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# The Thirty Years' War: Examining the Origins and Effects of Corpus Christianum's Defining Conflict

Justin McMurdie

*George Fox University*, [jmcmurdie09@georgefox.edu](mailto:jmcmurdie09@georgefox.edu)

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BY  
JUSTIN MCMURDIE

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR: EXAMINING THE ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF  
*CORPUS CHRISTIANUM'S* DEFINING CONFLICT

APRIL 4, 2014



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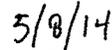
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EXAMINING THE ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF  
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## ABSTRACT

The following thesis is an examination of the Thirty Years' War. This conflict, from 1618-1648 in the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," was the culminating conflict of the Reformation era and set the stage for the modern world. Much scholarly debate in recent years has centered on whether or not the Thirty Years' War was a "religious" conflict. A great deal of recent work has tended to minimize or discount the religious element of the conflict.

This current thesis attempts to engage this debate and to argue that the war's origins did indeed lie in religious concerns. This is so because the Thirty Years' War was the final conflict necessitated by the Reformation challenges to the church-state nexus of *Corpus Christianum* (Christendom). The war was the final struggle for the shape and future of Christendom and its origins were decidedly religious. Yet, as this work shows, its effects were, paradoxically, the birth of the "irreligion" of the Enlightenment era as well as the launch of the ascendancy of nation-state structures and concerns in early modern Europe.



## INTRODUCTION

The series of interrelated conflicts, which engulfed most of the powers of Continental Europe from 1618-1648, has come to be known as the Thirty Years' War. The setting for the conflict was the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" (primarily the portions comprising modern-day Germany and the Czech Republic). Over the course of thirty years, Protestant rulers and armies from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands clashed with the Catholic militaries of the Habsburg monarchy (German and Spanish). Additionally, Roman Catholic France would become a dominant participant in the second half of the war.

At first glance, this would seem to be the final conflict in a series of "wars of religion" flowing from the splintering of Christendom due to the Protestant Reformation. As Peter H. Wilson remarks, "The assumption that the Thirty Years' War had been a religious conflict seemed so self-evident it was scarcely questioned."<sup>1</sup> For years, the scholarly and popular consensus characterized the Thirty Years' War as a devastating religious conflict which so exhausted the resources of Christianity in the West that it ushered in the modern era of the secular nation-state. While this view is still widespread, many scholars since the latter part of the twentieth century have asserted that the Thirty Years' Wars was, in actual fact, primarily a political conflict based around objections to imperial Habsburg rule. Thomas Cahill echoes the recent trend away from religious causation when he writes that the Thirty Years' War involved "most of Europe in bloody disputes over religion and territory – or, rather, *starting with religion and ending in territory*, ending indeed in 1648 with no one among the exhausted combatants able to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2009), 7.

articulate persuasively why they had been fighting each other for thirty years. ... With few exceptions, the results established the map of Europe as it stands today. *But no one will ever be able to begin to account for the blood that was shed.*”<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, any examination of the Thirty Years’ War does cause one to wonder at the shocking brutality and seeming senselessness of so many aspects of the conflict. Nonetheless, it is important for the church historian to seek to understand the origins and effects of this war. The answers to questions of cause and effect are important for understanding the history of modern Europe as well as the history and influence of Christianity in the wider Western world. The goal of this thesis is to clarify, as much as possible, the causal factors leading up to the Thirty Years’ War as well to elucidate the effects of this conflict in regard to the relationship between religion (Christianity) and the European/Western world.

There is nothing like a “scholarly consensus” on the origins and effects of the Thirty Years’ War. However, a trend toward secularizing the conflict has emerged in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship. Writing in 1938, C.V. Wedgwood typified the still widely held view that the conflict’s origins were primarily religious/confessional, with geopolitical causes stemming from the destabilization of *Corpus Christianum*<sup>3</sup> during the Protestant Reformation remaining secondary. More recently (1984, 1997), Geoffrey Parker has led a team of scholars in producing a survey of the Thirty Years’ War which has sought to place the conflict in an international setting with emphasis on hybrid origins

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Cahill, *Heretics and Heroes: How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World* (New York: Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, 2013), 286. [emphasis added]

<sup>3</sup> This term means the “Christian body” and is equivalent to what is more commonly referred to as “Christendom.” It is the name for the melding of church and state under the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and an emperor or rulers loyal to Rome. This essay will use significant space to examine the roots and significance of *Corpus Christianum* as it relates to the origins of the Thirty Years’ War.

in imperial policy disputes *and* religious affection/confession. Of late, the analyses of scholars such as Peter H. Wilson have sought to further diminish the religious dimension. Wilson has argued that the Thirty Years' War was not a religious conflict at all, except in the sense that everyone in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was religious. Instead, he has declared that the conflict was rooted in the problems inherent to the Imperial constitution.

With this divergence of opinion, it is easily seen that the way in which one understands the role of Christian faith in the Thirty Years' War is a crucial question. Contrary to the course of modern scholarship which has tended to increasingly secularize the conflict; this thesis will argue that its beginnings do indeed lie in religion. More specifically, the case will be made that the war's origins lie in the Western world's particular application of Christianity through a dominant conceptual and practical framework known as *Corpus Christianum* or Christendom.

In addition to examining the critical analysis of its causes, attention will be given to examining the lasting effects of the war for religion/Christianity in the West. For, while it is correct that the origins of the Thirty Years' War lie deeply in religious concerns, it is equally true that the results of this conflict mark out the beginnings of Christianity's decline in the Western World over the last three and a half centuries. Many of the themes of the Enlightenment and the secularization of society and government were foreshadowed and/or born in the outcomes of the Thirty Years' War.

To proceed with the above argument, this treatise will progress along the following lines. The first section is a general introduction. Next, in part one, a thorough historical examination of the concept of *Corpus Christianum* will set the stage for understanding the way that religion/Christianity was envisioned and practiced leading up

to the Protestant Reformation. In this examination, it will quickly become apparent that the Reformation could never have been merely an intellectual, theological dispute; rather, it was nothing less than a reconceptualization of the entirety of socio-cultural norms and political structures. This revision would have devastating consequences for the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” and would affect all of Europe by inaugurating the great military conflict engulfing it from 1618-1648.

Part two begins with a representative summary of scholarly views on the origins of the Thirty Years’ War. It continues as a brief survey of the conflict proper, followed by an examination of the specific religious issues present in each period. Additionally, part two is a necessary and useful transition toward the final phase of this thesis. One of the truly fascinating aspects of the Thirty Years’ War is that while it can be divided up *ad infinitum* by examining its various regional struggles, “the most important chronological division is a relatively easy one: the period of the war before 1631; and the second phase of the war, between 1631 and 1648.”<sup>4</sup> The first phase is most distinctly rooted in religion. The second phase, especially after France’s formal involvement from 1634/35 onward, is when it became increasingly clear that the splintering of Christendom would ultimately mean the splintering of the religious, Christian vision for society. Thus, part two of this thesis is not only useful for seeing the essential religious nature of the war, especially in its beginnings; it is also important for understanding that the shifting focus in the latter

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Bonney, *Essential Histories: The Thirty Years’ War 1618-1648* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 7.

stages of the war would commence the decline of not only Corpus Christianum but of Christian faith in the Western world.<sup>5</sup>

Part three will focus on the end of the war as formalized in the Peace of Westphalia (1648) along with an examination of the results for the Habsburg dynasty and the various state powers of Europe. Special attention will be given in this section to the wider context of a now recognizably “modern” Europe. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War, the political map was radically redrawn. Also, the spiritual mold of Europe had been recast. State churches and significantly “Christianized” societies did continue in the Western world. However, never again would there be anything like Christendom as it had existed from the latter stages of the Roman Empire up through the Reformation period. Soon, the Enlightenment would hold sway and national identity would become ascendant. Finally, the last section will bring a conclusion to this examination.

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<sup>5</sup> This statement may seem *prima facie* false, especially when one considers the amazing periods of Evangelical revival in the First and Second Great Awakenings. However, it is the opinion of this author that the virtual collapse of Christendom at the end of the Thirty Years’ War is the commencement point for the growing secularization of the Western world and for the eventual, radical separation of church and state which is seen in nearly all Western countries today.

PART 1  
THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND  
OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The dominant vision of human life – the religio-socio-political ether – in the Western world at the time of the Reformation, and even still at the outset of the Thirty Years' War was Christendom. Hermann Dooyeweerd gives a concise and helpful definition for this concept:

In the dominant medieval conception there was one great community of Christendom, the *corpus christianum* [the “Christian body”]. The pope was its spiritual head while the emperor was its worldly head. Their relation was not analogous to the modern relation between church and state, for a differentiated body politic did not exist ... National differentiation was largely unknown. The fact that the substructure was undifferentiated enabled the church of that time period to control the whole of cultural life.<sup>6</sup>

This definition helps to explain why the roots of the Thirty Years' War cannot possibly be viewed in merely secular terms. Instead, it was the culmination of the religio-social, political upheaval brought on by the Protestant Reformation. Christendom *was* religion and politics and culture. To see its importance for the origins of the conflict under examination, a brief survey of its development from the latter stages of the Roman Empire up to its role in the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” is in order.

**Corpus Christianum: The Religious, Social, and Political Framework of the West  
from Constantine to the Reformation**

*Constantine and the Christianization of the Roman Empire*

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<sup>6</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979), 76.

After years of intermittent and sometimes brutal persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire, the Christian church happily embraced the newly Christian(ized) Emperor, Constantine. After conquering his rival Maxentius in 312 under the “sign of the cross,” Constantine officially ended Christian persecution in 313.

Yet, he was not done. According to Eusebius, Constantine was God’s instrument to bring about a Christianized Roman Empire – an agent to meld together religion and state, Christianity and empire.<sup>7</sup> Routinely criticized by modern voices as a religious impostor, Constantine’s first official acts as sole emperor were to refuse to enter the Capitolium and sacrifice to Jupiter, and to unveil a political theology in which he was in “opposition to sacrifice.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, “when Constantine’s Arch was unveiled three years after he took Rome, the emperor was depicted not facing Jupiter but with his back to the god.”<sup>9</sup>

The Christian devotion of Constantine can be debated. However, there is no doubt that Christianity was being fused with the life of the Rome. Van Leeuwen remarks:

“Originally the Roman cult of state was centered in the king, who united in his person all

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<sup>7</sup> Eusebius, *The Church History*, trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007 [original publication – ca. 324-325]). For instance, Eusebius writes on pg. 332: “His enemy prostrate, the mighty victor Constantine, outstanding in every virtue godliness confers, as well as his son Crispus, a ruler most dear to God and like his father in every way, won back their own eastern provinces and combined the Roman Empire into a single whole, as in former days, bringing it all under their peaceful rule ... And so all tyranny was eradicated, and the kingdom that was theirs was preserved, secure and undisputed, for Constantine and his sons alone. They, having first cleansed the world of hatred to God and knowing all the good He had conferred on them, showed their love of virtue and of God, their devotion and gratitude to the Almighty, by their actions for all to see.”

<sup>8</sup> Peter Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2010), 66-67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

political and sacral functions.”<sup>10</sup> Under Constantine, the political and sacral functions were progressively Christianized and Corpus Christianum was born.

*Augustine: Two Cities in Theory, Christendom in Practice*

As Christendom progressed it also suffered a great challenge: “With ... Emperor Theodosius’ banning of other cults in 391, many Christians in Augustine’s time dared to hope ... that there would be a Christian Empire obeying and fulfilling God’s will on Earth directly. ... The sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 dashed such hopes.”<sup>11</sup>

The challenge of answering Christian concerns and pagan criticism in light of this sudden reversal fell to the great bishop and theologian Augustine of Hippo. He responded with his magnum opus, *De Civitate Dei*, “On the City of God.” In this masterwork, Augustine espoused his doctrine of the “city of God” (*civitas Dei*) and the “city of earth” (*civitas terrena*): “Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord.”<sup>12</sup>

Essentially, Augustine developed a theory which rejected the fusion of church and state. Again, van Leeuwen’s comments are helpful: “Although he gives *Christiana tempora* their due and sincerely admits that the conversion of the emperor and the abolition of the pagan state cult were both important events, he never speaks of a Christian empire.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, trans. H.H. Hoskins (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 273.

<sup>11</sup> Kim Paffenroth, Introduction to St. Augustine. *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006 [originally published ca. 412-426]), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.28 (pg. 569).

<sup>13</sup> Van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, 280.

Nevertheless, theory and practice often differ. So they did for one considered *the* father of the Western church. In a letter (ca. 408) to a Donatist bishop, Vincentius, Augustine defended the right of civil powers to work with the church to compel heretics and sinners to re-enter the fold of God:

For originally my opinion was that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ, that we must act only by words, fight only by arguments and prevail by force of reason, ... But this opinion of mine was overcome not by the words of those who controverted it, but by the conclusive instances to which they could point. For in the first place there was set over against my opinion my own town, which, although it was once wholly on the side of Donatus, was brought over to the Catholic unity by fear of the imperial edicts.<sup>14</sup>

Though Augustine masterfully laid out a theology of “two cities formed by two loves,” he repeatedly leaned toward a central role for the state in reclaiming heretics and the impenitent.<sup>15</sup> There is no doubt that Augustine’s motives in this use of the state were noble: to rescue, by punishment, those who had far worse coming to them in the afterlife if they were not reclaimed for God and His church. Nonetheless, Augustine’s theory was overridden by his application of it, and this represented a further step toward the merging of church and state.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> St. Augustine, “Letter 93.” In *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. Oliver O’ Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’ Donovan (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 132.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, not only did Augustine respond to the Donatists as in Letter 93, he also, in writing to a civil magistrate named Macedonius in what we know as Letter 153 (ca. 414), again defended the use of civil punishments for reclaiming the fallen from the church. Also, in Letter 189 (ca. 418) to Count Boniface, he defended a form of “just war theory” by saying that the Christian could, with clear conscience, serve in the military.

<sup>16</sup> Sadly, many modern historians – particularly at the popular level – have not been kind: “Augustine, for all his greatness, has become in old age the type of the evil cleric, full of mercy for those who fear him, full of seething contempt for those who dare oppose him, scheming to make common cause with Babylon and whatever state-sponsored cruelty will, in the name of Order, suppress his opposition. There is not a country in the world today that does not still possess a few examples of the type.” Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland’s Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 67.

## *The Decline and Rise of Rome*

Over the centuries following Augustine, the Western Roman Empire, centered in the city of Rome, continued to experience decline. It was in the Eastern Empire, with its new imperial capital of Constantinople, that a vision of a city of God on earth under an imperial representative of God on earth would move forward: “A Christian emperor, ruling as the sponsor and protector of the Church, could serve not merely as Christ’s ally in the great war against evil, but as His representative on earth, ‘directing, in imitation of God Himself, the administration of the world’s affairs.’”<sup>17</sup>

Yet, the idea of *Corpus Christianum* in the West did not disappear, it merely changed. In the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, Pope Gregory I was ruling in Rome. A man known for humility as well as skill and learning, Gregory is “reputed to be the theoretical founder, along with Cassiodorus and Isidore, of Christian ‘Romano-Germanic’ kingship.”<sup>18</sup> In many respects, Gregory and the popes after him had little choice but to take on a dual role: “To some extent, the popes – the good ones, at least – would have no choice but to take on the role of emperor, certainly insofar as the protection of Italy was concerned.”<sup>19</sup>

In his growing power as the Pope, Gregory and those after him were merely beginning to exercise in a wider way the influence and primacy they had long held as bishops of the city of Rome. As early as CE 96, one early Roman abbot, Clement, had written to admonish the church at Corinth in a struggle they were having with deposing

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<sup>17</sup> Tom Holland, *The Forge of Christendom: The End of Days and the Epic Rise of the West* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 7. Holland’s quotation comes from Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*, 3.3.1.

