

“Kings More Than Men, Men Less Than Beasts”: A Discussion of The Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire in Fulke Greville’s Treatises

Abstract

Fulke Greville (1554-1628) was a significant figure in English statesmanship, court life, and poetry during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods. His literary passion, coupled with his involvement in courtly politics, elevated him to the status of one of the foremost philosopher-poets of his era. In Turkish scholarship, considerable attention has been given to Greville’s *Mustapha* (1610), which explores the touching theme of the execution of Şehzade Mustafa. While this work has been extensively discussed, Greville’s treatises, offering insights into his political and philosophical perspectives on contentious issues of his time such as sovereignty, kingship, tyranny, and just rule, have not received comparable examination. Notably, his treatises “Of Monarchy” and “Of Warres” provide a comprehensive exposition of his thoughts on the rise and fall of the Ottoman state. This article, therefore aims to present a more nuanced exploration of Fulke Greville’s ideas concerning the Ottoman Empire, shedding light on his broader philosophical contributions on the subject. A close reading of his *Treatises* indicates that Greville’s interest in the Ottoman State and its history was intertwined with his political stance on a pressing concern for the English court—the rivalry with Spain and the broader Catholic world.

Keywords: Fulke Greville, Tyranny, Just Rule, Ottoman State, Anglo-Spanish Rivalry


“İnsandan Üstün Krallar, Hayvandan Değersiz İnsanlar”: Fulke Greville’in Risaleleri’nde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Yükselişi ve Çöküşüne Dair Bir Tartışma

Öz

Bürokrat ve şair Fulke Greville (1554-1628) geç Elizabeth ve erken Jakoben dönemin önemli saray figürlerindendi. Saraydaki uzun mevcudiyeti ve üstlendiği önemli görevler sayesinde erken modern dönem İngiltere’sindeki saray çevrelerinin çatışmalarını gözlemleme şansı bulmuş olan Greville, deneyimlerini keskin zekâsı ve edebi tutkusunu ile birleştirerek çağının önde gelen filozof-şairlerinden biri oldu. Türkçe literatürde, Şehzade Mustafa’nın idam edilmesine odaklanan tragedyası *Mustapha* (1610) yoğun bir ilgi görmüş olsa da Greville’in egemenlik, krallık, tiranlık ve adil yönetim gibi zamanının tartışmalı meseleleri hakkındaki siyasi ve felsefi perspektiflerine dair iç görüler sunan risaleleri, detaylı bir incelemeye tabi tutulmamıştır. Özellikle “Of Monarchy” ve “Of Warres” risaleleri, Greville’in Osmanlı devletinin yükselişi ve çöküşü hakkındaki düşüncelerini kapsamlı bir şekilde ortaya koyan önemli çalışmalardır. Bu makale, Fulke Greville’in Osmanlı devlet sistemine ilişkin fikirlerinin detaylı bir incelemesini sunmayı ve onun çok tartışılmış olan *Mustafa* oyununun dışında kalan felsefi çıkarımlarına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Risalelerin yakın okuması, Greville’in Osmanlı Devleti’ne ve onun tarihine olan ilgisinin, İngiliz sarayının daha ciddi bir meselesi olan İspanya ve Katolik dünyasıyla rekabet konusundaki siyasi duruşuyla yakından ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fulke Greville, Tiranlık, Meşru Yönetim Hakkı, Osmanlı Devleti, İngiliz-İspanya Rekabeti

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1. Introduction

Fulke Greville, 1st Baron Brooke (1554-1628), was a prominent English statesman, courtier, and poet of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras.¹ As a favourite of Queen Elizabeth and an unchanging name in the courts of the two following kings, James I and Charles I, he had the opportunity to witness the functioning of the courtly circles in early modern England. Combined with his keen intellect and passion for literature, his experience in Elizabethan and Jacobean politics turned him into one of the most prominent philosopher-poets of his age (Levy, 1972, p. 433). A frequently discussed work of this “thoughtful courtier” (Bullough, 1933, p. 1) in Turkish scholarship has been his neo-Senecan tragedy, *Mustapha* due to its subject matter, that is the execution of the son of Suleyman the Magnificent at the command of his father.² Greville’s treatises and prose works, which actually present his political and philosophical views on widely debated issues of his age such as sovereignty, kingship, tyranny and just rule, however, did not attract much attention and are dealt with only in connection to *Mustapha*. The treatises *Of Warres* and *Of Monarchy* provide a complete picture of his ideas on Ottoman state and the present article, therefore, is an attempt to lay out a more detailed discussion of the ideas of Fulke Greville on the rise, power, and the decline of the Ottoman Empire.³

