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Paolo Sarpi and the *Colloquium heptaplomeres* of Jean Bodin

It is already well established, that Paolo Sarpi was influenced by certain writings of Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron.¹ Some scholars have brought up also the name of Jean Bodin, but the connection between him and Sarpi has remained somewhat dubious, at least regarding to the *Heptaplomeres*. To be honest, there is a myriad of authors, to whose writings Sarpi makes references – praising or criticizing them –, whereas about Bodin there is not even a slightest mention. Federico Chabod has even claimed that Sarpi did not read Bodin.² Luisa Cozzi, instead, while stating the modernity of the method which Sarpi used in examining the religious phenomenon, includes the *Heptaplomeres* among the writings that helped Sarpi to develop further his introspective capacity. It is not surprising, that the two other works Cozzi identifies are the *Essays* of Montaigne and *De la sagesse* of Charron. Consequently, Luisa Cozzi seems to promote the *Heptaplomeres* to the same rank with these two books, so unequivocally established as readings of Sarpi. A little later, however, Cozzi maintains that Sarpi studied religions with a method which was analogous to that of Bodin, “whether or not Sarpi knew his *Heptaplomeres*.”³

According to Marion Leathers Kuntz, Bodin completed the *Heptaplomeres* in 1588. Having quickly gained a notorious fame as an impious text, it was published for the first time only in 1857.⁴ This does not exclude the possibility of Sarpi having read one of the manuscripts, which circulated as a latin original or as a French translation already toward the end of the sixteenth century. The possibility, however, seems quite exiguous for the reasons which I am hoping to make clear in this article.

¹ Cozzi, Gaetano, “nota introduttiva”, in Paolo Sarpi, *Opere*, Milano-Napoli 1969 p. 23-24, 31-34; Wootton, David, *Paolo Sarpi. Between Renaissance and Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1983, p. 24-35; Frajese, Vittorio, “Sarpi interprete del *De la sagesse* di Pierre Charron”, *Studi Veneziani*, n.s., XX (1990), 59-85; id., *Sarpi scettico. Stato e chiesa a Venezia tra '500 e '600*, Bologna 1994, p. 141-165; Cozzi, Luisa, “La formazione culturale e religiosa e la maturazione filosofica e politico-giuridica nei *Pensieri* di Paolo Sarpi”, in Paolo Sarpi, *Pensieri naturali, metafisici e matematici*, Milano-Napoli, 1996, pp. xl, xlv, liv-lv, lxxv, lxxvii, lxxxiv.

² Chabod, Federico, “La politica di Paolo Sarpi”, *Scritti sul rinascimento*, Torino 1967, p. 503: “*Bodin non figura tra gli autori letti dal Sarpi*”. See also p. 514, where Chabod points out some resemblance between the political ideas of Bodin and Sarpi. Gaetano Cozzi demonstrates in his “Nota introduttiva”, cit., pp. 481-486, the likeness between Sarpi’s *Scritture su Ceneda* and Bodin’s *Six livres de la République*, and considers it possible that Sarpi had read this masterwork.

³ Cozzi, L., “La formazione culturale”, cit., pp. lxxix-lxxx; lxxxii. See also, Cozzi, G., *Paolo Sarpi tra Venezia e l’Europa*, Torino 1979, p. 249, where he claims that Sarpi could not know the *Heptaplomeres*.

⁴ Kuntz, Marion Leathers, “Introduction”, in Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, edited and translated by M.L.Kuntz, Princeton 1975, p. xxxvii.

Jean Bodin's religious orthodoxy was questioned already during his lifetime. Although he signed the oath of loyalty to the Catholic faith on 10 June 1562, his name is lacking from the list of the renewed oath of 12 November 1568. It is not clear why Bodin failed to sign this oath. Neither we know whether this or some other breach caused his imprisonment from 6 March 1569 to 23 August 1570, but, considering the religious turbulence of that period, it seems more than hypothetical to presume a religious reason for the arrest. Furthermore, some contemporary writers accused Bodin of being influenced by protestant theologians, "Rabbins" and "mathématicians", and of having encouraged heresy and atheism with his *République*.⁵ In 1592, indeed, the *République*, and in the following years all the other major works of Bodin, *Démonomanie*, *Methodus* and *Theatrum*, were placed on the *Index*.⁶ Thus, it is not surprising that the *Heptaplomeres*, the only work where Bodin felt "free to give a complete and forthright statement of his criticism of Christianity"⁷, was not published until the nineteenth century.

What comes to the manuscript copies,⁸ there are now 89 identified exemplars of the *Heptaplomeres* spread around the European and American libraries: for instance, 39 in Germany, 20 in France and 2 in Italy (Parma and Rome). The oldest copy, only one from the sixteenth century, is in the *Bibliothèque Mazarine* in Paris. All the other copies are from the seventeenth or the eighteenth century, with the one German exception which dates from the 1839. There are also testimonies of seven other copies, which have later disappeared for various reasons. Besides the Parisian copy from the late sixteenth century, there are seven copies (all in France), which date from the early seventeenth century.⁹ Thus, it seems that at least eight manuscript copies of the *Heptaplomeres* existed in Sarpi's lifetime. That is not much for the avid European republic of letters.

⁵ Kuntz, "Introduction", cit., pp. xxi, xxiv; Berriot, Francois, "La fortune du *Colloquium heptaplomeres*", in Jean Bodin, *Colloque entre sept scavans qui sont de differens sentimens des secrets cachez des choses revelees. Traduction anonyme du Colloquium heptaplomeres de Jean Bodin*, Texte présenté et établi par Francois Berriot, Genève 1984, pp. xx-xxi; Rose, Paul Lawrence, *Bodin and the Great God of Nature: the Moral and Religious Universe of Judaiser*, Genève 1980, p. 190. In his chronological table (pp. xiii-xiv) Rose mentions other occasions when Bodin has had problems similar to his arrest in 1569: "1548 Tried for heresy"... "1587 Questioned for Huguenot sympathies and acquitted"... "1590 Arrested on suspicion and released". See, however, Isnardi Parente, Margherita, "Nota biografica", in Jean Bodin, *I sei libri dello stato*, a cura di Isnardi Parente, M., Torino 1964, p. 102, where she claims that it was an other Jean Bodin, who suffered these processes.

⁶ Berriot, "La fortune du *CH*", cit., p. xx.

⁷ Rose, *Bodin and the Great God*, cit. p. 134. Rose assumes that Bodin did not mean to publish the *Heptaplomeres* during his lifetime (hence the "forthright" criticism).

⁸ For a catalogue of these copies, see Berriot, "Répertoire des copies manuscrites du *Colloquium heptaplomeres*", in Jean Bodin, *Colloque*, cit., pp. li-lx.

⁹ Ibid. Berriot gives for each of them only a general description: "Debut du 17 ieme siecle".

