

Kerr's Musings

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Practical Politics

Somebody landing in Southern Italy in the late Middle Ages and heading North would have passed through various realms. On the face of it these realms would have been very different. Titles of rulers would have varied, likewise their powers, likewise the modes of coming to power. Primogeniture, the selective Papacy, the elective Empire, the democratic Swiss and so on. However, being Catholic states, the Kingship of Christ applied, so all these states had the same first principles.

Perhaps this is all outdated in the modern world? Societies are either going uphill towards the Kingship of Christ or downhill to the Gadarene hogwash. Let's see how some attempt to apply Christian principles in public life compares with scorning them which leads to a crude materialism with dreadful results.

In 1813 Napoleon received three offers of terms in which some post-1792 gains would have been kept. In 1814 he received 2 offers of the 1792 frontiers. In 1815, at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington was asked by an artillery officer for permission to fire at Napoleon. Permission was refused. This was not a matter of military protocol. Wellington well understood that the requirement was a military victory to secure the political result that enough of the French would be convinced that expansionism was folly thus ending the French Revolutionary Wars. Making a quasi-martyr of Napoleon wouldn't help. Wellington wrote in 1847 that it was Christianity that kept Napoleon from the scaffold.

In 1918-19 it was a different story. The German government of President Ebert was reluctantly willing to sign most of the Versailles Treaty. They balked however at the War Guilt clauses. Not without reason. As Lieutenant-Colonel D J Goodspeed in *The German Wars* notes, the sequence of mobilisations, the far larger sums spent on armaments by the Entente, the far larger forces of the Entente, the fact that the only French and Russian official accounts of the outbreak of war contained forgeries all point to Entente guilt.

The Allied statesmen reacted like bullies in a school playground. The Allied armies would march on Berlin unless the whole treaty was signed. Only when the German High Command told Ebert that there was no chance militarily was a bloodbath averted. The Allies' materialistic approach meant doomed efforts to weaken Germany leading to the rise of Hitler.

What the Allies had to fear was a German desire for revenge, something non-material. Now the Austrian constitution of November 1918 consisted of just two articles. The first stated that Austria was a democratic state, the second that Austria was part of Germany. Delegates were then sent to Weimar. The Allies disliked this case of self-determination, since it would have meant a Germany bigger in area and population than in 1914. The Germans were told to forget the *Anschluss* and it was made very clear to the Austrians that if they did likewise they'd get lenient terms. Suppose the Allies had permitted the *Anschluss* would that not have greatly diluted German desire for revenge? To remove Christian principles from foreign policy is catastrophic.

Let's see how the *de facto* repudiation of the Kingship of Christ works in relation to domestic policy. *Dignitatis Humanae* has sometimes been called an American effort because of the influence of Father John Courtney Murray. This is rather to ignore the efforts to defend the Kingship of Christ by the editor of *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, Msgr Joseph Fenton. What are the results of this slither to secularism?

The number of rapes per year of prisoners in male American prisons has been unofficially estimated as between 85,000 and 300,000. This raises all sorts of questions, not least that of extradition. Is it possible to come up with an answer (at any rate in theory) to this which conforms to the Kingship of Christ and to American tradition? The American Bishops tend to be hostile to capital punishment, and this has also been true *de facto* of the Vatican II Popes. From which we must conclude that the exact opposite is the correct answer. The following legislation should be passed at both Federal and State level to enable the widest possible sweep of encirclement of criminality not least those guilty of such atrocities including those derelict in their duty:

All juries must be randomly selected and may, if they convict an adult defendant of a capital offence, sentence the defendant to the firing squad. This sentence will be carried out within 12 months unless another jury, on appeal, overturns the death sentence. Executions will be carried out by infantry squads with their weapons set for automatic fire.

Thus potential jurors would only be ineligible on grounds of necessity and a jury would decide on the appeal. Executions would be essentially, 'Ready, Aim, Fire.' The heart would be hit with a storm of bullets and that would be that.

'*Blessed are the merciful*' would apply to those involved in such executions, since they would be merciful to potential victims and their families. This is of course all theoretical but we can at least note that most politicians most emphatically do not trust the people and that all too many Bishops tend to be more interested in burnishing their liberal democratic credentials than God's laws and their flocks.

The Silence of Stalin

Stalin formally extended the death penalty down to 12 year olds on 7th April 1935, and had this published in *Izvestia* the following day. He was willing to accept the bad but rapidly forgotten publicity in the West to demonstrate to those coming up for show trials that he would not hesitate to strike at their families if they did not go along with the cover stories.

This was unusual for Stalin. As Robert Conquest remarked in *The Great Terror*, Stalin was an expert at keeping quiet, when others talked too much, and in presenting an appearance of moderation. Thus many, such as Boris Pasternak, thought the atrocities were being carried out by the Secret Police without Stalin's knowledge, and that if he knew, he would have stopped them.

During the last years of Apartheid, a tactical question arose. Were the necklace lynchings tactically useful or not for the opposition? A necklace lynching consisted of putting a tyre filled with petrol round the neck of somebody suspected of helping the government and burning him to death.

Winnie Mandela favoured the necklace lynchings: '*With our necklaces and matchboxes we are freeing this country*'. Desmond Tutu said that foreigners seeing these lynchings would say that these people are not ready for self-government. What was Nelson Mandela's opinion?

C. Kerr