

The Divine Right of Death

The prisoner had woken early having slept surprisingly well, so he told me. For a condemned man he was in good spirits and following a hearty breakfast, dressed for the fate that awaited him.

The previous evening in the presence of a guard, the prisoner had enjoyed a fine meal of Windsor venison, Scottish trout and vegetables, with a flagon of English wine. Prior to the prisoner's final meal, his priest, unknown by name, had conducted a Mass which included the Eucharist. This led the prisoner to confess, before a makeshift altar, his misdemeanors. Although the prisoner accepted his extravagances had been plentiful and perhaps hallmarking his own interests, he believed in a divine right that triumphed over and vetoed any agenda of others. The prisoner thus considered himself exonerated from any evil that others had proclaimed; for God himself was judge and jury, not a set of parliamentarians. At the subsequent meal, he toasted his belief and invited no one to concur. 'After all,' said the prisoner raising his goblet, 'what is a man if he is not true to himself and accountable only to God as witness?'

Looming in the shadows of his confession, the prisoner reluctantly observed that the turmoil in which he had inflicted on his nation by way of civil war was deeply regrettable and had clearly divided his realm. However, the prisoner believed his conscience was clear and his will to do battle against the New Model Army of rebellious revolutionaries was in itself, a representation of God's will and thus would need to be played out to the end in order to ensure God's spiritual preservation.

Brought before a recalled Parliament posing as a Court, so the Prisoner was tried and condemned. Proclaiming his innocence and denied any representation, the prisoner continuously demanded, 'On who's lawful authority am I standing trial?' He reminded the assembled Court that it was he alone who had authority. The prisoner remained unchanged in his viewpoint to the very end. His fate had been unanimously decided and announced, 'Charles Stuart, King of England, you have been found guilty of High Treason against the good people of this nation, and you should be put to death by the severing of the head from the body.'

This morning after dressing, in which he wore a second shirt so as not to shiver and appear scared, the prisoner walked calmly up Whitehall and then entered his banqueting house. In a matter of minutes, the prisoner reappeared and climbed onto the high scaffold that had been erected outside the front balcony. In reaching this position, the prisoner would have seen Rubens' depiction of his own father in the keep of angels which floated high, painted on the ceiling of the main hall.

On this cold morning, the 30th day of January in the year of our Lord, Sixteen Hundred and Forty-Nine, a King was beheaded. His final words being, 'I go now from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, to everlasting peace.'