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South And The Dark Canon Of The Political Sermons Of The Seventeenth Century England: A Close Reading On Robert South's Sermons.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to arrest the atmosphere and tendency of the political milieu that influenced the very psychology of South's writings of the sermons of that time. South, the post-Reformation preacher of England, with some stark political necromancy and the fading tendencies of the tension between Protestant and Catholic, stated to cogent the importance of the sermons through the layers and textures of politics of England. South, by no means, with his most profound sensibility of dubious anxiety and tension, vestiges the political upheaval of seventeenth-century England with which he had gone through and experienced the cold relationship of the two communities- the Protestantism and the Catholicism- of England. The focal point of this paper is to clarify South's close understanding of how politics had deeply been fused with the stasis of the religion and the religious sensibility of men who came out in search of the perfect dominion over the new era of Restoration England.

Keynotes: Political sermons, 17th-century political canon, Protestantism and Catholicism, religious sensibility, Restoration of ideology.

Introduction

Robert South is probably one of the last great Anglican preachers with a lively sense of a hierarchic universe full of correspondence, and in this, he is not a modern. In 1677 South accompanied Laurence Hyde to Poland to present gifts to Charles II's god-daughter, the daughter of John Sobieski, King of Poland. South sent a long letter about his stay in Poland to Edward Pocock, an eminent orientalist who was South's fellow canon at Christ Church. He was an active observer since his understanding of the divine milieu around the air of England, and although he writes mainly about Roman Catholic practices, he is rarely judgemental. South's performance of his duties as a canon was not wholehearted. Abundant evidence exists to show his active participation in capitular business at Westminster. He served and enjoyed too as treasurer of the chapter in 1680, 1681, and 1684, and left a full account of disbursements- made for critical analysis. At the end of the century, South remained active in overseeing much-needed repairs at Westminster Abbey[1]. From 1670 on, South started preaching at Christ Church but hardly participated in Cathedral and college matters. He was never recorded as present at capital meetings and rarely signed in person for his stipends, paid twice in a quarter. South's proxies are duly recorded in the secretary's hand and all other canons during South's tenure were appointed someone's proxy at some time or other; South alone from 1690 to 1716 never served as a proxy for one of his colleagues.

In Robert South's lifetime, Westminster School and Christ Church were the greatest institutions of the entire national import. The steady and remarkable growth of the Christ Church during the mid-seventeenth century, unlike Westminster School's, had been checked by Parliament. Each year, Headmaster, Dean, and Master met to elect outstanding and most extraordinary Westminster boys for scholarships based on competitive

[1] See "Dr. South's Notebook", Muniments Room, Westminster Abbey, and also W. A. 33715, 33716, 33719, 35488, And 35493. South's attendance at Westminster chapter, though better that at Christ Church, was not always regular.

exams and Busby's recommendation. In 1650 Dryden was elected to Trinity, and in the next two years South and Locke to Christ Church. South gave his studentship up in 1670 when he received a stall. South began his literary studies there and continued them at Christ Church, where his serious philosophical and patristic studies began. South knew some Hebrew, but differently; in the course of a sermon, he notes that he has consulted Pocock about the meaning of a disputed passage in Isaiah. He knew Latin and Greek beautifully.

His training in Latin and Greek helped him in other ways to structure his orations and sermons, the rhetorical values of his own time, which held a methodical presentation in high esteem and also influenced the architecture of his sermons. From his readings in Aristotle and later manuals of logic, he learned how to separate, analyze, and combine ideas in argument. For South the categories of classical logic were companions at hand as he prepared his writing; his works show careful reading and retention of Aristotelian logic, learned, presumably, as an undergraduate at Christ Church. His reading at Westminster and Christ Church allowed him to collect a wealth of classical references and anecdotes. In his sermons up to only 1665, eight years after he took his M.A., South mentions near about thirty different classical, medieval and Renaissance authors, almost all of them written in Latin or Greek. An interesting aspect of South's reading, evident in the early 1660s, is his familiarity and fondness with the Latin works of Socinus and his followers, such knowledge prepared South for the major Anglican-Socinian confrontations of the 1690s. For all time South was in school and university, and for most of his preaching years, the best-known kook on preaching was John Wilkins' *Ecclesiastes, or A Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching, As It Falls Under the Rules of Art (1646)*. South's education, especially at Westminster, influenced his later choice to take the path in 1689.