<sup>18</sup> Oliver O’ Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’ Donovan, eds. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 195.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Cahill, *Mysteries of the Middle Ages: The Rise of Feminism, Science, and Art from the Cults of Catholic Europe* (New York: Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, 2006), 42.

some local presbyters. His letter ended with a command to “Be quick to return our delegates in peace and joy, Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, along with Fortunatus. In that way they will the sooner bring us news of that peace we have prayed for and so much desire, and we in turn will the more speedily rejoice over your healthy state.” The growing influence of the bishop of Rome would grow into the papacy, an increasingly mixed role of spiritual and secular rule. In AD 800, this transformation and growing power would crown a Frankish king as “Holy Roman Emperor” and formalize *Corpus Christianum* in the West.

#### *Charlemagne and the Official Beginning of the “Holy Roman Empire”*

During the period of growing separation between the churches and political structures of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire, new religio-political threats were also rising. Islam was a growing force, and it had begun to press at every point of the imperial borders. Eventually, Islamic expansion would conquer North Africa. This opened the way for Muslim forces to invade Spain and begin pressing toward Northern Europe. Additionally, Islamic expansion was also seeking inroads from the East. In this setting, the northern tribes of the old Roman Empire’s holdings began to take on greater importance. The papacy and church at Rome were forced to begin making alliances with Frankish and Germanic kings. Eventually, one great Frankish king would rise to the fore: Charles *le magne* (rough Latin for “the great”) or Charlemagne.

Charlemagne, and other Frankish kings before him, had long cooperated with and protected the Pope and Rome from military and political threats. In the summer of CE 800, Charlemagne had come to Rome to defend Pope Leo III in the face of charges of corruption by Roman nobles. Charlemagne lingered in Rome until Christmas. Then,

while Charles went to the basilica of St. Peter to worship mass on Christmas Day, he kneeled to pray before the tomb of the apostles. Mark Noll describes what happened next as he rose from his knees:

As he did so, Pope Leo III advanced, and in the words of an eyewitness, “the venerable holy pontiff with his own hands crowned Charles with a most precious crown.” Then the people – in fact, ‘all the Roman people,’ according to the annals of the Franks – arose as one. They had been told what to say; three times a great shout rang out: “Carolo Augusto of Deo coronato, magna et pacific imperatori, vita et victoria” (To Charles Augustus, crowned by God, great and peace-giving emperor of the Romans, life and victory).<sup>20</sup>

What this moment represented was the result of all the moves toward Christendom that had been made up to this point. The concept and outworking of Corpus Christianum was largely crystallized in this moment. The synthesis and cooperation which came from this culminating act, “symbolized ... an integrated view of life in which everything – politics, social order, religious practice, economic relationships, and more – was based on the Christian faith as communicated by the Roman Catholic Church and protected by the actions of secular rulers.”<sup>21</sup>

This would be the dominant religio-social and political framework that endured up to the Protestant Reformation. This “medieval synthesis” inserted the Roman Catholic Church into politics and daily life and also injected the concerns of state and empire into the church. Again, Noll is helpful in summarizing the significance of what this would come to mean:

With its central sacramental role in the salvation of sinners, the church also assumed immense significance for every other aspect of culture. Since the salvation of sinners is the most important imaginable task in life, leaders of the political sphere must cooperate with the church as it fulfills its spiritual tasks;

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<sup>20</sup> Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 108-109.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

those who exercise the mind must direct learning in ways that are compatible with church teaching; economic relationships should be structured to support the church in its mission; and ideals for social order will naturally imitate patterns that God has set out for the church. In other words, with the widespread agreement that salvation was the most important reality, and the further agreement that salvation was communicated through and by the sacraments, it had to follow that the church, as the administrator of the sacraments, should offer *a foundation for everything else*.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, with the solidification of Christendom, the entire pattern of medieval life was set.

This pattern and its influence on all of Western European life would continue, with only minor adjustments, until the cosmos-shaking events of the Reformation.

### *The Rise of a Germanic “Holy Roman Empire”*

Under Charlemagne, a period of cultural and spiritual renewal would begin known as the *Carolingian Renaissance*. However, though Charlemagne was a great ruler, his empire was vast and the structures that supported it were not well developed. In time, challenges from nomadic marauders, as well as the general ineffectiveness of Charlemagne’s heirs, would destabilize the Holy Roman Empire. This set the stage for the system known as feudalism. In this arrangement a powerful local ruler reigned as lord, while those who lived on and worked his land and holdings were his vassals.

Despite the continuing centrality of the Roman Catholic Church, it was also affected by feudal arrangements. The “state,” in the form of local rulers, began to exercise increased influence over the appointment of bishops and other church prerogatives. The involvement of the state further intensified as the title of Holy Roman Emperor shifted from Frankish to Germanic hands. This was particularly true under the Germanic king Otto the Great who revived the Holy Roman Empire in the West in 962:

Otto claimed to be the successor of Augustus, Constantine, and Charlemagne, although his actual power was confined to Germany and Italy. At first the papacy

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<sup>22</sup> Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points*, 125. [emphasis added]

looked to the German king for protection against the unruly Italian nobles who for a century had been making a prize of the papacy. From the church's viewpoint, however, this arrangement had its drawbacks, for the Germanic kings continued to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs – even in the election of popes.<sup>23</sup>

In time, one would rise to the papacy who would challenge this intervention. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) formally outlawed the practice of “lay investiture,” or the granting of ecclesiastical office by non-church officials (i.e., Germanic kings/emperors). Eventually, the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, contested this edict in an attempt to force the abdication of Gregory. However, Gregory took an “utterly unprecedented step [and] responded in ferocious kind. Henry’s subjects, the Pope had pronounced, were absolved from all their loyalty and obedience to their earthly lord – even as Henry himself, that very image of God on earth, was ... excommunicated from the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

It was uncertain whether Henry would bow. In fact, he tried not to. Yet, without the support of the Roman Catholic Church, Henry was severely undermined as a “Holy Roman Emperor.” His nobles turned against him and Henry was forced to seek forgiveness from the Church. He knew that he had to intercept Pope Gregory VII and do penance, in the hopes that the Pope would change his mind. Eventually, Gregory and Henry met at the castle of Canossa. Morris Bishop describes the scene: “At Gregory’s order, Henry stood without in the January snows, barefoot, gowned in coarse penitent’s garb, and stripped of all his regalia. Gregory kept him there for three days and two nights until at last the pope, in Christian charity, deemed the humiliation the emperor had

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<sup>23</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language: Updated 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 180.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Holland, *The Forge of Christendom*, xvi.

suffered to be sufficient.”<sup>25</sup> Of course, after Henry regained his power and grip over the German nobles, he again fought with Pope Gregory VII, and the papacy nearly came to ruin by the fourteenth century as rival popes fought for control of the Church.

Nonetheless, the incident at Canossa had moved the concept of Corpus Christianum even closer to the form it would take prior to the Reformation. The melding of church and state produced friction. At the end of the day, though, the church, with its hold on the sacraments and salvation, possessed the true power in the Holy Roman Empire. This was especially true as the ardently Roman Catholic Habsburg (also, Hapsburg and House of Austria) monarchy grabbed the reigns of leadership in the Holy Roman Empire.

*“The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” on the Cusp of the Reformation*

Under the House of Austria, Corpus Christianum reached its apex. Hans Hillerbrand comments: “The house of Habsburg dominated German history from the late Middle Ages until the time of Napoleon in that most emperors during that time came from the house of Habsburg.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, Christendom under the Habsburgs was also greatly challenged both by Protestant reforms and the opposition of Roman Catholic – but non-Habsburg – France. Despite these obstacles, Corpus Christianum under the Habsburgs was the dominant reality of the Western world.

Over time the power of the House of Austria grew exponentially. In his masterful study of the Habsburgs, H.G. Koenigsberger summarized their role in European history:

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<sup>25</sup> Morris Bishop, *The Middle Ages* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., A Mariner Book, 1968, 1996), 49.

<sup>26</sup> Hans J. Hillerbrand, *Historical Dictionary of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation: Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, No. 27* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), 99.

[F]or nearly one hundred and fifty years, from 1516 until 1659, it actually dominated European politics ... It is not difficult to see how this dominance came about. Charles V's inheritance of the crowns of four major dynasties, Castile, Aragon, Burgundy, and Austria, the later acquisition by his house of the crowns of Bohemia, Hungary, Portugal, and, for a short time, even of England, and the coincidence of these dynastic events with the Spanish conquest and exploitation of the New World – these provided the house of Habsburg with a wealth of resources that no other European power could match.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, with such power exerted over all of Europe, the Habsburgs had many enemies.

It seems that Charles V had much desired to defend the Catholic faith and bring about unity in Christendom.<sup>28</sup> However, his holdings were too vast and his intervention in the affairs at the Diet of Worms too bold for Christendom to support him. Charles sought to challenge Luther and the Reformers in Germany but received no praise for doing so. After the imperial Diet at Worms, Charles issued the Edict of Worms on May 25, 1521, against Martin Luther and those who followed him. This edict condemned Luther as a heretic and made him an outlaw. Though Charles V issued this edict in an attempt to uphold the unity of Christendom and the doctrine of the Catholic faith, he only increased animosity toward himself and the Holy Roman Empire. The followers of Luther obviously disagreed with Charles, and the papacy resented his aggressive attempts at issuing religious edicts. The stage was set for great conflict.

### *Summary*

Constantine, Augustine, Charlemagne and others could never have imagined the course that Christendom would take. However, this survey of the religio-social and

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<sup>27</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe: 1516-1660* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), xi.

<sup>28</sup> Charles, writing to his aunt about his succession said “that if the said election is conferred on our person ... we will be able to accomplish many good and great things, and not only conserve and guard the possession which God has given us, but increase them greatly and, in this way, give peace, repose and tranquility to Christendom, upholding and strengthening our holy Catholic faith which is our principal foundation.” *Ibid.*, 10.

political framework it represented, though lengthy, helps to set the stage for further understanding the origins of the Thirty Years' War. Below are the most salient points:

1. From the time of Constantine, Christianity adopted a new self-understanding as persecution ceased and Christian faith became dominant in the Roman Empire. This self-understanding was the burgeoning idea of a church-state complex which would embody the ideals of God's kingdom in the Roman Empire.
2. Augustine, dealing with the reality of Western decline and the sack of Rome, began to re-envision the role of empire and the church. He developed a powerful theory of "two cities." However, in practice he still advocated a large role for the state in the affairs of faith. Though he did not intend to birth Corpus Christianum, as the fount of Western, Roman Catholic theology, his actions spoke loudly and inculcated the idea of Christendom into the consciousness of the Catholic faith.
3. An explicit vision for the state as "heaven on earth" was developed in the East. The West did not follow this conception exactly. Nonetheless, the decline of imperial structures in the West brought about the rise of the papacy. The pope became not only head of the Church but also of a Christianized Roman Empire.
4. With the coronation of Charlemagne by Leo III, Christendom was solidified. The power of "king-making" flowed from the church, as well as the power of salvation through the sacramental system. Thus, the entire religio-social and political milieu of the West became focused around the Roman Catholic Church.
5. Certain emperors, particularly the Germanic kings, sought to curb the power of the Church. Yet, in the end the Church's dominant position, as well as the church-

state complex of Corpus Christianum was only strengthened, as the Lay Investiture Controversy made plain.

6. Eventually, most of Europe came into the hands of the Habsburgs. Under this dynastic house, especially Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor of the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,” Corpus Christianum reached its apex. Yet, resistance to the Habsburg’s growing power, as well as popular demand for reform in the Roman Catholic Church, began to undermine Corpus Christianum. Charles V, icon of Habsburg power and the Roman Catholic status quo, would unwittingly undermine Christendom in his staunch attempts to defend it.

Luther’s impassioned stand at the Diet of Worms, coupled with Charles V’s aggressive reaction, would continue to fan the flames of the burgeoning Reformation. The Protestant Reformation initiated a thoroughgoing reevaluation of Christianity in the West. By definition, this would lead to conflict as every aspect of life in the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” was thrown into upheaval by the splintering of Christendom.

### **The Protestant Reformation, Catholic Counter-Reformation, and Intractable Problems for the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”**

#### *The Revolutionary Nature of the Protestant Reformation*

As previously mentioned, the chief human objective in the collective mind of Corpus Christianum was salvation from the consequences of sin. This was accomplished through grace conferred by the Church in the sacramental system. This understanding of salvation was critical in ordering society and politics around the indispensable nature of the Roman Catholic Church, the papacy, and the religio-social structures of Christendom.

And, though France was a growing center for Roman Catholic power, in many ways the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” *was* Christendom. Little wonder, then, that with the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door, Martin Luther unleashed a firestorm that embroiled the whole of German and European society. Luther almost certainly did not intend to let loose chaos in Corpus Christianum, but this was the result of his and other Reformer’s actions.

Famously standing his ground at the Diet of Worms, Martin Luther argued for the religious conscience of the individual and the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In the modern Western world, these are hardly radical views. Yet, in Luther’s world, they were revolutionary. Gradually, he would begin to question the very foundations of Christian society: “Luther’s writings in 1520 only inflamed his terribly strained relationship with Rome. ‘To the Christian Nobility’ questioned the church-state nexus that had dominated Europe for almost a millennium. ‘The Babylonian Captivity of the Church’ undercut the sacramental structure that was fundamental to Rome’s self-understanding.”<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Luther would return to Augustine the theorist in developing his concept of “two governments/kingdoms.” Luther sounds very much the theoretical Augustinian when he wrote, “And so God has ordained the two governments, the spiritual [government] which fashions true Christians and just persons through the Holy Spirit under Christ, and the secular [*weltlich*] government which holds the

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<sup>29</sup> Mark D. Tranvik, introduction to Martin Luther *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans. Mark D. Tranvik (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 24-25.

Unchristian and wicked in check and forces them to keep the peace outwardly and be still, like it or not.”<sup>30</sup>

This return to Augustine’s theoretical “two cities,” in and of itself was a challenge to Christendom. Too, Luther’s further remarks were absolutely revolutionary:

Each must decide at his own peril what he is to believe, and must see to it that he believes rightly. Other people cannot go to heaven or hell on my behalf, or open or close [the gates of either] for me. And just as little can they believe or not believe on my behalf, or force my faith or unbelief. How he believes is a matter for each individual’s conscience, and this does not diminish [the authority of] secular governments. *They ought therefore to content themselves with attending to their own business, and allow people to believe what they can, and what they want, and they must use no coercion in this matter against anyone.*<sup>31</sup>

In a modern world where church and state are largely separate Luther’s assertion that this “does not diminish the authority of secular governments” holds true. However, in the religio-social, political framework of Corpus Christianum it most certainly did not.

The cohesion of religio-social and political life began to disintegrate. Initially, Charles V, distracted by his far-flung empire and the Islamic threat of the Turks, did little to work out the problems left by the Diet of Worms. In 1529, issuing a dictate to the Diet of Speyer to enforce the conditions of the Edict of Worms, Charles sought to repair Christendom. However, many princes and cities began instituting Lutheran practices in their local congregations. Several drew up a solemn protest against Charles’ order and became known as the “Protesting Estates,” giving the name “Protestant” to all who challenged Rome and the structure of Corpus Christianum.<sup>32</sup> The Protestant Reformation

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority,” In *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought: Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, ed. Harro Höpfl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. [emphasis added]

<sup>32</sup> Edith Simon, ed. *Great Ages of Man: The Reformation* (New York: Time Incorporated, 1966), 78.

was soon to produce large-scale revolt and conflict in the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.” The Peasant’s War (1524-1526), the Schmalkaldic War between Charles V and Protestant German Princes (1546-1547), wars of religion throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, etc. – all were the result of the revolutionary Reformation challenge to Christendom.

