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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago, the late, lamented Sebastian de Grazia gave me his *Machiavelli in Hell*, which had just won the Pulitzer Prize. He inscribed my copy of the book "to a fellow worker in the same vineyard." Since then, I have continued to labor in Machiavelli's vineyard, and the more I labor, the more I realize that de Grazia was right when he pointed out that, scattered throughout the works of Machiavelli, "like poppies in a field of chick peas, are many references to God." Niccolò's God is "the creator, the master deity, providential, real, universal, one of many names, personal, invocable, thankable, to be revered, a judge, just and forgiving, rewarding and punishing, awesome, a force transcendent, separate from but operative in the world."[1] He is a God that loves justice, that orders us to love our homeland, and who wants men to be strong so that they can defend that homeland. This God was, for Niccolò, the true Christian God, in contrast with the God who wishes men to be humble, willing to accept not only the suffering that is the inevitable accompaniment of the human condition, but also the other suffering, eminently avoidable, that the weak endure through the cruelty and ambition of evil men. He is a God that loves the same

[1] Sebastian de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1989. Even before de Grazia, in my view, Luigi Russo was right when he wrote, in his book, *Machiavelli*, 3d ed., Laterza, Bari 1949, pp. 222–23, that "Machiavelli is a religious man, typically Christian in his religiosity"; I would also point to the observations of Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli*, 2 vols., Sansoni, Florence 1969, in particular pp. 561–63, where he referred to the Florentine Secretary's religious and Christian conscience and emphasized that he "was anticlerical, not an atheist." In contrast, Felice Alderisio, in *Machiavelli. L'arte dello Stato nell'azione e negli scritti*, Bocca, Turin 1930, goes too far. Also see the review by Benedetto Croce, *Conversazioni critiche*, 4th Series, Laterza, Bari 1932, pp. 14–17. It is also essential, in my view, to read Emanuele Cutinelli-Rèndina, *Introduzione a Machiavelli*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 1999, pp. 77–111; Alberto Tenenti, "La religione di Machiavelli" [1969], in *Credenze, ideologie, libertinismi tra Medio Evo ed età moderna*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1978, pp. 175–219; Pierre Jodogne, "Il Cristianesimo di Machiavelli," Atti del Convegno di Nimega su letteratura italiana e ispirazione cristiana (15–19 October 1979), edited by Carlo Ballerini, Pàtron, Bologna 1980, pp. 249–74.

things that Machiavelli loves: the fatherland, the rule of law, living in freedom, and those men who, through their virtue, succeed in creating and preserving these precious and fragile treasures.[2]

1. The Republican Religion

De Grazia saw all this clearly, and he expressed it even better in his writing. And yet he failed to see that Machiavelli found his God in the tradition of republican Christianity that he experienced in Florence. That tradition was based on the principle that a true Christian is a good citizen who serves the common good and liberty in order to implement the divine plan on earth. God participates in human history, loves free republics, supports and rewards those who govern justly, created men in his own image, and wishes them to become like him with their virtue, working to make the earthly city comparable to the heavenly city. Christ and Cicero, the Apostles and the republican heroes of Rome all coexisted for the Florentines, side by side. The saints were not those ascetics who renounced the world, nor were they those devout men and women who obeyed the commandments of the church. Rather the saints were the citizens who placed liberty and the homeland before all other things. This interpretation of Christianity instilled a radical aversion to the corruption of the Catholic Church, and it stimulated a need for *renovatio*, a religious and moral reformation capable of triggering a rebirth of charity and justice.

Both *renovatio* and charity were also fundamental elements of Machiavelli's religious and political vision, to a greater degree than de Grazia realized. When Machiavelli writes that the Christian religion "permits us the exaltation and defense of the fatherland" and "wishes us to love and honor it and to prepare ourselves to be such that we can defend it," he is expressing a profound religious conviction and he is echoing the interpretation of Christianity that he experienced in the Florence of his own time.[3] To identify the religious beliefs of a man like Machiavelli, who concealed his thoughts and feelings, is perhaps an impossible undertaking, but his writings and the intellectual milieu within which he was working combine to encourage us to entertain as perfectly reasonable the hypothesis that he thought of himself as a Christian: a Christian sui generis, certainly not a Christian in full compliance with the church of Rome; with a God all his

[2] For a differing interpretation, see Gennaro Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Storia del suo pensiero politico*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1980, p. 512 and pp. 555–57.

[3] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, II, 2. English translation: Mansfield and Tarcov, *Discourses*, p. 132.

own, but not a God that he invented out of whole cloth; in other words, a God that had a great deal in common with the God that existed in the religious consciousness of the Florence of his time. [4] We know that he loved his fatherland more than his own soul, but to love the fatherland more than his soul was, for him, and for many Florentines, the true way of being Christians, of practicing the supreme value of charity and thus following the true path to eternal salvation. Once the true path had been found, all the rest—saying confession, hearing mass, fasting, theological quibbles, hell, heaven, devils, and the Lord's prayer—meant relatively little. Many respected political writers have claimed that he was an atheist, but is there a sentence, or even a single line of text, in which Machiavelli states or even hints that God does not exist? I have not succeeded in finding one, but I have found—as the reader will soon see—numerous documents that attest the reverse.

Along with the interpretation of Machiavelli the atheist, we may also discard the view of Machiavelli the pagan. Isaiah Berlin was the respected proponent of this view, long ago (though he had not been the first to advocate it). According to Berlin, when Machiavelli writes that the Christian religion "permits us the exaltation and defense of the fatherland" and "wishes us to love and honor it and to prepare ourselves to be such that we can defend it," he is simply performing an act of formal obeisance to forestall criticism and persecution. His words mean only that if the church had developed a militant attitude comparable to the *virtus* of the ancient Romans and had made men strong and devoted to the common interest, its teachings would have had a more desirable effect on society.

According to Berlin, Machiavelli may not have separated ethics from politics, but he did separate two incompatible ideals of life and two codes of morals, pagan morality and Christian morality. Pagan morality teaches courage, vigor, and the strength to withstand adversities, loyalty to the republic, order, discipline, the pursuit of happiness, justice, and self-affirmation. Christian morality, in contrast, preaches as supreme values charity, mercy, self-sacrifice, love for God, forgiveness toward one's enemies, scorn for the delights of this world, faith in eternal life and salvation of the soul. Machiavelli is truly original, Berlin emphasizes, when he places pagan morality above Christian morality and when he states that Christian values conflict irremediably with the kind of society that he would

[4] The problem that I explore for Machiavelli is closely related to the issue that Lucien Febvre explored for Rabelais. See Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle. La religion de Rabelais*, Editions Albin Michel, Paris 1968. English translation: *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, translated by Beatrice Gottlieb, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1982.

like to see reborn, modeled on the society of ancient Rome. That is why his ideas especially offended those who were unwilling to give up Christian or humanistic values.[5]

Let us leave aside the obvious considerations that Machiavelli was not the sort to pull his verbal punches and that he had no reason to fear ecclesiastical condemnation and persecution for a work that he never published; the fact remains that thosewho possessed a sincere Christian faith were in no wise offended by Machiavelli's words,and indeed found them to be consistent with the true teachings of Christ, as I explain in chapter 4. The values that Berlin identifies as pagan—courage, strength, justice, self affirmation, and especially the ideal of virtue—were in Machiavelli's mind also Christian values. At the same time, Machiavelli praised charity, clemency, forgiveness toward one's enemies (private enemies, that is, not public enemies), and exhorted his listeners to seek eternal life in the true Christian manner, that is, by loving one's fatherland. When Machiavelli wrote to Francesco Vettori, and not to Francesco Guicciardini as Berlin believed, "I love my fatherland more than my own soul," he was not setting forth a pagan principle but rather a Christian principle that had deep roots in the history of Florence.[6] The eight Florentine magistrates who showed with their deeds, during the war against the Papal States under Gregory XI, that they loved their fatherland more than their own souls, were popularly dubbed "Saints," because they were considered Christian saints, not pagan heroes (and that war is remembered as the War of the Eight Saints). Similarly, an idea that Berlin considered pagan—that it is an intrinsic quality of man to attempt to become similar to God and to imitate the aspirations to true glory of the ancient founders of states and religions—had a long history and deep roots within the Christian tradition.[7]

The idea of a God who loves above all others those who pursue the best interests of their fatherland is in Berlin's view very distant from the God of the New Testament.[8] In fact, Machiavelli, and many others of his time

[5] Isaiah Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in *Studies on Machiavelli*, edited by Myron P. Gilmore, Sansoni, Florence 1970, pp. 168–70,172–74 and 198. Also Meinecke considers Machiavelli to be unaffected by the religious impulses of the Renaissance, basically pagan and the proponent of a complete break with the dualistic Christian ethic that spiritualized man. See Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'état and Its Place in Modern History*, translated from the German by Douglas Scott. Praeger, New York 1965.

