

Szymon Budny's Defense of the Office of the Sword (1583)

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The idea of nonresistance (*Wehrlosigkeit*), i.e., the rejection of government as forbidden to “true Christians” who must remain “defenseless,” figured prominently in the history of the Radical Reformation.¹ First formulated in the Swiss Brethren’s Schleithem Confession of 1527, it provided a major strand in the thinking of the Anabaptist movement as it spread from Switzerland into Germany and on into the Netherlands. Whether or not the Frisian Menno Simons was an unconditional nonresistant is disputable; after his death in 1561, however, it became an essential tenet of Mennonitism in all countries where that faith took root. In addition, from the 1530s on the Hutterite communities in Moravia and northern Hungary, throughout over two centuries of troubled existence, were to provide nonresistance with perhaps its most persistent and consistent practitioners. In the mid-1550s Hutterite influence helped to spread nonresistance to Poland as a component of Anabaptism.

The Polish Brethren, who split off from the Calvinist Reformed Church in 1565 to form the so-called Minor Church, included — besides

¹ George Huntston Williams, in his study *The Radical Reformation* (3rd ed., rev. and expanded, Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 342, 343, distinguishes “at least three kinds of opposition to warfare” among the Radical Reformers. One of these types was nonresistance defined by Williams as “the evangelical pacifism of conventicular separatism based upon Dominical counsels in the Gospels notably in the Sermon on the Mount.” “It was a suffering pacifism,” he adds, “which accepted and sometimes sought out persecution and martyrdom from ‘worldly Christians’ as a confirmation of their elect faith, all in an apocalyptic mood.”

nonresistance and Anabaptism — a third element in their new religious creed: anti-Trinitarianism. The Polish Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) consisted then of two joint realms — the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania where more primitive economic conditions prevailed and the aristocracy exercised greater power than in the Kingdom. Strong opposition to the idea of nonresistance existed among the anti-Trinitarian congregations in the Grand Duchy, and soon supporters of the sword greatly outnumbered the adherents of nonresistance, even though the latter continued for several decades to predominate among the Polish Brethren.

In 1583 the leading anti-Trinitarian theologian in the Grand Duchy, Szymon (Simon) Budny, produced an elaborate defense of “the office of the sword (*urząd mieczowy*)” in which he aimed at refuting the arguments of the nonresistants centered in the Kingdom of Poland. Several earlier attempts to provide such a defense already existed. Among the Magisterial Reformers the Swiss Heinrich Bullinger, for instance, had written against the rejection of a Christian magistracy (1560), while among Radical Reformers the Anabaptist, Balthasar Hubmaier, did this in his treatise in German *On the Sword* (1527) and later the Greek anti-Trinitarian Jacobus Palaeologus, temporarily a refugee in religiously tolerant Poland, composed a lengthy treatise in Latin defending both the just war and a Christian magistracy (1572-3). Whereas the works just mentioned have been accessible to interested scholars, Budny's treatise, written in Polish (a language with which few Reformation scholars in the “West” have been acquainted), has remained virtually unknown outside Poland.² Though of course not unique in its critique of nonresistance, it

² Szymon Budny, *O urzędzie miecza używajacem* (1583) [*On the Sword-Bearing Magistracy*], ed. Stanisław Kot, Warsaw, 1932. For a summary view of the book's genesis and contents, see Kot, *Socinianism in Poland: The Social and Political Ideas of the Polish Antitrinitarians in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, transl. from the Polish by Earl Morse Wilbur, Boston, 1957, 98-103. Williams mentions it only very briefly in the work cited in the previous note. I would note, though, that a recent study in Belarusian contains an extensive treatment of Budny's defense of the sword: I. V. Saverchanka, *Szymon Budny: Gumanist i reformatar*, Minsk, 1993, 173-99. Though Polish by ancestry, Budny spent virtually his whole life in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the area of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth now part of Belarus; Belarusians, therefore, claim him as a Belarusian. In addition to Polish and Latin, Budny wrote in proto-Belarusian; some scholars regard him as one of the pioneers of the Belarusian literary language. For his role as a Protestant propagandist in the Grand Duchy, see Antoine Martel, *La langue polonaise dans les pays ruthenes: Ukraine et Russe Blanche 1569-1667*, Lille, 1938, 206, 207, 210. Budny

certainly deserves attention from students of the Radical Reformation. A complete translation from the Polish is not likely, at least for the foreseeable future. This article endeavors, in the meantime, to go some way to fill this gap by surveying Budny's leading arguments and placing them in the context of the ongoing controversy over the sword that had emerged among the Polish anti-Trinitarians between 1572 and 1583, the date of publication of Budny's treatise against nonresistance.