The issue of the causes of Turkish greatness and the future of the Ottoman Empire kept the minds of early modern English writers busy for a long time.⁴ Ottomans, especially after Elizabeth’s firm decision to become trade partners with them, occupied a central place in the minds of the English intellectuals.⁵ There were certain fractions within the courtly circles that supported this new, lucrative friendship but there were also other groups who openly opposed the idea of seeing this long-lasting enemy of Christianity as a trade partner of England. This double view of the Ottomans, as a friend and a foe, turned Ottoman state, culture and society one of the most popular topics of early modern English literary agenda (Çırakman, 2002, p.13).

Fulke Greville, thus had a set of views about the Ottoman state that were readily available to him. In developing his own ideas of the Ottoman state, he could have read numerous travel accounts of diplomats and merchants who visited the Ottoman lands and often provided detailed descriptions of the Ottoman political structure, administration, and military.⁶ As a

¹ For a detailed biography of Greville, see Gouws, John (2007). “Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554–1628)”. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11516>

² on Greville’s plays *Alaham* and *Mustapha*, see: Erkoç, Seda. (2016) “Dealing With Tyranny: Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* in the Context of His Other Writings and of His View on Anglo-Ottoman Relations” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 47, 265-290; Çakırtaş, Ö. (2017) “Mustapha and Greville: Constructing Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy and Machiavellian identities in early modern English drama” *Ideological Messaging and the Role of Political Literature*, 145-158; Şahin-Gülter, İ. (2018) “Mustapha ve Macbeth’de Kadının Devlet İşlerine Katılması: Hegelci Bir Yaklaşım” *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 28 (2), 97 – 107.

³ For a biographical study on Fulke Greville and a discussion of his Works in general, see Rees, Joan (1971). *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628: A Critical Biography*. London, Routledge.

⁴ For a full review of this discussion on the greatness of the Ottomans, see Chew, Samuel (1937). *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance*. Oxford, Oxford University Press., p. 100-121.

⁵ For a general discussion on the scope of writings about the Ottomans, see Ingram, A. (2015). *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in Early Modern England*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Such as: Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *Itinera Constantinopolitanvm et Amasianvm ab Augerio Gislenio Busbequij ...* (Antwerp, 1581); Hugh Goughe, *The Offspring of the House of Ottomano, and officers to the greate Turke. Whereunto is added Bartholomaeus Georgieviz Epitome of the Customs, Rytes,*

statesman, Greville also had access to diplomatic reports and correspondence regarding the Ottoman Empire. Together with the scholarly works that were available, these reports would have provided Greville with insights on the functioning of the Ottoman government and society and its relations with the world around it.⁷ Greville was also part of the intellectual circles of his time, where discussions on politics, history, and culture were frequent. Conversations within these circles would have certainly touched upon the Ottoman Empire and its state system.⁸

Some of the views that were in circulation explained the glory of the Ottoman Empire through references to divine intervention. Primarily, Ottoman success was seen as a part of the divine will, where God employed Muslims as a scourge against the wrongdoings of Christians. The influence of Satan in inspiring prophet Muhammad to establish a new religion and in fostering the discord among Christians and the religious beliefs of Muslims that deems a war against Christians as holy were also seen as the root causes of Ottoman success. Additionally, through a worldly perception, Ottoman success was seen as either as an outcome of the natural order that dictated the succession of empires or a result of the cohesive unity within Islam that seems to be more striking in comparison to politically divided world of Christianity. The Ottoman greatness was also evident in the disciplined, organized state structure geared for warfare, the competence of their army, the skilful leadership of their commanders, and the religious fervour that commands respect from subject populations. The virtues of Turkish soldiers such as courage, temperance, patience, and endurance, as well as the heavenly promise of all sorts of pleasures for the brave were also mentioned among the reasons for the rise of the Ottomans (Chew, 1937, p.121).