[6] *Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli*, vol. III, *Lettere*, edited by Franco Gaeta. Utet, Turin 1984, p. 629. Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in *Studies on Machiavelli*, p. 179. English translation: Atkinson and Sices, *Machiavelli and His Friends*, p. 416.

[7] Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in *Studies on Machiavelli*, p. 195.

[8] Ibid., p. 202, n.102.

and of the centuries that followed, believed that a God who commands us to love our fatherland was in no way separate from the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, and that the interests of the republic were entirely compatible with the will of God. Furthermore, there was no need for a rebirth of paganism in order to bring about a resurrection of civic virtue.

Not a pagan, then, but a supporter of an instrumental conception of religion? This interpretation, too, has a long history. Gennaro Sasso produced a particularly sophisticated discussion of it. In his view, Machiavelli saw religion as a fundamental element of a "well ordered" state, "like the state that, in fact, makes possible good morals, good orders, and good arms. But, at its roots, and also at its summit, it unfailingly presupposes the presence of an attentive and virtuous legislator, who knows how to modulate its power and apply its effects accordingly with the conditions of the times and the winds of fortune." Religion, therefore, takes on a twofold meaning: it is "*instrumentum regni*, the medium through which, in the name of God, an intelligent legislator can carry out great, even extraordinary achievements. But it is also the profound life of the people, the good and not extrinsic morals, its political and moral 'education': thus the concept immediately loses the extrinsically utilitarian character that marked it in the first case, and tends to render it obsolete." The concept of religion, Sasso points out, is no longer merely an instrument of dominion, but also takes on a "constructive significance."[9]

Sasso is quite right when he emphasizes that Machiavelli's religious thought is miles away from that of the political writers of the Counter-Reformation, and the reader can see further confirmation of this by reading chapter 4. The authors of the Counter-Reformation were calling for a Catholicism that was little more than a formal, external participation in worship, obedience to the church, and a school for humility; Machiavelli instead called for a religion that was intrinsic "to the soul of the people,"

[9] Gennaro Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Storia del suo pensiero politico*, pp. 510–12. Before Sasso, Giuliano Procacci had pointed out that Machiavelli considered religion to be a powerful force in favor of social cohesion in his Introduction to *Il Principe e Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1960, pp. lix–lxi. Also read what Ernst Cassirer has to say in *The Myth of the State*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1946, pp. 138–39. Among the (less perceptive) supporters of the idea that Machiavelli held a purely utilitarian view of religion are J. Samuel Preus, "Machiavelli's Functional Analysis of Religion: Context and Object," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (1979), pp. 171–90. For further bibliographic references, see Marcia L. Colish, "Republicanism, Religion, and Machiavelli's Savonarolan Moment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999), p. 598, n.3. Also William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1968, p. 38, claims that Machiavelli had a political conception of religion.

that would translate into a sense of civic duty and a true goodness of soul: not an *instrumentum regni*, but rather an *instrumentum libertatis*.[10] Religion, then, as means and end. A love of liberty and the good morals for which religion is a tool are themselves goals that the Christian religion, properly understood, and therefore God, call for. It is God that loves justice and wishes great men to found good political orders. The upright Christian religion educates good citizens, but one must be a good citizen in order to be a good Christian. For that reason, too, Machiavelli sets the chiefs and the founders of religions above the founders of states: if religion's only value was as a tool of political purpose, he would not have placed those who create the tool on a higher plane than those who identify and implement the ultimate goal.

Machiavelli sketched out a religion based on virtue, capable of correcting the bad religious education of the Catholic Church. He did not set himself up to preach a new theology, but rather saw himself as a proponent of a new way of life. Francesco De Sanctis (1817–83) wrote that Machiavelli was the Martin Luther of Italy, because he chose to substitute science for theology. In reality, he chose to replace a religion that preached docility, and made men weak, with a religion that would teach a love for liberty and virtue. Savonarola had told the Florentines that a true Christian must live as a good citizen, and he had called for a religious reformation that would restore to life the simplicity and purity of early Christianity. Machiavelli too was advocating a religious reform, but not like the one that Savonarola attempted so unsuccessfully. In Machiavelli's view, the evil that undermines kingdoms and republics is neither usury nor "the occasional carnal sin," and little is gained through fasting, charity, or prayer, and least of all is gained by an idlereliance on the assistance of God.[11] The true evil that a reformation might uproot is the religion of idleness that teaches people to believe that "without you for you God fights, / While you are on your knees and nothing do." Machiavelli felt no need for tiresome,

[10] Concerning religion as a tool of political liberty in Machiavelli, see Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli on Virtù and the Maintenance of Liberty," in *Visions of Politics*, *Renaissance Virtues*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, vol. 2, pp. 160–85. On the other hand, Jeffrey Stout is mistaken in his excellent study *Democracy and Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004, when he likens Machiavelli to Burke and attributes to him a conservative conception of religion (p. 26). As the reader can see, Machiavelli instead envisions a religion that is capable of subverting the prevailing political order, that is, the order of principalities and monarchies, replacing it with the order of republics.

[11] Niccolò Machiavelli, *L'Asino* [*The Golden Ass*], in *Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli*, vol. IV, *Scritti letterari*, edited by Luigi Blasucci, with the collaboration of Alberto Casadei, Utet, Turin 1989, pp. 382–83. Concerning anticlericalism during the time of Machiavelli, see Ottavia Niccoli, *Rinascimento anticlericale. Infamia, propaganda e satira in Italia tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2005.

gloomy, intolerant saints, nor was he interested in mumblers of prayers, always eager to bend a knee before the powerful. Instead, he aspired to a religion that would teach men that their first duty to God, and the sole path to salvation, is to be strong citizens. His reformation was not the reform of Savonarola nor the reform of Luther: it was a much wiser reformation than either of the two.

Machiavelli did not bother to explain that his idea of reformation was in keeping with the Holy Scriptures. He wrote his political works with the intent of fostering, through the persuasive power of words, morals that were similar to those of the ancients, morals that survived, though they were barely eking out an existence, in Florence, and that were flourishing greatly in the free cities of Germany. In contrast with the full-blown anachronism that scholars have perpetuated countless times, Machiavelli did not write his works in the style of the scientist or the chilly preceptor who attempts to persuade his listeners with the power of facts alone, and with the rigor of his reasoning. He did rely on facts and was (almost always) rigorous in his reasoning, but he wrote in the style of an orator and a prophet in an attempt to move his audience to action, to sway passions and imagination, and to encourage the birth of a new moral and political world. He wrote to teach what is good, as was the duty of a "good man": and who was the good man who showed the right way, if not the true orator depicted by classical theorists of rhetoric?