### *The Peace of Augsburg*

Yet, while the original idea of Corpus Christianum was disintegrating, it had also simultaneously reformulated itself. The Protestant princes in Germany, the Calvinist-Reformed converts in France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, as well as the remaining rulers loyal to the House of Habsburg and/or the Roman Catholic Church – all of these began to seek to live out Corpus Christianum with their own localized, confessional spin. In the Holy Roman Empire, after much conflict, this attempt coalesced in the Peace of Augsburg (1555)

By its terms, Lutheran princes, imperial knights, and free cities were guaranteed security equal to that of the Catholic estates. However, it applied only to those Protestants who adhered to the Augsburg Confession, so Calvinists and other Protestants were excluded [though mostly tolerated]. It also proclaimed the principle that each ruler would determine the religion of his domain and all subjects must conform, a principle termed by seventeenth-century jurists *Cuius regio, eius religio* (Latin, literally, “whoever the king, his religion”).<sup>33</sup>

While this seemed to provide a way for a reformulated, localized Corpus Christianum to continue, this peace was doomed to failure. It had numerous problems attendant to it, three of particular importance. First, it dictated that “in the free cities, where both Lutheranism and Catholicism existed, the two faiths should share the

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<sup>33</sup> Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict: From the Medieval World to the Wars of Religion AD 1350-1648*, vol. 4 of *The Baker History of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 117-118.

churches.”<sup>34</sup> This was an unmanageable arrangement in light of deep confessional differences and the expectation of church-state unity leftover from the long centuries of a wholly united Christendom. Second, there was a very controversial section, added in by the Emperor, known as the “Ecclesiastical Reservation.” Heinze explains: “In simple terms, this meant that if an ecclesiastical ruler became a Lutheran, he could not take his property and income with him, but a Catholic successor should be elected in his place.”<sup>35</sup> This clause was violated again and again and became a major source of enmity between Lutherans and Catholics. Finally, the Peace of Augsburg completely ignored the Reformed/Calvinist churches. In Germany proper, this was not as much of an issue because Lutheranism was dominant. Still, in the wider Habsburg holdings of the Holy Roman Emperor, this would become a serious problem.

### *The Catholic Response*

In the face of the Protestant threat, the Roman Catholic Church was not idle. Initially taken off-guard by the popularity of Luther and other Protestant Reformers, eventually a “Counter-Reformation” began. In 1563, the Council of Trent concluded its eighteen-year effort at outlining reforms for the Roman Catholic Church. Nearly every area of doctrine was reconsidered, but its chief achievement was to reaffirm the Roman Catholic vision for Christendom. It clarified Catholic teaching on contested doctrines, put in place reforms to correct abuses of clergy, and it placed the parish priest at the center of its mission – an important step for later efforts to (re)Catholicize the population.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 372-373.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>36</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed. *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500-1660*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 148.

Additionally, the council rejected the freedom of conscience ensconced in the Protestant's idea of *sola Scriptura* by reaffirming that Scripture *as interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church* was the measure of orthodox teaching. Also, Luther's position on justification *sola fide* was largely rejected. The gift of salvation, according to Trent, required free-will cooperation and continuation in good works (of which participation in Roman Catholic sacramentalism was an important part) to grow in merit of grace.<sup>37</sup> By virtue of its designs for (re)Catholicizing the population as well as its reaffirmation of the Roman Catholic sacramental structures of Corpus Christianum, the Council of Trent strengthened the eroding position of the Roman Church. It also emboldened the strong Catholic sympathies and designs of the Habsburg monarchy.

Additionally, this period witnessed the growth of a number of well-organized orders and movements for reform. The best known of these is the Jesuits or *the Society of Jesus*. Founded in 1539 by Ignatius Loyola, the Jesuits became a force for missionary expansion and education in the Western world. Strengthened by Tridentine reforms and the Jesuit order, the Roman Catholic Church engaged in an aggressive program of (re)Catholicization. Marc R. Forster, in an important study, summarizes its outcomes:

In many parts of Catholic Germany ... the Counter-Reformation began with an effort to convert Protestant populations to Catholicism. ... Catholic princes followed similar policies in the decades before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, exacerbating political and religious tensions. These policies were an integral aspect of Tridentine reform as well as part of the attempt to strengthen state power.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, 148-149.

<sup>38</sup> Marc R. Foster, "The Thirty Years' War and the Failure of Catholicization" in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, edited by David M. Luebke (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999), 166.

So it was that the reforms of Trent and the unleashing of aggressive Catholic orders began to further exacerbate tensions and work to undo the tenuous Peace of Augsburg.

### *Additional Religious Pressures*

In addition to the fundamentally religious tensions present in the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,” there were important developments in France and Spain. These circumstances would greatly add to the pressure being placed on the older order of Corpus Christianum and would play a role in moving the whole of Europe toward the all-encompassing conflict known as the Thirty Years’ War. A brief survey of the additional religious and political pressures brought about in France and Spain is necessary before moving toward a summary of the problems facing the German lands.

In Catholic (though non-Habsburg) France, attempts at rapprochement had been made between Catholic and Huguenot (French Calvinist-Protestants) elements but had largely failed. One last, important attempt was made to bring about Catholic-Protestant peace in France. An arranged marriage between the Catholic, Margaret of Valois (sister to King Charles IX), and the Protestant, Henry of Navarre (Bourbon heir), was supposed to mend fences and provide a stabilizing treaty-by-marriage between Catholic and Protestant factions. Many Huguenot nobles came to attend the ceremony in Paris on August 18, 1572. Nevertheless, through a series of intrigues, an influential Huguenot leader was assassinated on August 22. Catherine de’ Medici, Charles IX’s mother and influential power-broker behind his rule, in fear of Huguenot retaliation ordered the rest of the Huguenot leadership to be killed. This boiled over into the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on August 23, 1572, which spilled over into an intense persecution of

Huguenots in France. Many of them fled during this period to the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,” especially to the regions of the Palatinate and Bohemia.

Once the French Calvinists were present in large numbers in German lands, a phenomenal conversion from Lutheranism to Calvinistic-Reformed Christianity would begin. This large-scale Protestant shift would come to be known as the “Second Reformation.” It would have important ramifications for Germany and the Thirty Years’ War. Later, Emperor Ferdinand the II, would directly blame “the subversive Calvinist schools” for the revolt of Bohemia which launched the conflict.<sup>39</sup>

In Catholic, Habsburg Spain, events were unfolding which also contributed to the situation leading up to the Thirty Years’ War. Upon Charles V’s abdication of the Habsburg throne in 1555/56 “The Habsburg dynasty had split into Austrian and Spanish lines ... Charles had left his son, Philip II, the Spanish Habsburg territories, which included the Netherlands, Italy, and the Spanish colonies in the New World. He had left to his brother, Ferdinand I, the Austrian Habsburg territories [i.e., “The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation], including Hungary and Bohemia.”<sup>40</sup> Philip II proved to be a staunch and aggressive militarist for the papacy, Roman Catholicism generally, and Habsburg interests. A supporter of the Spanish Inquisition’s efforts to control Protestants and a staunch warrior against the Calvinist rebellions in the Spanish Netherlands, Philip II was responsible for decades of war against Protestant challengers to the Habsburg-Catholic domination of *Corpus Christianum*.

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<sup>39</sup> As quoted in Geoffrey Parker, ed. *The Thirty Years’ War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 40.

<sup>40</sup> Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke, eds. *Experiencing the Thirty Years’ War: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013), 2.

Eventually, Philip the II's protracted war against the United Provinces (Dutch-Reformed, northern territories in the formerly Spanish Netherlands) and remaining Protestant elements in the south would be handed to his son Philip III. A "Twelve Years' Truce" from 1609-1621 would bring about an end to the conflict. However, the continued pressure placed on the southern Spanish Netherlands by the Calvinist north would exacerbate tensions between Spanish, Dutch, and French interests – eventually dragging all three parties into the Thirty Years' War.

A final, important development involving Spain is seen in what is known as the Oñate Agreement between Philip III and Ferdinand II. In this treaty in 1617, "the Spanish ambassador, Oñate, secured a secret agreement with Ferdinand [presumptive successor to his uncle, Holy Roman Emperor Matthias] by which he promised, if he became king of Bohemia and emperor, to cede to Spain Piombino and Finale in Italy, and Alsace. By means of [this] Habsburg family compact ... Ferdinand was recognized as their candidate for Bohemia and the Empire."<sup>41</sup> This important agreement had at least two results. First, and most pressing, it practically guaranteed war would break out in the German lands. Ferdinand was widely viewed as a danger to Protestants and an aggressive proponent for the reunification of Corpus Christianum under the Catholic Habsburgs. Nicola Sutherland poignantly remarks, "as a Jesuit-trained absolutist, Ferdinand was the last prince in Christendom who could be expected to preside over an acceptable adjudication of the Peace of Augsburg. This alarming prospect therefore caused Frederick [an imperial elector] of the Palatinate, and others concerned, to set about stiffening the Protestant

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<sup>41</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, "The Origins of the Thirty Years' War and the Structure of European Politics," *English Historical Review* 107, no. 424 (1992): 609.

Union.”<sup>42</sup> Second, it effectively placed the anti-Habsburg France into a pincer between the Habsburg rulers – a reality which would exacerbate tensions and draw France into a political strategy for the second half of the Thirty Years’ War (1635-1648).

*Intractable Problems in the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”*

To summarize, there were several critical problems coalescing in the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire which ultimately undermined the fragile Peace of Augsburg and set the stage for the Thirty Years War. The most important of these are summarized below:

1. Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformers – simply by virtue of questioning the centrality of the sacramental system and the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church – would destabilize *Corpus Christianum*, thus creating conditions for large-scale conflict and societal upheaval. It is probable this was not Luther’s original intention. However, just by virtue of challenging the Church and the Holy Roman Emperor, this was the outcome. This was certainly a religious issue.
2. The destabilization mentioned above led many Protestants to develop a “theology of resistance” not before seen in Christendom. Luther’s radical attempt to recapture the Augustinian theology of “two kingdoms” and Calvin’s decidedly different attempts in Geneva to do the same were a challenge to the very structure of religio-social, political reality. Additionally, tracts such as *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* and Theodore Beza’s *The Right of Magistrates over Their Subjects*, were strong Protestant attempts to detail the limitations of state power and to provide a justification for rebellion against the powers in the name of religious

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<sup>42</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, “The Origins of the Thirty Years’ War and the Structure of European Politics,” 609.

- principle. The above were religious issues which unleashed particular political consequences. This was especially true in the initial Bohemian uprising which started the Thirty Years' War – a rebellion driven by the “revolutionary” Huguenot refugees and other Reformed-Calvinist Christians in Prague.
3. In an age of confessionalization, strictly theological issues repeatedly became political ones. An example of this was the strong divisions between Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed Christians regarding the Lord's Supper. As Heinze comments on a French effort to bring peace between Reformed Huguenots and Roman Catholics, “Ironically, the meal in which Christians remember their Lord's sacrifice for them and express their unity in Christ was the rock on which efforts to restore unity foundered.”<sup>43</sup>
  4. When the above factors (Protestant challenge to unified Christendom, theological justification for resisting authority, and confessional tensions) coalesced to produce armed conflict between Protestants and Catholics, *Corpus Christianum* suffered irreparable damage. In Germany, especially, the Peace of Augsburg was doomed because it failed to deal with confessional differences, it failed to include all groups (i.e., Reformed Christians) in the terms, it preserved inflammatory provisions such as the “Ecclesiastical Reservation,” and it did nothing to put limits on Jesuit and Tridentine (re)Catholicization in the region. Thus, efforts at peace prior to the Thirty Years' War simply miscarried due to inattention to the underlying religious issues.
  5. Imperial abuses, arising from confessional politics, were also on the rise. One such case which exacerbated tensions in the run-up to the Thirty Years' War was

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<sup>43</sup> Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 361.

the intervention of then Emperor Rudolf II into the church politics at Donauwörth. Due to Protestant resistance to a Roman Catholic procession in April 1606 on St. Mark's Day, Rudolf II sent in troops and restored the Donauwörth parish to Catholic control. This incident led to the formation of the Protestant Union (1608) and the Catholic League (1609) - informal agreements between religiously aligned princes, cities, etc. for military defense. In response to escalating tensions and pressure from the Protestant Union, Rudolf signed the infamous Letter of Majesty on 9 July 1609. This granted the Bohemian Protestants far wider freedoms than the Augsburg Peace of 1555. Essentially, every lord and free city was allowed to choose which confession to follow. This undermined the Peace of Augsburg, and as Peter Wilson remarks, "effectively created a parallel government [in Bohemia]."<sup>44</sup> Again, this was first a religious issue and only secondarily a political one.

6. In the wake of the Tridentine reforms, an aggressive (re)Catholicization was being played out in the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." The papacy was driving this, and the Emperors leading up to the Thirty Years' War (Rudolf II and Matthias) were complacent. This was an issue of religious conviction with very negative political implications as Imperial allowance or force (i.e., Donauwörth incident) was being used to undo the advances of Protestantism.
7. Finally, the election of Ferdinand II, duke of Styria, as the new Holy Roman Emperor – a result guaranteed by the Oñate Agreement – was a clear indication to the Protestants in the empire that forced (re)Catholicization was coming. Twenty years earlier, Ferdinand II had "taken his coronation oath [in Styria] to observe

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<sup>44</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy*, 113.

the liberties of his subjects; but these liberties, he said, had nothing to do with religion. He had simply banished the Protestant leaders of the Styrian estates and had replaced them with his own officials.”<sup>45</sup> Like all of the other problems present in the German lands, the election of Ferdinand II was a religious issue at its core.

As this survey moves forward now to an examination of the Thirty Years’ War proper, the background is in place to interact with the claims of scholars regarding the origins of the conflict. However, what should be abundantly clear at this juncture is that every issue which modern scholarship might want to place in a merely “secular” sphere is, at its core, a religious issue when it is placed in the overarching religio-social, political context of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Corpus Christianum* was a holistic conception of Christian life on earth. The pressures of the Reformation along with the issues it would continue to bring to the fore in “The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” argue strongly that the origins of the Thirty Years’ War should be seen as essentially religious.

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<sup>45</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe*, 223.

## PART 2

### A REVOLT TURNS INTO THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

At this point it is necessary to paint a representative picture of the various scholarly interpretations regarding the nature of the Thirty Years' War. This thesis has already argued that its origins and early outworking should be seen as essentially religious because they were grounded in a complex of issues all related to the reformulation of Christendom due to the Protestant Reformation. This position will be put in relief as various scholarly points are examined and a general critique is presented.

After the brief survey of scholarly opinion is interacted with, we will next survey the conflict proper. This section offers the general contours of the Thirty Years' War. The conflict involved nearly every major and minor power in Europe and was lengthy and complex. However, an attempt at understanding the overall flow of the conflict is important for two reasons. First, it will help to establish the strongly religious nature of the war in its first half, from 1618 to the death of the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus in 1632. Second, it will also provide a transition point. For, as the second half of the Thirty Years' War moves forward from 1633-1648 it will become increasingly clear that the war would ultimately lead to the dissipation of the religio-social, political vision of Corpus Christianum.

#### **Summary and Critique of Scholarly Views on the Origins of the Thirty Years' War**

##### *The Proliferation of Writings about the Thirty Years' War*

The Thirty Years' War has long captured the interest of historians and writers. As soon as its hostilities were concluded in the Peace of Westphalia, contemporaries were

already calling it “The Thirty Years’ War.”<sup>46</sup> Also, within a relatively short amount of time, it was receiving attention as an object for study and novelization. A few of these attempts were particularly noteworthy. The first was the 1667 study *The Conditions of the German Empire* by Samuel Pufendorf, a law professor who served in both Sweden and Brandenburg as an official historiographer.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, a very famous 1668 autobiographical novel by Hans Grimmelshausen entitled *The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus* (German: *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*) is considered valuable source material.<sup>48</sup> In this work, Grimmelshausen details the ordinary experience of peasants during the war as well as the grotesque atrocities and brutal violence committed by soldiers and peasants alike in the desperate days of the extended conflict. Another important contemporary source was Hans Heberle’s diary accounts, *Zeytregister* (1618-1672).<sup>49</sup>

Yet, while the above-mentioned source texts are important, they are literally but a few of thousands of works published on the Thirty Years’ War. The conflict included participants from Germany, Bohemia (Czech Republic), Hungary, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, and others. The dizzying number of languages and perspectives is literally mind-boggling. Thus, while it is impossible to give a complete survey of the scholarship on the Thirty Years’ War, it is imaginable to provide a highly selective, yet representative summary of important scholarly views. In the

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<sup>46</sup> See Geoffrey Mortimer, “Did Contemporaries Recognize a ‘Thirty Years’ War’?” *English Historical Review* 116, no. 465 (February 2001): 124-136.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years War* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> See selections in Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke, eds. *Experiencing the Thirty Years’ War: A Brief History with Documents*, 39-41 and 179-182.

paragraphs that follow, some notable sources will be mentioned and their arguments summarized.

