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THE ISSUE OF OBEDIENCE IN THE ANGLICAN THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN THE MID 1629S

SUMMARY. The idea of obedience emerged full blown for the Anglican theological thought after the Reformation. This problem came under discussion again in the 1620s, when the royal power tried to collect non-legitimate in the eyes of many subjects forced loans. In 1627 a number of noblemen refused to dip into their purses and were imprisoned. It resulted in the famous Five Knights' case, the parliament debates in 1628 which contributed to the enactment of the Petition of Right. In late September of 1626 Charles I sent a letter to his bishops urging them to appeal from their pulpits to the parish with a request to "help and support protection of the royalty" by their personal means. Coming into political force, a leader of the Arminian wing Bishop of Bath and Wells William Laud addressed an instruction to the clergy which demanded to "remind subjects about their duty of obedience".

This article studies four sermons: the first was called "Apostolic Obedience" and was preached by Robert Sibthorpe on the 22nd of February, 1627 in Northampton; the second, simply called "The Sermon", belonged to the king's chaplain, Dean of Canterbury Isaac Bargrave and was delivered before the monarch on the 27th of March, 1627. The two sermons under the common name "Religion and Allegiance" were preached before Charles I by the king's chaplain Roger Maynwaring: the first one on the 4th of July 1627 at the king's palace at Oatlands Surrey, the other on the 29th of July at Alderton Suffolk. To increase the effect, all the sermons were published by the order of His Majesty. The Anglican clergy were interested in the issue of obedience and interpreted it according to the expectations of the Crown; namely as the most important religious principle and the foundation of the established order. The Anglican Church considered a king to be the Vicar of God on earth, thus disobedience to the king was considered as a rebellion to Christ Himself, i.e. an attempt to destroy a hierarchical community settled by Him.

The sermons show that the Anglican clergy was close to ranking obedience to the monarch higher than obedience to law or tradition. Some of them believed that a king's mission to support the order gave him a right to set and collect monetary contributions from his subjects to his own discretion. Nonetheless, the others regarded such claims as an intolerable attempt to broaden the limits of royal prerogative and as aggression upon ancient liberties of subjects.

KEY WORDS. Obedience, preachers, England, the Stuarts, order, sermon.

The idea of obedience and submission to authority is an important element of Christian discourse. The power tended to reiterate the issue at those crucial times when faced with criticism of its policy or even open resistance. In Europe, the issue of obedience was emphasized in the middle of the 15th century by Gabriel Biel, a leader of "The Brethren of the Common Life" and a precursor of the German Reformation, in his treatise "In Defense of Apostolic Obedience" (1462). Many of the Reformers had to turn to it, shattering the foundations of the church and destroying the unity of Christendom [1; 143-144, 159-192].

The idea of obedience to the royal power had always been discussed in the Anglican Church and in the political circles of Pre-revolutionary England. In 1606 (after the Gunpowder Plot), all Catholics were required by the Crown to take the so-called Oath of Allegiance, also known as the "oath of obedience" [2; 75-123]. After the Reformation in England at the beginning of the 16th century and after proclaiming a monarch the head of the church, the Crown used pulpits as an important tool to propagate its ideas. A surge of such propaganda occurred in 1627, as the year before the Privy Council had started collected a "forced loan" to cover military expenses in the war with France. A lot of subjects believed the loan was illegitimate [3; 48].

Many interpreted it as imposing a direct tax by the monarchy without consent of the Parliament, which obviously violated the common law traditions and principles. In 1627 quite a few noblemen refused to dip into their purses and were imprisoned. It resulted in the famous Five Knights' case, the parliament debates in 1628 which contributed to the enactment of the Petition of Right. [4; 153-176].

At the end of September 1626, Charles I sent a letter to his bishops urging them to appeal from their pulpits to the parish with a request to "help and support protection of the royalty" by their personal means [5; 358-359]. Coming into political force, a leader of the Arminian wing bishop of Bath and Wells William Laud addressed an instruction to the clergy which demanded to "remind subjects about their duty of obedience" [3; 62]. The exhortations were immediately followed by sermons, some of which were promptly published. All sermons abounded with biblical examples, reminiscences and allusions, as well as references to prominent leaders of Christianity and the Reformation. Such preaching was not just supposed to evoke certain associations but to urge parishioners to act accordingly.