Budny included in his book plenty of important documentary material relating to this controversy. But the core of his book lies in the lengthy "Defense of the Office Which Employs the Sword," which occupies 129 pages in Stanislaw Kot's modern reprint.³ Apart from the brief introduction and conclusion ("Apostrophe to the Polish Brethren"), the Defense is divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 22 responses to the arguments put forward by Marcin Czechowic, the leading exponent of nonresistance among the Polish Brethren. Most of these arguments had appeared in Czechowic's book entitled *Christian Dialogues* (1575)⁴; but some had been used by Czechowic and his supporters at a recent anti-Trinitarian church synod. In the case of the latter, as Budny explains, "we have had to present and arrange them according to our own memory or that of certain pious participants in the synod."⁵ The second part presented 15 positive arguments in favor of the sword; some of these, however, overlap with the contents of the first part. What made Budny choose Czechowic as his main antagonist was the fact that, unlike another prominent Polish nonresistant polemicist, Gregorius Paulus, Czechowic wrote his book in Polish, not Latin. Thereby he had hoped to reach a wider circle among his coreligionists than he could have done if he had employed the language of the learned.

Unlike the work of his chief opponent who employed a sprightly style in conveying his arguments to the less well educated Brethren, the

described the language of his works published in the Cyrillic alphabet as "Slavonic (*sloven'sky*)," a usage then prevalent among Orthodox writers, too.

³ Budny, 45-170.

⁴ I have translated extracts from the twelfth dialogue, the one dealing with nonresistance, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, vol. LII, no. 4, October 1978, 279-93, and vol. LXVII, no. 4, October 1993, 451-68. These dialogues, which Czechowic composed primarily for didactic purposes, are carried on between a master, whose views are obviously those of the author himself, and his pupil, all of whose doubts are successively resolved by the arguments of the Master, i.e., Czechowic!

⁵ Budny, 43.

structure of Budny's book, borrowed from the methods of the medieval schoolmen, is cumbersome and cannot have made easy reading even in the sixteenth century! In the first part each section begins with a summary of one of Czechowic's arguments followed by Budny's refutation. Each section of the second part commences with a brief statement of one of Budny's theses in favor of the magistracy backed by lengthy supporting arguments and proof texts. Sometimes Budny includes, as well, counter-arguments of the opposing school with his answers to them. True, Budny is skilled in his use of sarcasm; occasionally he is quite playful at what he considers to be his opponents' vagaries. He treats Czechowic and his colleagues with a certain respect, indeed with a touch of affection at times; but clearly he regards their ideas as silly, if not dangerous for church and state. The positive aspects of Budny's work, however, do little to offset its ponderousness, which a modern reader may well find hard to bear.⁶

On the other side, certain characteristics displayed by Czechowic irritated Budny. For instance, there was his custom, when arguing, of using Socratic irony to prove his point.

No man is without his little peculiarities. And Marcin is no exception. For long he has been in the habit of avoiding a simple answer to a question, however simple. First he goes round and about it, and only then does he rebut the proposition he has first seemed to allow while the proposition he had at first denied he now supports. Such a method is perhaps permissible in trifling matters but should not be used in matters of divinity. Anyhow, it is always best to say what one has to say without hedging. As the Lord tells us: "But let your communication be, Yea, Yea; Nay, nay" [Matt.

⁶ Cf. the apt comments of Kot, "Szymon Budny: Der grosste Haretiker Litauens im 16. Jahrhundert," *Studien zur alteren Geschichte Osteuropas*, Pt. I, *Wiener Archiv fur Geschichte des Slawentums und Osteuropas*, vol. II, 113, 114. According to Kot, Budny's major works, and especially his treatise on the sword-bearing magistracy "make difficult reading . . . because of his inclusion of so many proofs and counterproofs. Yet where Budny can cut himself free from this method in dedications, prefaces, annotations, etc . . . liveliness, clarity, and color mark both his choice of words and his style." Quick to detect the weaknesses of his opponents' arguments, Budny possessed a clearheadedness that made him impatient with those whom he suspected of sentimentality. Kot (*ibid.*, 64) also draws attention to his training in dialectic, which he displayed prominently in his defense of the sword.