### *Important Scholarly Trends Regarding the Thirty Years' War*

An important scholarly history of the Thirty Years' War was completed by the playwright, poet, philosopher, and historian Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller. His survey, *History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany*, was published in 1791. He would also publish an epic poem based around the Catholic General Albrecht von Wallenstein in the late 1790's which is considered "the equivalent of Shakespeare's history play for the German-speaking world."<sup>50</sup> Schiller's history is instructive for it included elements of the Gothic preoccupation with death along with an emphasis on the tragic inevitability of the conflict.<sup>51</sup> Yet, it is also notable as an archetype of the religious interpretation that dominated until the latter part of the twentieth century. Schiller opened his account with a strong statement that shaped the whole of his narrative:

From the beginning of the religious wars in Germany, to the peace of Münster [one of the treaties in the larger Peace of Westphalia], scarcely any thing great or remarkable occurred in the political world of Europe in which the Reformation had not an important share. All the events of this period, if they did not originate in, soon became mixed up with, the question of religion, and no state was either too great or too little to feel directly or indirectly more or less its influence.<sup>52</sup>

With slight variations in emphasis, the religious interpretation of the Thirty Years' War held sway from roughly the end of the conflict until the latter part of the twentieth century. For example, the Cambridge History of Christianity sums up the view that both the cause and the settlement of the conflict was, at its core, religious: "The Thirty Years'

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<sup>50</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy*, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-8.

<sup>52</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany*, trans. Rev. A. J. W. Morrison (San Bernardino, CA: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC/Qontro, 2010 [originally published 1791]), 8.

War (1618-1648), being in part a war of religion, made it clear that a better and more comprehensive settlement than the Peace of Augsburg was needed. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) which ended the war was ... a fundamentally religious settlement.”<sup>53</sup> Again, while some variation was present, this view continued.

Another important study, which left the religious view intact but also began widening the examination of its causes, is C.V. Wedgwood’s 1938 treatment of the conflict, *The Thirty Years War*. In this work she clearly proclaimed the centrality of religion in the conflict. For instance, in commenting on the fact that its origins were in religion and its effects devastated religious belief, she wrote: “After the expenditure of so much human life to so little purpose, men might have grasped the essential futility of pitting the beliefs of the mind to the judgment of the sword. Instead, they rejected religion as an object to fight for and found others.”<sup>54</sup> However, Wedgwood also began to widen the scope of examination. In examining the religious causes she paid special attention to the militant and political nature of Calvinism and the role it played in the conflict.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, while emphasizing the German situation, she also began to emphasize the power struggles between France, England, Spain, and Germany.

Consciously or not, scholarship in the latter part of the twentieth century has tended to move further down the road Wedgwood began to travel and embrace non-religious causation for the conflict. An instance of this trend is the very important

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<sup>53</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, 238.

<sup>54</sup> C.V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (New York: New York Review Books, 2005 [1938]), 506.

<sup>55</sup> For instance, she makes the following statement on pg. 22 regarding Calvin’s political structuring of Geneva and its widening application to Europe: “As the organization and the doctrine spread, the monarchic governments of Europe found themselves challenged each in turn by a religion which supplied in itself a rival political formation.” *Ibid.*, 506.

scholarship put forward by a team of academics under the guidance of Geoffrey Parker in *The Thirty Years' War*, now in its second, updated edition. Parker and the other writers examined the conflict from nearly every possible angle and emphasized several factors: the Habsburg monarchy and its problems, the paralysis of the Imperial institutions, and the growing economic issues highlighted by monarchical debt.<sup>56</sup> Parker's treatment does not overlook religion. Nevertheless, it tended to view even the religious causes of the war as relating to difficulties with the succession and election of new Habsburg monarchs.<sup>57</sup>

Continuing the trend away from viewing the war as centrally religious was Richard Bonney: "The Thirty Years' War began as a religious war ... [but] developed into a political contest that saw the Austrian Habsburg rulers of the Holy Roman Empire seeking to expand their control in Europe, while a number of other powers (such as Sweden) tried to limit their ambitions."<sup>58</sup> This line of thinking has been taken even further by Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke. While not dismissing religious factors entirely, they have commented, "The Thirty Years' War has often been referred to as the last of the religious wars. *This characterization is problematic for several reasons.* On both sides of the religious divide, rulers made decisions based on secular dynastic interests, international relations, and constitutional politics."<sup>59</sup> As the move away from viewing the war as essentially religious has gained traction, the issues of Habsburg rule and the Imperial constitution have begun to be emphasized. Stephen J. Lee, for example,

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<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1-41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 22ff.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Bonney, *The Thirty Years' War 1618-1648*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke, *Experiencing the Thirty Years' War: A Brief History with Documents*, 44. [emphasis added]

represents the view of many that the Thirty Years' War was, at its core, a constitutional/electoral crisis which was exacerbated along confessional lines.<sup>60</sup>

A survey of the scholarship regarding the war would not be complete, though, without referencing the prolific writings and strong viewpoint of Peter H. Wilson. The G.F. Grant Professor of History at the University of Hull is the chief proponent of the drive toward viewing the Thirty Years' War as a constitutional conflict of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." In his nearly 1000-page study of the war, Wilson has asserted two points of particular importance. First, he stated that though the event was extremely complex, its various parts should be connected "through their common relationship to the imperial constitution."<sup>61</sup> Second, while not dismissing religion entirely he has rejected religious causes as being central.<sup>62</sup>

#### *Critique and Reassertion of the Link to Corpus Christianum*

It would be unfair and disingenuous to pretend that there were not significant imperial problems which played a part in fomenting the Thirty Years' War. In fact, in a conflict that was often confusing, even to contemporaries living through it, it would be the height of modern hubris to declare that an absolutely definitive interpretation of the origins of the war is possible.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, as this thesis has argued, the newer

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years' War*, 13ff.

<sup>61</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>63</sup> Tryntje Helfferich gives a lengthy, but impressive statement that outlines the extreme complexities leading up to the war. He writes, "In addition to the structural problems of the empire and the common motivations of acquisitiveness, the war aims of the participants were shaped too by individual character. Personal experiences, beliefs, cherished grievances, family situations, alcoholism, and so on, led the men and women living through this war to respond in different ways, even when faced with the same problems as their neighbors. Local circumstances too, such as poor relationships between princes and their estates, crop failures, looting armies, dynastic squabbles, or any number of other unique circumstances, could cause local changes that might influence the empire as a whole. These elements of human agency and

interpretations which have tended to sideline religious causes, while pointing out valuable issues, have also overstated the case. Below is a brief critique of the overall trend toward minimizing religious causes, along with specific points that argue against this tendency.

N. M. Sutherland has written, “No historian of the Thirty Years’ War has paid systematic attention to its origins. *Most have contented themselves with taking the imperial civil war as the real starting-point.*”<sup>64</sup> It is the opinion of this author that she is largely correct. Thus, this work has given systematic attention to the origins and outworking of Corpus Christianum up to the eruption of hostilities in 1618. Failure to recognize the overarching religio-social, political framework of Christendom has led to a devaluing of the religious causes, a position that is unwarranted. The war’s origins lie in the revision and fracturing of Christendom precipitated by the radical events of the Protestant Reformation. The Thirty Years’ War represented the final attempt to reformulate and appropriate the model of Corpus Christianum.<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, while there were significant political challenges within the electoral system for Habsburg succession (economic and military disparity between princes, issues

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chance cannot be underestimated in explaining the war, since there were many moments when things might easily have gone differently: errors in judgment, greed, hubris, fear, illness, lost battles, missed rendezvous, failed uprisings, mislaid letters, collapsed negotiations, lost horseshoes. Alliances were created and fell apart; princes changed sides, dropped out, died; new foreign powers were spurred to intervene; strategies shifted with the loss or win of a battle or territory; and on and on.” Tryntje Helfferich, ed. and trans. *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2009), xvi-xvii.

<sup>64</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, “The Origins of the Thirty Years’ War and the Structure of European Politics,” 587. [emphasis added]

<sup>65</sup> Ironically, Peter Wilson, while seeking to minimize religious causes actually makes a similar argument to the one presented here. For instance, in refuting the “state-building” hypothesis of J. Burkhardt, Wilson comments on pg. 565: “Sixteenth-century rulers saw themselves *not as independent sovereigns, but as the leading Estates of a single Christendom.* They distinguished sharply between themselves and the infidel Turks. *Intra-Christian wars thus represented competition for status within a distinct system.*” [emphasis added] Perhaps if Wilson and others were less focused on micro-causation and were able to emphasize the macro-causation of the Reformation challenge to Corpus Christianum, they would be able to give the religious causes their due. Peter H. Wilson, “The Causes of the Thirty Years’ War 1618-1648.” *English Historical Review* 123, no. 502 (2008), 554-584.

of language and culture in the respective territories of the electoral kingdoms, etc.), these were largely nullified by the Oñate Agreement of 1617. This compact clarified the role of the Spanish and German branches of the House of Habsburg and streamlined the succession of Ferdinand II to the throne. However, the *religious question* surrounding the leadership of Corpus Christianum was still unresolved. This question became especially significant as the Calvinistic-Reformed vision for Christendom became ascendant in the important electoral region of the Palatinate, as well as in Bohemia, prior to the war. The Bohemian Rebellion of 1618 was the flashpoint for the outbreak of wider hostilities.

Even on a popular level, the issues generated by the Reformation were decidedly religious. As Wedgwood remarked, “The generation which preceded the Thirty Years’ War may not have been more virtuous than its predecessors, but it was certainly more devout.”<sup>66</sup> Her statement holds no little importance in grasping the religious situation of the populace. It is argued by some scholars that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation actually evangelized the general population, which, while participating in the Roman Catholic Church’s sacramental system, did not necessarily have strong confessional tendencies. For example, Kaspar von Greyerz includes a quote by the French historian Jean Delameau on this point: “[O]n the eve of the Reformation, the average European was only superficially Christianized. Under these conditions, the two reforms, that of Luther and that of Rome, were in the end merely two ostensibly competing, though in the final analyses converging, processes of Christianizing the masses and spiritualizing religious sensibilities.”<sup>67</sup> An additional example of this idea is

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<sup>66</sup> C.V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Kaspar von Greyerz, *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Europe: 1500-1800*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63.

seen in Marc R. Forster's assertion that the Tridentine attempts at (re)Catholicization which had grown in intensity prior to the Thirty Years' War were actually efforts to convert generational Protestants to the Roman Catholic faith. Whatever the case, the issues brought out by the Protestant Reformation were unresolved, and at both the aristocratic and popular level, religion became central. In this climate, Christians were anxious to assert either a Protestant or Roman Catholic identity for the reunification of Corpus Christianum.

Finally, the pressure being applied by the Habsburg monarchy and its staunchly Roman Catholic vision for Christendom had heightened the tensions in the Holy Roman Empire. This was especially true for the Emperor Ferdinand II: "His Catholic convictions amounted ... to 'a consuming passion.' Convinced that he had a divine mission to reconvert the Habsburg dominions to Catholicism, he had already imposed 'confessional absolutism' on his own province of Styria."<sup>68</sup> It was his intent to do the same in Bohemia, something the strongly Calvinistic Christians there could not abide. Again, this was a religious issue. The partitions and challenges left over from a once-united, now-divided Christendom were "turning up the heat" in the German lands. The Peace of Augsburg could not and would not hold.

As this study moves forward into an overview of the struggle itself, the essentially religious nature of the conflict's origins will be seen even more clearly. This was particularly the case in the first half of the Thirty Years' War from the Bohemian Revolt to the death of the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus (1618-1632). As the survey of the proceeds into the second half (1634-1648) it will be seen, though, that the war eventually undermined religion and became a pan-European war waged over increasingly

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<sup>68</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years' War*, 22.

secularized, nationalistic motivations. From there, a move toward dissecting the effects of the Thirty Years' War will be effectively launched. We now turn to an examination of the war in an effort to emphasize its major battles and developments.

### **The Thirty Years' War, Part One: 1618-1632**

#### *The Bohemian Revolt and Aftermath (1618-1623)*

Although tensions were running high after the Donauwörth Incident in 1607 and the formations of the Protestant Union and Catholic League, they were soon eased. Rudolph's Letter of Majesty, followed by his successor, Matthias's, relatively benign rule led many to believe that a period of religious toleration in accord with the Augsburg Peace would recommence. This was not to be the case. With Matthias' appointment of his Jesuit-trained, ardently Catholic nephew, Ferdinand II, as his successor it was merely a matter of time before conflict would arise. This became a foregone conclusion as Ferdinand was crowned King of Bohemia in June of 1617. As King of Styria, Ferdinand II had enacted aggressive (re)Catholicization efforts. There was every reason to believe that he would do the same in Bohemia. As Helfferich comments: "It was an open secret that Ferdinand agreed to uphold the Bohemian Letter of Majesty only in order to gain the Bohemian crown, and once named as king-designate, he immediately began a systematic attempt to suppress both Protestantism and the local estates in his territories."<sup>69</sup> These attempts included censorship, the deposing of Protestant officials, and a reversal of religious policies determined under previous agreements.

This situation was untenable, and on May 23, 1618 the so-called Defenestration of Prague launched the Thirty Years' War. In this incident, two representatives of King

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<sup>69</sup> Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 2-3.

Ferdinand, along with one of their secretaries, were thrown out of a 70-foot-high window in Prague Castle. Miraculously they survived. However, the fragile peace in the German lands did not. Events moved quickly as the rebels declared Ferdinand II to be deposed as their king. In his stead, they placed the Bohemian crown on Frederick V, Elector of the Palatinate. Frederick, a devout Calvinist-Protestant and powerful prince of the Palatinate, was only 23 years old. Despite his passionate Calvinism and the fact that he was “one of the best-connected princes in Protestant Europe,”<sup>70</sup> Frederick turned out to be a very weak leader. He was not only unable to effectively organize the military but he also struggled to make alliances and gain support. He was prodded on by some of his staunchest allies, particularly Prince Christian of Anhalt-Bernberg. In the end, though, even potential allies such as his father-in-law, King James I of England, were not willing to enter into the conflict on his behalf.

The situation for Frederick and the Bohemian rebels quickly deteriorated. In 1619, Ferdinand II officially took hold of the title of Holy Roman Emperor from his uncle, Matthias. This was critical, for although the Bohemian rebels had deposed him as their king, the title and rights of Emperor allowed him to assert legal claims to the throne and to undermine the statesmanship of Frederick. Additionally, the Spanish Habsburg forces invaded Frederick’s territories in the Lower Palatinate and undermined his ability to utilize his title and strength in his native electoral region. By the first major battle of the war, at White Mountain (5 miles outside of Prague) on November 8, 1620, the situation for the Bohemians was bleak. Though the military numbers were roughly equivalent, Ferdinand’s forces were guided by the experienced Catholic League commanders, Maximilian of Bavaria and Johannes Tserklaes, Count of Tilly. By contrast,

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<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years’ War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 47.

Frederick's forces were not seasoned and his Upper Palatinate minister, Prince Christian of Anhalt-Bernburg, was not of the quality of Tilly or Maximilian. Within hours, the rebel forces were crushed and Prague was opened to the onslaught of the Imperial-Bavarian army. Maximilian offered immunity to those who fled. However, rebel leaders who stayed were hunted down and killed. Frederick V was forced to flee back to his Palatinate lands and abdicated the Bohemian throne.<sup>71</sup>

Using the Palatinate as his base of operations, Frederick sought over the next three years to regain his foothold and make gains. Unfortunately for him, his forces absorbed one defeat after another. By August of 1623 he had lost everything and was forced to flee to the United Provinces (the Netherlands). In February of 1624, Ferdinand II officially deposed Frederick as Elector of the Palatinate.