We know that – in Italy – Venice was the right place for those who were interested in prohibited books. Even more so during the interdict (1606-1607) and the years right after it, because the customs inspection ceased to function and was properly restored only after some years of relative liberty.¹⁰ Also, it has to be said, the *Heptaplomeres* is probably based on a Venetian example: according to a testimony of Gabriel Naudé, four men gathered twice a week in Venice to discuss about various religions. Among these men was Guillaume Postel, who wrote down what was said during the meetings. After the death of Postel (1581) these writings were passed to Bodin, who, it seems obvious, made use of them for his own work.¹¹

The *Heptaplomeres* is thus closely connected to Venice and in this sense it would seem understandable, if one of those eight (or a few more) manuscript copies had found its way to the hands of the Venetian patricians and erudits, and, if so, most likely to the very hands of Paolo Sarpi, who seems to have been the center of erudition in Venice of that period. He too, however, complains sometimes the difficulty of getting certain books, as we can see from his letter to Jérôme Groslet de L'Isle on 13 October 1609: “Il libro del re d’Inghilterra sarebbe stato letto qui con eccessiva curiosità, se ne fossero venuti qualche esemplari. Pochissimi se ne sono veduti.”¹² On 23 March 1604, that is, before the liberating phase of the interdict, Sarpi wrote to Jacques-Auguste de Thou, thanking him for having sent the first ten books of his *Historiae sui temporis*, which had brought some “ardore d’intendere particolari, de quali nelle tenebre di queste reggioni non ci è cognitione alcuna.”¹³ Others had problems too: Isaac Casaubon was searching for a certain Jewish book, but it was - so far - not to be found in Venice, as Sarpi was forced to inform him.¹⁴ How much more difficult it must have been to search for a notorious and rare manuscript copy? Even the queen Christine of Sweden had to wait for her copy for more than thirty years, and this was some decades after Sarpi had died, when there were already more copies available.¹⁵

¹⁰ Grendler, Paul F., “Books for Sarpi”, *Essays presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, Florence 1978, Vol. I, pp. 105-114, especially pp. 110-112. For the relatively free circulation of books and ideas in Venice, see Cozzi, “Nota introduttiva”, cit., p. 20.

¹¹ For the testimony of Naudé, see Kuntz, “Introduction”, cit., p. lxi.

¹² Sarpi, *Lettere ai protestanti*, a cura di M.D. Busnelli, Bari 1931, Vol. I, p. 98. Sarpi refers to the *Apologia pro juramento fidelitatis* of James I.

¹³ Sarpi, *Lettere ai gallicani*, a cura di Boris Ulianich, Wiesbaden 1961, p. 167. See also, p. 78, where Sarpi laments that the cardinals of the curia “domini librorum sibi esse volunt.”

¹⁴ Sarpi, *Opere*, cit., p. 285, a letter to Casaubon, 11 November 1608.

¹⁵ Berriot, “La fortune du *CH*”, cit., pp. xxvii-xxviii. See also, Roellenbleck Georg, “Venezia scena dell’“ultimo” dialogo umanista: l’*Heptaplomeres* di Jean Bodin”, *Centro tedesco di studi veneziani, quaderni – 29*, Venezia 1984, who notes on page 5 that also Pierre Bayley had difficulties in getting a copy of the *Heptaplomeres*.

In fact, the *Heptaplomeres* began to become renowned among the erudits only when Hugo Grotius and Gabriel Naudé started to show interest in it. A fascinating coincidence, doubtfully anything more, is the fact, that Grotius wrote on 12 February 1632 to Jean des Cordes, translator of Sarpi, in order to get a copy of the manuscript. Des Cordes *had* a copy in his possession and, willingly or not, borrowed it to the Dutch.¹⁶

There are two other links – both more direct and more interesting – between Sarpi and Bodin. The first is Arnaud du Ferrier, ambassador of France in Venice 1563-1567 and 1570-1582, who knew personally men like Michel de Montaigne, Michel de l’Hospital, Jacques Cujas and Jean Bodin. He had taught both Cujas and Bodin and the latter praised him in the dedicatory part of the *Methodus*. Sarpi met du Ferrier frequently and was “intrinsichissimo” with him, as Fulgenzio Micanzio, Sarpi’s close friend and associate testifies in his biography of Sarpi.¹⁷ The other link is Jacques Gillot, a lawyer of the parliament of Paris, and not only a long-term correspondent of Sarpi, but also a personal friend of Jean Bodin.¹⁸ Why, then, there is no mention of Bodin in the correspondence between Sarpi and Gillot? It has been proposed, that Bodin is missing from Sarpi’s writings because of the criticism of Venice he had displayed in some of his earlier works.¹⁹ If this is true, Gillot should have been pleased to mention the *Heptaplomeres* in his letters to Sarpi, not only, because the discussions in the manuscript were held in Venice, but also, because Bodin placed in the beginning of his work a famous praise of Venice:

... we reached Venice, a port common to almost all nations or rather the whole world, not only because the Venetians delight in receiving strangers hospitably, but also because one can live there with the greatest freedom. Whereas the other cities and districts are threatened by civil wars or fear of tyrants or harsh exactions of taxes or the most annoying inquiries into one’s activities, this seemed to me to be nearly the only city that offers immunity and freedom from all these kinds of servitude. This is the reason why people come here from everywhere, wishing to spend their lives in the greatest freedom

¹⁶ Berriot, “La fortune du *CH*”, cit., p. xxiv. Berriot writes: “...ce mystérieux *Colloquium* que Grotius et Naudé, les premiers, signalent à l’attention des lettrés européens, peu après 1630.”

¹⁷ Cozzi, G., “Nota introduttiva”, cit., pp. 9-10; Rose, *Bodin and the Great God*, cit., p. 22; Micanzio, *Vita del Padre Paolo*, in Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, a cura di Corrado Vivanti, Torino 1974, p. 1337.

¹⁸ Berriot, “La fortune du *CH*”, cit., p. xxii, note 40: Bodin wrote to Bignon, that “Mr Gillot est bien de mes amis”.

¹⁹ Cozzi, G., “Nota introduttiva”, cit., p. 482. For Bodin’s criticism of Venice, see, for instance, *I sei libri*, cit., pp. 555-557, 636, where he claims that Venice was an aristocracy and rejects, thus, the idea of “governo misto”, which was so dear to Venetians like Gasparo Contarini.

and tranquillity of spirit, whether they are interested in commerce or crafts or leisure pursuits as befit free man.²⁰

It is, indeed, perplexing that Sarpi does not mention such a famous writer, who was one of the central figures in the French intellectual life during the later half of the sixteenth century. Perhaps the explanation could be found in the prudence of Sarpi. It should be remembered, that Bodin was not only a writer, whose major works were put on the *Index*, but also one whose name was closely connected to that of Machiavelli.²¹ Or, could it be, that Sarpi ignored Bodin simply because their opinions and attitudes were too different from each other?