5: 37].⁷ This is the way to proceed here, too; clear answers to clear questions.⁸

Budny also claimed over Czechowic and his colleagues the advantage of always basing his case on Scripture. Here indeed we come up against the essential difference between the two men that made any kind of consensus between them impossible. For Budny the Hebrew Bible, containing *inter alia* the Mosaic Law and the prophets of Israel, enjoyed even for Christians an equal authority with the New Testament (except in what he regarded as certain inessential matters like circumcision), whereas for Czechowic, speaking he believed for all “true Christians,” Christ’s Law of Love had replaced God’s earlier dispensation. The unbridgeable gulf dividing these two anti-Trinitarian theologians emerges clearly throughout Budny’s defense of the sword. Budny’s God was — or at any rate could be — a god of wrath, the avenger of wickedness who punished every kind of unrighteousness sternly and with impartial justice. He wielded the sword against the enemies of His chosen people and empowered those of the faithful He selected for the task to apply human law in the same spirit. This God contrasted sharply with God as Czechowic and the nonresistants envisioned Him on the basis of the message preached by His son, “the gentle and mild Jesus Christ,” in the Sermon on the Mount.

Each section in Budny’s treatment is self-contained; there does not appear to be any logical sequence in his arrangement of subjects discussed. This alone makes any succinct presentation virtually impossible. (The problem proved too much even for Kot, who usually manages to give a reasonable summary of the often extremely complex works he discusses in the course of his pioneering study of the political and social ideas of the Polish anti-Trinitarians.) The method I have adopted below is to choose from both parts for brief treatment — but not necessarily in the order employed by Budny — what seem to me to be the most important of Budny’s arguments in favor of the sword. So as to give the reader a glimpse into Budny’s way of thinking (if only in translation), I have quoted more extensively than I would normally think proper to do. At the end I have included three appendices, the first containing in translation some selected propositions from part two of the Defense (to

⁷ All biblical quotations are cited from the Authorized King James Version.

⁸ Budny, 45, 46.

illustrate Budny's method) and the second reproducing a specimen section *in toto* from the second part of Budny's Defense. The third appendix consists of brief semi-autobiographical passages, which Budny inserted in supplementary sections of his book and not in the Defense itself.

The first set of Budny's arguments in favor of the sword which we shall look at here, revolve around the *Via Crucis*, the "defenselessness" which, in his twelfth dialogue, Czechowic had argued was an essential prerequisite of a true Christian. For Jesus had told his disciples they must go out into the world like sheep among wolves (Matt. 10:16): a stance incompatible with holding any office that entailed the use of the sword. To this Budny replied that God regarded "the faithful who lived before Christ" also as sheep; and he pointed in proof to Moses' extreme meekness (Num. 12:3) and to David (Ps. 95:7). "Was not Daniel also a sheep . . . and the Babylonians, were they not wolves? And yet that sheep ruled over these wolves." Therefore, Budny concludes, "Christians today can safely hold office too, and when necessary govern the unfaithful" just as men like Daniel did in Old Testament times without angering God.⁹

Budny agreed with Czechowic that Christians must be ready to accept death for the true faith. But he dismissed his opponent's claim that, as rulership of any kind excluded the possibility of voluntary sacrifice of life, of martyrdom, this fact alone precluded Christ's followers from accepting office. As so often, Budny had recourse here to the Hebrew Bible:

The faithful, who [lived] before Christ were, like us, ready to die for the truth Therefore, this argument does not in any way help Marcin's cause. On the contrary it strengthens ours. While it is indeed correct that the faithful must be ever ready to give their lives for the truth (like sheep going to the slaughter), yet such readiness for sacrifice does not affect the question of office-holding for that did not prevent holy men of old from becoming magistrates.¹⁰

Patience and humility, Budny conceded, should be traits of every faithful Christian. They formed part of the discipline needed in following the Cross. But he thought it nonsense to draw from that the conclusion that