This aspect of Machiavelli's intellectual physiognomy also shows his link to the Florentine context. In his Florence, eloquence was the queen of political and religious life and animated the civil religion that fused together republican principles and Christian faith. With the power of words, and with prophetic language, Savonarola had persuaded the Florentines to establish a republican government, and he had urged them to return to a true Christian and civil way of life. Yet neither powerful words nor prophetic language were enough to preserve Savonarola from death or to defend the republican government fr om its enemies. Machiavelli interprets the defeat of the unarmed prophet, Savonarola, in contrast with the victory of the armed prophet, Moses, and comes to the conclusion that "all armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed."[12] He knows that the power of words is not sufficient to found political orders and to preserve them, but he also knows that without that power, free republics are not born, they do not survive, and they cannot defend themselves against moral corruption.

This belief was the source of inspiration in all his political writings. In

[12] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* , VI.

The Prince he refers to the story of Exodus in order to sketch in dramatic hues a portrait of the redeemer who will succeed in putting Italy back on its feet; in the *Discourses on Livy* he comments on Livy's *Ab urbe condita* because he wants men to rediscover their ancient virtue; he writes the *Florentine Histories* in order to teach his fellow citizens to avoid the errors of the past and to imitate their ancestors, who placed their fatherland above their own souls; he writes *The Art of War* in order to revive the age-old orders and the ancient military discipline, and precisely in this work he reveals in a single phrase the hope for a rebirth that inspired his own life, as well as his writings: "This province seems made to revive the dead things of the past."[13]

The religion that Machiavelli advocated and attempted to bring back to life was a religion of liberty that taught that one could live without serving or dominating others, that one should be strong-minded in order to defend the common liberty, that one should obey only the laws and those who govern justly, and that one should feel an internal sense of shame for violating one's duties. Without that religion and without that God, a people cannot live in freedom. Machiavelli stated with the greatest possible clarity that republics have greater need of this religion than do monarchies. If we fail to keep in mind this essential element of his political thought, we cannot understand the true meaning of his republican theory and of republican theory in general.

The religion of virtue that Machiavelli had defended, and the idea of a religious and moral reformation to be achieved through a return to the genuine principles of the Christian religion, inspired and fascinated those in Italy who sincerely believed in the need for a religion and a moral life capable of regenerating and supporting true political liberty. Sixteenth-century heretics and reformers read his books, and Italians who had immigrated to Basel in search of religious liberty translated *The Prince* into Latin and published it.[14] In the same years, the political thinkers closest to the Catholic Church directly attacked Machiavelli's religion of virtue, claiming that it already existed within the church, as shown by the victories of Catholic armies, or that it was merely an impossible dream. The determination and the virulence of that attack derived from the belief that Machiavelli was not one of the many critics of the church's corruption or

[13] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Dell'arte della guerra*, in *Opere*, vol. I, p. 689.

[14] Concerning the exemplary nature of the critiques of Machiavelli's ideas on religion, see Adriano Prosperi, *I tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, Einaudi, Turin 1996, pp. xix–xx. In the Protestant world, respected authors based on Holy Scripture the idea of the Christian as a good citizen. See Piero Adamo, "Cittadini e santi. Immaginario politico e cultura protestante dalla Riforma alla Rivoluzione Americana," in *Filosofia Politica* 14 (2000), pp. 35–51, p. 39.

the misdeeds of priests, but a theorist of a Christian religion of virtue that was an alternative to the teachings of the Vatican.

Despite the obstinacy of Catholic writers, others—most notably Giordano Bruno—discovered at the end of the sixteenth century Machiavelli's religion of virtue and wrote eloquent pages on the need for a religious reformation to combat the corruption of the world. At any rate, it was in the eighteenth century that the belief took firm root that, without a moral reformation inspired by the religion of virtue, Italy would never be emancipated from its condition of political decadence. Vittorio Alfieri, to mention just one exemplary name, harked back to Machiavelli's God and set it forth as an ideal of moral and political redemption. At the end of the eighteenth century, Italian Jacobins preferred the civil religion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau over Machiavelli's God: not a reinterpreted Christianity, but a completely new religion, with a new deity, new symbols, and new rites. It was an unfortunate choice that did great harm to the republics that sprang up in the wake of the French armies, and inhibited the turmoil of religious reformation.

After the decline of the Jacobin republics, Vincenzo Cuoco understood better than anyone else that Italy's greatest weakness was the lack of public spirit. He derived from Machiavelli the belief that Italy, in order to win a lasting liberty, must emancipate itself from the religion of idleness, find true religion, and with it the God that commands us to emulate the ancient virtues. In the same years, Ugo Foscolo quoted Machiavelli's words (the philosopher who was "undeservedly proscribed" by the Catholics) to explain that without a true religion, Italy would never become free, and that the only religion that could assist the laborious conquest of liberty would be a Christianity that had returned to its roots. Giacomo Leopardi came to a similar conclusion in his commentary on passages from Machiavelli, whom he saw as a great and tragic figure; the passages that he chose concerned the renewal of political bodies and religions through a return to first principles. If humanity is to avoid extinction, it must free itself from the corruption of civilization and return to its true nature, rediscover the ancient virtues and the love of the fatherland that flourished in the ancient republics filled with a religion that taught the populace to cherish the public interest and to seek true glory. The moral rebirth of the human race will not take place—if it ever occurs—through a return to paganism, but through a renewed Christianity that teaches the political virtue of antiquity.

The Italian Risorgimento, especially the sermons of Mazzini, went well beyond Machiavelli in the awareness that the political emancipation of a people demands faith in ideals and sacrifices. For Mazzini, the great

achievements of freedom were the product of a religious yearning to achieve moral ideals on earth and the interior elevation of the individual to a sense of duty. Mazzini, however, accepted the profound meaning of his intuitions on the subject of religion. Thanks to Mazzini, and the other apostles of the national unification, many of whom were sincere Christians, Italy's aptitude to bring back to life the dead things of the past, which Machiavelli wanted to believe was true, actually did become true in the Risorgimento, when a love of liberty and a love of the fatherland were both reborn. An aspiration to a moral and political *renovatio* that sank its roots in Italian humanism seemed, at least in part, to be coming true.

The most surprising—and even moving—chapter in the long account of the presence of Machiavelli's ideas on religion in Italian history, however, comes in the 1920s and 1930s, concomitant with the birth of that concept of the religion of liberty that assisted the finer consciences in their resistance during the years of the Fascist regime. Benedetto Croce, in his *History of Europe*, developed and popularized the concept; but Piero Gobetti had already rediscovered it, as he meditated on the words that Alfieri had written about Machiavelli. Gobetti sensed in Alfieri the presence of a religion based on Christ—a Christ, however, no longer considered as a teacher of humility, but rather as a creator of political liberty: a genuine civil religion that takes as its fundamental principles moral and political liberty. The prophet of the true religion of liberty was not, in Gobetti's view, the "peasant Luther," but rather Machiavelli, the Florentine citizen. Italy had need of this religion, and of a religious reformation that was not dogmatic but rather, essentially moral, in order to be reborn out of Fascist slavery.

In this book, I end the history of Machiavelli's impact on the aspirations for religious and moral reformation in Italy with the words that Luigi Russo wrote in 1945 in his book *Machiavelli*, dedicated to Nello Rosselli and Leone Ginzburg. Italian history, Russo wrote, has vindicated not the Machiavelli who writes coldly about the art of statesmanship, but rather the Machiavelli who writes with prophetic and religious pathos because he knows that "without prophetic pathos, without a moral renewal, without a civil conscience," republics can neither come into existence nor can they survive. I know full well that my account is incomplete, but I have decided to tell it all the same because it casts light on the true Italian evil: the low wickedness that springs out of an unhealthy religious education and long years of living in servitude. Machiavelli formulated an impeccable diagnosis of the disease and prescribed a remedy for it in a religious and moral renewal that might lead to a rediscovery of the principles of charity

and justice. His diagnosis remains just as valid as ever, and it shows Italy the way to become a people of truly free citizens.