In order to make a comparison between the ideas expressed in the *Heptaplomeres* and in the writings of Sarpi, it seems appropriate to outline first the positions which the *Heptaplomeres* takes within certain religious and philosophical traditions. In this book there are seven men who participate in discussions, which are held in a private house in Venice, and all of them represent a different religious point of view: Salomon (Jewish), Toralba (natural philosopher), Octavius (Islamic), Senamus (Skeptic), Coronaeus (Catholic), Fridericus (Lutheran) and Curtius (Calvinist). Scholars have usually chosen either Salomon or Toralba to be the person who is revealing the ideas of Bodin himself,²² and these two indeed express the most persuasive arguments throughout the text. This means that the Judaism of Salomon and the natural philosophy (or natural religion) of Toralba form the background for the particular attitudes displayed in the *Heptaplomeres*. The Neoplatonic orientation of the dialogues is also evident, although with some restrictions, as we shall see.

Toralba's natural philosophy is infused with a profound religious sentiment and he is always alert to refute those philosophical ideas that imperil the position of God as the omnipotent and free creator of all things. Especially Aristotle "writes many intolerable

²⁰ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 3. See also p. 467. All my quotations are from the edition and translation of Marion leathers Kuntz, op. cit.

²¹ Paolo Paruta, another Venetian and Sarpi's contemporary, writes in his *Discorsi politici*, appresso Giuseppe Pavoni, Genova MDC, p. 444: "Nicolò Macchiavelli (...) che hora condannato dalla Santissima Sede Apostolica ad oblivione perpetua, non è pur lecito di nominare." The Jesuit Antonio Possevino wrote a book against – among some others - Machiavelli and Bodin: *Judicium de Nuae militis Galli Joannis Bodini, Philippi Mornaei, Nicolai Machiavelli* (2. ed 1593). For the resemblance between Machiavelli and Bodin, see Tenenti, Alberto, *Credenze, ideologie, libertinismi tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, Bologna 1978, pp. 221-236.

²² Kuntz, "Introduction", cit., p. xlv offers a list of scholars and their opinions. Kuntz herself believes that all the speakers represent Bodin's thinking, although she notes that the others find it very difficult to refute Salomon; Rose, *Bodin and the Great God*, cit., passim, but especially pp. 138, 144-145, sees Salomon as the protagonist and Toralba as his assistant.

things about God”,²³ but he is critical also toward the Epicureans and the Stoics. After having defended the free will of God against certain natural scientists, he states scornfully, that “the whole assembly of Peripatetics, Epicureans and Stoics had decided that not only is the first cause moved to action by necessity, but even that God has no power to prevent things that occur by nature.”²⁴

On the contrary, the God of Toralba is “infinite, simple, eternal”, the very existence of all things depends on His will, and this God, who is “freed and loosed from the fates and the laws of Nemesis”, is so powerful, that He “can desert what He has made whenever He wishes.”²⁵ The world depends on a voluntary cause, that is, the will of God, instead of being preserved of necessity, as Aristotle thought. Consequently, the world is not eternal. Toralba notes that Plato, while attributing a beginning to the world, also understood that it would end some day. These things, Salomon corrects, concerned only “the accidents of the heavens, not the essence”, and thus it was “shameful even to conceive the destruction of the world”. This was the opinion of Plato and Philo the Hebrew, one of the principal sources of Bodin, but Salomon says, that because “the Eternal Builder” had decreed that the world would perish, it would be so. “Dear is Plato, dear is Philo, but more dear is the voice of God”, he concludes.²⁶ Already from these quotations we can presume that the religious ideas of Bodin grew from the old mixture of Platonism and Judaism.²⁷ His God is transcendent, omnipotent *kardiognostes*, who knows all the secrets of the human soul, or, as in this case, the human heart.²⁸

“It is characteristic of man to believe; it is characteristic of God to know”, defines Curtius the relationship between man and God.²⁹ Man is not capable of attaining divine knowledge or perceiving and understanding the laws of God without divine help, states

²³ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁷ See *Ibid.*, pp. 339, 354, where Plato is depicted as “divine”, and, pp. 65-66, where Salomon claims that Plato had received all the best things from the Hebrews. See also, Kuntz, Marion L., “The home of Coronaeus in Jean Bodin’s *Colloquium heptaplomeres*: an example of a Venetian Academy”, *Acta conventus neolatini bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-latin Studies*, Bologna 1979, pp. 277-283, and, *id.* “Introduction”, *cit.*, pp. xviii-l, where Kuntz associates the Neoplatonism of the *Heptaplomeres* with that of Marsilio Ficino’s Academy and finds special affinity between Bodin and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. For the Renaissance Platonism, see Kristeller, Paul O., *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, New York 1979, pp. 50-65, especially, for its “almost ubiquitous presence” in the sixteenth-century, p. 59, for the Neoplatonic current in medieval Jewish thought, p. 54, and, for Pico’s attempts to reconcile the Jewish Cabala with Christian theology and Platonist tradition, pp. 58, 174-175, 206.

²⁸ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 195.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Salomon,³⁰ and Toralba confirms this by saying that “the power of nature is not so great that a man may attain the consummate wisdom of divine affairs without the aid of divine light.”³¹ According to Fridericus “the weakness of the human mind cannot grasp” the “wondrous deeds” of Christ³² and, moreover, “the weakness of human frailty and the fury of our passions is so great”, that we are in a constant need of Christ’s help “as advocate and mediator.”³³ Coronaeus, too, says that “we do not even reach in our understanding” God’s “excellence and purity”, much less so in our action, but “the power of the creator is not lessened because of the weakness of the creature and subject.”³⁴

The weakness of man, as it is described in the *Heptaplomeres*, is not as absolute as it is in the thought of Sarpi. The best religions, according to him, “mettono Dio al più alto, che dà maggior speranza. L’uomo al più basso, che raffrena più gl’affetti.”³⁵ Sarpi’s pessimism – one of the dominating features in his personality – has its roots in a world view, which is strictly naturalistic and shares many things with the ancient Stoicism. Micanzio says in his biography of Sarpi, that no other philosopher had yet arrived so far in speculating the nihilism of human nature.³⁶ An improvement in human affairs is, for Sarpi, a rare phenomenon, and usually “si cambia sempre in peggio.”³⁷ Furthermore, in the preface of his *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* Sarpi states tersely, that the vicissitudes of the council are a clear sign to dedicate one’s thoughts to God and not to trust in human wisdom.³⁸

For Bodin, happiness is attainable through contemplation, which leads to the recognition of God. The ultimate happiness, that is, “the clearest effusion of the light and love of God toward us”, touches but a few.³⁹ Men are expected to follow the Ten Commandments, which are “the very law of nature” for Toralba, and divine law for Salomon.⁴⁰ God gave the Decalogue to men, because he felt pity for the human

³⁰ Ibid., p. 464, also, p. 243.

³¹ Ibid., p. 244.

³² Ibid., p. 329.

³³ Ibid., p. 430.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 429.

³⁵ Sarpi, *Pensieri sulla religione*, in *Pensieri*, cit., p. 654.

³⁶ Micanzio, *Vita del Padre Paolo*, cit., p. 1396: “in tutto il corso del tempo ancora nessuno è arrivato forse al profondo della nichilità della natura umana (così mi sia lecito dire, perché il padre così parlava), stimandosi un niente.” See also p. 1346: Sarpi discussed for a long time with Gaspar Schoppe, “in particolar della dottrina degl’antichi stoici.”