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50, 52. Among those in Old Testament times ready to give their lives for truth Budny cites Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

such virtues prevented Christians from becoming magistrates and, in this capacity, wielding the sword of justice and defending their country from attack. God had imposed a heavy cross on Abraham — “the father of all the faithful” — when in his youth he removed him from his family, and in later years, too, he imposed further burdens on the patriarch. Yet Abraham became a magistrate. As Budny explained:

We recognize that the Christian must be patient and take up the Cross (if God places it upon his shoulders) and follow Christ the Lord . . . It is certainly true that every faithful Christian must do this if he wishes to be his disciple . . . Yet the Christian today does not have to reject office because of the Cross or because he has the duty to be patient. Not everyone indeed need shoulder the Cross; all he is obliged to do is not to cast it off if God places it upon him . . . Besides, kings and other rulers can maintain their humility and adopt a modest stance. And, as this is so, the argument of our opponents falls to the ground.¹¹

In Budny’s view, Christ’s teachings did not abrogate either the law of nature or the Mosaic Law, which was indeed formulated in consonance with the former. The death penalty for murder forms part of the law of nature; therefore capital punishment remains obligatory at any rate for this crime. Let us again give Budny’s argument in his own words:

The law of nature, which God has inscribed on men’s hearts, is eternal. I have no need to prove, confirm or defend this proposition since it is granted to be true by all — even Marcin himself! . . . Since, then, capital punishment forms part of the law of nature . . . it must continue in force in the Congregation of God [i.e., among true and faithful Christians]. And the office of magistrate, which punishes murder with the sword, must in consequence continue for ever in the Congregation of God.¹²

The continued validity of the Mosaic Law within the community of “true Christians” forms a key point in Budny’s case.¹³ For Czechowic and the nonresistants, of course, Christ had replaced the other legal code by

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 70, 71, 73.

¹² *Ibid.*, 123, 125, 126.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 73-103. Discussion of this point occupies considerably more space than do any other of Budny’s arguments in defense of the sword.

a more perfect rule of conduct that *inter alia* disallowed both soldiering and office-holding. The Hebrew Bible, they believed, no longer contained (what it once had indeed done) divinely inspired instruction for God's chosen people.

Budny stated his case against this view when he wrote: "Both the Testaments of Holy Scripture are of equal weight; both are equally necessary and of equal value. The reason why in the Apostolic Scripture you do not find a description of the magisterial duties of kings, emperors and other rulers is simply because at that date no single monarch had as yet accepted Christ's teaching, even though the Apostles were ready to accept such persons, too." In this period God had entrusted only the Romans with the government of the area: though pagans, they wielded the sword so as to repress evildoers. But the absence at first of Christian rulers did not mean that the Mosaic Law had lapsed. Quite the contrary! And Budny proceeds to tell us why:

God's Law, which he gave to Moses, has only been abrogated in superficial matters [like circumcision] . . . The Law is one . . . Jesus Christ the Lord is not a Lawgiver but an interpreter of God's Law . . . The Law of God as promulgated by Moses is perfect in itself . . . Therefore, since Christ did not do away with this Law of God but it still continues in force, how can these people say that now there is no longer any need for the sword-bearing magistracy in God's Congregation? For today there is only one Law, the same Law as before Christ the Lord. How then, if in those days one of God's faithful might hold office without impropriety, he may not safely do so now? . . . At every step these people cry out, "What have we to do with Moses or the Old Testament? Christ gave us a different Law. Under the earlier dispensation one could fight but under this new one even to feel anger is wrong." But this invention of theirs of two Laws and creating a lawgiver out of the mediator and savior of the whole world are nothing but monkish fable-making, just fiction and error.¹⁴

Budny correctly called Matthew 5 his "opponent's chief bastion." The Sermon on the Mount has always been at the center of the Christian

¹⁴ The final part of this quotation reflects perhaps the Reformers' charge against the contemporary Catholic Church of emphasizing works to the detriment of faith, especially in the area of monasticism.