South's writings support the Christ Church royalism that Fell consciously constructed, and South and Pocock, another canon, had a most intimate friendship'. One might follow Wood's view that the South had a psychological need for the titles and stipends, never satisfied, the more he got, the more he wanted. South's sermons depict and explore intense personalities like this, and condemn them. South often creates image patterns in his sermons, and there is no greater sign of South's artistic self-consciousness than his pattern-making. South understood rhetorical invention as a gift from God; all preachers should use all the gifts they have to communicate the gospel. South looked to his audience as well as to the rules of decorum.

Literature Review

Seventeenth-century England was a time of extreme religious and political upheaval, something that is even seen in literature during this era, particularly with political sermons. The political sermons were not only religious but also highly effective tools for political commentary and political influence since they were regularly preached by the clergy. Amongst these preachers, Robert South was a most notable figure, specifically famous for his biting political oratory, much of which tended to inform and influence popular opinion about the monarchy, state, and church. A detailed reading of South's sermons uncovers his central role in confronting the politics of seventeenth-century England and thus contributing to what might be described as the "dark canon" of political sermons during this time.

The seventeenth century saw an immense political transformation in England, specifically the English Civil War (1642-1651), the execution of King Charles I, the ascendance of the Commonwealth, and finally the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 under Charles II. This made for an explosive atmosphere with political and religious power constantly changing. Sermons, as a form of public speech, were usually used to promote political stances, question the established order, or defend the reigning authority. Political sermons were, in most respects, weapons employed by the clergy to uphold or challenge the governing authorities. Clergymen such as John Owen and Richard Baxter were strong voices of the Puritan era, standing for the people's rights and advancing republicanism, while others, such as the South, were favourable to royalist ideals. The interplay between religion and politics within sermons was not solely a question of dogmatic affirmation; it was a necessary component of the public forum of seventeenth-century England in which the clergy exerted significant authority in the formation of political thought.

Robert South (1634-1716), Anglican divine, preacher, and polemicist, was a vociferous champion of the Church of England and the monarchy. Sermons by him, composed and delivered in the Restoration era, offer a unique case of royalist political eloquence. South's first goal was to provide sustenance for the restoration of the monarchy and to justify the divine right of kings, a theological-political theory that stated that monarchs governed at the will of God and owed loyalty to no one but Him. South's sermons frequently combined theological argument with political observation. His writings, including The Sermons of Robert South (1692), demonstrate a strong allegiance to affirming the authority of the monarchy and Church. His style, which combines wit, learning, and biting humour, was especially effective in moulding royalist ideology. One of the core principles of his political theology was obedience to authority — not just as a moral principle but as a divine command. South expressed that restoration of the monarchy under Charles II was God's will and resistance to this authority was equivalent to resisting God's will.

South's political sermons may be located in what has been designated the "dark canon" of seventeenth-century English political rhetoric. A "dark canon" describes language employing dark and foreboding, even brutally authoritarian terms for legitimizing political power and enforcing conformity. South's sermons frequently had about them a bludgeon of moral and religious absolutism under which resistance to the

monarch equalled religious and moral condemnation. The black colour of South's political sermons is not just in their theological fervour but also in their harsh condemnation of revolt, which was viewed as a transgression against God and the order of nature. Throughout much of his sermons, South argues political order is but a reflection of divine order. As an example, in the sermon The Divine Right of Kings (1681), South presents the forceful argument that the monarchship is more than a terrestrial institution but was rather instituted by God. Based on this divine right, it reasons that monarchical leaders do enjoy the capacity to rule supreme with no confrontation by their followers. His rhetoric on the divine right is unrelenting, and his unflinching defence of monarchy as an institution divinely ordained shows his strong allegiance to royalist ideologies.