The decisive defeat of the Calvinist-Protestant rebels, along with the unwillingness of the remaining Lutheran princes of the Protestant Union to support the failed leadership of Frederick should have ended the conflict. However, for three reasons it continued and exploded into a wider war after 1624. First, pockets of resistance in the Upper and Rhine Palatinate refused to give up and held out for years. Second, the Spanish Habsburg forces moved into the Rhine Palatinate to prepare for further war with their former (United Provinces) and current (Spanish Netherlands) Dutch lands. A twelve-year truce from 1609-1621 had kept the peace. Now, Spanish intervention exacerbated Protestant and Catholic tensions. Third, and finally, The Lutheran king of Denmark, Christian IV, who owned many lands in northern Germany, became convinced

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<sup>71</sup> For this reason, Frederick V was mocked by his enemies as the "Winter King," his rule having lasted only the winter of 1619-1620.

that he must intervene for the Protestant cause and for his territory. This would set up the next phase of the war (1625-1629).

Again, it is important to note that this first phase of the Thirty Years' War was decidedly religious. Territorial gains and political strategy certainly played a part. Nonetheless, the aggressive (re)Catholicization of Ferdinand II coupled with the diametrically opposed Calvinist-Protestant vision for Corpus Christianum found in Bohemia and the Palatinate was the major factor in the war. A further corroboration of the centrality of religious causation was found in the popular view of the time. This assessment was that the conflict represented God's judgment on the sinfulness of Christendom. The famous diary of the shoemaker Hans Heberle, *Zeytregister*, ensconced this perspective. In a 1630 re-write of his diary's 1618 introduction, he commented on the religious import of the war and an associated astral event:

Anno 1618, a great comet appeared in the form of a great and terrible rod through and by which God threatened us mightily because of our sinful lives, which we fully deserved and continue to deserve daily. ... What it meant and what would follow thereafter [the war] causes one to cry hot tears ... Anno 1619, Ferdinand II became the [Holy] Roman Emperor, under whom a great persecution happened through war, unrest, and the spilling of the blood of Christians ... First he started a big war in Bohemia, which he then oppressed under his religion.<sup>72</sup>

From the Emperor to the "man on the street," the beginning of the Thirty Years' War was widely viewed as being religiously centered. When this popular view of the conflict's contemporaries is examined and set in the context of Corpus Christianum, it becomes clear that the religious origins of the war should not be dismissed in the more secularized climate of contemporary scholarship.

#### *The Danish Phase (1624-1629)*

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<sup>72</sup> Hans Heberle, "The Comet of 1618 as a Sign of the Times and a Bad Omen" in Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke, *Experiencing the Thirty Years War: A Brief History with Documents*, 40-41.

Significant effort was spent to frame the beginning phase of the war as essentially religious. As this examination moves forward, it will be argued that this continued to be the case in the Danish phase, despite two surprising twists; one made by the Lutheran king of Denmark, Christian IV, and the other by Ferdinand II. Both of these players, in an effort to curtail the conflict, would focus their attention around the agreement which had allowed Christendom in the Holy Roman Empire to limp along, the Peace of Augsburg (1555). However, their application of the Augsburg agreement differed greatly, with Ferdinand's action almost guaranteeing that religious conflict would continue.

With his resounding defeat at the hands of the Imperial-Bavarian army, Frederick V was deposed and exiled. However, his remaining allies in the Palatinate, as well as his father-in-law in England, sought to put pressure on King Christian IV of Denmark to rise to the defense of the Protestant cause. Initially, the Dane was somewhat reluctant to do so. Nonetheless, he was also alarmed at the aggressive (re)Catholicization being implemented by Ferdinand II. After some deliberation, Christian declared his intention to come to the aid of the Protestants in a letter (February 21, 1626) to the archbishops and electors of the northern German lands. However, in a surprising twist, he also sought to make clear that his desire was not to outlaw Roman Catholicism but, instead, to return the large part of Christendom represented by the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," to the compromise position of the Peace of Augsburg:

[W]e were inclined toward peace ... and wished to be excused before God and the world for all of the judgments and bloodletting that would ensue. ... [However] in order to save this circle [i.e., defensive alliance in northern electorates] ... and to save German liberty, which is everywhere suffering, we joined with them in a confederation so that thereby, with the grace of God the Almighty, liberty and the

Religious and Secular Peace [of 1555] might not be lost, but conserved through those means allowed by God and nature.<sup>73</sup>

Despite his somewhat lengthy deliberations about becoming involved in the fight, King Christian was initially very confident he would succeed. However, Emperor Ferdinand II had not been idle in the wake of his initial victories during the Bohemian rebellion and the Palatinate phase of the war. Desiring an army that would be under direct Imperial control without any constraints from the Catholic League, Ferdinand had negotiated with his general Albrecht von Wallenstein and had authorized him to raise an army of some 25,000 troops. Wallenstein was an adept recruiter and negotiator as well as an impressive military commander. The force he raised would prove to be decisive in the Danish phase of the war. Though Wallenstein suffered some minor setbacks, his army crushed the Danish forces on September 2, 1628 in the Battle of Wolgast. Christian IV was forced to take refuge by ship and return to Denmark. By 1629, he had negotiated with Ferdinand for peace and withdrawn entirely from the war.

While this turn of events could have, once again, ended the conflict, Ferdinand II would make a move that guaranteed further bloodshed. Ferdinand – under the advice of his hawkish, Jesuit confessor Lamormaini – would issue the fateful Edict of Restitution. In this decree, Ferdinand also appealed to the Peace of Augsburg, albeit in a very different way than Christian IV. First, his dictate sought to reverse the gains made by Lutherans in claiming church property through their former refusal to abide by the controversial “Ecclesiastical Reservation” in the Augsburg peace. Also, Ferdinand’s order outlawed Calvinism and any sect that was not Roman Catholic or adhered to the Augsburg Confession (i.e., Lutheran). Two brief excerpts from the Edict of Restitution

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<sup>73</sup>“Letter of King Christian IV of Denmark” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 80-81.

help to illustrate the untenable religio-political situation that was introduced through this decree. First, the attack on Lutherans through the retroactive enforcement of the

Ecclesiastical Reservation:

Thus we are finally resolved, for the genuine implementation of the Secular and Religious Peace, to delegate forthwith our imperial commissioners to go into the empire; to reclaim from their illegal holders those archbishoprics and bishoprics, prelatures, cloisters, and other ecclesiastical property, hospitals, and foundations that the Catholics possessed at the time of the Treaty of Passau [1552].<sup>74</sup>

Next, the devastating blow to the Calvinist-Reformed Protestants, especially those who had sided with Frederick V:

We also hereby ... declare and recognize that the Religious Peace concerns and includes only those of the ancient Catholic religion and the adherents of the unaltered Augsburg Confession, as it was presented to our beloved ancestor Emperor Charles V in the year 1530 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. All other contrary doctrines and sects, of whatever name and whether they have already arisen or are still to arise, shall be impermissible, excluded from the peace, forbidden, and neither tolerated nor suffered.<sup>75</sup>

With the above diktat, Ferdinand had once again shown that he had no intention of allowing for Protestantism to have an equal footing in the life of *Corpus Christianum*. This decree would raise the ire of many in the Holy Roman Empire and precipitated the next phase of the war, the intervention by Sweden under the command of the “Lion of the North,” Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden.

As with the earlier Bohemian and Palatinate phases of the war, the Danish intervention can be seen as a decidedly religious endeavor. Perhaps more than any personality in the war, Christian IV seemed to have had pure motives. He did seek to “save” the Protestant cause, although not to the exclusion of Catholic worship and

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<sup>74</sup>“The Edict of Restitution (March 6, 1629)” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 97.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

freedom. The Danish king, in fact, seemed content to live *within* the tension of a reformulated Christendom under the terms of the Peace of Augsburg. Christian IV was moved toward the conflict, inexorably, by the designs of the Protestants in England and the Calvinists supporting Frederick V. There were *religious* causes at root in this stage of the war even if political opportunism was also at play. Again, the controlling issue at this point of the war was still to decide the shape of the religio-social, political reality of Corpus Christianum.

For the Roman Catholic Habsburgs, the motives at this stage were also decidedly religious – especially for Ferdinand II and his Jesuit advisors. The Edict of Restitution was a decidedly pro-Catholic, religiously motivated, power grab. It fit the pattern of Ferdinand's rule – a pattern exhibited since his first moves as King of Styria. Ferdinand, like the other Habsburg princes and monarchs, was self-consciously Catholic and determined to restore the proper order of Corpus Christianum to its rightful Roman Catholic foundation. Ironically, however, Ferdinand's decree set the stage for drawing in Swedish military might under King Gustavus Adolphus. This led to renewal of the Protestant cause as well as the unseating of the important imperial general, Albrecht von Wallenstein.

#### *Swedish Intervention (1630-1635)*

With the official entrance of Sweden into the fighting, the Thirty Years' War began to take on a decidedly international character. At this point in the conflict, one can see the ever-widening scope of the war. Standing on one side and representing most of the Roman Catholic powers in Europe were the pro-Habsburg powers of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, along with Italian and papal elements. On the other side were those

aligned with the pro-Protestant elements in Germany and Bohemia along with the Swedes who enjoyed Franco-Dutch support (indirectly through financial payments, and directly through military alliances against Spanish and Italian interests).

Despite this, it is the opinion of this author that the conflict at this point still remained a battle for the shape of a united *Corpus Christianum*. This can be seen especially in the larger-than-life figure, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. It is true that Geoffrey Parker, in citing Adolphus' war declaration from June 1630 does state the following: "There was no mention at all of what Sweden hoped to gain by her intervention, nor of any desire to save the Protestant cause from extinction at the hands of Imperial troops."<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the important statesman, Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna of Sweden, steadfastly maintained that there was no distinct religious purpose behind Sweden's involvement. However, a wider look at Protestant sentiment during this stage of the war, as well as a look at the character and aims of Gustavus, will show, once again, that the war continued to be decidedly religious in character.

Swedish involvement in the war was begun and expanded by a combination of factors. First, King Gustavus was clearly in the crosshairs of Imperial expansionism. As the Danish threat from Christian IV quickly came to naught, Albrecht von Wallenstein – with pressure from the Emperor, Spain, and France – had begun to march north toward the Baltic Sea. The army of Wallenstein occupied large areas of Pomerania, making the invasion of Sweden for Imperial gain a distinct possibility. It became quite clear that this was the plan when Wallenstein put Straslund (northern Pomeranian city ideal for launching a naval invasion of Sweden) under siege. Straslund held, but the

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<sup>76</sup>Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 109.

counteroffensive launched from there by Christian IV would lead to his destruction at the aforementioned Battle of Wolgast.

This would lead to the second factor bringing Sweden into the war, the direct intervention of Wallenstein and Ferdinand II in the Swedish conflict against Poland. Geoffrey Parker sums up the situation well: “[Christian IV’s defeat] left Wallenstein free to loan 12,000 of his troops to the emperor’s brother-in-law, Sigismund of Poland, who had been fighting off a Swedish invasion since 1625.”<sup>77</sup> This intervention nearly led to the death of Gustavus and the destruction of his army at the Battle of Honigfelde on June 27, 1629.

The third factor followed Gustavus’ near demise. He escaped and retired from Poland just in time to receive a French envoy sent by the crafty Cardinal Richelieu. Richelieu and France, seeking to undermine Habsburg power (to be seen in more detail later), had sought, to no avail, to co-opt Maximilian of Bavaria as an ally against Ferdinand. Additionally, France had sought to persuade Christian IV to continue the Protestant war effort, again to no avail. However, in a complex agreement worked out between Sweden and Poland-Lithuania, Richelieu’s envoy, Hercule de Charnacé, was able to broker peace and extract Gustavus from Poland. Upon brokering this peace (the Truce of Almark), Gustavus was persuaded to enter into the fray in the German lands.

Once Gustavus invaded, a final factor helped convince the King of Sweden to expand his military involvement: the dismissal of Wallenstein. Albrecht von Wallenstein had proven himself an able general and a crafty alliance-maker. However, reaction to the problems caused by Ferdinand’s overreach in the Edict of Restitution combined with alarm at Wallenstein’s growing power, led a group of Imperial Catholic electors to act.

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<sup>77</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years’ War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 110.

Richard Bonney sums up these developments well: “At their electoral meeting at Regensburg in August 1630, they forced the dismissal of Waldstein [Wallensein] as Imperial generalissimo, refused to elect Frederick II’s son as king of the Romans (apparently questioning the Habsburg automatic right of succession to the Imperial title) and, most significantly, reduced the size of the Imperial army.”<sup>78</sup> Command of the armies of the Catholic and the Holy Roman Empire shifted to Count Tilly. Due to this confusion in the Imperial forces, King Gustavus Adolphus, the “Lion of the North,” was able to make swift and steady progress through Germany from 1630 until early 1631. By January of 1631, the northern city of Magdeburg, which was seeking to break free from the grip of Ferdinand’s (re)Catholicization, had become Sweden’s operational base.

The Protestant cause seemed once again ascendant, but at this very moment the war would take a brutal turn. The Thirty Years’ War up to this juncture had already been a fierce and bloody affair, with much suffering among the soldiery and peasantry alike. However, on “20 May 1631 ... the army of the Catholic League, under Tilly and Pappenheim, captured and sacked Magdeburg, in what constituted the single worst atrocity of the war and certainly the event that was most widely recorded. Practically the whole city was destroyed by fire and 24,000 men, women and children are said to have died.”<sup>79</sup> The city was subjected to not only the fire, but the burning hatred and resentment of the Catholic armies. A contemporary eyewitness clearly believed the murder, rape, and pillage of the event to be, at least in part, religiously motivated: “Thus it happened that the city, with all of its inhabitants, fell into the hands and under the power of its enemies, whose fierceness and cruelty came partly out of a *common hatred of the adherents of the*

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<sup>78</sup>Richard Bonney, *The Thirty Years’ War 1618-1648*, 42.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

*Augsburg Confession.*”<sup>80</sup> The Sack of Magdeburg marked a transition point toward increased cruelty and violence, especially against non-combatants.

After this setback, the Protestants armies of Sweden and its allies were motivated to avenge the deeds done at Magdeburg. This vengeance would come quickly in an important victory for the Protestants at the First Battle of Breitenfeld on September 17, 1631. This was the largest battle of the war in sheer numbers of troops and artillery. The Saxon-Swedish army numbered between 39-42,000 infantry and cavalry against a force of 31-37,000 under Tilly and the joint Catholic League-Imperial army. This battle was a smashing victory for the Protestant forces, with Tilly losing somewhere between one-third to two-thirds of his army. This victory virtually guaranteed that the war would continue unabated for years to come. The Protestant cause was emboldened, yet the Catholic cause was not fully undone. More bloodshed would be sure to come.

The events of Breitenfeld also illustrate the continued, strongly religious view of the war among its participants at this juncture. The victory had raised the hopes of Protestant leaders for total victory against the Catholics and a new era for *Corpus Christianum* under Lutheran and/or Reformed dominance. In a letter from the Protestant ruler, Landgrave William V of Hesse-Cassel, to Gustavus Adolphus this emphasis can be clearly seen. William V asserted in the letter that the conflict had always been a religious struggle: “[T]he primary cause of the arming of the Evangelicals was freedom of conscience.”<sup>81</sup> Additionally, he called for the complete removal of Imperial or papal influence regarding interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, and by extension, the

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<sup>80</sup> Otto van Guericke, “The Sack of Magdeburg (May 20, 1631) in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 108. [emphasis added]

<sup>81</sup> William V of Hesse-Cassel, “Protestants Triumphant (March 5, 1632)” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 119.