pacifist case.¹⁵ Budny, though, denied it contained the implications pacifists drew from it and argued that the Sermon was directed against the Jewish priests and Pharisees of Jesus' own day. "Resist not evil," an injunction Budny claimed was rooted in the Old Testament (he quoted from the Psalms to prove his point), he interpreted as meaning in effect: "Not to punish evil is to return evil for evil."¹⁶

At the center of Budny's case against nonresistance lay its inconsistency with the Mosaic Law, according to which the sword-bearing magistracy enjoyed a vital role in the life of God's chosen community. Czechowic's arguments against the sword naturally appeared irrelevant when confronted with his opponent's viewpoint. For, as Budny wrote:

True Christians today have been chosen, like once that Israelite nation was, to be God's holy and elect people. And since the sword-bearing magistracy existed in that nation, the foundations of Marcin's case thereby collapse . . . For if that nation — holy as it was and loved by God above all other people — had nevertheless to possess a magistracy which would punish the wicked and disobedient, how much more does the Congregation of God today need such an office and its holders, since it is gathered not out of one but out of a multitude of nations.¹⁷

The pro-sword argument from the Mosaic Law, Budny claimed, was reinforced by God's covenant with Noah at an earlier stage of biblical history. Whatever God had then commanded Noah and his sons to do must continue to be done by us "his descendants," including the punishment of murder by death.¹⁸

¹⁵ But in his ministry Jesus, like the Indian teachers of nonviolence Mahavira and Buddha before him, did not specifically deal with the question of war. Indeed it never arose to need an answer. For pacifists, though, Jesus' love commandment, including love of enemies and nonretaliation, must necessarily exclude participation in, or approval of, war. Church Fathers like Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius were the first to declare an unconditional condemnation of war and to advocate conscientious objection to military service. Since semantically pacifism is connected with war, it is with them perhaps that we should begin the history of pacifism, assigning earlier exponents of various forms of nonviolence to the prehistory of pacifism. But without that earlier inspiration, pacifism clearly would have taken a different course.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-4, 121, 122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 126-31. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). Countering the argument of the

While Budny relied mainly on Old Testament texts to uphold his arguments, he made the most of the few incidents in the New Testament where he could perhaps find support. In the case of John the Baptist's advice to the soldiers who asked him what they should do (Luke 3:13, 14), Budny considered that the Baptist's failure to tell them to abandon their profession and become civilians justified the Christian's acceptance not only of military service but also of the magistrate's office, since in so far as soldiers, if only indirectly, executed the orders of rulers and magistrates they must be considered as themselves office holders. Moreover, John himself, "being Christ's messenger, taught only what Christ the Lord was to teach." His advice to the soldiers, therefore, also expressed what Jesus would have told them, too.¹⁹

Budny, we may note, rejected the distinction made by most modern pacifists between soldiers and police and between international war and law enforcement. He wrote: "Just as [magistrates] are placed in office by the king in order to make justice prevail in his realm, so soldiers receive their authority from the king to take vengeance on the wicked and force them to obedience, without which the military would not be possible."²⁰

Budny could point to several instances in the apostolic age of office holders being converted to Christianity without any record of their having been required to resign their positions. The most striking of these cases is perhaps that of the black treasurer of Candace Queen of the Ethiopians, who is described as a man "of great authority" (Acts 8:27). Pointing a finger at Czechowic and the nonresistants, Budny wrote triumphantly:

nonresistants that capital punishment prevented a sinner's repentance, which they believed was always a possibility so long as the criminal remained alive, Budny wrote that while it was quite true that "God did not take pleasure in the death of any, he was not opposed, because of this, to the office of the sword whereby he punished the guilty." No one under sentence of death, if truly penitent, should despair of receiving God's forgiveness, however heinous his crime. In this connection Budny pointed out with respect to the penitent thief on the cross that "his shameful agony did not prevent him from repenting, indeed it certainly must have helped him in this." See *ibid.*, 118-22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132-8. Czechowic and his colleagues, on the other hand, maintained that John the Baptist belonged to the old dispensation so that what he taught was not necessarily valid after Christ's earthly ministry.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

It is no use your shouting about the Cross, about renunciation of self, etc. all that is irrelevant . . . These things do not affect office-holding [for true Christians]; nor does a [Christian] magistracy impede such things. You are only frightening people unnecessarily, therefore, and placing a heavy burden on them unprofitably. You see, there is nothing in God's Word that could support those notions of yours. Wherever you look in Holy Scripture, it speaks clearly against you. Consider this well — and stop spreading such groundless fancies and monkish superstitions.²¹