We have four of such sermons: the first was called "Apostolic Obedience" and was preached by Robert Sibthorpe on the 22nd of February, 1627 in Northampton [6]; the second, simply called in press "The Sermon", belonged to the king's chaplain, Dean of Canterbury Isaac Bargrave and was delivered before the monarch on the 27th of March, 1627 [7]. The two sermons under the common name "Religion and Allegiance" were preached before Charles I by the king's chaplain Roger Maynwaring: the first one on the 4th of July 1627 at the king's palace at Oatlands Surrey, the other on the 29th of July at Alderton Suffolk [8]. To increase the effect, all the sermons were published by order of His Majesty.

Even a cursory comparison of the sermons makes it clear that Roger Maynwaring was far better educated than the other two preachers. His sermons contain plenty of reminiscences and quotations from the Bible and the Church Fathers — Tertullian, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Duns Scotus Eriugena, Philo of Alexandria, Epiphanius, St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as ancient authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Polybius, Dio Chrysostom, Tacitus. Among

his contemporaries, Roger Maynwarding frequently refers to the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suarez, the most notable theological authority in Europe at that time.

The preachers assert that subjects' refusal to obey and submit to the royal authority results in the distortion of the order established by God and, consequently, can be regarded as a rebellion not only against a monarch, but against the Lord Himself. R. Sibthorpe believes that obedience of subjects is stipulated by justice and necessity, since the law, the government and the king limit particular interests for the benefit of the general one. "We must prefer the general to the particular", proclaims the preacher, and all must keep within the limits of their duty and subjection [6; 9]. Following the common practice of the time, R. Sibthorpe likens the state (a political body) to a natural body where all subjects (parts of a body) are to be in the proper way subordinate to a king (the head). The king's responsibilities (duties) include "to direct and make laws", "to command execution of law and justice" and "to protect the laws and people commanded by him". Whereas he has to "be honored, obeyed and maintained" [6; 10-11].

Isaac Bargrave proclaims that the Lord, being the perfect embodiment of wisdom, created the order and placed the man above His other creatures to administer the established order. "Disobedience and order could never long dwell together". The root of mankind soon got "corrupted" by "the worm of pride". Bargrave refers to the Holy Scriptures to prove that people started to summon against the Lord. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers to take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, [saying], Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" [Ps. 2:2-3]. But soon people realized that to maintain order the Lord had a yoke which was the law. It was that very law that the Lord used as a sceptre to hold them back from disobedience and to put them on the way of righteousness. The "God-given King" owns this right and the sceptre on the earth, thus, by the Lord's precept, he is to be obeyed. Isaac Bargrave equates disobedience with witchcraft, idolatry and disobedience to God himself [7; 1-2, 6-7, 12-13, 20]. Furthermore, I. Bargrave puts obedience above sacrifice and other moral qualities [7; 5].

Just like his counterparts, Roger Maynwarding begins his sermons with the idea shared by most people of the 17th century [9; 29-37]. Referring to Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Francisco Suarez, he reminds his listeners that the world was created by God as a hierarchy which implies that all things and creatures, no matter how different or distinct they are, are supposed to be united and subjected to each other [8; first sermon, 3]. The very nature suggests the principle of subordination and obedience [8; 3-4]. Ties or relations are based on the "dutiful obedience" which guarantees "tranquillity, peace and order". It is dutiful obedience that brings about the original unity among different and disparate things. Nature and, mostly, religion are to prevent disintegration and lead to re-union [8; first sermon, 4].

