CHAPTER FIVE

CIVIL SOCIETY OF CALVINIST THEOCRACY

*Puritan Moralistic Tyranny*

Calvinist theocracy’s “civil society” constitutes the theocratic destruction or subversion and domination of the civic sphere, notably individual moral freedom and responsibility and private life. To that extent, civil society is effectively subjected to self-elimination or self-degeneration as an independent secular domain of individual, notably moral, liberty or autonomy and private life. Civil society or Parsons’ “societal community” within Calvinist theocracy degenerates into what can be denoted religiously grounded and sanctified “moral fascism”, thus becoming a non-entity, a sort of “uncivil society” (McCann 2000), epitomized by the Puritan theocratic “godly community” in New England (German 1995) and its “Bible Belt” revival (and Mormon Utah).

In essence, Calvinist theocracy transforms civil society from a free, humane “life-world” (Habermas 2001) into the world of unfreedom, inhumanity, and anti-life, ultimately of death through the religiously based and sanctified system of executions for “ungodly” acts (blasphemy and sins) and a global, permanent self-destructive “holy” war or crusade against “evil” societies. In Hobbes’ words, civil society (the term he coined before Hegel) in Calvinist theocracy mutates from the secular realm of “human” life and politics into the sacred sphere of “divine politics” and the “kingdom of God.” The latter is inhabited by human subjects, as he put it, “feigned to be animated, inhabited, or possessed” by “innumerable sorts of Gods” as the “creatures” of their “innumerable variety of Fancy”, thus effectively vanquishing civil society as he conceived it.

More specifically, the civic subsystem of Calvinist theocracy as a total social system, including an equivalent civil society, alongside an economy, polity, and culture, is what Weber identifies as the moralistic “tyranny of Puritanism” as Anglo-Saxon Calvinism. Consequently or eventually, it is moral fascism in the broad sense of moralistic absolutism and authoritarianism or totalitarianism as the denial and
destruction of individual liberty or choice and responsibility in morality and private life overall. At this juncture, moral fascism in Puritan societies, primarily America and in part England, originates and operates as the reenacted and readapted form of the moralistic tyranny of Puritanism and thus as the present and future (un)civil society or societal community of Calvinist theocracy after the image of a “Biblical Garden” as a holistic category.

Alternatively, Calvinist, especially Puritan, theocracy as a total social system generates, predicts, and incorporates moral fascism as its characteristic ethical logic and its civic subsystem, just as Calvinism and Puritanism entail or produce Bibliocracy. In this sense, Calvinism, notably Puritanism, eventually develops in or amounts to moral fascism thus understood through Puritan moralistic theocracy. For instance, recall that Comte characterizes Calvinism as the moralistic repressive “reign of Saints”, and in that sense as the archetype or minimally anticipation of moral fascism precisely characterized by the fact that its leaders and most fascists act as or claim to be saints or purists in morality and ascetics. In doing so, Comte perhaps had in mind Calvinists in his France and beyond, with their “strong notion of election” and consequently their claimed formation of and belonging to the “community of the saints” (Mentzer 2007).

In particular, the above holds true of the Calvinist Anglo-Saxon derivative, Puritanism, as implicit in Hume’s and Weber’s observations about the English Puritan Parliament comprised of self-proclaimed one hundred-odd moralistic “divines” or “saints” exemplified by Cromwell et al. Also, J. S. Mill describes Calvinists and Puritans, including early Methodists, as “intrusively pious members of society” and in that sense moral arch-fascists. For what defines or typifies the latter is precisely their intrusion and control of others’ individual morality, privacy, and life, notably the obsession with and severe punishment of human sins and vices. At this juncture, the “obsession with sin and vice” and their Draconian punishment, as observed for the old and ever-renewed moralistic “politics of Puritanism” in America (Wagner 1997), redefines US Puritans and their fundamentalist revivals as moral proto- and neo-fascists, respectively.

Significantly, Weber defines Calvinist Biblical theocracy in terms of ascetic mastery of or domination over the “sinful world” of “mundane affairs” by “religious virtuosi” forming the “pure” church or sect (Symonds and Pudsey 2006), as in Puritanism, with “authoritarian moral discipline” and in that sense moralistic tyranny or moralizing