Budny admitted that Christ himself never held office. “Man, who made me a judge . . . over you?” he had asked of one who sought his help as an arbitrator in a property dispute (Luke 12:13, 14). But this did not mean that “we are not to become judges or assume office” when God requires us to do so. True, we should not strive to obtain office; Christ did not do this, and he should always be our guide. On the other hand, when called upon to become magistrates, by accepting office we are acting in a more Christian spirit than do those who dress up in rags in order to display their poverty. “For God takes no heed whether we go around in cloth of gold or in tatters. What he takes note of is a sincere heart with love of God within it. And thus the Lord Jesus regarded as blessed those who are poor in spirit rather than those who go around in ragged garments.”²²

In conclusion, Budny's “Defense of the Sword-Bearing Magistracy,” for all its structural shortcomings, must be considered a work of prime importance in sixteenth-century political thought. Long ignored outside Poland on account of the language barrier, it deserves to be better known both among historians of political ideas in general and among specialists in the Radical Reformation. To this writer Budny's reliance for support on the Old Testament vitiates to a large extent the arguments he puts forward, often with considerable eloquence and always with enviable ingenuity. But this view is of course a matter of opinion. Just as recognition of the important role Machiavelli's *Prince* played in the development of European political thought does not depend on one's

²¹ *Ibid.*, 160, 161. Budny also cited St. Paul's appeal to Caesar in Rome as proof of the Christian character of magistracy. Thus, since the faithful could make use of the courts to obtain redress of wrong, there was clearly no reason why they should not also occupy a position of trust in such a useful institution. This conclusion he characterized as “certain, powerful, and true.” See *ibid.*, 161-3.

²² *Ibid.*, 63, 66. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

sharing the *Realpolitik* he advocates in that treatise, so our esteem for Budny's Defense is not contingent on our agreement with the theses he advances in the course of that work.

APPENDIX A

I have selected for translation below four of Budny's propositions, or "proofs" as he calls them, from the second part of his Defense. Each proposition is followed by extensive supporting argument and sometimes counterargument as well.

Proof 7

All God's ordinances are good.
Power or rulership is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).
Therefore a Christian may securely hold any office wielding the sword.

Proof 8

A Christian is justified in undertaking anything that is good.
The sword-bearing magistracy is both good and useful.
Therefore, a Christian may hold such an office.²³

Proof 10

Whoever may keep slaves is also justified in holding office.
A Christian may keep slaves.
Therefore, he is also justified in holding office.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*, 151, 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 154, 155. Budny refers here to Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22 as his supporting texts where the Vulgate uses *servi* (translated in the AV as "servants"). He comments: "In our Sarmatia, that is, in Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia and the adjoining lands, a nobleman, though a private citizen, is still free to punish his slave (*niewolnik*) as well as his serf (*poddany*) with death," in the same way as this was possible in Greece of the Homeric age. "And thus," Budny goes on, "a private citizen, when he is a nobleman, differs in no way from the holder of public office since both exercise authority over those whom they rule — except that the officeholder (especially if he is a high-level functionary) is likely to have more people under his sway." The closely interrelated questions of slavery and serfdom had been debated among the Lithuanian Brethren at their synod in 1568. Budny took a leading part in the discussions — on the socially conservative side. For a record of these debates, see Budny, 180-216.

Proof 14

Whoever may accept Roman nobility may also become an officeholder. A Christian may without impropriety be a Roman nobleman. Therefore, a Christian may accept office.²⁵

APPENDIX B²⁶**Proof 15**

Whatever form of punishment the Apostolic Congregation was justified in using, today's congregation is likewise permitted to impose.

In the Apostolic Congregation use was indeed made not only of disfellowshipping but also bodily injury and even the death penalty (Acts 5:1-11 and 13:6-12).

Therefore it is permissible for today's Congregation to inflict injury on the body as well as capital punishment.