Maynwarding refers to Ecclesiastes (5:8) who proclaims that the Lord has given a king the supreme position on earth [8; first sermon, 5]. All things in the world either "work by some Power, or ability which is in them". All Power is either created and derived from some higher cause, or uncreated and independent, i.e. "all powers ... are of God" [8; first sermon, 6]. Among all the powers ordained by God, the Regal (the royal power) is "the highest, strongest and largest: Kings above all, inferior to none, to no man, to no multitudes of men, to no Angel, to no order of Angels". Although the divine hierarchy places angels superior to men, yet kings are not subjected to angels. No one on the earth, including the

church, can restrain the royal power. Even the highest and mightiest must kneel before kings, whereas kings extend their care to the lowest of their subjects. The royal authority is not just power over people; it is the sovereignty given from above. The Lord Himself says about those who have been crowned, enthroned, given a scepter and authority: "Ye are Gods" (Psalm 82:6). Subjects owe everything they have — including food and clothing — to their monarchs and laws. Calamities — when a war breaks out, ploughs are turned into swords and scythes into spears, blood covers garments and famine strikes the country — is a punishment for the sins of kings and their subjects [8, first sermon, 7].

The sovereign's will cannot be resisted, goes on teaching Maynwaring, even if it obviously runs counter to the law of God. One should endure suffering and obey, bearing in mind that it is obedience to the Lord rather than to a man. Those who endure any penalty with patience become "glorious martyrs", whereas those who resist are "odious traitors and impious malefactors" [8, first sermon, 11]. Moreover, a sovereign has the right to expect his subjects' obedience if his decrees are not in any opposition to the laws of God, nature, nations and the Gospel, but just partially do not correspond to the national and state laws. In this case resistance is a rebellion against the Lord and the person is subject to the curse. "As a Father of the Country, hee commands what his pleasure is, out of counsel and judgement. As a King of Subjects, he enjoines it. As a Lord over God's inheritance, hee exacts it. As a Supreme head of the body, he adviseth it. As a Defendour of the Faith, hee requires it as their homage. As a Protectour of their persons, lives, and states, he deserves it. And as the Sovereigne procurer of all the happinesse, peace, and welfare, which they enjoy, who are under him, hee doth most justly claime it at their hands. To Kings therefore, in all these respects, nothing can be denied". Lives of Royal persons are worth millions of others, so, in case of urgent needs caused by a necessity to protect the kings, their kingdoms and territories, to help allies, defend and share the Gospel, they have to be given financial support, provided by the laws and the royal prerogative [8, first sermon, 11-12].

The theologian explains that by "obedience" he means "a willing and understanding act of an inferior, done at the command, and to the honour of a superior". In his view, duty done on compulsion is not "true obedience" which is "voluntary service pleasing God and man". "Behold", he renders a verse from the Bible", to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"(1 Samuel 15:22). Firstly, from Day One the Lord intended his creation to obey. Thanks to it, "Is the Heavens, in moving; the Earth, in standing still; the Fire, in burning; the Air, and Water, in refreshing, cooling, and flowing". Secondly, the Lord put into his creation the "obediential" capacity that always maintains willingness to do what "is contrary to its own Nature", if such is the will of the Creator. Therefore the earth opens her mouth, and swallowes those Rebels against the Lord and the King (Numbers 16:32). The waters divide, the dry land appears, the people of the Lord find their marvellous way, and His enemy — a strange death (Exodus 14:15-27). Stones fall from the sky,"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (Joshua 10:1,12), the children of Israel remain unscathed in the Babylonian Furnace (Dan.3:27), [8, first sermon, 12-13].

Everyone is meant to obey another. This obedience (voluntary, conscious subordination) is both natural and moral. Inevitably driven by obedience, an inferior gives a fair share to the superior, children obey their parents, servants obey their masters,

soldiers — their commanders, parishioners — their pastors, subjects — their sovereigns. This is the king of obedience the Bible teaches us [8, first sermon, 13].

The same idea is unambiguously articulated in the second sermon of the preacher. During the Creation, the Lord used a hierarchical model, i.e. each thing was determined to have its own place in a subordinated system. “The supremacy” and “allegiance” (subordination) are the two primary inherent properties that keep the Order. God is supreme over the world. He is the Creator, the Beginning and the End of the creation. The preacher turns to the prophet Isaiah: “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us” (Isa. 33:22). It is God people are responsible to for what they did. They must share with him some of their property. “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase” (Prov. 3:9). God rules the world by the subordinated laws — divine, natural and human, as well as the power that God endows with kings and the clergy. On the earth, the supremacy belongs to the king who is the holiest power among people. He is the second after God who possesses the unlimited power over men and jurisdiction over their deeds and actions [8, second sermon, 8-11, 15].