Evaluations on the current status and the future of this powerful enemy, however, did not present the same variety. Ottomans, now at the peak of their power, were doomed to fall according to almost all writers of the period. To begin with, the natural order dictated the rise and fall of empires, and Ottomans were expected to reach a period of decline soon. Greedy-tyrannical rule of sultans that dishonoured not only the law of leagues by expansionist policies but also the law of nature by killing their own sons was a symptom of dysfunction in the state system. Events such as janissary rebellions at the time of Murad III and the success of the Christian league against the Ottomans in Lepanto were clear outcomes of the deterioration of the Ottoman state system in general (Chew, 1937, p.131).⁹

ceremonies and Religion of the Turkes ... (London, 1569/1570); Giovanni Botero, *The Trevellers Breviat, Or an Historical Description of the most famous Kingdomes in the World ...* (London, 1601).

⁷ The most important of these would be Antoine Geuffroy, *The order of the greate Turckes courte, of hys menne of warre, and of all hys conquestes, with the summe of Mahumetes doctryne.* (London, 1524); Paolo Giovio, *A shorte treatise vpon the Turkes chronicles ...* (London, 1546); Sebastian Munster, *A Brief Collection and Compendious Extract of Strange and Memorable Things ...* (London, 1572); Johannes Leunclavius, *Annales Sultanorum Othmanidarum,* (1588) and Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London: 1603).

⁸ Greville was a close friend of the earl of Essex and an active member of the Essex circle known for their scholarly activities in renewing the topos of the divided body of Christendom and the menace of the Turk in the 1590s. For a full discussion the Essex circle see Gajda, Alexandra (2008). "The State of Christendom: history, political thought and the Essex circle," *Historical Research*, 81/213, 423–46.

⁹ Greville refers to this victory openly, in *A Treatise of Monarchy*, st. 410. For all passages from *A Treatise of Monarchy* see: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A29659.0001.001/1:4?rgn=div1;view=fulltext> stanza numbers are indicated after the quotes.

To the political minds of the period, writing about the Ottomans in general and commenting the reasons for and the results of their success and/or expected failure had a dual function. This exotic state that was geographically and culturally far enough presented authors with a setting that made it possible to talk about current issues in their own courts without openly doing so. Thus, ideas about the rise and fall of the Ottomans in fact denoted something more than an evaluation of the Ottoman history. Though a discussion of the Ottoman success against Christian powers, English authors were actually talking about the broader contexts of Anglo-Spanish rivalry, discord of Christianity and limits of the power of the sovereign. Greville, therefore, in his discussion of the Ottoman state and its history was also taking sides with certain fractions within Elizabethan courtly circles. His connection to the Essex circle, his close friendship with the Sydney family and his ongoing struggles in his courtly career forced him to portray quite a negative view of the Ottomans. In order to evaluate his ideas on the rise and fall of the Ottoman state, therefore, one must turn to the political career of Fulke Greville.

2. Fulke Greville and His Courtly Connections

Born into a distinguished family, Greville received his education at Cambridge University, where he developed his passion for literature. Greville's palace service started in the court of Elizabeth I, where he quickly rose the ranks and became a trusted advisor due to his intelligence and loyalty. Greville served the English crown for over four decades, from 1583 to 1621, demonstrating versatility in various roles during the reigns of both James I and Charles I (Rebholz, 1971, p. 4). Greville held positions of significance and influence such as secretary to the principality of Wales, treasurer of the navy, chancellor and under-treasurer of the exchequer and commissioner of the treasury. 1621 he was raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Brooke, and received the grant of Warwick Castle from James I (Dephi, 2021, p.12-13).

As one of Queen Elizabeth's favourites, Greville found himself embroiled in the intricate web of court politics. During this period, he witnessed the factional struggles that defined the political landscape of Elizabethan court. Aligned with the militantly anti-Spanish faction, Greville and the Sidney family faced a shift in power as the more cautious Cecils gained ascendancy over the final decades of the sixteenth century. After the deaths of influential figures such as Leicester and Walsingham, Greville's association with Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex, became more pronounced. Devereaux led the militant faction, persisting in advocating aggressive policies against Spanish imperialism that were at odds with the prevailing sentiments of the Cecils. Greville's increasing alignment with Essex even led to a sense of detachment from the political core in the mid-1590s (Rebholz, 1971, p.90-105). His connections with these anti-Spanish had an impact on his perception of just rule, expansion of empires and tyranny. Greville was critical of Spain's political and religious policies, particularly its oppressive measures and the Inquisition. He viewed Spain as a nation that had become excessively powerful and authoritarian, which he believed was detrimental to individual freedoms and human progress.¹⁰ His concern with the Ottomans and their tyrannical power, therefore can be seen as a means to highlight similar issues in a completely different context.