Peace of Augsburg. Finally, he echoed other calls for vengeance against Roman Catholics: “Finally ... 1) ... the Catholics should be completely and totally disarmed ... 3) That on account of the damages we have sustained, and just as they intended to do with us, the papists, must pay Your Royal Majesty and us Evangelicals with their lands and people.”<sup>82</sup> William’s sentiments resonated well with a Protestant military and populace that had suffered greatly under (re)Catholicization and fourteen years of Catholic military dominance up to this point in the conflict. Religious factors were still dominant.

Additionally, the warrant for continuing to call the Thirty Years’ War a religious conflict through this stage can be taken from looking at the figure of Gustavus Adolphus himself. Due to his Calvinist upbringing and his strong distaste for the Catholic mass, Gustavus was firmly a Protestant (though, more Lutheran than Reformed in his sensibilities). Additionally, there is little doubt that Gustavus viewed his entire life’s mission as emanating from a divine call. He had (seemingly miraculously) survived many military incidents in his life, and he had taken these, along with his father’s sense of divine providence as marking out his life’s path:

Such episodes reinforced his faith in divine providence and belief that he was doing God’s will. Later writers, like the philosopher Hegel, took the king at his word and interpreted him as an instrument of world spirit, destined to unfold history. Gustavus grew up with his father’s propaganda that linked the Vasas’ [the royal house of Sweden to which Gustavus belonged] dynastic struggle to the Protestant cause. He [Gustavus] appears to have sincerely believed that these two interests were genuinely the same.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> William V of Hesse-Cassel, “Protestants Triumphant (March 5, 1632)” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 123.

<sup>83</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years’ War: Europe’s Tragedy*, 183.

Further evidence of this was the way in which Gustavus' military was very strictly governed with respect to religious devotion and discipline.<sup>84</sup> Despite the growing political motivations of some European powers – particularly France – the conflict up through this stage remained one in which committed Protestants and Catholics continued to fight for the soul of Corpus Christianum.

The Protestant hopes for Christendom were now pinned on the “Lion of the North.” Emboldened by success at Breitenfeld and convinced of the favor of God, Gustavus and the French-backed, Swedish-German armies pressed forward. Throughout the remainder of 1631 and well into 1632, they liberated Protestant areas from Imperial control and the oppressive yoke of the Edict of Restitution. Gustavus pushed through the territories of Franconia and Thuringia and down the Main and Rhine river valleys. He retook the Lower Palatinate and marched into the electorate of Mainz. Here, the Swedish army built a “vast military camp, called Gustavusburg, as the base for his conquering army.”<sup>85</sup> Spirits were high. However, at the height of his power in the German lands, Gustavus and the Protestant cause began to falter. Alarmed at the rapid march of the Swedish armies, Ferdinand II recalled the deposed Albrecht von Wallenstein. This proved to be a key factor in the undoing of Adolphus and in the lengthening of the war. The building of a confined military camp (Gustavusburg) also proved to be disastrous. The cutting of supply lines by Wallenstein coupled with outbreaks of disease in the crowded Swedish encampment brought about a swift reduction in the Swedish numbers. Additionally, Wallenstein dispersed his troops into smaller units to combat his army's

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<sup>84</sup> See William Watts, “The Swedish Discipline (1632)” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 126-127.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Bonney, *The Thirty Years War 1618-1648*, 47.

own struggles with illness and supply. Bonney credits the above conditions with setting the stage for the still-large yet greatly-reduced forces (18,000 for Wallenstein and approximately 19,000 for Gustavus) which would engage at the Battle of Lützen on November 16, 1632. The battle was largely indecisive except for one crucial event: the death of King Gustavus Adolphus. This threw the Protestant, Swedish-led army into disarray and decisively turned the conflict from a religious war into a European civil war, with Franco-Spanish tensions and full-scale French engagement driving another decade and a half of brutal, scorched-earth bloodshed. Setback after setback for the Protestant armies would continue until 1634.

### **The Thirty Years' War, Part Deux: 1634-1648**

#### *French Intervention and Secularization of the Conflict (1634/5-1648)*

After two years of steady setbacks and slackening morale among the Swedish-Protestant militants, the Imperial forces appeared to be gaining the upper hand. However, a seeming “ray of light” for the Protestants came on February 25, 1634 as the ever-scheming, always-powerful, yet never-trusted *generalissimo* Albrecht von Wallenstein was assassinated due to his attempts to broker a peace with Saxony, Brandenburg, and Sweden behind Ferdinand II’s back. Wallenstein was a pivotal figure in the early success of the Habsburg-Catholic cause. Nevertheless, his loyalties were often in question: “The complexity of his character makes him more difficult to categorize than any of his contemporaries; he seems to have been part-mercenary, part-diplomat, and part-political aspirant.”<sup>86</sup> Whatever, the case, Ferdinand II sent a group of foreign mercenaries to end the career and life of Albrecht von Wallenstein.

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<sup>86</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years War*, 25.

This seemed to provide an opening for the Swedish-Protestant army. After Gustavus' demise, the overall command of his forces was handed to Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. Bernard was not as gifted as King Adolphus, but he proved to be a somewhat steadying influence. Still, despite Wallenstein's death and the Protestant stabilization, the Imperial-Catholic cause appeared to be near victory. Ferdinand III (the son of the Emperor) was given the overall command of the Imperial forces after Wallenstein's demise and was initially very effective. Additionally, his cousin, Fernando, Cardinal-Infante of Spain, increased the presence and importance of Spain in the conflict. At the First Battle of Nördlingen on September 6, 1634, the Imperial-Catholic army, with the united forces of the Spanish and Germano-Austrian Habsburg lines, delivered a crushing defeat to the Protestant forces. Total victory for the Imperial forces seemed close at hand.

It might have been if not for the full-scale involvement of France which came to dominate the second half of the Thirty Years' War. For years, the French minister Armand-Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, had been the driving force of French policy under Louis XIII. In agreements with the United Provinces (a Spanish enemy, the northern Netherlands), through the Truce of Almark (which brought Sweden formally into the war), and in general attempts to undermine the Germano-Austrian Habsburgs and Spanish Habsburgs, Richelieu and France had proven themselves to be Catholic, yes, but also the most "political" (in the more modern, secular sense) of all the groups involved in the Thirty Years' War. However, France had largely been content to work the angles behind the scenes. This would change quickly and dramatically after tensions with its long-term enemy, Spain, were re-sparked on March 26, 1635. Utilizing its position in the Spanish Netherlands, the Spaniards attacked the city of Trier in the Palatinate and then

captured its French-allied protector, Christoph von Sötern. This incident would bring France into the war in a formal capacity.

The French involvement would come to dominate and unleashed a period where the Thirty Years' War became increasingly secularized. Franco-Spanish tensions, mercenary armies, and national-linguistic-regional-state concerns became the dominant factors in the conflict. The Thirty Years' War was no longer centrally religious, but increasingly developed into a secular, pan-European war. From 1635 through 1648, the Franco-Swedish, mercenary-laden alliance fought the Habsburg partners (Ferdinand II, his successor Ferdinand III, and Spain) and, in the process, utterly ravaged the German lands. Gustavus Adolphus' successor, Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, knowing that the German Protestant princes were either unable or unwilling to join with the Swedes to further resist Imperial forces, began to negotiate with France. France successfully became the dominant player in the region.

Another important aspect to note regarding the entrance of France and the secularization of the conflict concerned the dealings of Axel Oxenstierna of Sweden. As previously discussed, Gustavus Adolphus was the pivotal figure in the first half of the Thirty Years' War, and he also convinced of a religious, providential direction for his prosecution of the struggle.<sup>87</sup> Yet, it was in cooperation with his trusted Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna that Gustavus truly set his course, as seen in his famous remark: "if my ardour did not put some life in your phlegm, we should never get anything done at all."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Just another fascinating window into Adolphus' character is seen in this note to his Brandenburg brother-in-law regarding his entrance into Germany: "I don't want to hear about neutrality. His grace must be my friend or foe ... *This is a fight between God and the Devil*. If His grace is with God, he must join me, if he is for the Devil, he must fight me. There is no third way." [emphasis added] Quoted in Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy*, 465.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

And, after the king's death, as Swedish-Protestant forces languished, Oxenstierna's "phlegm" was set to work. As the war went increasingly poorly for Sweden in 1633 and 1634, the Swedish minister sought to broker a deal with the French while at the same time seeking to make peace with Ferdinand II. In the end, France provided the sweeter deal, and in the Treaty of Hamburg (March 1638), the terms were set: France would pay to finance the army and would continue the fight against the Imperial forces in the Rhineland. In return, Sweden would continue the prosecution of the war in the East. With Spanish aggression having forced their hand and the compact with the Swedes locking them into the conflict, the designs of the French monarchy under the influence of French ministers Cardinal Richelieu and later Cardinal Mazarin came to the forefront.

With France's formal entrance into the war, the Swedish-Protestant forces were stabilized. Johan Báner, a rising Swedish marshal, supplanted Bernard of Saxe-Weimar as the commander of the Swedish forces after Bernard's death and, along with generals Lennart Tortenson and Alexander Leslie, won a decisive victory over Imperial forces at the Battle of Wittstock on October 4, 1636. However, just as it again appeared that the anti-Habsburg armies were winning, setbacks came throughout 1637. These were short-lived, though, and with the solidification of a *politically-based, anti-Habsburg* alliance between France and Sweden through the aforementioned Treaty of Hamburg, the eventual weakening of Imperial power began. Along with France's renewed capital support came Oxenstierna's gift of 14,000 new recruits for Báner from Sweden. This allowed him to push deeper into German lands, and at the Battle of Chemnitz in Saxony, on 14 April 1639, Báner inflicted a major defeat on the Imperial army under Archduke Leopold-William, Ferdinand III's brother. This opened up the route into Silesia and

Bohemia and Bánér made further advances. In 1640, the forces of Sweden and France joined their war effort together; meeting at Erfurt, they began pushing into Bavaria.

The death of Bánér on May 20, 1641 was a momentary setback. This led to a mutiny among the Swedish forces – many of whom were mercenaries that had not been receiving their pay. However, by November of 1641, the army stabilized as Tortennson, Gustavus' artillery commander and Bánér's right-hand man, was appointed by Chancellor Oxenstierna as the head of the Swedish forces. After some minor gains and victories, Tortennson, though outnumbered, won a significant victory at the Second Battle of Breitenfeld on November 2, 1642. Additionally, in a further illustration of the growing *irreligiousness* of the war, Tortennson defeated a Danish army (Lutheran-Protestants) as they sought to re-enter the war in 1644, this time *as allies* of the pro-Catholic Imperial Forces.

With a few setbacks, the final stretch of the war moved closer. French forces devastated a Spanish force of 18,000 men at the Battle of Rocroi on 19 May 1643. Joint Franco-Weimar forces suffered a small setback on 24 November 1643 at the Battle of Tuttlingen which briefly emboldened the Imperial forces and led Maximilian of Bavaria to call upon Emperor Ferdinand III for reinforcements. However, in 1645, Tortennson resolutely reclaimed the areas of Bohemia and Moravia which were lost in the Danish re-incursion into the war. At the Battle of Jankow on 6 March 1645, Tortennson dealt a devastating defeat to the Imperial forces and began marching toward Vienna, the Austrian capital. Emperor Ferdinand III fled to Graz. From this point, the Imperial position continued to weaken.

The gains in the East by the Swedish army were not initially replicated by the French armies in the West. The French general Henri Turenne suffered losses in the early part of 1645. However, joining together with Louis II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé (the Great Condé), Turenne crushed the Imperial Army at the Second Battle of Nördlingen on 6 August 1645. After this devastating loss, the Imperial forces, particularly those fielded by Maximilian of Bavaria, were stretched to the limit. At this point, the Swedish under Tortennson and Wrangel, along with the French under Turenne joined forces. This was mildly objected to by the French minister Cardinal Mazarin because the Swedish commanders, particularly the dominating figure of Karl Gustav Wrangel, were proud and unpopular figures who threatened the French. Mazarin was wary of ceding the French army to the control of what was now a superior Swedish force. However, Turenne, though French, was a Huguenot, and as a Calvinist had a strong desire to crush the Catholic Emperor in addition to undermining Habsburg power. The joint Franco-Swedish force quickly cut off the Bavarian forces under Archduke Leopold-William. By August 19, 1646 Maximilian of Bavaria was forced to flee to Munich. From there, he opened up negotiations and in the Treaty of Ulm (March 14, 1647) negotiated between France, Sweden, and Bavaria he abandoned his alliance with Ferdinand III.

Maximilian broke the Treaty of Ulm and shifted back into alliance with Ferdinand III in September of 1647. It was to no avail. A final consolidation of the Swedish and French armies set the stage for the almost complete annihilation of the Imperial-Bavarian military at the Battle of Zusmarshausen on May 17, 1648. Finally, the Thirty Years' War would come to a close. The last major battle of the war was the Battle of Prague which commenced on July 26, 1648 when Swedish general Hans Christoff von

Königsmarck was able to enter a portion of the city and recapture Prague Castle. This brought the conflict full-circle, to the very location where the Defenestration of Prague and Bohemian Rebellion had, thirty years prior, launched the devastation. The Swedish forces were unable to take the entire city and, shortly thereafter, the series of treaties negotiated at Osnabrück and Münster in Westphalia were signed and ratified, becoming completed in October of 1648 and known collectively as the Peace of Westphalia.

The final half of the war was dizzying in its pace and the alliances it engendered. It was increasingly fought for secularized reasons, despite having a religious veneer. Catholic France united with the Dutch-Reformed United Provinces against Catholic (though Habsburg) Spain. Additionally, France led the victory charge for Protestantism with Sweden – against the Catholic power of the Habsburgs in Germany. Denmark had been the Protestant standard-bearer for a time from 1625-1629; however, she entered the fray against her fellow Lutherans in 1644. While the period from 1618-1632 certainly included some territorial motivations, it was the second half of the war under French ascendancy that transformed the conflict into a secularized venture. With the weakened situation in Germany after the first half of the war, it was perhaps to be expected that powers with colonial designs would seek to fill the vacuum of power. As part three is ended, we will next shift attention to the aftermath of the war. What will be seen is that the Thirty Years' War – always vicious and devastating – will prove to have sown the seeds for the undoing of *Corpus Christianum* and the undermining of Christianity and religion in the Western World.

PART 3  
THE END OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR AND  
THE AFTERMATH FOR CORPUS CHRISTIANUM

Friedrich Schiller surmised that the turn from religious motivation toward political power-grabbing could be seen even prior to France's formal involvement in the figure of the Swedish hero, Gustavus Adolphus. Schiller remarked, "[I]t was no longer the benefactor of Germany who fell at Lützen: the beneficent part of his career, Gustavus Adolphus had already terminated; and now the greatest service which he could render to the liberties of Germany was – to die. The all-encompassing power of an individual was at an end."<sup>89</sup> Schiller's words could, and perhaps more aptly, *should* be applied to religion as practiced and conceived in Corpus Christianum. For, in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, the "all-encompassing power of religion" in the Western world would come to a close.

This thesis has argued that religious motivations were central in the Thirty Years' War's first half (1618-1632/33) and that the ascendancy of French political motivations and a colonializing, nation-state brawl came to characterize the conflict's second period (1634/35-1648). This can nowhere be seen more clearly than in the Peace of Westphalia and the effects of the war on the generations following 1648. In order to examine the results of the conflict for Corpus Christianum, this thesis shall now turn to an assessment of the Peace of Westphalia, especially its role as a founding charter for secular government (though it was not a fully secular document). Next, a summary of the reordering which flowed from Westphalia shall be given. Lastly, a brief look at the

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<sup>89</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany*, 167-168.

devastation of the conflict for Germany and Europe will commence, concluding with the assertion that the true devastation produced by the Thirty Years' War was the collapse of *Corpus Christianum*. From this collapse, the Western world would witness the rise of the Enlightenment, secularization, and absolute monarchy as Christendom receded.