Supporting Arguments

No one can deny the first part of the above proposition that what was right for the Apostolic Congregation is right, too, for the Congregation [of the faithful] today. For it is certain that this last is one and the same with the Apostolic Congregation or Church of God in antiquity. There is one and the same God, one and the same Christ the Lord, one and the same Holy Spirit, one and the same baptism, and one and the same faith, and even [as it were] one and the same body, as the apostle tells us (Eph. 4:4-6). And since we are one body and have one head, namely Christ, then

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 163, 164. Citing Acts 16:37 and 22:25-27 as proof texts for his proposition, Budny identified St. Paul's Roman citizenship with Roman "nobility." "If it was right for Paul [to act as a Roman nobleman], then it would be right for any other [Christian] to do so." We may note that in Renaissance Poland-Lithuania, with its cult of classical Rome, especially of the republican era, the landed nobility considered themselves, as it were, the Romans of the Vistula. *Civis Romanus sum* became the boast of members of the gentry-nation, who then formed the country's ruling class — alongside a small and underprivileged urban middle class and a servile peasantry bound to the soil and obliged to perform unpaid labor on the manor farms of the landowning gentry. Budny, as we see, in contrast to the socially radical wing of Polish anti-Trinitarianism, acted as an apologist for the manorial system and the servile status of the rural masses of the population.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-70.

surely we also share with the apostolic church the same manner and method of conducting business and of governing ourselves? Assuredly, then, whatever was right for them is right for us, too . . . I believe that all the faithful, my opponents included, will allow that we should punish offenses in the same manner as the Apostolic Congregation was accustomed to do.

It is not hard, either, to prove the second part of the proposition: that in the latter Congregation not only disfellowshipping or handing stubborn offenders over to Satan was practiced but also deprivation of limbs and of life itself. We have indeed two clear instances of such methods of punishment, patterns as it were, in the Acts of the Apostles. There St. Luke tells the story of the conversion of that worthy man Sergius Paulus, the deputy at Paphos [in Cyprus], and how a certain sorcerer named Barmesius hindered the Apostles Paul and Barnabas by trying to turn the deputy away from the truth faith. But Paul the Apostle, being filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed upon the sorcerer and said, "thou child of the devil . . . thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season . . . And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness . . . Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed" (Acts 13:6-12). Here we have clear and irrefutable evidence that Paul, together with Barnabas, punished the sorcerer or wizard by inflicting bodily injury on him. So, too, today it is not contrary to God and to Christ's teaching to curb the disobedient and the unjust by blows, imprisonment, and other torments of this kind.

If someone should say that the reason why the Apostles did not punish Elymas [as the sorcerer was also called] with exclusion from the Congregation but punished him instead with blindness was because he did not belong to the faithful, I would reply: Good. But we have another example, related by the same Luke, namely of how St. Peter punished Ananias and his wife Sapphira even more severely with sudden death — even though they both belonged to the Congregation of God (Acts 5:1-11) . . . This was truly a terrifying punishment; as the Evangelist, who relates the story, tells us: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." So you see how they conducted affairs in the Apostolic Congregation. Even at the very beginning, although the office of the sword was not yet represented within the Congregation, still, inspired by the Holy Spirit, they punished evil with the utmost severity. They would never have done that if it had been wrong for the Congregation to inflict such punishment or for the Christian to inflict the death penalty.

But at this point someone may say: We should not identify the Apostles with magistrates, whose duty it is to punish with the sword. For unlike the latter, they did not wield the sword but merely pronounced punishment, which they watched God inflict on these persons. Let me reply first as to the Apostles allegedly not punishing with the sword but only pronouncing sentence, which was then carried out by God invisibly through his angels. It is, in fact, in this connection of no importance who kills whom and whether by the sword or by shooting, or by stoning, or by poisoned cup. There is no need to examine in what way exactly Ananias or his wife were killed. The question is who promulgated the sentence and for what purpose. Now it is quite clear in this case that it was St. Peter who pronounced sentence on them and declared the nature of their crime, while — and it is St. Luke who explains this — the benefit derived from their execution lay in the fear that came upon the whole church, etc. Thus, since Peter was responsible for sentencing, it is not wrong for Christians to impose the death penalty. Now as to purpose. It is easy to see that this lies in deterring others from in future getting up to such tricks! That indeed is the reason why evildoers must be punished: the threat is necessary in order to restrain others from committing evil deeds. And since this threat and fear are both needed today in the Congregation, the office of the sword must be present there, too.