2. *Machiavelli the Puritan*

Outside of Italy, there were many who clearly understood what Machiavelli wrote about religion. Fervent puritans rejected the idea that the Christian religion made men weak and proudly proclaimed the ideal of the soldier who fought in God's name and took strength from his faith.[15] Alexander Leighton (1568–1649) writes in his *Speculum belli sacri* (1624) that Moses was a great king, a great commander, and also a "servant of God," not only because of his authority and his loyalty, but also because of his piety. In order to triumph, it is not enough to have authority and a good cause; it is also necessary to be good. For that reason, Machiavelli's advice that the prince, or any great man, must attempt to appear religious rather than actually being religious, deserves to be condemned to hell, whence it certainly emerged. To make such a statement is tantamount to "to mock[ing] God" and to being hypocrites worthy of the sternest reprobation. Likewise, the idea that in soldiers pagan religion is preferable to true Christian religion can only be rejected as blasphemous. It is moreover counter to all reason to deny—as Machiavelli does—the power of the Christian religion. A soldier who knows that God is on his side will become magnanimous and courageous because he is convinced in his conscience that he will not lose his soul while fighting for his country, for the glory of God, and in the defense of his religion.[16] Equally stern in his condemnation of Machiavelli was Richard Bernard, another eloquent voice of the English puritan universe. Only those who have religion, Bernard explains, are willing to sacrifice their lives. Those who believe that God is on their side "will fight with their hands and pray with their heart"; they are courageous and ready to give their lives for a just cause, certain that death will open the gates of eternal life for them. It is therefore necessary not to allow the "Machiavellian Atheists" to mock God and to maintain that the Christian religion is incapable of training good soldiers.[17]

[15] See Mario Praz, *Machiavelli in Inghilterra*, Tumminelli, Rome 1943; Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation (1500–1700)*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1964.

[16] Alexander Leighton, *Speculum belli sacri: Or the Looking-glasse of the Holy War*, Amsterdam 1624, pp. 25–28.

[17] Richard Bernard, *The Bible-Battles, or The Sacred Art Military for the Rightly Waging of War According to the Holy Writ*, London 1629, pp. 79–80.

These puritans, clearly, were not familiar with the pages of the *Discourses on Livy* and *The Art of War* in which Machiavelli points out that, without religion, it is impossible to assemble armies that can fight courageously and respect th e rules of war. They also overlooked the fact that Machiavelli blamed the decline of military virtue not on the Christian religion per se, but on the Christian religion interpreted as a form of idleness. In any case, it is true that the puritan armies of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and Oliver Cromwell were "Protestant and national," rather than civil and classical. But it is equally true that the puritan warrior, who fights with the comfort and reassurance of the chaplain's sermons, singing sacred hymns as he marches into battle, is very similar to the citizen soldier that Machiavelli wanted to see in place of mercenaries. Machiavelli never imagined a soldier who fought to establish the rule of God on earth; but he did imagine, and attempted him self to forge, a Christian soldier who would fight for his fatherland, supported by his faith.[18]

Alongside the puritans who failed to realize that Machiavelli had actually laid the groundwork for the citi zen soldier who fights for his fatherland with the encouragement of religion, there were others who judged him to be a full-fledged puritan. James Harrington (1611–77), an eminent Christian and republican reformer, con siders Machiavelli to be the only modern political writer to have rediscovered the "ancient prudence" revealed to humanity "by God himself" in order to establish and preserve governments founded on the common interest and the rule of law.[19] Like the humanists of fifteenth-century Florence, Harrington believes that the republic is the kingdom of Christ and the true manifestation of divinity on earth.[20] In this context, he unites Machiavelli's ideas with Christian Providence and merges into a single concept the ideal of the good citizen derived from Roman political thought and the ideal of the good Christian,

[18] See in this connection, what Michael Walzer writes in *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study of the Origins of Radical Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1965, pp. 268–99, in particular pp. 289–90.

[19] James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* , in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, edited by John G.A. Pocock, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1977, pp. 161, 178.

[20] "Now if you add unto the propagation of civil liberty, what is so natural unto this commonwealth that it cannot be omitted, the propagation of the liberty of conscience, this empire, this patronage of the world, is the kingdom of Christ. For as the kingdom of God the Father was a commonwealth, so shall be the kingdom of God the Son; *the people shall be willing in the day of his power* "; Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* , in *The Political Works of James Harrington,* p. 332, italics in original. John Pocock writes that Harrington, to whom the adjective "messianist or millennial" is well suited, comes close to asserting a political heresy according to which civil virtue "is identified with the condition of salvation and the *vivere civile* with the *civitas Dei*"; ibid., p. 70.

taken from the Bible.[21] He considers Machiavelli to be a thinker who follows in the footsteps of Moses [22] and judges the words of *The Art of War* in which Machiavelli explains the importance of religion in raising good armies to be a "goodly sermon."[23] These ideas of Harrington's attracted the sarcasm of Richard Baxter, who accused him of making Machiavelli into a puritan.[24] There is no question that Niccolò was no puritan, at least not in the narrowest sense of the term. And yet the fact remains that for a republican and puritan thinker like Harrington, Machiavelli was one, and not only because of his political ideas, but also because of his ideas about the Christian religion.

The impact that Machiavelli's ideas on religion had on the political thinking of the English republicans is even more evident in the case of Henry Neville, who published in 1675 an English edition of Machiavelli's works. He added, as a sort of foreword, a clearly apocryphal letter from Machiavelli to Zanobi Buondelmonti, dated 1 April 1537.[25] The letter is a truly exemplary document of how an English puritan interpreted Machiavelli's religious thought. In this text, "Machiavelli" declares that democracy, founded on good orders, is the best and most excellent form of government, and that anyone who reads carefully the historical accounts of the Old Testament will find that God himself established only one kind of government for men, and that th is government was the republic. [26] He

[21] Mark Goldie, "The Civil Religion of James Harrington," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, edited by Anthony Pagden, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, pp. 197–222, 109, and 203. See also *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, edited by Perez Zagorin, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1980.

[22] "We have the books of Moses, those of the Greeks and of the Romans, not to omit Machiavel, all for it," James Harrington, "The Prerogative of Popular Government," in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, pp. 391–93. "The puritans of the 1650s," writes Blair Worden, "were, moreover, like Harrington, as deeply imbued with classical republican ideas as with Hebraic and Apocalyptic ones, with Machiavelli as well as Moses," Blair Worden, "Classical Republicanism and the Puritan Revolution," in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H.R. Trevor Roper*, edited by Hugh Lloyd Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden, Duckworth, London 1981.

[23] Harrington, "The Prerogative of Popular Government," in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, pp. 444–45.

[24] "I know Mr. *Harrington* is here *involved* (as he speaks) by *Machiavel*. No wonder. But if *Machiavel* be become a *Puritan* to *him*, what is Mr. *Harrington* to *us?*" Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth*, London 1659, p. 235.

[25] For the influence of the *Lettera di Machiavelli*, see Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, pp. 219–20. Also see *Two English Republican Tracts*, edited by Caroline Robbins, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1969, p. 15.