South's sermons frequently denounced the Parliamentary Party and the dissenters who had joined in the regicide of Charles I. His Sermon Preached before the King (1682) constitutes a fierce excoriation of rebellion, branding it as parallel to apostasy. South invokes vivid imagery as well as the biblical text to signify the seriousness of defying the throne, codifying such revolt not as the political act itself but as one of direct provocation against God's order. This stark contrast between the "righteous" monarchy and "rebellious" elements is the cornerstone of a lot of the South's political discourse.

Robert South's political sermons offer an engaging framework by which to understand the entwining of politics and religion during seventeenth-century England. His sermons exemplify the dark canon of political sermons — a collection of religious rhetoric which legitimized and supported monarchical authority, most notably in the post-Restoration period. Through highlighting the divine right of kings and as a denunciation of rebellion, the South not only contributed to the theological foundations of royalist doctrine but was also instrumental in ensuring the stability of the monarchy in an otherwise unstable time in English history. Through close reading of South's sermons, one is made aware of the multifaceted manner in which political and sacred were intertwined at this decisive moment in English history.

Methodology

The research approach to this research includes a close reading of the political sermons of Robert South and their political and theological content with a special focus on his understanding of monarchy and divine right. This is an interpretive approach with a qualitative focus that considers the text itself along with both the historical and theological backgrounds of South's writing. The main source material will include South's published sermons, especially those that were preached during the Restoration period, like The Sermons of Robert South (1692) and The Divine Right of Kings (1681). The close reading will discuss the language, rhetorical devices, and religious as well as political arguments used by the South to argue in favour of royalist thoughts. This involves the analysis of how he used the references in the Bible, metaphors, and moral arguments to justify the divine right of kings and the authority of the monarchy.

Further, the research will place South's work in the wider political and religious context of seventeenth-century England, the Restoration and post-Civil War periods. Secondary material, such as scholarly papers and books on political sermons during early modern England, will establish a background of understanding for the wider ramifications of South's sermons in the "dark canon" of political rhetoric. The approach makes possible a thorough analysis of the South's contribution to the development of royalist ideology.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this research weaves together the use of a mix of political theology, rhetoric, and discourse analysis in addressing Robert South's political sermons about seventeenth-century English political and religious thinking. South's sermons are regarded not as strictly religious expounding but as texts of sophisticated purpose that have theological and political agendas. These writings, spoken throughout an era of extreme political turmoil in the aftermath of the English Civil War and the Restoration, are a mix of ecclesiastical and royalist thought, well ingrained in the political rhetoric of the time.

One of the central theoretical ideas in this system is political theology, and more specifically the divine right of kings doctrine, which South passionately upholds. Political theology discusses the connection between religion and political power, and how theological thought influences political institutions. In South's case, his sermons often contend that monarchy is not a man-made institution but a God-ordained one. Basing itself on divine right theory, South claims that monarchs are ruled by divine right, thus the political order is not just sacred but also absolute and unchallengeable. This paradigm will explore how South's sermons employ theology as a basis for political obedience, identifying rebellion as being both a moral and religious sin. The theological structure also positions the ideology of obedience at the fore of South's sermons. Obeying monarchs is presented as obeying the will of God, citing biblical passages that support submission to the authority. The research will examine how South uses biblical narratives, like the accounts of David and Saul or Romans 13, to legitimize monarchical authority and frame disobedience as a transgression of divine order. This fits within political theology's concern with the intersection of the sacred and secular in legitimating political power.

The concept of the dark canon is borrowed from Michel Foucault's discourse and power theories, which highlight how ideas, language, and narratives are employed to exert control over people and societies. For South, his sermons are an instrument of ideological control, promoting royalist ideology and stifling

resistance to monarchical authority. The research will examine how South's sermons play a part in constructing a political discourse positioning the monarchy as central to temporal as well as spiritual power, positioning rebellion against it as an act of disobedience threatening both social hierarchy and divine justice.