³⁷ Sarpi, *Opere*, cit., p. 263, a letter to Jacques Leschassier on 14 Ottobre 1609.

³⁸ Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, cit., p. 6: “chiaro documento di rassegnare li pensieri in Dio e non fidarsi della prudenza umana.”

³⁹ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 248 (Toralba).

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 192, for Toralba, p. 194, for Salomon.

“vicissitude” and wanted to “prevent us from violating nature.”⁴¹ This providential – but, at the same time, transcendent and distant – God of Bodin has helped men many times, as Salomon declares: “He gave us body and mind; He prescribed laws for running well, and He taught us; He helped us to run in the stadium of virtues; He sustained us when we were falling; He often helped us after we had fallen; He led us to the goal when we had been up.”⁴²

It is striking, after these confident words of Salomon, to move into the desolate world of Sarpi’s *Pensieri*. Suddenly, man is the most imperfect creature among all the animals. With his reasoning capacity man has alienated himself from the original naturalness of existence, which, on the other hand, has been conserved by all the (other) animals.⁴³ Bodin, instead, places man above all the animals: “God made man a little less than the angels and gave him complete power over all living creatures.”⁴⁴ While reading Sarpi’s *Pensieri*, one realizes that God is almost totally absent and everything happens according to the laws of nature.⁴⁵

Whereas the bodinian man can attain happiness through contemplating God, for Sarpi happiness is primarily a stoic state of mind, which can not be moved or disturbed by any external causes. A perfectly happy man is self-sufficient, one who does not need anything, “*nec seipso*.” Happiness is to be found in stillness, not in movement. Since, however, everything in the world is in constant movement, perfect happiness exists only in our imagination. A kind of a limited happiness is attainable through virtue. Thus, while Bodin places happiness in a traditional Christian context, Sarpi bases his theory on pre-Christian philosophies, with a certain flavor of nihilism.⁴⁶

Toralba says: “the good that is common to all things is to be well according to the nature of each thing. So also the end of man is to have served the glory of God.”⁴⁷ When man is

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 249 (Salomon).

⁴² Ibid., p. 428.

⁴³ Sarpi, pensiero 404, in op. cit., p. 307, : “...perché l’uomo più di tutti animali abbisogna di medicine, sopra tutti egli è imperfetto.” See also pensiero 253. For this subject, see Amerio, R., *Il Sarpi dei pensieri filosofici inediti*, Torino 1950, p. 13; Sosio, L., “L’animale uomo e l’arte di ben pensare”, in Sarpi, *Pensieri*, cit., pp. 547-575.

⁴⁴ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 117 (Octavius).

⁴⁵ Especially in his *Pensieri sulla religione* Sarpi exposes ideas, which reduce all religions to mere inventions of man. This has created some confusing problems for those, who are trying to explore his religious thought, for it is necessary, that they have to deal with two different worlds of Sarpi: the public and religious, and, on the other hand, the private and philosophical. Because the purpose of this article is not to struggle with this question, it is enough to say that the dualism exists, and that it comes particularly clear when comparing the Sarpi of the *Pensieri* and the almost saint figure that Micanzio depicts in his biography.

⁴⁶ Sarpi, pensieri 250-253, 400 and the notes, in op. cit., pp. 221-224, 304. See also, Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri*, cit., p. 30.

⁴⁷ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 247. See also p. 246, where Salomon says: “the final good for man rests in the enjoyment of eternal God.”

serving the glory of God, he is simply acting according to his nature. For Sarpi the end of man is simply to live. Furthermore, to try to live without pain, which is possible by obeying one's natural inclinations.⁴⁸ Also here Sarpi is inspired by the ancient Stoicism. As we have already seen, Bodin's attitude toward the Stoics is clearly negative.⁴⁹

Even more evident is his aversion toward the Epicureanism: "there is no better sign of piety", Fridericus declares, "than to be mocked by the Epicureans."⁵⁰ In the very beginning of the discussions Senamus tries to defend Epicurus, who did not believe in immortality of the soul or in divine providence, and yet "piously worshipped gods with no hope of reward." Nevertheless, Senamus' role in the *Heptaplomeres* is often only provocative, as it certainly is here, and his point of view is refuted by Toralba: "for when the hope of rewards and the fear of divine punishment are removed, no society of men can endure."⁵¹

This is not the conclusion that Sarpi makes in the *Pensieri*. According to him a temporal punishment was quite enough for a timid person, whereas nothing, the divine punishment included, could restrain the audacious one.⁵² Sarpi shared many things with the Epicureans, for example, the idea of justice as an arbitrary contract between men, and, also, the classification of desires into "naturali e necessarie", "naturali non necessarie" and "né necessarie né naturali".⁵³

An important notion, with regard to the *Heptaplomeres*, is Sarpi's idea of sensation as the necessary condition for all knowledge. Here, too, Sarpi is influenced by ancient materialism, Epicureanism and Aristotelianism, which means, that there was no room for the Platonic idea of an incorporeal soul, which could attain ultrasensory knowledge of other incorporeal entities. It is clearly contrary to Sarpi's thought when Salomon says: "the sight of the mind is sharper for seeing than that of the eyes."⁵⁴ All this is connected to the question of the immortality of the soul. Sarpi's materialism and his idea of a corporeal soul

⁴⁸ Sarpi, *Pensieri sulla religione*, cit., p. 643: "il fine dell'uomo, come d'ogn'altro animato, è vivere"; *Pensieri medico-morali*, ibid., p. 603: "Lo scopo nostro (...) è l'idoglienza." See also the notes.

⁴⁹ See, for example, *Heptaplomeres*, p. 27 (Toralba), p. 413 (Coronaeus), p. 418 (Coronaeus), p. 451 (Salomon).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 306. See also, p. 27 (Toralba), p. 63 (Octavius and Coronaeus), p. 148 (Curtius), p. 162 (Coronaeus), p. 232 (Curtius), p. 252 (Toralba), p. 400 (Toralba), p. 449 (Toralba), p. 461 (Coronaeus), p. 463 (Coronaeus).

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6. See also p. 450.

⁵² Sarpi, pensiero 413, in op. cit., p. 314. David Wootton, cit., p. 134 and passim, suggests that Sarpi was an unbeliever and favorable to a society without any kind of a doctrinal religion.

⁵³ Sarpi, pensiero 420 (justice), pensiero 277 and the note (desires), in op. cit., pp. 318, 235. See also, Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri*, cit., pp. 29, 32; Cozzi, L., "La formazione", cit., pp. lix, lxxvii.