What, then, have our opponents to reply to all this? We know, they will go on saying that Peter did not inflict death, he only pronounced sentence, etc. And there will be the old refrain (though surely they cannot any longer sound it where Peter and Paul are concerned?): A Christian is bound to pray for his enemies, while malefactors must not be put to death since they would thereby be deprived of the possibility of repentance, etc. But why, we may ask, did Peter not pray for Ananias and his wife? Why did he not suspend sentence until they had expressed penitence? You claim that Christ the Lord gave to his Congregation other laws [different from the Mosaic Code]: admonition in place of accusation and exclusion from the Congregation in place of the sword. But then, why did not the Apostle Peter just disfellowship Ananias along with his wife since they were members of the Congregation? You see, now your notions cannot stand up against the evidence of Holy Scripture! You will really have to pull yourselves together. Do not harden your hearts any longer but give a place there now to truth before it is too late.

As for all they say about neither Paul nor Peter punishing those wrongdoers, Elymas and Ananias and his wife Sapphira, but that God

alone through his angels punished them with the two Apostles merely conveying to the offenders the sentences they had received, my answer is this: magistrates do exactly this very same thing. They proclaim the sentences God (sitting on his throne) has already drawn up against crimes and their perpetrators. Thus it is God alone, and not the magistrates, who punishes evildoers.

And so, since the first part of our proposition — that the Apostolic Congregation not only disfellowshipped offenders but punished such by inflicting bodily injury and death — is proved to be absolutely correct on the basis of Holy Scripture, it is impossible to contest the second part of the proposition. In conclusion, with both the first and second parts proved without shadow of doubt, its third part must likewise be true, namely, that today under the new Covenant we may punish by maiming and death. And since the death penalty may be inflicted within the Congregation, the office of the sword must find acceptance there.

APPENDIX C

From Budny's "Reply to Simon Ronemberg," February 21, 1581.²⁷

Ever since, nearly twenty years ago, the late Piotr of Goniądz wrote against the office of the sword²⁸ I have continued to concern myself with the question. I have spoken on the subject, debated it, and discussed it with various people (as opportunity arose). But I have come across no really strong arguments from your side [i.e. that of the nonresistants], apart from those based on the fifth chapter of the Evangelist Matthew.²⁹

Teaching and Theses of Certain Polish Brethren

Among the beliefs they put most stress on in their teaching, speaking also and publishing books on the subject and summoning Scripture to their support, is that it is wrong for a Christian to accept any office involving the sword. One of the faithful should not become a king, a prince or a duke. He should not serve as an army commander (*Hetman*), a provincial or district magistrate, a viceregent (or *Namiestnik*) or major

²⁷ Ronemberg was elder (*senior*) of the anti-Trinitarian congregation in Cracow. Though highly respected throughout his church, he shared the views of the nonresistants and had written to Budny to protest against his attacks on the latter.

²⁸ In his no longer extant book *De primatu*, published around 1563-64. Piotr of Goniądz was the first Polish anti-Trinitarian; he was also a convinced Anabaptist.

²⁹ Budny, 219.

of a city or village, a centurion, a soldier or bodyguard, etc. In addition, they assert that a pious man may not possess property which can be used for warlike purposes, nor may he participate in any court of law in which the death penalty can be inflicted or an oath exacted,³⁰ irrespective of the type of law being enforced . . . Finally, they argue that it is wrong for a traveler to wear or carry a weapon of any sort for defense against bandits. In short, they want to banish from the Church of God good order, defense and discipline, law enforcement and liberty as well as deterrence of evil, and leave it exposed under the pretext of religion. Since they pretend they can prove all this from Holy Scripture, it is up to us, especially those of us who are pastors, to arouse ourselves and no longer turn a blind eye to a matter of such great importance . . . In sum, what has, above all, prompted me to take up my pen to refute the opponents of the sword-bearing magistracy is this: that the question is no minor one and yet, so far, no man of learning has attempted [in Polish] a defense of the office of the sword within the community of the faithful.³¹

³⁰ The nonresistant Polish Brethren, like other Anabaptists, rejected the oath along with the sword as an unchristian practice.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20, 21.