Discussion on South's political sermons and their interconnection

Robert South often preached about the imperatives of social morality, for him as for most preachers, then and now, vice and virtue were not private affairs. He frequently instructed his congregations about what to think and how to act in this world of politics; about how the king should perform his offices, about strategies the nation should take in times of crisis, and especially about the ideal forms of the civil and ecclesiastical polity. According to Wilkins' method, South divides and subdivides his 9000-word treatment. An outline looks like this:

I. Exposition of the text (547- 48)
II. Division and confirmation
1. How an act of providence might be called extraordinary (547-51)
a. When it falls outside of the usual operations of a cause
b. When it falls contrary to the design of its expert agent
c. When it comes to pas beyond the power of its cause
2. By what extraordinary means God saves princes (551-66)
a. Giving them added intelligence
b. Giving them a singular course in danger
c. Disposing of accidents to concur with their preservation
d. Inclining the hearts of men and women to follow them
e. Rescuing them from unknown mischief
f. Imprinting on subjects an awe of their persons
g. Disposing their hearts to virtuous causes
3. Why providence is concerned with the salvation of kings (566-73)
a. To support civil society
1. Monarchy is the most excellent form of government
2. Its strength rests on the personal qualities of the monarch
III. Application (573-75)
1. How princes should behave to their subjects
2. How subjects should behave to their princes

South never moves from one segment to another without calling attention to the transition, that is, to some extent, his closure and new beginning. He made politics his homiletic theme in an intense and prolonged manner, political sermons were his forte. These political sermons fall into three categories; (1) sermons given on English anniversaries such as 30 January and 5 November, in which whoever was preaching was expected to defend the English Church and state; (2) sermons on church matter that, the Church of England is an established religion, involved questions of the national politics; and (3) sermons on the moral issues such as the right use of speech or conscience, or the immortality of lying, that could have been treated as private matters but were treated as contributory to political peace or disruption. Additionally, it must be noted that South left a total of twenty sermons in these three categories (Reedy 53).

In South's sermon, irony takes two forms: verbal irony where amplification is expressed and diminution intended, a technique he usually reserves for Protestant dissent; and structural irony, where statements or images tend to counter the main argument when at first they seem to support it. South's sense of how actions on different levels, psychological, social, and political, were related, was acute; for him, disorder in one sphere brought disorder in another. South thought that he could show by historical proof that freedom of conscience which was not restrained by Scripture and human law had revolutionary implications. South knew that some further development had occurred, and he used his sermon partly to warm his audience about the dangers of an Anglo-French alliance. Of course, he does not warn the audience directly. He first constructs the theology of God and kingship, reminding kings of their obligation to trust in God who supports them, then gives warnings about foreign alliances, and finally interprets foreign alliances as a failure of trust in God. For him, all kingly dominion, in Christ or a prince, was analogues; all legitimate dominion, which was, for South, always kingly dominion, was hierarchical, as was the universe itself, when properly understood. This hierarchy, which South's generation was perhaps the last easily to perceive, was both a fact and a value, how things were and how they should be. Likewise, in a sermon dealing mostly with the personal and social effects of lying, the South cannot avoid looking at recent political history to comment on the willful deception of the English people in the 1640s that culminated in the regicide.

For the South, the fundamental norm by which to judge political life after 1660 was the execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649. He was a boy at Westminster school then, not far from the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, outside of which the execution took place; the Westminsters prayed openly for the king on the morning of his execution and, even if Busby did not allow them to attend, they would have known about the beheading minutes after it had taken place.

The uniqueness of South's political sermon of 5 November 1675 is clear. One cannot even say that the South's practice excels in that of others in exemplifying some of these qualities in some ultimate way. South is unique

only in that he handles so many of the qualities of the genre so well in the same homiletic moment. His strength lies in his awareness and conquest of all the genre can afford. Many authors, in fact during his time, learned to use images in the post-Reformation, rationalist mode, but South uses image patterns in a more sophisticated and polished way. His ability to elaborate an image pattern in various modes is especially and strongly interesting.