⁵⁴ Sarpi, pensieri 2-4 and the notes, in op. cit., pp. 5-13; *Arte di ben pensare*, in *Pensieri*, cit., pp. 577-598. See also, Sosio, "L'animale uomo", cit., pp. 562-575. Salomon's statement is in *Heptaplomeres*, p. 60.

lead to the conclusion, that the soul is to die with the body. He, indeed, includes the immortality of the soul among the false ideas in his *Arte di ben pensare*.⁵⁵

On the other hand, it is evident, that Bodin believed in the immortality of the soul. Toralba says it very clearly: “I think no one except the Epicureans doubts that soul survive bodies.” Coronaeus too defends the immortality of souls against “certain untrustworthy Epicureans.”⁵⁶ Bodin’s idea of the immortality of the soul does not seem to be Platonic or Neoplatonic, for Toralba states that “no essence except God is incorporeal”, and, while defining the human mind, that “if it were a particle of God, God would be corporeal, which all admit is foolish.”⁵⁷

Angels and demons are an essential part of Bodin’s vision of the universe. Just like men and men’s minds they too are finite and thus corporeal. According to Salomon, God “calls together assemblies of angels” in order to use their services, since “it is inconsistent with divine majesty to act through itself what it can perform through the action of angels.”⁵⁸ Indeed, there are many things that are not caused by nature, but by angels and demons, who are carrying out the orders of God. Toralba says: “Nothing is more alien to nature than violence, so we know that storms and winds which disturb the elements cannot happen from nature.”⁵⁹ This natural philosopher is very critical toward natural scientists, of whose “innumerable errors (...) there is none more serious than to think that all things which are outside man’s power come from the necessary causes of nature or fortune.” Coronaeus asserts, that “the winds and storms are summoned by the forceful power of demons.”⁶⁰

Needless to say, the criticism falls on Sarpi, whose naturalistic world view does not permit any kind of a supernatural explanation. This is one of the crucial differences between him and the author of the *Heptaplomeres*. Bodin’s world has but one first cause, which is “free, not natural, not violent”, that is to say, the will of God. There are also natural things that happen according to the laws of causation, “unless they are kept from doing so by the divine will in all things or human will in some or by the power of demons in

⁵⁵ Sarpi, pensiero 114 and the note, in op. cit., p. 132; *Arte di ben pensare*, cit., pp. 595-596. See also, Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri*, cit., pp. 17-18; Wootton, cit., p. 41; Frajese, *Sarpi scettico*, cit., pp. 90-94. For the Epicureans, the Stoics, the corporeal soul and its mortality, see Kristeller, *Renaissance thought*, cit., p. 185.

⁵⁶ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 449 (Toralba), p. 461 (Coronaeus).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 55.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 70-71. It should be remembered, that Bodin wrote an entire book about this matter, *De la démonomanie et sorciers*, 1580, and, that he defended the death penalty for magicians and sorcerers. See Kuntz, “Introduction”, cit., p. xxxvii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27 (Toralba), p. 82 (Coronaeus). Tenenti, *Credenze*, cit., p. 272, defines Toralba as a deist, and not without a reason. He also claims that Toralba is the person who most clearly expresses the ideas of Bodin himself.

many”, as Toralba says.⁶¹ Sarpi’s world, instead, has many first causes, which are all eternal and natural. From these eternal causes are reduced all the temporal causes, as the heat of the Mount Etna and the flooding of the river Po. Many things only seem to be supernatural to those, who do not know all the causes. However, the natural law of causation reaches everywhere and thus “everything is natural”.⁶²

We have already seen, how Bodin rejected Plato’s and Philo’s opinion, that the essence of the world does not change, and, thus, the world does not perish. Sarpi, instead, agrees with Plato on this question: the world is eternal, maintained by the eternal causes, and by the fact, that there can not be any substantial changes in natural things (ie. in any thing).⁶³ Now, it seems safe to conclude, that for Bodin (of the *Heptaplomeres*) the world is going to perish, but the soul is immortal, whereas, according to Sarpi (of the *Pensieri*), world is eternal, but the soul is mortal.

If we are to compare Bodin’s and Sarpi’s theological ideas, their judgments on various Christian doctrines, we will soon find out, that Sarpi did not have much to say about these matters. *Heptaplomeres*, instead, is very critical and especially the sixth (and the last) book contains ideas, that must have been most upsetting to Bodin’s contemporaries. For example, Toralba ridicules the idea of Incarnation and continues by saying that “All the Hebrew and Ismaelite people and all groups of philosophers uniformly deny that this so new and unusual change befits to God.”⁶⁴ Salomon refutes the Trinity, for there is no proof of it in the divine law or in the profets.⁶⁵ Furthermore, there was no deity in Christ, Octavius claims, and Toralba confirms that (because) “the divine mind has not mingled with the human mind, Christ will be nothing other than man.”⁶⁶

The last quotation recalls Sarpi’s statement “L’espiazione facillissima per mezo d’un uomo conciliatore, potente senza meno”,⁶⁷ which reduces Christ to a mere conciliator and seems also to eradicate his deity. Sarpi, nevertheless, reserves for Christ the power to expiate the sins, whereas Bodin makes Salomon say that “it is clear (...) that Jesus’ death was useless in expiating the sins of men.”⁶⁸ Toralba confirms this by saying that “it is in vain to think that Christ suffered death to cleanse the stain of original sin.” A little earlier

⁶¹ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 34.

⁶² Sarpi, pensieri 131-136, 138, in op. cit., pp. 149-153. Pensiero 138: “ma poichè da ciascuna sequì naturalmente quel tutto che sequì, perciò natural si è il tutto.”

⁶³ Sarpi, pensieri 113-114, in op. cit., pp. 131-132., See also, Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri*, cit., pp. 21-22.

⁶⁴ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 327.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 375 (Octavius), p. 379 (Toralba).

⁶⁷ Sarpi, *Pensieri sulla religione*, cit., p. 662. See also the note.

⁶⁸ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 390.

he had rejected the idea of original sin transferring from Adam to his descendants, because “no sin can be charged to an infant”, who can not even “understand the things which have been implanted in him by nature.” To “blame the nature of any sin”, on the other hand, would be to blame the “parent of nature, and nothing is more deadly than this.”⁶⁹

Salomon denies the whole “Fall of origin” and claims that it had only been a trick of the “leaders of the Christian religion”, in order to “draw the souls of unlearned men to themselves.” In fact, Adam was simply “delighted by the charms of the senses and by the sweet desire of excessive”, which can happen to all of us, but, just like Adam, “finally we at some time rise up from the filth and return to the straight path of salvation.” Salomon continues by declaring, that “each man is Adam”, and, thus, the story of Adam’s fall is only an “elegant and divine allegory.”⁷⁰

It is a difficult task to try to define Sarpi’s opinion about these matters. After all, what else can we expect from this skeptical naturalist, than a persistent aspiration to evade all theological speculation? Indeed, according to Sarpi men can not talk about God without stammering.⁷¹ Besides, he thought that there were already too many religious doctrines,⁷² and the differences, which were often only verbal, made him sometimes laugh.⁷³ However, the questions of salvation and free will seem to have inspired also Sarpi to write a few succinct lines.