[26] Nicholas Machiavel's *LETTER to Zanobius Buondelmontius in VINDICATION Of Himself and His WRITINGS*. From *The WORKS of the Famous Nicolas Machiavel, Citizen and Secretary of FLORENCE. Written Originally in ITALIAN, and from thence Newly and*

defends himself from the charges that he is an irreligious man and proclaims that he has lived as a good Christian, and that as such, he was an enemy of the papacy that completely disfigured the Christian religion, ultimately rendering it entirely worldly and atheist, corrupting the governments of Europe, and destroying all the good principles and the morality that it had inherited from the pagans.[27] He hopes that one day God will decide to inspire the princes of Christendom to strike down the power of the priests, restore the original Christian faith, and bring about the rebirth of true humanity and a true civil community.[28]

"Machiavelli" proclaims that God sent his son into the world to teach us a new truth, "to restore true Religion," "regenerate our Hearts," and show us examples of virtue, goodness, and obedience. He does not claim to be a theologian, and he admits that his real interest is politics; but he states confidently that Christ taught that his kingdom is not of this world, and that his greatest disciples must be—not powerful men—but humble servants. He boasts that he had foreseen the scourge that struck the church in the form of the Reformation, and proclaims what was also the real Machiavelli's true credo, that is, that men who act well gain "immortal honor in this life, and eternal glory." And even though he thinks of himself as a Christian, last of all, he defends the holiness and the worth of the pagans, paragons of "good policy" and dedicated supporters of the principle that the pursuit of virtue is crowned with honor on earth and glory in heaven. Neville insisted on the portrayal of Machiavelli as a puritan in his *Plato redivivus* (1681) as well, in which he presents him as the finest and most honest of modern political writers, a victim of priests and know-nothings, a champion of the idea that the Christian religion cannot be imposed with the force of law, but only taught in words and practiced with a pure heart.[29] He ends the treatise with a motto that is the most complete synthesis of

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Faithfully Translated into ENGLISH, printed for John Starkey at the Miter in Fleetstreet, near Temple-Bar, London 1675.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "I am charged then, in the second place, with impiety, in vilifying the Church, and so to make way for Atheism. I do not deny but that I have very frequently in my Writings, laid the blame upon the Church of Rome, not only for all the misgovernment of Christendom; but even for the depravation and almost total destruction of Christian Religion it self in this Province; but that this discourse of mine doth, or can tend to teach men impiety; or to make way for Atheism, I peremptorily deny: and although for proof of my innocence herein, I need but refer you and all others to my Papers themselves, as they are now published," Ibid.

[29] Henry Neville, "Plato Redivivus," in *Two English Republican Tracts*, pp. 168 and 154–55. Neville also quotes "the divine Machiavel" in reference to the analogy between the ills of political bodies and the ills of natural bodies; ibid., p. 81.

Machiavelli's thinking on religion: "Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia" ("No heavenly powers will lack where wisdom is").[30]

Another major republican political writer, Walter Moyle (1672–1721), developed Machiavelli's ideas on the religion of the Romans in his *Essay upon the Constitution of the Roman Government* (ca. 1699). He describes Numa's achievement as an improvement on Romulus's institutions and singles him out as an example of the methods of all great lawgivers who, in order to win the people's credence and ensure their obedience to the laws, pretend to speak through divine inspiration. He emphasized that Numa's religion was in Rome "the foundation of justice, of love of country, and the valor of the armies."[31] He praises Machiavelli for deriving from Cicero the principle that republics cannot survive unless they are frequently renewed by their magistrates, either by reviving the fear and reverence of the laws, or by restoring the ancient virtue and discipline, and by a reformation of those corruptions and disorders brought about by bad government and the depravity of human nature.[32]

In the same year that Moyle wrote his *Essay*, Algernon Sidney (1623–83) published his *Discourses concerning Government*, in London. In that book he criticized Machiavelli's idea about the reformation of political constitutions through a return to original principles. The political writers who have supported this idea, Sidney comments, should first of all examine whether the principles in question are good or bad. Since no political constitution is so perfect that it is in no need of change, the argument that the only salutary changes are those which restore political bodies back to their origins would oblige humanity to remain a prisoner of the errors of past generations and renounce the benefits of wisdom, industry, experience, and the proper use of reason.[33] Despite these criticisms, Sidney follows in

[30] Neville also adds the English translation: "If prudence be present, no divine power is absent," ibid., p. 200.

[31] Walter Moyle, "An Essay upon the Constitution of the Roman Government," in *Two English Republican Tracts*, pp. 210–13.

[32] "Cicero, and from him Machiavel, and other modern writers of politics lay down for a certain maxim, that commonweal ths cannot subsist, unless they are frequently renewed by their magistrates, either by reviving the revere nce and terror of the laws, or by restoring the ancient virtue and discipline, or by a thoroughreformation of those corruptions and disorders, which length of time, a loose administration, and the depravity of human nature will introduce into the soundest and firmest constitutions of government. This Machiavel styles resuming the commonwealth and reducing it to its first principles, of which there are many memorable instances in the rise of popular government," ibid., pp. 253–54 and 259.

[33] Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, edited by Thomas G. West, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis 1996, p. 462. In the opinion of Alan C. Houston, Sidney dedicates no attention to the Machiavellian idea of civil religion. See Alan C. Houston, *Algernon Sidney and*

Machiavelli's footsteps in reinforcing the religious content of republicanism. Machiavelli, Sidney notes, believed that a man endowed with reason could never wish to be Caesar rather than Scipio, or to imitate the deeds of such bad princes as Nabis, Phalaris, and Dionysius, rather than those of good princes, such as Agesilaus, Timoleon, or Dion.

He adds that history shows us many instances of knowledgeable men of good judgment falling into the error of imitating bad princes instead of good princes, to their infinite harm and disgrace. A good prince, who rules with justice and clemency, can obtain satisfaction for his soul, count on "the blessing of God" on his just and virtuous deeds, and obtain the love and praise of his fellow men, living safely and happily among safe and happy subjects; the bad prince who falls into barbarity, evil, and tyranny draws on himself "the displeasure of God" and the hatred of his fellow men.[34] Machiavelli in the *Discourses on Livy* speaks of neither the blessing nor the displeasure of God. With this addition, Sidney not only reiterates that tyranny is hateful to God and that the good prince is a friend to God, but he also arrays Machiavelli among the supporters of a republican Christianity.

Sidney adopts a similar procedure when he defends the principle, which Machiavelli had set forth with particular authority and efficacy, that the virtue and the power of the Romans began and ended with their liberty. He points out that it is ridiculous to attribute to fortune, which is inconstant and capricious, the remarkable greatness that the Romans achieved in the period of just over three hundred years that followed their conquest of liberty from their kings. That greatness was the result not only of virtue, as Machiavelli had written, but also—and this idea does not appear in Machiavelli—of a secret design by God. When God wishes to help a people, he endows it with extraordinary virtue, and when he wishes to destroy a people he strips it of virtue and wisdom.[35] In another chapter, he first quotes Augustine in order to reiterate that God does not fail to reward men who act well, and then quotes Machiavelli to explain that virtue is necessary to win and keep liberty.[36] In this fundamental work of seventeenth-century republican political thought, Machiavelli therefore emerges as a proponent of a religion that is on the side of republican liberty.

A similar contrast in the interpretations of Machiavelli's religious ideas also developed within Dutch political thought. Like their English counter-

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the Republican Heritage in England and America, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1991, p. 165.

[34] Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, p. 283.

[35] Ibid., pp. 144–45.