¹⁰ For his views on Spain, see "A Letter to an Honorable Lady".

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A02226.0001.001/1:9.1?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

In this work, which was probably completed by 1601, Greville expresses his concerns and criticism regarding the state of Spain during his time.

Greville's literary activities were also reflective of the intellectual and cultural milieu of his time. He wrote numerous treatises and two political plays incorporating the products of his busy mind into his poetic words. As a cautious courtier, he did not publish anything in his life time. A set of bound volumes of the works of Greville was found at Warwick Castle comprised scribed copies annotated with corrections in the author's own hand.¹¹ This set made it clear that Greville kept his literary productions, expanding and revising them throughout a long period, probably until his death (Rees, 1971, p. x). The specific period of origin for the Warwick transcripts remains undisclosed, as does the chronological timeline of Greville's corrections. Consequently, each work of Greville has many different versions, making it almost impossible to date any work or any specific version.

In 1633, *Certaine Learned and Elegant Workes*¹², a compilation of poetic and dramatic works Fulke Greville was posthumously published. This anthology encompassed treatises titled *Of Humane Learning, Upon Fame and Honour*, and *Of Warres*; plays *Alaham* and *Mustapha*; the sonnet sequence *Caelica*; and miscellaneous compositions denoted as *A Letter to an Honourable Lady* and *A Letter of Travell*. Subsequently, in 1670, another volume, entitled *Remains*¹³, was published, incorporating previously unreleased treatises *Of Monarchy* and *Of Religion*. Bullough, in his compilation of *The Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, which is based in the 1633 version of *Certaine Learned and Elegant Workes*, describes the manuscripts and suggests a plausible chronology based on their material attributes.¹⁴ G. A. Wilkes undertook the editorial task of the 1670 compilation of *Remains* and re-evaluated the issue of chronology of the works in an article in *Studies in Philology*.¹⁵ His argument, derived from insights gleaned from Greville's *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, asserts that a substantial portion of Greville's literary works were created during the later phase of his life, specifically post-1612 or 1614. Furthermore, Wilkes contends that this later corpus of work witnesses to a profound reorientation in Greville's philosophical thought, shifting away from secular preoccupations pertaining to love and politics toward an ascetic and otherworldly religious rigor (Wilkes, 1959, p. 500-501).

3. Ottoman State: A Modern Tyranny

Greville's *A Treatise of Monarchy* starts with an evaluation of the relations between the rulers and the society in the Golden Age.¹⁶ This age is described as a harmonious period when kings

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of these manuscript, see W. H. Kelliher, "The Warwick manuscripts of Fulke Greville", *British Museum Quarterly*, 34 (1969–70), 107–21.

¹² Fulke Greville. *Certaine learned and elegant vworkes of the Right Honorable Fulke Lord Brooke written in his youth, and familiar exercise with Sir Philip Sidney. The seuerall names of which workes the following page doth declare*. London, 1633. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A02226.0001.001>

¹³ Fulke Greville. *The remains of Sir Fulke Grevill Lord Brooke being poems of monarchy and religion: never before printed*. London, 1670. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A29659.0001.001>

¹⁴ Bullough, G. (1945) *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Wilkes, G. A. (1959) 'The sequence of the writings of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke', *Studies in Philology*, 56 (1959), 489–503.