According to Salomon “grace, life and salvation were offered for those who obeyed the law.”⁷⁴ Moreover,

in vain does Christ or anyone else promise salvation by His death in order to lead men away from virtue, piety, integrity, observance of the law, and the true worship of eternal God to laziness, sin, and the wicked adoration of dead men, as if it were not in every man’s power to execute the divine commands and as if the free will to follow the law had been snatched away from posterity by Adam’s sin.⁷⁵

Curtius tries in vain to reject the idea of free will and becomes refuted by Coronaeus, Toralba and Salomon. Coronaeus even specifies, that Curtius is left alone with the Stoics in

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 395-396.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 404-405.

⁷¹ Sarpi, *Opere*, cit., p.719, a letter to Dudley Carleton: “Delle cose divine ogni mortale parlerà sempre balbutendo”.

⁷² Id., *Lettere ai protestanti*, cit., I, p. 65, to Groslot de l’Isle, 17 February 1609.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 86, to Groslot de l’Isle, 7 July 1609. See also, Vivanti, C., “In margine a studi recenti sul Sarpi”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXXIX (1967), fasc., IV, p. 1082.

⁷⁴ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 411.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 413.

this question, since all the other philosophers agree with the Roman church and the Hebrews.⁷⁶

It seems evident, that sarpi denied the idea of free will. His rigorous materialism and the world view, which was based on the strict laws of causation, did not leave much space for human will.⁷⁷ Interestingly, we can find a confirmation for this, when we move from the *Pensieri* into the other world of Sarpi, into that of public life and correspondence with protestants. In 1609 Sarpi was asked to write about the controversy *de auxiliis* between the Dominicans and the Jesuits. This is one of the few texts, where we can find some traces of Sarpi's theological thinking. He begins by stating, that it is an "articulo fondamentale della fede cristiana che l'uomo ha bisogno della divina grazia, cioè del divino agiutto, per ottener la salute." However, not everyone will be saved, only the "pochi elletti".⁷⁸

Sarpi moves then to discuss the Pelagian and Semipelagian ideas about grace and refutes them with the authorities of St. Augustine and St. Paul. According to them we do not only need the grace "per operar bene", but also, "per voler operare". We can not want anything good, unless God has first made us to want it. Moreover, after having introduced the good to us, and after having made us to want it, God helps us to execute it and to persist in the "buona volontà". Some "dottori cattolici", Sarpi criticizes, while examining the origins of the sufficiency and the efficiency of divine help, had come to the conclusion, that the first originates from the grace, and the latter from the free will of men. Sarpi does not share this point of view. According to him, these "dottori" measure the mysteries of the faith rather with human wisdom than with the "dottrina rivelata da Dio", and they are "non versati molto nelle scritture divine". Furthermore, they argue, that the Scripture gives the "preceppi di ben operare", the general rules for achieving the good, and threatens with castigation those who do wrong. All these things would have been said in vain, if it was not totally in our possession to decide whether we accept or refuse the divine grace.⁷⁹

This is exactly what Salomon means, when he says: "But the laws are commanded in vain, and the promise of divine rewards would be empty if man has no power, nor even will, to follow divine laws." Curtius, the Calvinist, tries to defend his own point of view: "we act good or bad not from will, but from necessity, nor has anyone ever had any power or free will."⁸⁰ He also declares that not "anyone except Christ could satisfy divine laws. From Him the bulwarks of salvation must be sought and hoped for, so that he might absolve us

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 418.

⁷⁷ For certain contradictions in Sarpi's ideas about determinism, see Amerio, *Il Sarpi dei pensieri*, cit., pp. 26-28.

⁷⁸ Sarpi, *De Auxiliis*, in Sarpi, *Scritti scelti*, a cura di Giovanni da Pozzo, Torino 1982, p. 157.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 158-159.

⁸⁰ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 414.

from the antiquated law of Moses.”⁸¹ He is, however, refuted by the others on the following pages.

Sarpi rejects this opinion of the “dottori” repeating St. Augustine’s idea that the “precetti” of God manifest the duties of men, which they, nevertheless, can not do without the help of divine grace. Respectively, the castigations manifest the limitations of men, which are caused by the sins. While rejecting the “dottori”, Sarpi rejects also Salomon and the other interlocutors – with the exceptions of Curtius and Fridericus – of the *Heptaplomeres*. Consequently, he rejects Bodin’s idea of grace and free will. That idea, Sarpi claims, grows from excessive self-esteem, “che ci fa parere che siamo qualche gran cosa.” It also alienates men from God, and, since strengthening dependence on human affairs, it serves political purposes.⁸² Here we can see two characteristically sarpian ideas: disdain toward men’s exaggerated opinion of themselves and, on the other hand, the belief, that religion becomes easily contaminated by politics.

Sarpi takes sides with the Dominicans, who consider the “precetti” of God sufficient grace. This would be enough to save men, if they were not corrupted by sin. However, since they are sinful, more help is needed: a divine motion turns the will from its evil inclination and guides it toward the good. This motion is physical action inside our will, it is not violent, and thus it is not repugnant to free will. It would be against the freedom of will, if it was moved by an external cause, but when the will is moved by itself or by God, the movement is free.⁸³ Consequently, the freedom of will is not a natural quality of men. It is divine motion inside us. Sarpi concludes the *De auxiliis* by quoting St. Augustine: “non per nostra libertà acquistiamo la grazia divina, ma per grazia divina conseguiamo la libertà.”⁸⁴

We can construct a more comprehensive picture of Sarpi’s theological thinking with the contents of his letter to Daniel Heinsius on 4 June 1620.⁸⁵ In the previous year the synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) had resolved the controversy on predestination. Both Sarpi and Heinsius were on the winning side, which refuted the opinions of the Arminians. The synod confirmed, that the efficient help of Christ’s death touches only the elected ones, that the grace is irresistible, and, that it is impossible for the elects to lose the faith.⁸⁶ Heinsius, in his *Homilia in locum Johannis Cap. XVII vers. IX*, 1619, which Sarpi had read right away,

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 418. On page 431 Fridericus says: “no one could ever follow the laws of Moses.”

⁸² Sarpi, *De auxiliis*, p. 160.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 163. See also, pensiero 141, in op. cit., p. 154: “Ben disse adunque S. Tommaso, che niuna cosa mossa dalla sua causa è violentemente mossa; e se gli uomini fosser mossi da Dio, le opere loro volontarie sarebbero”.

⁸⁴ Sarpi, *De auxiliis*, p. 164.

⁸⁵ For an exhaustive analysis of the letter, see Ulianich, B., “Sarpiana. La lettera del Sarpi allo Heinsius”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXVIII (1956), fasc., III, pp. 425-446.

⁸⁶ Ulianich, “Sarpiana”, cit., p. 437.

emphasizes the oneness of election and grace. Consequently, he flung himself against those, who fabricated different kinds of elections, “etiam infirmas, etiam incertas, et quas nulla sequitur glorificatio”, and those, who claimed that it was possible for men to resist the grace.⁸⁷

As we have already seen, Bodin reserved for men the power to choose whether or not to obey the divine laws. Since the obeying was the way to salvation, and men had the power to choose it or reject it, they also had the power to resist the grace. Bodin also rejects the idea of predestination, as we can see from these words of Coronaeus:

...those who take away from men the free will of doing good seek hiding places for their own sins and open the doors to all crimes and call back the teachings of all theologians and wise men. Then comes that paradox: that many men are abandoned to eternal fires, since they cannot accomplish anything good even though they especially desire it, but certain men are chosen for salvation in such a way that they cannot become wicked even though they especially wish it.