[36] Ibid., pp. 134–35.

parts, the Protestants of the United Provinces accused Machiavelli of using religion for political ends. An anonymous author of political pamphlets wrote that Machiavelli, following the ideas of the pagan Polybius, theorized that religion was a form of sacred fraud. Another author lambasted him for having actually advised the rulers of the Republic of Holland not to respect the official state religion and instead to allow other religious cults, to the great detriment of civil peace. In the translation of the *Discourses on Livy* that was published in 1704, we read, instead, that Machiavelli was a god-fearing man. Without waiting for the new edition, Pieter de la Court, one of the most influential figures of republicanism, had borrowed freely from Machiavelli's ideas on religion and on the relationship between the Catholic Church and everyday morality in his *Politike Discoursen* (1662). To the anonymous author of *Machiavel républicain*, published in Amsterdam in 1741, lastly, the Florentine Secretary was not irreligious at all, and his ideas deserved full support for his correct criticism of the corruption of the church of Rome.[37]

In Holland, too, the men who advocated political and religious liberty sensed an affinity of beliefs in the pages of Machiavelli. It is true that Machiavelli never theorized religious freedom, but read the Bible on his own and was convinced that he read it intelligently. Moreover, he was a determined defender of the full right to free speech in public assemblies and scorned the claims of the church to teach religion with the sword.[38] For that matter, one of Machiavelli's closest readers in Holland was none other than Baruch Spinoza, the great theorist of religious freedom. In his *Tractatus politicus* (*Political Treatise*), which was first published in the *Opus Posthumus* (1677), Spinoza praised Machiavelli as a "most ingenious" and "far-seeing" man who had written on political matters with much better results than the philosophers,[39] especially those who "conceive of men, not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be; Whence it has come to pass that, instead of ethics, they have generally written satire, and

[37] Eco Haitsma Mulier, "A Controversial Republican: Dutch Views on Machiavelli in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, edited by Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, pp. 248–263. Present in Dutch republican thought is the idea, which we also find in Savonarola, that monarchy is an enemy to Christ, and that only a free republic is Christian; see *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland Written by John De Witt and Other Great Men in Holland*, London 1702, pp. 6, 39–40, 58–65, 377–88, 482–83.

[38] Martin van Gelderen differs, see "The Machiavellian Moment and the Dutch Revolt," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, p. 218.

[39] Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus politicus*, V.7 and I.2. Spinoza read Machiavelli in Italian. See in this connection the excellent study by Vittorio Morfino, *Il tempo e l'occasione. L'incontro Spinoza Machiavelli*, LED, Milan 2002, p. 21.

that they have never conceived a theory of politics, which could be turned to use, but such as might be taken for a chimera, or might have been formed in Utopia, or in that golden age of the poets when, to be sure, there was least need of it."[40] In his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (*Theologico-political Treatise*), published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1670, Spinoza summarized in a passage on Moses Machiavelli's idea of the lawgiver as a man who, thanks to his extraordinary virtue, brings to the state the religion that arouses in men a sense of duty, encourages good morals, and gives bravery to the soldiery.[41]

In the same years, French freethinkers set up an image of Machiavelli as an atheist and a radical critic of religious superstition. The anonymous author of the *Theophrastus redivivus* (1659), an emblematic work of seventeenth-century atheistic and materialist thought, describes Machiavelli as the thinker who denounced Moses and Christ as impostors who used fakery to pass themselves off as gods, and who showed that all lawgiver princes are frauds and impostors ("deceptores et simulatores"), and that religion was nothing more than a gimmick and deception in the pursuit of power.[42] With an ingenious interpolation between two passages of chapter 12 of the *Discourses on Livy*, the author attributes to Machiavelli the idea that all religions take their authority and their force from some stratagem, and that their foundations lie in a superstitious faith in oracles, fortune-tellers, and haruspices.[43]

The *Treatise of the Three Impostors: The Life and Spirit of Master Benedict de Spinosa* (*Traité des trois imposteurs*), one of the most important clandestine texts of the late seventeenth century, also takes its inspiration, directly or indirectly, from Machiavelli when it claims that "all ancient legislators, wishing to reinforce, consolidate, and establish good foundations for the laws that they were giving to their peoples, were unable to come up with anything better than to render public and claim, with all the skills they possessed, that they had received them directly from some deity or other."[44] It then goes on to quote explicitly from Machiavelli to illustrate, with the example of Savonarola, that lawgivers claim to be inspired by God, and it notes that force is needed to found a new religion. In reality, Machiavelli

[40] Spinoza, *Tractatus politicus*, I.1.

[41] Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, V.

[42] Tullio Gregory, *Theophrastus redivivus. Erudizione e ateismo nel Seicento*, Morano, Naples 1979, p. 201.

[43] Ibid., pp. 199 and 208, in particular, see the Appendix with the quotes from Machiavelli.

[44] *Trattato dei tre impostori. La vita e lo spirito del Signor Benedetto de Spinoza* [*Traité des trois imposteurs* or *Treatise of the Three Impostors: The Life and Spirit of Master Benedetto de Spinosa*], edited by Silvia Berti, Einaudi, Turin 1994, chap. 17.

had stated that force is needed to found political orders, not to found a new religion. The most evident deformation, also found in other texts by freethinkers, is the fact that, while the *Traité des trois imposteurs* considers the founders of religions to be so many deceivers who exploit the ignorance of the people, Machiavelli places them among men worthy of the highest praise.[45]

Much closer to Machiavelli's thought are the considerations concerning religion that Montesquieu sets forth in the *Spirit of the Laws*. Montesquieu explains with clear reference to Machiavelli (whom he calls a "great man") that "most of the ancients lived under governments that had virtue for their principle," and their religion imposed no conflict between duties to the fatherland and duties toward the gods.[46] In contrast with the ideas of Pierre Bayle, who claimed that Christianity is not suited to preserve a republic because it takes into consideration only the afterlife, Montesquieu writes that "[true Christians] being infinitely enlightened with respect to the various duties of life, and having the warmest zeal to fulfil them, must be perfectly sensible of the rights of natural defence. The more they believe themselves indebted to religion, the more they would think due to their country. The principles of Christianity, deeply engraved on the heart, would be infinitely more powerful than the false honour of monarchies, than the humane virtues of republics, or the servile fear of despotic states."[47] There is nothing more absurd than to call for peoples or princes without religion.[48] What is in contrast with the republican spirit, Montesquieu concludes, in full agreement with Machiavelli, is the Catholic religion, not the Christian religion, especially the religion of the Reformation.[49]

[45] Concerning the relationship between Machiavelli and seventeenth-century libertinism, see Lorenzo Bianchi, *Rinascimento e libertinismo. Studi su Gabriel Naudé*, Bibliopolis, Naples 1996, in particular, pp. 33 and 122–26, where the author points out that both in the *Theophrastus redivivus* and in the *Considérations politiques* Naudé uses Machiavelli to support an interpretation of religion as a pure instrument of power. See also the *Trattato dei tre impostori* [*Traité des trois imposteurs* or *Treatise of the Three Impostors*], in particular chapters 16 and 17, where there is a clear appreciation of Machiavelli, and Giorgio Spini, *Ricerca dei libertini. La teoria dell'impostura delle religioni nel Seicento italiano*, Editrice "Universale di Roma," Florence 1950, p. 171.

[46] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, VI.5 and IV.4, in *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Roger Caillois, Gallimard, Paris 1951.

[47] Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, XXIV.6.

[48] Ibid., XXIV.2.

[49] Ibid., XXIV.5. See also the entry *Christianisme* in the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences des Arts et de Métiers*, vol. III, facsimile ed. 1751–1780, Fromann Verlag, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1966, pp. 384–86.

The other great work of eighteenth-century republican political thought, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, also borrows from Machiavelli's ideas that religion and republican liberty are necessarily linked, but it extends them in the opposite direction from that taken by Montesquieu. Rousseau recognizes that the true lawgiver must put the rules of civil life into God's mouth "in order to constrain by divine authority those whom human prudence could not move" and reiterates that only great-hearted men can persuade their listeners that they have been inspired by God and thus establish lasting laws. Yet he eliminates the Machiavellian distinction between the Christian religion interpreted according to idleness and the Christian religion interpreted according to virtue, and he formulates a condemnation that admits neither appeal nor review: "So far from binding the hearts of the citizens to the State," the Christian religion "has the effect of taking them away from all earthly things. I know of nothing more contrary to the social spirit." Christianity, Rousseau concludes, "preaches only servitude and dependence. Its spirit is so favourable to tyranny that it always profits by such a régime. True Christians are made to be slaves, and they know it and do not much mind: this short life counts for too little in their eyes."[50] With perfect consistency, Rousseau concludes that the religion of the republic must be an entirely new religion, a civil religion based not on dogmas, but on sentiments of sociability to be instituted not with the force of words, but by the force of laws.

