores to him his whole self in harmony with God. In St. John is the notion of willing to *do*. He exhorts his reader to overcome sin and *act* virtuously. He says, "Ascend, my brothers, ascend eagerly. Let your hearts' resolve be to climb."²³⁵ Endure

²³¹ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 158-59.

²³² Climacus, *The Ladder*, 165, 171.

²³³ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 187, 189.

²³⁴ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 172.

²³⁵ Climacus, *The Ladder*, 291.

suffering, run the good race,²³⁶ and will to climb each rung in pursuit of God's love by His grace, says St. John. His emphasis rests on action.

Of course, these notions of being and doing are not mutually exclusive. The one who *is* faithful to God naturally *acts* virtuously; being and doing are often conjoined. Instead, these notions simply contain the difference in inflection with which Anti-Climacus and St. John speak about sin's cure. In both *The Sickness unto Death* and *The Ladder*, sin, as sickness, is rooted in being, but the spiritual uplift that concerns both Anti-Climacus and St. John is accomplished through different means, and this is one way in which Anti-Climacus and St. John Climacus stand apart.

²³⁶ Gal. 5:7.

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