Toralba confirms this immediately: “This lazy reasoning of cowardly and lifeless men should be exploded.”⁸⁸ In Bodin’s view there is always hope for men – provided that they obey the divine laws –, for “God very often removes punishments altogether which He had decreed in His own judgment, or He lessens them”, as Salomon says. A little later he continues: “the door of salvation lies open to every age, to every order, to every sex.”⁸⁹

Bodin’s view is opposite to that of Heinsius and Sarpi, who, in his letter, clearly agrees with Heinsius and the synod of Dordrecht.⁹⁰ It is worth noticing, that in his *Homilia* Heinsius at times nearly quotes the decrees of Dordrecht, which, on the other hand, are almost identical with Calvin’s idea of the predestination.⁹¹ Thus, Bodin, while mocking the “fatal necessity of Stoics”, rejects the idea of predestination, whereas Sarpi seems to sustain not only the Stoic (or naturalistic) fatalism, but also the Calvinistic concept of predestination.⁹² According to Sarpi, some men are elected to be saved, while the others are

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 433, 437.

⁸⁸ *Heptaplomeres*, pp. 413-414.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 417-418.

⁹⁰ Sarpi, *Lettere ai protestanti*, cit., II, p. 223, to Daniel Heinsius, 4 June 1620: “Fuit procul dubio Apostolorum Johannis et Pauli sententia, quam in tua *Homilia* narrasti, eamque orthodoxam esse soli non credunt qui caecitate mentis damnati sunt; nam, ut divinae gratiae et adoptionis soli electi participes sunt.”

⁹¹ Ulianich, cit., pp. 432-435.

⁹² For Sarpi’s inclination toward Calvinism, see Ulianich, “Sarpiana”, cit., p. 438; Cozzi, G., “Fra Paolo Sarpi, l’anglicanesimo e la *Historia del Concilio Tridentino*”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXVIII (1956), fasc., IV, pp. 584, 593.

left for damnation. On what basis the election is done, that is not for men to know. The answer remains hidden in the abyss of God's will.⁹³

In spite of the radical differences in some crucial philosophical and theological questions, both Sarpi and Bodin show interest in certain social aspects of religion. For Bodin, as we have already seen, happiness is attainable through contemplating the secrets of God. These secrets are not allowed "to be made common or polluted by profane men." Nevertheless, especially the Decalogue, but also other "commands, prohibitions, penalties, judgments, festivals, rites" and "customs", that is, "things which pertained to the salvation of everyone", are written in such a clear manner, that they are understood by all. The "occult rites and sacrifices", instead, are understood only by the learned, and the knowledge of natural mysteries, the Cabala", is reserved only for the most learned.⁹⁴ Thus, there are different levels in the Scripture, and when Curtius clings to a literal interpretation of Adam's fall, Salomon asks masterfully: "Curtius, do you not see an elegant and divine allegory?"⁹⁵ These allegories can reveal the divine secrets to those, who are capable of understanding them. For the others there are the rites and the ceremonies, and although Bodin allows his protagonists to mock them, the conclusion is, that "no religion can exist completely without rites and ceremonies."⁹⁶

As for Sarpi, according to him it is necessary to sharpen with interpretation the most coarse features of religion, and, on the other hand, to symbolize that what is too subtle, in order to maintain the coherence of faith among different kinds of believers.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, he seems to place less emphasis than Bodin on the importance of religion as a social stabilizer, since "the politician", while constituting a "city", could also do without the religion.⁹⁸ Sarpi is also very skeptical in regard to the power of human intelligence. Thus, when he says, that men should not abase the divine things by discussing about them, his motive comes from the human depravity, which might pollute those "excellent" things.⁹⁹

⁹³ Sarpi, *De auxiliis*, cit., pp. 163-164: "Ma per che causa Dio ad alcuni dona questa sua grazia efficace, e li muove effettivamente al bene, non muovendo medesimamente tutti gl'altri, questo è quello che S. Paulo riduce nell'abisso profondissimo delli giudicii divini."

⁹⁴ *Heptaplomeres*, pp. 94-95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226 (Salomon).

⁹⁷ Sarpi, *Pensieri sulla religione*, cit., p. 650: "per accommodar l'istessa ad ambidua si assottigliano le parte grosse coll'interpretazione, e s'ingrossano le sottili col simbolo." For interpretation, symbol and mystery in Sarpi's thought, see Vivanti, C., "Introduzione", in Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio*, cit., pp. lii-liii; Frajese, V., "Sarpi interprete", cit., p. 78-79.

⁹⁸ Sarpi, *Pensiero* 423, in op. cit., p. 320.

⁹⁹ Sarpi, *Opere*, cit., p. 714, a letter to Dudley Carleton: "le cose Divine debbono esser stimate tutte eccellenti, et il trattarle con libertà di discorso è un haverle per basse." For Sarpi's distrust in human

Toralba, too, wants to prohibit the conversation about religion for the same reason: “no one has the eloquence to describe the secrets of divine majesty (...) and so it is better to be silent altogether than to speak (...) without the proper dignity.” The other interlocutors motivate the ban of public conversation with the fear of “upheaval in public affairs.” However, “a private discussion about the divine matters among educated men” can be “most fruitful”, Fridericus concludes.¹⁰⁰

Bodin trusts in human intelligence and in man’s capacity to understand – if not to describe – the secrets of God. Salomon says: “if we eagerly read divine words and think often on our reading, it will be possible to bring forth incredible treasures.”¹⁰¹ There is, once again, certain ambiguity in Sarpi, for he writes in his commentaries on Sandys’ *Relazione dello stato della religione*, that Christ himself had commanded all men to examine the Scripture, because it enlightens the mind and gives intelligence to men.¹⁰² Thus, also for Sarpi, men seem to be able to understand the Scripture and to become enlightened from divine words. However, there is such a strong pessimism in Sarpi, that one should not interpret these words of him in a too positive way. In fact, Sarpi is thinking about politics: he is urging men to study the Scripture not so much because he wants them to become enlightened, but because he wants them to become independent from the Roman Church. Bodin is much more sincere in his trust in human intelligence and its capabilities. An evident proof of Sarpi’s skepticism is to be found, for instance, in his *Pensieri*, where he prefers the false but gratifying opinions of the ignorant to those of the sagacious, who has lost all his illusions.¹⁰³

Beyond all the philosophical and theological discussion in the *Heptaplomeres*, there is the leitmotif of religious tolerance. It is Senamus, the skeptic, who most unequivocally stands for the toleration: “I enter the temples of Christians and Ismaelites and Jews wherever possible and also those of the Lutherans and Zwinglians lest I be offensive to anyone, as if I were an atheist, or seem to disturb the peaceful state of the republic.”¹⁰⁴

intelligence, see, for example, *Pensieri medico-morali*, cit., p. 628: “La peste dell’uomo è l’opinione della scienza. (...) La più illustre azione di Socrate era saper giocar con li putti alli astragali.”