3. *Machiavelli's Prophecy*

The patriots who founded the republic of the United States were followers of Montesquieu rather than Rousseau. Instead of attempting to invent and popularize a new religion, they interpreted and taught Christianity as a religion of virtue. To certain American writers, in the years of the republic's founding, Machiavelli was a figure of considerable importance because of the pages he wrote about republican liberty, and especially because of his doctrine of the renewal of constitutions through a return to fundamental principles.[51] Nathaniel Chipman (1752–1843), for instance, praised

[50] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social* [*Social Contract*], in *Œuvres Complètes*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, Gallimard, Paris 1964, vol. III, pp. 456–66.

[51] Concerning the issue of religious devotion for the classical political authors, see Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1969, p. 50; Eric Cochrane, *Machiavelli in America*, in *Il pensiero politico di Machiavelli e la sua fortuna nel mondo*, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Florence 1972, pp. 133–50. See also Giorgio Spini, "Sulla storiografia puritana nella Nuova Inghilterra," in

Machiavelli for having theorized a plan of reform that would allow "the people to return periodically and peaceably to fundamental principles."[52] Joseph Perry, pastor of the First Church of Christ, explained in a sermon to the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut (11 May 1775), that Machiavelli and Sidney both taught that all constitutions are subject to corruption and death, unless they are renewed "by reducing them to their first principles."[53]

When the patriots began to explore the problem of educating the Americans to civic virtues, they found a solid foundation in the religion that the pastors preached and practiced. That religion was a Christianity that taught its adherents to love liberty, to strengthen civic virtues, and to cultivate a love for the fatherland. Samuel Kendall (1753–1814), for instance, held that religion, and the moral and social virtues that derive from it, are, under God, "the life and the security of a free people."[54] Since the Creator established that men must live under a civil government, any government that has ends that diverge from the public good or the common interest fails to comply with the design of Heaven and does not deserve the respect of men. Religious faith fosters the morality necessary for the good order and best interests of society, and is therefore the basic foundation of good government. That is why the wise men of antiquity inculcated in the people a reverence for the gods and always considered it a grave error to undermine the power of religion, even though many of them knew that what were being venerated were not real gods. The most eloquent example, Kendall notes, is that of the Romans, for whom oaths were the true safeguard of duty. Christianity not only offers a clear vision of one's duties, but also

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Rivista storica italiana 72 (1960), pp. 415–44; Spini, "Riforma italiana e mediazioni ginevrine nella Nuova Inghilterra puritana," in *Ginevra e l'Italia*, edited by Delio Cantimori, Sansoni, Florence 1959.

[52] Nathaniel Chipman, *Sketches of the Principles of Government*, Rutland, VT 1793, pp. 289–90 and 291–92.

[53] Joseph Perry, *A Sermon Preached before the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut at Hartford*, printed by Eben. Watson, Near the Great Bridge, Hartford 1775. For a reference to Machiavelli as the teacher of free states and free peoples, see "The Tribune," I (1766), p. 94; and concerning Machiavelli as the theorist of the reform of constitutions through a return to original principles, see Anonymous, *Four Letters on Interesting Subjects*, ibid., p. 389.

[54] Samuel Kendall, "Religion the Only Sure Basis of Free Government" (Boston 1804), in *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760–1805*, 2 vols., edited by Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz, Liberty Press, Indianapolis 1983, vol. 2, p. 1243. In the rhetoric of the American patriots, we find both the idea of God who wishes the liberty of the peoples, and the idea that the rulers are deputy regents for God and that they must imitate his perfection and defend America as the refuge of liberty. See *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760-1805*, pp. 257–80 and 562–63. See in this connection Maria Teresa Picchetto, "La 'Respublica Hebraeorum' nella Rivoluzione Americana," *Il Pensiero Politico* 35 (2002), pp. 481–500; and Tiziano Bonazzi, *Il sacro esperimento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1970.

provides strong motivations to adhere to virtues; it presents our liberty and our happiness as the subjects of divine concern, it exhibits extraordinary examples of benevolence, it prohibits the indulgence in selfish passions and admonishes that honoring men is tantamount to dishonoring God.[55]

Phillips Payson, in a sermon from 1778, stated in his turn that alongside the liberty in the heavenly Jerusalem, there is the liberty that the sons of God, heirs to his glory, possess in this life when they free themselves from the slavery of corruption and from the tyranny of bad passions. Religious or spiritual liberty is the greatest form of happiness that man can enjoy in the private sphere, but we must also consider civil liberty as "the greatest of all human blessings." Both the voice of reason and the voice of God teach that the goal of civil government is the public good. A free, just government derives from the people, and a republican government is one that better than any other defends the rights and the liberties of individuals and achieves the public interest.[56] Love of country, or public virtue, is an indispensable support of good government and liberty.[57] Equally important, Payson emphasizes, is religion, because it preserves the feeling of moral obligation and gives value to oaths, an indispensable instrument of government. The fear of God acts as a powerful brake on the minds of men, and religious worship educates the manners and customs of the people. The corruption of worship, especially when it drives worshippers away from the original simplicity of the Gospel, inevitably entails grave consequences for a free government. For that reason, the wisest men advise us to consider with respect religious cults and to take care lest they be corrupted.[58] The duty of a Christian, Tunis Wortman admonished in a sermon in 1800, is to defend the integrity and independence of the church, keep religion separate from politics, prevent the unification of church and state; but also to defend liberty and the constitution: "You have a religion which deserves your pious solicitude; but need I to remind you that you likewise have a country!" The duties of a good Christian are in no way in contrast with the sacred duties of a citizen. Religion is of inestimable worth and deserves great care; but the civil constitution is also invaluable: "Your obligations to your children, to your country, and to heaven, command you to defend that constitution." With equal force, the speaker concludes, you must protect both your faith and your liberty.[59]

[55] Kendall, *Religion the Only Sure Basis of Free Government*, pp. 1244–48.
[56] Phillips Payson, *A Sermon* (Boston 1778), in *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760-1805* vol. 1, p. 524.
[57] Ibid., p. 528.
[58] Ibid., p. 529.
[59] Tunis Wortman, "A Solemn Address, to True Christians and Patriots, upon the Approaching Election of a President of the United States" (New York, 1800), in *Political Sermons of the*

Richard Price, last of all, in a speech that he delivered in London on the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, explains that Christ did not exhort the love of country because in his day that would have caused more harm than good. His words would have driven the Jews to insurrection and made the Romans even fiercer in their opposition to the peace and happiness of mankind. By preaching love for all men and the virtue of charity, Christ and the apostles achieved much more, and established a genuine "Religion of Benevolence," different from all other religions.[60] With his example, Christ nonetheless taught that he loved his Jerusalem with a special fondness, even if it was an ungrateful homeland. In one of his last trips to Jerusalem, Christ wept for the city: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Luke 19: 42). Jerusalem rejected Christ's love, but he responded with words of sadness: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13: 34). St. Paul went so far as to say that, for the love of his compatriots, he would be willing to be "accursed from Christ," that is, he would be happy to suffer the calamities that were about to strike the Jews, if his sacrifice would help to save them (Rom. 9: 3). The fatherland, Price concludes, needs our service to defend our common liberty and to protect our interests. But even if all our efforts were in vain, we would still have the satisfaction of our consciences and we could foster the hope that we might soon become citizens of the heavenly fatherland.[61]

This survey, however summary it may be, shows us that the religion that helped the Americans to found and preserve their republic was, in the final analysis, quite similar to the religion that developed four centuries earlier in Florence, a religion that Machiavelli helped to preserve and hand down to later republican political thinkers. Did that religion not proclaim that a good Christian must be a good citizen and love his earthly fatherland with all his might, in order to prepare himself for the heavenly fatherland? That God loves free republics and that he was a friend to those who govern in the public interest? That it is the citizen's duty to cultivate the moral strength that will allow him to defend liberty effectively? Even though they did not derive it directly from Machiavelli, the religion of the Americans was the very religion that Machiavelli would have most liked

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American Founding Era, 1730–1805, edited by Ellis Sandoz, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis 1990, pp. 1482–84.