### **The Peace of Westphalia**

The Peace of Westphalia, which formally ended the Thirty Years' War, was made up of two separate treaties.<sup>90</sup> The Peace of Osnabrück (*Intrumentum Pacis Osnabrugense* or IPO) formally ended hostilities between the Empire and Sweden and served as a new Imperial constitution across the Empire. The Peace of Münster (*Instrumentum Pacis Monasteriense* or IPM) worked out issues between the Empire and France, while excluding certain issues such as French occupation of the duchy of Lorraine. Yet, the Westphalian Settlement was not merely a dividing up of territory. Instead, it was a religious, political, and territorial compromise which was put forth as a new Imperial constitution and a definitive statement on the 1555 religious settlement in the Peace of Augsburg.

The negotiations were highly complex, and the settlement took more than four years to complete. This complexity has prompted one scholar to remark:

The first peace conference of modern times was a law unto itself. The negotiations were handled by 176 plenipotentiaries (almost half of them lawyers by profession) who acted for 194 European rulers, great and small. Not all of the states represented at the congress sent delegations of their own – only 109 did so – but nevertheless several thousand diplomatic personnel thronged the streets of Münster and Osnabrück between 1643 and 1648. The size of the various

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<sup>90</sup> Some fighting would continue until a further conference at Nuremberg in 1650 fully ratified all aspects of the Peace of Westphalia. 1648, though, was the official end of the war and much fighting ceased as soon as news reached the various armies.

embassies ranged from 200 men, women and children in the French delegation to the lone envoys of the smaller German principalities.”<sup>91</sup>

The Peace of Westphalia covered much ground, but can be roughly summarized as follows. First, it granted a general amnesty for all involved in the violence of the war (Article II of IPO). Second, it reasserted and defined the right of princes to administer allocations of church property. Importantly, it stipulated that all allocations would revert back to their condition on January 1, 1624 (Article V, Sec. 2 & 31 of IPO). This was seen as a date which would be fair to Roman Catholics while undoing the seizures of the Empire and Roman Catholic Church in the Edict of Restitution. Third, it undercut the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* set forth in the Peace of Augsburg and located proper interpretation of the religious peace within the Westphalian settlement itself: “Regarding the controversial articles in the present treaty, whatever was agreed to by common consent [at Westphalia] *shall be considered a perpetual declaration of the said peace* [i.e., Peace of Augsburg].”<sup>92</sup> Fourth, it broadened the religious peace to include “Reformed” Protestants (Art. VII, Sec. 1 of IPO). Fifth, it strengthened and “birthed” the secular idea of private religious principle vs. public life (Article V, Sec. 34). Finally, it articulated various conditions which would govern the relationships of the powers involved, and it formally established territorial gains and/or losses from the war.

Each of the above issues was important. However, it was the way that the Westphalian settlement dealt with religion that particularly stood out. While the Peace of Westphalia was not a fully secular document, it nonetheless enshrined important principles that would come to govern Western nations from that point forward. Two of

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<sup>91</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 159.

<sup>92</sup> See “The Peace of Westphalia (October 24, 1648),” in Tryntje Helfferich, *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, 258. Quoted from Article V, Section 1 of IPO. [emphasis added]

these principles, in particular, would represent the establishment of a proto-secular order. Benjamin Straumann crystallizes the importance of this development: “Westphalia ... established a secular order by taking sovereignty over religious affairs away from the discretion of territorial princes and by establishing a proto-liberal legal distinction between private and public affairs.”<sup>93</sup> These two issues, along with the declaration that the once-hated Reformed groups would also share equal legal status in Europe, cemented the growing importance of nation-states and political entities vis-à-vis religious issues and the Church.

Nowhere is this move toward favoring nation-state politics over religion seen more clearly than in the treatment of the papal delegations at the peace proceedings. Initially, in a very Corpus Christianum-like way, the papal delegation was given a favored role. However, this was not to last:

When Rome would not sanction any Catholic concessions to the Protestants, or even to accord them diplomatic recognition, the powers found that they could do without papal services. ... The final, and unheeded, protest by Innocent X [Pope from 1644-1655] against the peace treaties ... showed starkly the gulf between the political-religious claims of the papacy and the realities of European political life.<sup>94</sup>

In this incident, as well as in the general tenor of the Westphalian negotiations, was a decisive turn away from the religio-social, political amalgam that had dominated the Western world for well over a thousand years. Again, while the Peace of Westphalia dealt with many religious issues, it was its subordination of sacred concerns to those of the state which signaled that the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War would also bring to a close the story of Corpus Christianum. From Westphalia forward, many of the national

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<sup>93</sup> Benjamin Straumann, “The Peace of Westphalia as a Secular Constitution,” *Constellations* 15, no. 2 (2008): 184.

<sup>94</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe: 1516-1660*, 262-263.

and political concerns of the modern Western world became visible. It is important at this point to briefly summarize some of the specific political outcomes for the powers represented at Osnabrück and Münster and to briefly comment on their significance.

### **The Establishment of a New Order After the Peace of Westphalia**

#### *Outcomes for the Habsburgs*

The Thirty Years' War not only proved to be the end of the Habsburg dream of a Christendom reunited under Roman Catholicism, it also proved to be the undoing of Habsburg hegemony in European affairs. The Spanish-Habsburg line would come to an abrupt end in 1706 with the death of the physically and mentally handicapped Charles II. This severely curtailed the wealth and resources of the Habsburg monarchs. Never again would Europe be controlled between the designs of an allied front made up of Habsburgs from Spain and Austria.

Nonetheless, the House of Habsburg in Austria would survive, even thrive. Though Ferdinand III accepted a diminished role in wider German and European affairs, Austria, with its capital at Vienna, became a much more centralized power. This consolidation of Habsburg holdings, along with the Westphalian settlement's general strengthening of state power vis-à-vis religious concerns produced an Austria which was allowed to pursue its own religious and political policies. Austria became a power in its own right and remained a bastion of Roman Catholicism. It was the undisputed center of what remained of Habsburg rule and would continue to exert influence in Germany until its defeat in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866.

#### *Outcomes for Germany and the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation"*

The German lands of the Holy Roman Empire were ravaged by the Thirty Years' War. In addition, the political structure of Germany was left in tatters. As Stephen Lee has insightfully remarked: "Between 1648 and its eventual dissolution by Napoleon in 1806, the Empire never again functioned as a political unit. The future belonged, instead, to a select number of individual states."<sup>95</sup> The vacuum of power created by the Empire's demise left three important problems for the German states. First, they had to deal with the practical outworking of the Westphalian settlement – a settlement which left no real mechanism for dealing with litigation from the war. Second, few overarching political structures were left intact as there was no longer an Empire-wide constitution. Third, each of the German states was left with the yeoman task of repairing war-time damage and creating a climate for renewed economic development. The states that were most successful in dealing with these challenges were those which grew in power.

In addition to the above mentioned problems, there was another practical reality held over from the Thirty Years' War – the profound potential for armed conflict among states now competing for political and economic dominance in the German lands. Richard Bonney has insightfully summarized the situation: "The Peace of Westphalia left Germany as a profoundly militarized society, with a strong potential for internecine conflict."<sup>96</sup>

The growing competition among select German states coupled with the military build-up during and after the Thirty Years' War would profoundly affect the future of Germany. Ultimately, Brandenburg-Prussia would grow to be the most dominant power

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<sup>95</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years War: Lancaster Pamphlets*, 62.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Bonney, *The Thirty Years War 1618-1648*, 89-90.

in the German lands and entered into prolonged rivalry and conflict with the remaining House of Habsburg in Austria. Several reasons for the rise of Brandenburg-Prussia can be deduced. First, it made out very favorably in the Westphalian settlement, gaining its historic holdings as well as the important duchy of Magdeburg. Second, Brandenburg-Prussia had repeatedly been marched across and devastated during the war. As a result, when the conflict was ended a concerted effort was made to strengthen its military defenses. Third, when the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV of France unleashed a fresh wave of persecution on Huguenots in France, Brandenburg-Prussia sought to draw in the immigrants who had been hardened in battle. This contributed to the military strength of Brandenburg-Prussia and provided, through the religious sensibilities of Reformed Christianity, a strong sense of Prussian destiny. Ultimately, this potent mix of factors would come forth through the Napoleonic Wars and would fashion Brandenburg-Prussia into a formidable power. Prussia eventually defeated France under Napoleon III and defeated Austria-Hungary in 1866 to create a German Empire with Prussia as its head in 1871. The German tendency toward militarism and domination as witnessed in the world wars of the twentieth-century had many of its roots formed in the situation that grew out of the Thirty Years' War.

#### *Outcomes for Sweden*

Though Sweden, under Gustavus Adolphus, had turned the tide of the conflict, eventually the Thirty Years' War would exact a heavy toll from Sweden. Sweden received considerable land holdings in Germany and a cash settlement of 5 million thalers. However, despite its gains, Sweden struggled: "Unlike France, Sweden accepted its gains as full imperial Estates, giving it representation in the Reichstag as well as the

Lower and Upper Saxon assemblies. ... [However] Swedish authority remained curtailed by imperial law.”<sup>97</sup> This decision to administer its gains within the Westphalian construction of the reconfigured Holy Roman Empire all but insured that Sweden gained almost nothing for its own kingdom. Tax proceeds and natural resources rarely benefited Sweden proper and instead were funneled back into its German holdings for administration and operation. The Swedish monarchy became embroiled in civil conflict from independence movements and failed to strengthen its position in Germany. It swiftly receded from the international scene and by the early eighteenth-century it was no longer a formidable power in Europe.

#### *Outcomes for France*

Arguably, France gained more from the Thirty Years’ War than any other European power. Stephen Lee’s summation of the situation illustrates France’s situation after the war: “[T]here can be little doubt that the period from 1648 onwards saw the completion of most of Richilieu’s original ambitions: the separation of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, the expansion of the French frontier into the Empire, and the substitution of French for Spanish military supremacy in Europe.”<sup>98</sup> Additionally, France not only became militarily superior to Spain, she essentially ended Spanish influence in Europe. Under the conditions of the Peace of Westphalia, Spanish territories were given to France – even though the Franco-Spanish conflict would not be completed until 1659.

Nonetheless, though France was ascendant, the seeds for her downfall were also sown during this period. France’s victory and subsequent rise went hand-in-hand with the growing dominance of the monarchy. Julian Swann writes, “[O]nce France had officially

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<sup>97</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years’ War: Europe’s Tragedy*, 757.

<sup>98</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years War: Lancaster Pamphlets*, 67-68.

listed the Thirty Years' War in 1635, the government's desperate need for funds obliged it to circumvent traditional judicial and administrative officeholders, whose loyalty and efficiency were questioned."<sup>99</sup> This situation under Louis XIII led to a crippling of the aristocratic nobility in France. After the Thirty Years' War, the French would struggle through a series of civil wars known as La Fronde. During the Fronde, aristocratic nobles sought to curtail the abuses of the monarchy. The revolts were put down handily, and afterward Louis XIV strengthened his throne into an "absolute monarchy." Upon his death, the aristocratic nobility sought to regain power during the reigns of Louis XV and XVI. However, due to their efforts to reclaim privileged status, they ultimately crippled efforts for egalitarian reforms, with devastating effects:

According to this interpretation, the death of Louis XIV was followed almost immediately by a reaction of powerful privileged groups led by the parlements, the Catholic Church and the court aristocracy. Their largely selfish opposition to egalitarian reform of the fiscal system paved the way to the royal bankruptcy that preceded the revolution of 1789.<sup>100</sup>

In just over a hundred years, France would see her stock fall from the heights of her triumph over Spain and the Habsburgs. The French Revolution plunged the country into terrible ruin, paving the way for the rise of the dictator Napoleon. After Napoleon's eventual defeat, the West saw the long decline of French fortunes (despite her colonial gains).

#### *Outcomes for Spain and the Netherlands*

France's longtime enemy, Spain, began the Thirty Years' War as a still-dominant power in Europe with a strong position as one part of the powerful Habsburg line. By the

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<sup>99</sup> Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* in *New Studies in European History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

end of the conflict, Spain effectively ceased to be an independent, imperial power. It was forced to make many concessions in the Treaty of Westphalia. Knowing that war with France was still a reality, “Philip IV drew the logical conclusion from this situation and came to terms with the United Provinces. Spanish recognition of the complete independence of the United Provinces and the closing of the Scheldt were hard to swallow but did not call for any change in the position as it had existed for many years.”<sup>101</sup>

The Spanish monarch thought that ending the long war with the Dutch would free Spain to focus on finally defeating the French and regaining a foothold as a dominant force in European politics. However, this was not to be the case. Without its Dutch holdings and saddled with extreme debt, Spain grew too weak to continue to fund its military and expansionist obligations. The Dutch had gained their independence and France was now the strongest state in the region. For Spain, the world had turned on its head. She would retreat into absolute monarchy and entrenched Roman Catholicism, never again to rise to her former glory.

#### *Outcomes for Wider Europe*

As the Thirty Years’ War came to a close with the Peace of Westphalia, a recognizably “modern” Europe was emerging. Though different in combination and exact borders from its twenty-first century form, the reshaping of the Western world would produce a recognizable nation-state of France, the beginnings of German unification under Prussian (Brandenburg-Prussia) power, the bloc of Austria-Hungary, an independent Netherlands, a diminished-but-independent Spain, a small-but-independent

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<sup>101</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe*, 263.

Sweden and Denmark, and a free Switzerland (largely uninvolved in the war, but still included in the terms of the peace). The power blocs that would come to dominate Europe into the twentieth century also began to emerge at this time. Even England – largely disengaged and unaffected during the war – was in the process of working through its own religious questions and would eventually emerge as a strong, “secularized” power in early modern Europe.

Europe was transformed as secularized political life and detectably “modern” national boundaries rose from the ashes of *Corpus Christianum*:

The treaty gave the Swiss independence of Austria and the Netherlands independence of Spain. The German principalities secured their autonomy. Sweden gained territory and a payment in cash. Brandenburg and Bavaria made gains too, and France acquired most of Alsace-Lorraine. The prospect of a Roman Catholic reconquest of Europe vanished forever.<sup>102</sup>

In fact, the religio-social, political framework of *Corpus Christianum* had been irrevocably altered.

### **The Toll of the War on Germany, Europe, and the Western World**

#### *The Reshaping of the Psyche of Germany and Europe*

In addition to the rise of secularized, nation-state politics over/against a Church-state nexus, as well as the reshaping of boundaries along national-ethnic-territorial lines, the psyche of Germany and Europe was remade as a result of the Thirty Years’ War. Modern scholarship has widely debated the extent of a “cultural myth” of devastation and suffering drawn from Germany’s experience in the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>103</sup> In the wake of

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<sup>102</sup> Richard Cavendish, “The Treaty of Westphalia,” *History Today* 48, no. 10 (October 1998): 50-51.

<sup>103</sup> See David Lederer, “The Myth of the All-Destructive War: Afterthoughts on German Suffering, 1618-1648,” *German History* 29, no. 3 (2011): 380-403.

World War I and World War II some scholars were reluctant to “coddle” Germans as victims. However, Randall Hansen has penned an important statement regarding this tendency: “Scholars began to write about the ‘myth’ of suffering and total destruction during the Thirty Years’ War. Yet, even this scholarship did not nullify the claim that destruction and suffering were meted out on a previously unprecedented scale.”<sup>104</sup>

It is true that certain areas of Germany were repeatedly destroyed while others were little-touched. Yet, in the final analysis, the German countryside, as well as the peasant population of the German lands, was shattered. Heinze remarks, “The big losers in the war were the German people. For thirty years armies had lived off the land, looting, raping, and destroying. The empire suffered very severe population losses. It is estimated that there may have been as many as eight million fewer inhabitants in Germany at the end of the war than there were in the beginning.”<sup>105</sup> Again, while it is plausible to accept that a significant number of reports were exaggerated, even false, the suffering of the populace was very real. In fact, one scholar has argued that the “rhetoric of death and destruction” in contemporary accounts of the war was a part of the shared reality of the populace. In other words, even if some of the rhetoric was not factual, it gave voice to the very real grief and suffering of the people during the war, a grief and suffering that became a palpable part of the social fabric of German life.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Randall Hansen, “War, Suffering, and Modern German History” *German History* 29, no. 3 (2011): 369.

<sup>105</sup> Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 376.