The English anniversaries, to some extent with a special case, including 30 January, gave plenty of opportunity to uplift his ideas about the English Church and state, which in the 1660s and 1670s, put Charles II firmly in the centre of the political matters. The anniversary of the Gunpowder plot on 5 November suggested a sermon that would attack Roman Catholics. The 30 January anniversary encouraged and vitalized the preachers to raise their voices against the Protestant domination other than the English Church of England. In the reign of Charles II preachers either supported the monarchy or did not talk about it due to the extreme disciplines and rules maintained by the Royal palace. God was responsible for punishing the sinful king, and the whole sermons were developed to gather texts from the literature of the early Christian church that showed the passivity of believers in the face of unjust treatment. In a sermon of 30 January 1668/9, Stillingfleet demonstrates the fact of the ruling history:

Another principle, which tends to the subverting (of) Government under a pretence of Liberty, is, that in case of Usurpation upon the Rights of the People, they may resume the exercise of Power, and punish the Supreme Magistrate himself if he be guilty of it. Than which there can be no principle imagined more destructive to civil societies, and repugnant to the very nature of the Government (Reedy 55)

South did not alone believe and practice that God specially favoured England, but in his theology the only avenue by which this favour is extended runs through the monarch. At various times during South's life, his patrons were Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, and the King's brother, James, the Duke of York. South was, indeed, a determined spokesman for these royalists. From the early 1660s, South took as his special province the defence of kingship on the highest road possible; even in an age of royalist propaganda, his sermons stand out for their exposition of the sacramental nature of kingship, of the value not reason but divine providence bestowed on it. While he did not ignore arguments for kingship based on experience or its intrinsic merits, his primary grasp of the subject concerned its sacramentality. South had represented the hyper-royalist circles in his 'high' theological of kingship. This is the kingship which had the primary value for the South in that it is the human analogue to God's rule and, only secondarily in empirical observation, a good form of government. South, that's why, wrote in the 1675 sermon:

Monarchy, in this kind of Government, is the first, and consequently the most perfect of all other sorts. It is an image of divine supremacy, man's imitation of Providence, a copy of God's government of the universe in a lesser draught. For the world has one sovereign ruler, as well as but one maker; and every prince is both his lieutenant and his resemblance too (82)

South was among those who carried these ideas out rigorously and to their extreme, giving a monarchy that was analogous to divinity a central place in his political theology.

The king was God's 'vicegerent', he ruled in God's place, received extraordinary gifts to do so, and had to be honoured accordingly. Although South himself never retracted his many enunciations of the theory of the divine rights of kings, changes of government in England certainly gave him second thought; after 1685 he went through what one may guess was a painful period of watching events undermine his political philosophy (55). The act of philosophical analysis in the late seventeenth century was, in fact, inimical to kingship, although this enmity is more easily perceived in retrospect.

South's political sermon of 5 November 1675 offers three arguments that deny Richardson's thesis. First, his extremist theology of kingship is not for 'the thoughtful, philosophical person', in its day and ours, the calculated effort to confuse the borders between God and king was suspect and perhaps offensive. It is no honour to South to consider in any other way, to palliate his extremism is to misunderstand him. Second, South often but not always writes about human 'foibles and weakness'. The sermons that do this are his dullest, although with the proper hermeneutic anything can come alive. Third, Richardson's curious tactic of looping off beginnings and ends sends one back to the South to discover how integrated the various parts of his sermons are. At best South positions, these parts against one another; the beginning and middle are enriched by the ending, and this leads firmly and gradually for them. South's metaphors seem part of an ongoing ritual in support of kingship first, and second, the individual holder of the seat of power. By so amplifying the power and dignity of kingship, South made his emotions and reputation hostages to political fortune.

South's sermons are not fictional narratives wherein the loss of one part may ruin the whole, but certain aspects of his sermons suggest that the idea of an organic or architectural whole is not the worst model by which to understand them. The theory of passive obedience could rationalize even gross immortality in a monarch; the theory was framed, in a sense, to face this eventuality without flinching. But because of the particular relationship of church and king in England, a terrible flaw by hidden in the passive acceptance of a king's wrongs. What if the divinity-confirmed king should begin to tamper with the divinity-founded constitutions of the church? South's wit occasionally transforms his imagery: he refers once to 'the gentle manurings of his mercy' and warns that 'we have lived under a long sunshine, and God knows that it has ripened our sins apace'. Through sermons such as that of 5 November 1675, South left himself in the worst possible position to accommodate such change. South's response to political change can be seen in a

comparison of his 5 November sermons of 1675 and 1688; these two sermons demonstrate the heights of South's royalism and his subsequent descent from them.
South is threateningly dire about his main theme, England's repeated refusal of divine help. To be elected by God, in 1688, means sure punishment. South's political theology in four stages:

1. Summary and discussion of the structure, content, and imagery of the sermon of 5 November 1675
2. For the comparison and contrast, summary and discussion of the structure, content, and imagery of five other political sermons
3. A brief return to South's sermon of 1675 to estimate its uniqueness, and
4. Assessment of the South's later changes in politics by analyzing a sermon given on 5 November 1688, the day that William of Orange landed in England.

South praises 'the mutual interchange of good offices' as the only thing that stands between civilized behaviour and the animal nature of man; he attacks newly rich magnates who try to concentrate the nation's wealth in their own hands and 'transmit the fruits of their sins and repine to their posterity. Political sermons also involved their kind of learning. They placed a primary obligation on the preacher to address the occasion: the problem Roman Catholicism presented to a national, Protestant church on 5 November, Protestant political dissent on 30 January, and fast days proclaimed by the king, whatever particular problem was announced as a threat to the nation. The greatest preachers used the particularity of these occasions as a starting –point for a more ambitious project; to construct a general theology of English history that defined how God had worked and would work for England, and what the response of English men and women should be. This practice of historical generalization tended to distance the congregation from the emotional violence of the moment, especially during the Popish Plot.
Once South lowered his sights to envision England, as God elected, he became more interested in the secondary causes that made English society habitable. In these brief remarks, South again echoes latitudinarian thought, which, though supportive of late seventeenth-century capitalism, condemned its grosser manifestations. In political sermons, it was customary to enrich the plain style by the use of typology. It is rare in the South's time to find the fully typological scheme of an extended comparison of Charles II to Moses of David. In November 1691 and October 1692, in two sermons given at Christ Church on conscience, South apprehends conscience as a positive force in that it fights political fashion. Conscience:
"is no less than God's vicegerent of deputy, doing all things by immediate commission from him. It commands and dictates everything in God's name, and stamps every good with an almighty authority. So that it is a kind of copy or transcript of the divine sentence, and an interpreter of the sense of heaven….(it) has one prerogative above all God's other vicegerents; to wit, that it can never be deposed'' (Reedy 87).
South has habitually reserved the imagery of vicegerency and divine copy for the person of the king. The deposition of James II, as South's wit makes clear to his Christ Church audience, caused him to transfer the imagery to a once-suspect entity, the human conscience.
South hides the personal anxiety; the same, firm persona governs both the 1672 and 1692 sermons. South never abandons what he conceived pulpit decorum to be. Each text is internally consistent, and we can sense, in them, none of the ambiguity about rulers that the poetic structures of Marvell's 'Horatian Ode" or Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" encourage. For 5 November 1675, in sermons preached in Westminster Abbey, South chose as his text Psalm 144: 10: "it is he that giveth salvation unto Kings". His brief exegesis ignores the question of languages, of Davidic contexts, and of scriptural parallels that Wilkins' paradigm might have suggested. He moves immediately to a single doctrine deduced from the text, that 'God in the government of the world exercises a peculiar and extraordinary providence over the persons and lives of princes. He rarely chooses to be subtle; he may bully his hearers towards his thesis, even when he has bullied them in an opposing direction. He can be fairly perceived as insincere.

Conclusion

In each of his political sermons, South wanted to present both a plan for correct behaviour and an image of the strength that followed them adopting that behaviour. He was a public man to showed the inner conflict of the rhetorical world. The church, South announced, must support the work of such men, because the church could not cogently address the world without them. None of South's sermons was written in a day, years of reading and weeks of construction had gone into them, because of these efforts, Christ Church lacked South's daily presence as an administrator, yet gained in reputation as the college of a great preacher. In light of this gain, it is not surprising that there seems to be no record of complaint extent, except Wood's, about South's absenteeism.

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