[60] Richard Price, "A Discourse on the Love of Our Country" (4 November 1789), in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era 1730–1805*, p. 1011.

[61] Ibid., pp. 125–27.

to see flourish, taking the place of the corrupt Catholic religion that led souls away from virtue and, thus, made the foundation of free republics impossible.

We find no trace of any of this in John G. A. Pocock's monumental reconstruction, though it may fairly be given credit for having documented the links between Florentine republicanism and Anglo-Saxon republicanism.[62] We find no trace because Pocock believes that the Aristotelian ideal of the citizen that was reborn in Florence in the early modern age set itself "in a paradoxical, though not explicitly contentious, relationship with the Christian assertion that man is *homo religiosus*, formed to live in a transcendent and eternal communion, dubbed however with a sinisterly political name: *civitas Dei*."[63] The ancient ideal of *homo politicus*, Pocock explains, asserts its nature and its virtue through political action; the human type that is closest to it is *homo rhetor*, while the most antithetical human type is *homo credens*.[64] Working from these assumptions, Pocock states that for Machiavelli "the civil goals of political life (including the virtue of political participation) no longer have anything to do with the ultimate aims of otherworldly redemption."

In Pocock's view, this is the most subversive idea set forth by the *Discourses on Livy*, even more subversive than the ideas of *The Prince*. He believes that for Machiavelli "Christian virtues and civil virtues could never meet," with the consequence that "the implications of civil life are progressively resolved in a pagan, secular direction, entirely within the temporal dimension. In other words, civil life is best implemented where there is no such religion as Christianity, but only the practice of oracular fortune-telling, and where there are no transcendent values conflicting with the values of life on earth."[65] The truth is, instead, that Machiavelli wrote very clearly that the Christian God loves those redeemers who possess virtue and is their friend, and he stated with equal clarity that civil life prospers most where there is true Christianity, the one that is closest to authentic Christianity. In contrast with what Pocock claims, civil humanism and Machiavelli proclaimed that there is no conflict between the citizen and the Christian believer, and that if you are a true Christian you must be a good citizen.

Because of this error in interpretation, Pocock failed to see that the strongest ideological and historical link between Florentine political thought

[62] John G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1975.
[63] Ibid., p. 462.
[64] Ibid., p. 530.
[65] Ibid., pp. 193–94 and 213–14.

and the Atlantic tradition is the republican religion. Sheldon Wolin, instead, did notice it, and in his study of Alexis de Tocqueville he points out that American Christianity can be considered "a Machiavellian civil religion."[66] The religion that Tocqueville observed in America set forth rigorously republican and democratic principles, and had succeeded in instilling in the souls of the citizens the belief that Christianity and liberty are inseparable and that a true Christian loves his fatherland.[67] Separate from political power, the religion of the Americans was capable of educating the morals of the people and moderating the most dangerous passions. And it exhorted its followers to consider the commitment to the common interest and for the liberty of all peoples as a religious duty. For these reasons, the religion that developed on American soil played an essential role in republican life.[68] It was precisely the religion that Machiavelli had hoped to see blossom in Italy, at least in its moral and civil content. Without intending to, and through the power of his imagination, Machiavelli had formulated, not a hope, but a prophecy.

As Hannah Arendt rightly notes, Machiavelli's republican Christianity is an essential component of the theory of political revolution that inspired the birth of modern republics. In her view, Machiavelli is "the spiritual father of revolution in the modern sense" because he possesses "that conscious and passionate yearning to revive the spirit and the institution of Roman antiquity which later became so characteristic of the political thought of the eighteenth century."[69] The protagonists of the revolutionary experiments justified and supported revolution as a return to the true principles of the political community. Great modern revolutions originated as "restorations or renewals" in the Machiavellian meaning of renovations that return the body politic to its origins and thus save it from corruption and death.

In the thought of the founders of the American republic, Hannah Arendt has pointed out, Machiavelli's idea of the rebirth of the ideals and virtues of antiquity had a very powerful influence: "From a historical point of view, it was as if the rebirth of antiquity that had taken place during the Renaissance, and had come to a sudden end with the advent of the modern age, had suddenly found a new lease on life; as if the republican fervor of the Italian city-states in their brief existence—already condemned, as

[66] Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001, pp. 297–98.

[67] Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amerique*, Gallimard, Paris 1951, vol. I, p. 31: "Puritanism was not merely a religious doctrine, but corresponded in many points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories." English transl. from *Democracy in America*, Knopf, New York 1945, vol. 1, p. 32.

[68] Ibid., pp. 304–308.

[69] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Viking Press, New York, 1963, pp. 30–32.

Machiavelli knew full well, by the advent of the nation-state—had only been sleeping, so that it could give the nations of Europe the time to grow, as it were, under the tutelage of absolute monarchs and enlightened despots.[70]

The men of the revolutions turned to classical antiquity for inspiration and guidance, and took as their model "the Roman republic and the grandeur of its history." The success of America was determined at the very moment that the Constitution began to be venerated.[71] Machiavelli therefore contributed to revolutionary theory precisely with his thoughts on the role of religion in the foundation of new political orders. The birth of a new political order, demands, alongside violence, religion; alongside power, authority: the force of arms and the force of words. "Machiavelli," wrote Hannah Arendt, "the sworn enemy of religious considerations in political affairs, was driven to ask for divine assistance and even inspiration in legislators—just like the 'enlightened' men of the eighteenth century, John Adams and Robespierre for example." [72] Among those enlightened men who were the political and intellectual leaders of the democratic revolutions, it was in any case the founding fathers of the American Revolution who made the best use of Machiavelli's intuition that the Christian religion, and not a new religion, invented out of whole cloth, was especially necessary for a sovereign people.

The history of republicanism should be reconsidered, in order to give to the religious theme the import ance that it had historically. [73] It is entirely legitimate to theorize the republican idea of liberty as liberty from domination, without mentioning that many important republican political writers considered political liberty a gift from God, and the duty to defend it a religious duty.[74] But only an incomplete interpretation would fail to cast light on one of the essential aspects of republican political thought, and Machiavelli's thought in particular, thus transforming republicanism into a theory poorly suited to teach the true way of conquering and preserving liberty.

[70] Ibid., p. 197.
[71] Ibid., p. 203.
[72] Ibid., p. 32.
[73] Another writer who deplores the scanty attention paid by scholars to the religious dimension of republicanism is Jonathan Scott, "C lassical Republicanism in Seventeenth-Century England and the Netherlands," in*Republicanism, a Shared European Heritage*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, vol. 1, p. 61. In the same book, two other studies focus on the theme of religion within the context of republicanism: Lea Campos Boralevi, *De Republica Hebraeorum* (*The Jewish Commonwealth*), vol. 1, pp. 247–61; and Simone Zurbuchen,"Republicanism and Toleration," vol. 2, pp. 47–72.
[74] See the essay, by Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* , Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998.