<sup>106</sup> John Thiebault, “The Rhetoric of Death and Destruction in the Thirty Years’ War,” *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 271-289.

The suffering of the populace and the attendant destruction, in the German lands but also in wider Europe, was truly horrific. Estimates for the population loss in Germany run from a high of 40% to a low of 20%. For the peasant population, mistreatment at the hands of mercenary soldiers was a constant fear. Additionally, aside from the threat of physical violence, famine and disease were ever-present realities. By any account, the Thirty Years' War was a time of deep desolation and it profoundly affected the populace.

*The "Collapse" of Corpus Christianum*

The tremendous suffering actually experienced by the population, as well as the shared consciousness of devastation and loss in the popular psyche, was not without its effect on religion:

[T]hough the Reformation had been saved, it suffered, along with Catholicism, from a skepticism encouraged by the coarseness of religious polemics, the brutality of the war, and the cruelties of belief. ... Men began to doubt creeds that preached Christ and practiced wholesale fratricide. They discovered the political and economic motives that hid under religious formulas, and they suspected their rulers of having no real faith but the lust for power.<sup>107</sup>

In short, the greatest casualty of the Thirty Years' War was the loss of a defined nexus of religio-social, political meaning as previously provided in Corpus Christianum.

Historians, for all of their wrangling over whether or not the Thirty Years' War was truly fought for religious reasons, are largely united in seeing that the overarching result of the conflict was the un-mendable fracture of the Christian ordering of the Western world that had lasted for more than a millennia. For instance, Koenigsberger writes, "After 1648 there was a real change. Religion might still produce sympathy or antipathy between states, but it no longer determined alliances nor did it lead countries into war. From 1648 until the French Revolution the European states were engaged in

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<sup>107</sup> Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Reason Begins*, vol. 7 of *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961), 571.

pure power struggles.”<sup>108</sup> The militancy and brutality of professing Christians against one another had discredited the militant viewpoint that sought to forcibly unite all of society under the banner of a single, unified Christendom.<sup>109</sup>

Even the Church as an institution was called deeply into question. Mark Noll comments, “Recent historians have suggested that the churches may have been used as puppets by military imperialists in this struggle, but the war still led to a growing sense that it was necessary to reduce the visibility of religion in order to have peace in the day-to-day life of European nations.”<sup>110</sup> While official designations of a region as “Lutheran,” or “Catholic,” or “Reformed,” continued to exist, there was never again in the Western world a return to the holistic religio-social, political conception of reality as witnessed in *Corpus Christianum*. In truth, skepticism regarding the practicality and truthfulness of religion – especially Christianity – would begin to take deep root in the Western world. Christendom ceased to be the dominant reality of Early Modern Europe: “[W]ith the religious divisions caused by the Reformation and Counter-reformation, [people] had lost the last shreds of the never very strong medieval feelings for the *communitas Christianiae*, the community of Christendom.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *Habsburgs & Europe*, 271-272.

<sup>109</sup> Michael E. Devine “Religion in the Thirty Years’ War and Peace of Westphalia: Relevant to Pakistan Today?” *Joint Force Quarterly* 65 (2012): 23.

<sup>110</sup> Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points*, 238.

<sup>111</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *Early Modern Europe 1500-1789* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1987), 146.

## **New Worldviews and Structures for a Post-Christendom World**

### *The Rise of Secularization and the Enlightenment*

With the collapse of Corpus Christianum and the cessation of hostilities new structures and attitudes began to be adopted. Ironically, “the religious wars played a major role in bringing about a degree of toleration, since neither party was able to annihilate the other, and the participants emerged from these lengthy wars too exhausted to continue trying to achieve religious unity by the suppression of the opposition.”<sup>112</sup> This growing religious toleration became a fertile ground for ‘tolerating’ other viewpoints – even the skeptical attitude which had begun to inundate modern science and philosophy. A long march toward secularization in the Western world was commenced and the Enlightenment was born.

The Enlightenment was (and is) a notoriously flexible concept. Suffice it to say, though, at its core it was motivated by a growing confidence in reason, scientific endeavor, and human progress. The Enlightenment era rose from the ashes of the Thirty Years’ War and stretched from the middle decades of the seventeenth century up through the late eighteenth century. It was marked by impressive discoveries about the natural world, and revolutions in philosophy and the social order. Additionally, it was decidedly irreligious. Religion did not recede completely during this era. In fact, attempts were made by certain powers – notably France and Spain – to retrench and reestablish a modified version of Corpus Christianum. However, even these attempts would be quelled. The Enlightenment was a period of growing secularization and it marked the beginning of the West’s reformulation under a decidedly non-religious banner. Certainly, important exceptions to this general trend would come to the fore. The Great Awakening

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<sup>112</sup> Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 377.

of the eighteenth century in England and the British colonies constituted one important example. Yet, even in times of religious revival, the religio-social, political order of the Western world was never again to be characterized by an all-encompassing church-state bond. Enlightenment figure Denis Diderot famously summed up the new outlook: “Never shall man be free until the last king has been strangled with the entrails of the last priest.”<sup>113</sup>

As the Durants remarked, “Even in this darkest of modern ages an increasing number of men turned to science and philosophy for answers less incarnadined than those which the faiths had so violently sought to enforce. ... The Peace of Westphalia ended the reign of theology over the European mind, and left the road obstructed but passable for the tentatives of reason.”<sup>114</sup> The general intellectual and cultural milieu of the era was a fertile ground for the growing secularization of society. Aside from a few short-lived exceptions, former-Christendom began a decisive move toward a thoroughly secularized future. In the German lands, particularly, the growing power of Brandenburg-Prussia was largely due to a decision to unite around German language, German culture, and militarization.<sup>115</sup> In every corner in which Corpus Christianum had once been the rule, new democratic structures, which were not dependent on the church, began to grow. The Peace of Westphalia and the religious exhaustion which had been brought on by the

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<sup>113</sup> Quoted in David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of Christian Faith* (London: Quercus Books, 2007), 216.

<sup>114</sup> Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Reason Begins*, 572.

<sup>115</sup> As previously noted in the sub-section, *Outcomes for Germany and the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”* it is also true that Brandenburg-Prussia became an important center for Huguenots who were persecuted and sent out of France by Louis XIV’s Edict of Fontainebleau (1685). Yet, Prussia did not take on the identity of a German-Reformed conglomerate; rather, it became the central player in the future fusion of the individual German states into a united, secular nation.

Thirty Years' War helped to birth the Enlightenment and ensured that never again would anything like the "medieval synthesis" of Corpus Christianum exist.

*Absolute Monarchy: Corpus Christianum Revisited and Found Wanting*

The notable, though temporary, exceptions to the secularizing trend were the absolute monarchies that rose in several of the nation-states of former-Christendom. Many of these failed quickly. A few, especially England and the Netherlands, emerged to become exemplars of the post-Christendom world:

The greatest transformations occurred in the United Provinces and in England. There, compromise solutions were found: mixed constitutions, the emancipation of intellectual life from clerical control, and the development of open and flexible, even though highly differentiated, social structures. These were the differences which were to determine the course of European history for the next hundred and fifty years.<sup>116</sup>

However, this was not the case with a few of the important Catholic powers, particularly France and Spain. In each of these countries, the privileged status of Roman Catholicism under the rule of a divinely appointed monarch was reasserted. In a very important sense, this represented an attempt to reestablish Corpus Christianum, albeit in a modified form. This attempt was most successfully carried out in France under the absolute monarchy of the "Sun King," Louis XIV. During his reign, France grew as an important power, the Roman Catholic faith was elevated, and the power of the monarch to control that faith was practiced.

Louis XV and XVI attempted to carry forward this reformulated Corpus Christianum. However, the re-visitation of Christendom under the system of absolute monarchy would eventually succumb to the secular force of the Enlightenment age. This led to the French Revolution and the unraveling of French society in the "Reign of

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<sup>116</sup> H.G. Koenigsberger, *Habsburgs & Europe*, 284-285.

Terror.” Out of the ashes of this reign would raise the new attempt to find a universal organizing principle for the Western world, the universal state. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to bring France and the world under his rule. His eventual defeat did not lead France or Europe back toward a fusion of Christianity and political life. Instead, in the now very secularized states of Europe, attempts at universalizing secular rule were made through colonial ventures. Eventually, tensions between the European powers led to German ascendance and the conditions that led up to the world wars of the twentieth century.

In the final analysis, Christendom was finished. Many factors had converged during the seventeenth century to ensure that that the Western world was pushed toward what scholars discuss as the “General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century.”<sup>117</sup> Whatever one concludes about the general upheaval of that era, it is demonstrably true that the period after the Thirty Years’ War was the beginning of a new religio-social, political journey for the West. From the Peace of Westphalia forward, former-Christendom was reshaped and reformulated into the world of modernity, characterized by Enlightenment rationality, secularized politics, and the privatization of religious sentiment.

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<sup>117</sup> For a useful resource, see Geoffrey Parker and Leslie M. Smith, eds., *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 1997). This is a contentious topic. It goes beyond the scope of this project to delve into the “General Crisis” in significant detail. The term dates to the 1950’s and originated from Marxist historian Erick Hobsbawm and later by Hugh Trevor-Roper. It refers to the political, social, economic, and religious breakdown of the seventeenth-century Western world.

## CONCLUSION

Norman Davies, in his massive tome, *Europe: A History* wrote, “The Thirty Years War ... may be seen as an episode in the age-old German conflict between Emperor and princes. At another level, it may be seen as an extension of the international wars of religion between Catholic and Protestant; at yet another, as an important stage in a Continental power-struggle involving most of the states and rulers of Europe.”<sup>118</sup> All of this is true. However, this thesis has argued more specifically that the Thirty Years’ War was essentially religious in its beginnings, secular and “political” by its end, and that it spelled the doom of Christendom. In fact, it was the last gasp for the religio-social, political conglomerate known as Corpus Christianum.

### **Brief Summary of the Contours of this Study**

By taking a “long view” of the origins of the conflict, the case was made that the Thirty Years’ War, while multi-faceted, was an *essentially* religious conflict in its beginnings through its first half. The parties which found themselves at war in the lands of the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” starting in 1618 were seeking to stabilize the centuries old church-state nexus which had encompassed their world for centuries and which had been destabilized by the Protestant Reformation. In the events of the first half of the Thirty Years’ War, religious concerns and motivations were primary, as the reunification of Christendom under a united church-state was sought. The Bohemian revolt was fought by Calvinists who sought to resist the attempts of the Catholic Habsburgs. The incursion of Denmark under King Christian IV was motivated by his desire to come to the rescue of Protestantism, particularly the Lutheranism which

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<sup>118</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 563.

he shared with many of the German princes. The Swedish phase, especially under Gustavus Adolphus, was an attempt to work out the providential ascendancy of the Protestant cause so that Christendom could be united under true religion. Whatever other motivations were present, a discernable and central religious motivation can be seen in the first part of the Thirty Years' War as the combatants battled for the heart of Corpus Christianum.

Nevertheless, as the conflict progressed, it became clear that neither side could achieve religious or military dominance over the other. At this point, and especially after France's formal entrance into the fighting in 1635, the Thirty Years' War devolved into unprincipled carnage and chaos dominated by nation-state goals and ends. The last fifteen years of the conflict would continue to pit ostensibly "Protestant" and "Catholic" armies against one another. However, this was no longer even superficially true. Roman Catholic France fought the Roman Catholic Habsburgs of Germany and Spain for reasons of political and territorial advantage and not religious principle. In the Protestant armies, much religious motivation was lost when Gustavus Adolphus died. Mercenaries came to dominate the conflict as the German lands and Europe descended into death, destruction, and devastation. The folly of Christians maiming and killing one another in the name of the Prince of Peace became apparent and the stage was set for religion to recede as a unifying animus in the Western world.

The Peace of Westphalia would cement the collapse of Corpus Christianum as the territorial and/or nation-state ruler was given authority over religious disputes and religious sensibility began to be pushed into the private world of the individual believer. Additionally, the hatred and violence, which had been carried out in the name of the

Christian religion, began to undermine the very idea of religion itself. Enlightenment rationality and secularized political thinking took hold. Brief attempts at returning to Corpus Christianum were eventually crushed, and a recognizably modern world began to emerge. Events and conditions coalesced which would eventually give rise to the modern Western world.

### **Closing Thoughts**

As this study comes to a close, it is perhaps appropriate to go beyond summarization to an evaluation of the results of the Thirty Years' War. If the casualty of the war truly was Corpus Christianum, the question must be asked: was this a good consequence or not? Should religion be kept fundamentally separate from the life of the *polis*? Was Constantine wrong? Was Augustine right in theory but wrong in practice?

It is tempting quickly to answer, "Yes!" Yet, this would be too simple. Robert Markus, in his landmark study on history and society in the thought of Augustine offers an important word at this juncture:

For the *polis*-centered tradition of Greek thought the political framework of human life was the chief means of achieving human perfection. Life in a city-state was an education for virtue, a fully human life, the good life. Politics was a creative task. ...

In Judaeo-Christian tradition the key-note of political thinking was different. The people of God, whether of the old or the new Covenants, could not think of themselves as citizens involved in creating the right order in society, nor of their leaders as entrusted with bringing such an order into being. Only God's saving act could establish the one right social order. In relation to that kingdom they were subjects, not agents; in relation to all other, human, kingdoms, they were aliens rather than citizens. In relation to neither God's nor men's kingdoms could they therefore think of themselves as active participants in a creative political task. ...

Although Augustine came to repudiate the 'creative' conception of politics characteristic of the classical tradition, this was only the first major development of his own political reflection. In the end he was not content with this rejection. In the final phase of his thought there is an obstinate sense of a need to give more weight to the political order than it could bear in the perspective of a stark,

biblical repudiation of ‘creative’ politics. A way had to be found for reconciling the Christian’s sense of having no abiding city here with some real political participation in a commitment to a city which was far from an abiding one.<sup>119</sup>

The point communicated in the preceding paragraphs is an important one as we evaluate the outcomes of the Thirty Years’ War. Earlier in this thesis, a somewhat critical view of Augustine’s “inconsistencies” regarding the idea of a distinct-in-theory, but united-in-practice *civitas dei* and *civitas terrena* was espoused. However, it is now time to qualify that view. The struggles of Christendom, especially as they were played out in the horrors of the Thirty Years’ War, understandably led to the politically secular nation-states of the modern era. However, have the horrors of the modern nation-state been any less dramatic than the travails of the church-state? Many, including this author, would argue that the answer to that question is a resounding, “No!” Why is this so? Could it be that the once-revered, now-dismissed genius Arnold J. Toynbee was correct when he warned that the disintegration of society would be the result of a universal (secular) state?<sup>120</sup> Again, this author thinks that he was correct and agrees with the sentiment: “Nihilistic politics arises when the modern state reassumes the role of sacrificer but then realizes there are no more gods to receive the sacrifice – no more gods but itself.”<sup>121</sup>

The Thirty Years’ War originated because the Church had largely lost the ability to exist apart from the state. As the Protestant Reformation reawakened many toward the essentially prophetic stance of the Church in relation to the *polis* and the world, massive conflict ensued. Corpus Christianum, as the dominant religio-social, political reality was

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<sup>119</sup> R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), 73-74.

<sup>120</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vols. 1-6, abridged (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 552.

<sup>121</sup> Peter Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, 341.

a necessary casualty of this conflict. However, perhaps the baby was thrown out with the proverbial bathwater. Religious toleration and freedom of conscience were and are important and necessary realities for peace on this earth. However, the radical secularization that largely removed Christianity from Western, public life after the Thirty Years' War led not to peace but instead set in place conditions, which would eventually contribute to the devastating world wars and Communist revolutions of the twentieth century. Perhaps now, over three and a half centuries since the beginning of the recognizably modern West, it is time to consider again how the Christian can participate in the politics of this world while remaining true, in an ultimate sense, to the One True Ruler of all the kingdoms of the world. Perhaps the terrible period of history known as the Thirty Years' War, along with its outcomes, can provide useful soil for considering how the Church of today can be "salt and light" in society once again.

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