¹⁰⁰ *Heptaplomeres*, pp. 164-165. For Bodin’s aversion to public discussion about religion, see Isnardi Parente, “Introduzione”, in Bodin, *I sei libri*, cit., p. 65.

¹⁰¹ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 96.

¹⁰² Sarpi, *Opere*, cit., p. 330: “(le Scritture Divine) illuminano la mente (...) e sono, come S. Paolo dice, scritte (...) per dottrina e per istruzione nostra, e debbono esser da tutti studiate, perche *intellectum dant parvulis*.”

¹⁰³ Sarpi, pensiero 528, in op. cit., p. 385: “meglio era esser volgare, anzi meglio se rimaneasi col genere suo, dove ancora le false opinioni son giovevoli.” For Sarpi’s excessive tendency to politicize religious matters, see Ulianich B., “Considerazioni e documenti per una ecclesiologia di Paolo Sarpi”, *Festgabe Joseph Lortz*, II: *Glaube und Geschichte*, herausgegeben von Erwin Iserloh und Peter Manns, Baden-Baden 1958, p. 399.

¹⁰⁴ *Heptaplomeres*, p. 466. See also p. 154.

When Senamus wonders why “Jews, Christian, Ismaelites, Swiss, Romans and Germans” disagree in so many things, but agree completely on the Psalms of David, Salomon gives an answer, which crystallizes Bodin’s idea of true religion:

This ought not to seem strange, since all those people acknowledge that they worship the name and the divinity of one eternal God, and they confess there is one God alone. Moreover, the praises of David (...) say nothing about Venus and Bacchus, nothing about Jesus of Nazareth, nothing about Mohammed or the Virgin Mary, nothing about the countless myriads of saints which Christians had chosen (...). However, they remind us of the praises and acts of one eternal Builder of all things.¹⁰⁵

It is the Hebraic God, the transcendent God with no name, that corresponds to Bodin’s religious thinking. Toralba confirms, that the religion of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methusaleh and Noah, is the best one, and “those who have departed from that most ancient and best religion have fallen into an irreconcilable labyrinth of errors.”¹⁰⁶ This pure and plain religion with one God, which is indescribable, allows enough flexibility to embrace all believers. Bodin seems to suggest, that the plurality of gods, prophets and saints is the very reason for the religious factionalism and, ultimately, for the civil strifes. It is obvious, that – while writing the *Heptaplomeres* – Bodin was motivated by the religious wars which took place in France during the later half of the sixteenth century. Consequently, on the last pages of his work the interlocutors emphasize the significance of piety and assert, that no one should be forced to believe.¹⁰⁷

Through his correspondence Sarpi was well informed not only of the French political and religious life in general, but also of the thoughts and the beliefs of many leading French intellectuals. He admired the Gallican church and even considered it to represent the universal church of all believers.¹⁰⁸ The best religion, which Sarpi depicts in his *Pensieri sulla religione*, resembles in certain aspects the *vera religio* of Bodin: “Non fa determinazione alcuna dell’esser divino. Né gran prescrizione nel modo di servirlo.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, both Sarpi and Bodin place emphasis on the importance of avoiding too precise description of God. Basically, they also oppose the rites and the ceremonies, but accept them as a necessary means to guarantee a successful reception of the religion. The toleration

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 323-324.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 468-471. Coronaeus, however, is favorable to force the unwilling “to go to public religious services”.

¹⁰⁸ Sarpi, *Lettere ai protestanti*, cit., I, p. 23, a letter to Groslet de l’Isle, 22 July 1608.

¹⁰⁹ Sarpi, *Pensieri sulla religione*, cit., p. 656.

and the universality of religion are made possible by the simpleness of service and the indefiniteness of God.

According to Sarpi, the best religion “non aborrisce nessuna opinione che gl’altri abbino. Né alcun servizio che gl’altri prestino.”¹¹⁰ This capability to tolerate different opinions seems to originate from Sarpi’s belief, that all aesthetic, moral and epistemological evaluations are relativistic. He makes a question in pensiero 531, which is a logical conclusion of this relativism: “Perché dobbiamo noi ridersi delle scienze australi...?”¹¹¹ On the other hand, Bodin’s tolerance is marked by a certain fundamentalism, for he makes Salomon say: “let there be no religion unless we shall grant it to be the true religion.” Furthermore, although Senamus is willing to visit all kinds of temples, Salomon declares, that “no one can practice without impiety many religions which are different from each other.”¹¹²

Here, too, we can see a clear distinction between the temperaments of these two men: Sarpi is objective and emotionally detached, whereas Bodin defends strongly the true religion, which, it has to be said, is tolerant toward other beliefs. Unlike Sarpi, Bodin is emotionally involved in his study of religions.¹¹³ There is, nevertheless, a certain similarity in the method that they use while exploring the religious phenomenon. Both of them base their studies on historical knowledge. This similarity is particularly evident between certain passages of the *République* and, on the other hand, the historical writings of Sarpi.¹¹⁴ The *Heptaplomeres*, instead, is more concerned with the philosophical and theological foundations of the true religion, and it is rather a display of personal religious opinions, than an objective study. It also elucidates the fact, that Sarpi and Bodin disagree in many crucial questions. Sarpi’s philosophical ideas about the eternal world and the natural causes, and the mixture of Stoicism and Epicureanism in his thought, manifest all precisely the opposite mental disposition of that of Bodin’s. We have seen an evident disagreement also in certain theological questions: Bodin judges with harsh words those, who deny the freedom of will and believe in the predestination and in the mortality of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Sarpi, pensieri 260, 424, 468, 471, 523, 531, in op. cit., pp. 228, 320, 352-353, 382-383, 386. See also Bouwsma, William J., “Paolo Sarpi e la tradizione rinascimentale”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXXIV (1962), fasc., IV, p. 711, where he suggests, that Sarpi’s tolerance had its roots in his pessimism.

¹¹² *Heptaplomeres*, pp. 152, 159.

¹¹³ In his *Paolo Sarpi tra Venezia e l’Europa*, cit., p. 249, Gaetano Cozzi says that *both* Sarpi and Bodin explore the religious phenomenon “con la freddezza distaccata dello scienziato”. See, however, Roellenbleck, “Venezia scena”, cit., p. 25, note 40, where he rightfully criticizes this statement of Cozzi and points out the passion of Bodin’s religious conviction.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, *I sei libri*, cit., pp. 448-467, where Bodin demonstrates the historical development of the papal power.

soul, which, on the other hand, are exactly the ideas that Sarpi supports. It seems obvious, that certain attitudes of Bodin in the *Heptaplomeres*, and especially the aggressive way of displaying them, would have appeared repelling to Sarpi. However, if Sarpi has read any of Bodin's works, it seems most probable, that it has been the *République*, rather than some other book. Quite certainly not the *Heptaplomeres*.

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