Meanwhile, being the Source of any power, God does care about what happens on earth. He constantly sees to it that people fear and obey those secular or clerical who administer His power. At the same time, He urges “all the sons of Adam” by “His word” to fulfill their “natural obligation”, i.e. ‘to yield all reverence and obedience to the sacred mandates of their sovereigns’. That is what both reason and religion teach them [8, second sermon, 11-12].

The interpretation of “obedience” by the Anglican preachers of the time proves that it justified the right of the king, as God’s vicar on earth and the head of the Natural Body as well as the head of the family, to dispose his subjects’ property and to collect taxes and loans without their consent approved through established procedures, in particular, through the Parliament. As R. Sibthorpe put it: “The tribute, due to princes, is divine, natural and civil. Without it, a state would find itself disabled and vulnerable”. To make his point, the preacher refers not just to eminent church fathers and scholastics, but also to the leaders of the Reformation who emphasized that rulers were to obey spiritually and secularly. This leads him to the conclusion: “If a prince imposes an immoderate, even an unjust tax, still, the subject may not thereupon withdraw his obedience and duty. Nay, he is bound in conscience to submit” [6; 14-17]. Christian liberty has not freed us from civil obedience. The other way around, Christians are bound in duty to one another. Moreover, all subjects have duty to the princes “according to the laws and customs wherein they live”. To underscore it, he emphasizes that “Spiritual liberty may very well agree with civil bondage”. At the same time, no matter what limitations are, liberty should be stood up for [6; 6-9].

R. Maynwaring asserts that the king who “is served by the field” (Eccl. 5:9) should be supported by his men. The people should pay him tribute without considering it tyranny. In his turn, the king has his own duty towards the Lord and has a bigger responsibility, namely, to care fatherly about his people, thinking about their welfare, peace and piety [8, first sermon, 9].

According to R. Maynwaring, a monarch has the right to assign a subsidy, whereas the only thing the Parliament has to do is to make sure it is proportionally and fairly allocated. Moreover, Maynwaring refers to a treatise by Francisco Suárez

rez “On the Laws” (Book 5, Chapter 17) and emphasizes that “the highest magistrate has the right to demand subsidies in utmost and urgent need”. The proportion of such “tributary help” is to be held respectfully to the abilities of a person charged. Any person who resists the Lord’s command will be cursed, even if it is contrary to the state laws [8, first sermon, 14-15].

The above-mentioned confirms that Anglican preachers of the time interpreted the notion “obedience” as absolute submission to God’s power. Moreover, most likely this interpretation was welcome by the subjects unless it didn’t have to do with their possessions or taxes which were considered not religious or ethical issues but rather legal and traditional. However, John Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican chief hierarch, argued against such a vague interpretation. He dared to agree with the majority of the subjects who refused to pay the forced loan, for there was “no law or custom”. More than that, he considered precarious the statement by R. Sybthorpe that the sovereign could impose a tax on his subject because of “the need to protect liberty” [10, 1809. Col. 1456]. He argued that “the need” could be easily replaced by “the coercion”. It was for these ideas that he later fell into disfavor.

Thus, the Anglican clergy was concerned with the problem of obedience and preached it in the way the Crown expected, namely as one of the basic spiritual principals. The monarch was believed to be God’s vicar; subsequently disobedience to him was equaled to disobedience to God Himself and an infringement on His hierarchy. The sermons show that Anglican clergy were about to place obedience to the monarch above the obedience to the law and traditions. Some of them believed that the mission of maintaining order gave the right to the King to allocate and collect subsidies from subjects. However, there were others who regarded such statements as an unacceptable attempt to expand the royal prerogative and as an infringement on the original liberties of subjects.

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