¹⁶ The Golden Age theory, in the context of early modern political thought, refers to a utopian or idealized period in the past when society was considered to be in a state of perfection, characterized by harmony. This concept was used to critique the current state of political affairs and to propose a return to these idealized conditions. For a full discussion see Levin, Harry. (1969) *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.

and people were united, nurtured by mutual love. The virtue of rulers in this period, who obtained power through justice, labour, and love is emphasized. The idealized state, however, declined in time, giving way to inequality and a shift in the balance of power. After a time when “Order makes [the people] the Body, [the rulers] the Head” came the age in which “by disorder Anarchy is bred” (26). These sections of *A Treatise on Monarchy* entitled “Of the beginning of Monarchie” and “Declination of Monarchy. To Violence” explore the consequences of these changes, including the birth of “a Giant Creature in excess of Might” which “Takes not God as he is, but makes him new / Like to his ends, large, narrow, false, or true” (56). This new creature that wants to use “Religion, Honour, Natures Laws and Nations” to its own good does not accept any limit to its will (57). The “uncontrolled will” is seen as the basis of the tyrannical rule, in Greville’s writings. Greville’s ideas on tyranny, in this respect, does not differ from his contemporaries and is marked by an abuse of authority, violations of individual liberties, and a lack of adherence to established laws or principles of justice.

After mentioning the degeneration in the ruling bodies in general, Greville presents Prophet Muhammed as an example of the ruler who aspired for unlimited power:

Instance proud Mahomet when he propos'd
The Empire of this world to his ambition,
Under Gods name were not his acts dispos'd
To change Mans faith and freedom of condition?
The sacred Dove whisp'ring into his Ear
That what his Will impos'd, the World must fear. (58)

The first reference to Islam in *A Treatise of Monarchy*, therefore comes within the context of the emergence of tyrannical rule, through manipulation of beliefs. With these lines, the author questions the sincerity of the Prophet’s motivations, suggesting that he was aiming at an “Empire of this world”, i.e. pursuits of worldly power and dominion. These lines reflect a critical perspective on the intersection of religious authority, political power, and the potential for manipulation in the name of faith. As power becomes absolute, Greville suggests, the rulers manipulate laws and use force to suppress dissent. Uncontrolled power, in the end, corrupts rulers and transforms subjects into submissive masses (66-69).

In discussing the role of the religion in the state structure, Greville advocates for a well-balanced distribution of power. Monarchs, according to Greville, should be “active and judicious” in their rule, with a foundational reliance on religion to gain reverence and stability. “Placing the first foundation of their Reigns / Upon that frame, which all frames else exceeds”, helps rulers to build a strong authority “In Forrainger, and home-bred subjects” (202). Following this idea, comes a second reference to Islam, in comparison to the condition of Christian rulers:

And is not Mahomets forg'd Alcoran
Both with the Heathen in Authority:
And to the Christians misled Miter-throne
Become a very rack of Tyranny?
Their spirits united, eating men like food,
And making ill ends with strong Armies good. (204)

Here, Greville draws a parallel between the Islam and the structure of the Christian Church, symbolized by the “Miter-throne” which has become, according to Greville, a tool of tyranny. The “misled Miter-throne”, the ecclesiastical leadership within Christianity, has deviated from

its intended path and has been used as an instrument of oppression. A devouring or oppressive force that is created by the abuse of religious and military power, Greville believes has led to destructive consequences. The authors scepticism towards the religious institutions as instruments of oppression and tyranny when their authority is misused or manipulated for non-spiritual ends is clear. Word choices of the author in describing two religions is also revealing: while Islam is described as “forged”, following a long tradition in Christian texts about Islam, Christianity is seen to be “misled”. The tyranny of Christian leaders, therefore seen as something temporary, the result of being misled by the institution of Church and the Pope. This current condition, therefore is not seen as a characteristic of Christian religion. Muslim leaders, however, as mentioned in the previous reference to Prophet, are doomed to become tyrants as abuse of religious authority for worldly power it is an innate part of the religion. It should also be mentioned that this Christian (Catholic)-Muslim / Spanish-Ottoman parallels would not be lost on the contemporary reader.

At the end of this part, Greville warns the reader against the potential dangers of unchecked religious authority, cautioning rulers not to let the clergy’s governance overshadow the secular power of the crown:

Therefore I say Pow’r should be provident
In judging this chief strength of Tyranny
With caution, that the Clergy Government
Give not the Miter Crown-supremacy;
Making the Sultan and the Caliph one,
To Tyrannize both Cair and Babylon. (207)

The concern is that if political power allows ecclesiastical authority to gain supremacy, it may lead to a situation where the religious leader (the Caliph) and the political leader (the Sultan) become unified in power. Although there is a clear reference to conditions of the Ottoman state, these lines can also be read as a reference to the close ties between the Spanish throne and the Pope, in the Christian context. The reference to “Cair and Babylon” suggests that this union of religious and political authority could result in tyranny over both spiritual and worldly domains, symbolized by Cairo (Cair) and Babylon. Instead, Greville suggests a hierarchical power structure within the state:

Pow’r may not be opposed, or confounded;
But each inferior Orb command or serve,
With proper latitudes distinctly bounded,
To censure all States that presume to swerve,
Whereby the common people and the Throne
May mutually protected be in one. (233)

This hierarchical arrangement is of crucial importance in maintaining order and preventing chaos according to Greville, as it ensures that all entities within the political structure adhere to their designated roles and functions, thus “the common people and the Throne” are mutually protected. This harmony between the people who are safeguarded by the central authority, and, in turn, the ruler who is protected by the allegiance and cooperation of the people. This is in complete contrast to the condition of tyrannical ruler, who, seems to be more powerful, but also greatly in danger of being divided from his people, who in the first place gave them the wings to fly with. (234)

Here again, the case of Ottoman state provides a negative example:

Affecting such irrevocable might
 With us, as to their Mufty, Turks liv'd under,
 Or rather sacrilege more infinite,
 From Jove to wrest away the fearful Thunder:
 Salmoneus pride, as if the truth then fell,
 When he alone rul'd not Earth, Heav'n and Hell. (235)

The practise of Ottoman Sultan being the chief representative of religion, under the title of Caliph, is criticized here. Being the Sultan and the “Mufty” at the same time, Ottoman rulers possess an “irrevocable might” over Christians, but this, according to Greville is also a great violation. Salmoneus, who claimed to rule over Earth, Heaven, and Hell, serves as an example of the kind of pride that the author warns against.¹⁷ Such excessive and blasphemous claims according to Greville, may lead to a total fall from grace.

Greville’s references to the current condition of the Ottoman State becomes more elaborate towards the end of the *A Treatise of Monarchy*, under the titles of “Of Peace” and “Of War”. “Of Peace” is centred on the theme of peace as the ideal state of governance. Peace, according to Greville can be achieved only if rulers prioritize the well-being of their subjects, engage in public works, and establish good educational institutions (471-473). The responsibilities of kings, the importance of maintaining order, and the benefits of uniting different elements in society are also discussed in this part. Towards the end, there is a critique of tyranny, emphasizing the negative consequences of oppressive rule and the pursuit of power for selfish gains and references to the current state of the Ottoman Empire are given at this part:

Again, this Art of Tyrant Cittadel,
 Not suffering free Citizens but slaves,
 What is it, but a Council out of Hell,
 Making the Princes Triumphs, Peoples graves?
 And sorts it not well with the Sultans word,
 Who vaunts, Grass grows not, where his horse hath stood? (511)

The specific reference to the famous saying that is attributed to Ottoman sultans, “Grass grows not, where his horse hath stood,” suggests a tyrant’s destructive influence, implying that even nature suffers in the wake of oppressive rulers and also refers to the inevitable decline of the Ottoman State. Overall, the lines underscore the negative consequences of tyranny, portraying it as a force that undermines freedom, leads to suffering, and leaves a destructive legacy.

Greville also refers to the idea of four monarchies¹⁸ at this point, and restates his view that in its present state, Ottoman Empire is “Not Empire but a crafty violence / Whose Ruines never

¹⁷ A reference to the famous Greek myth about Salmoneus. Salmoneus was a mortal king known for his pride. Seeking to emulate the powers of the gods, particularly of Zeus, he devised a plan to impersonate divine attributes and constructed a bridge made of brass. Driving his chariot over it, he attempted to mimic the sound of thunder, a power associated with Zeus. In his hubris, Salmoneus proclaimed himself equal to the gods and sought to challenge the natural order. However, Zeus, angered by this mortal's attempt to imitate divine authority, struck Salmoneus down with a lightning bolt. see Jennings, H. R. and J. N. Bremmer (2016). “Salmoneus” <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.5678>

¹⁸ The theory of the four monarchies is a historical and biblical concept that traces the rise and fall of four great ancient empires. The idea is primarily derived from the Book of Daniel in the Bible and was later expanded upon by various historians and scholars. The four monarchies are Babylonian, Medo-

raise Magnificence” (512). The essence of genuine monarchy, according to the author, lies in creating a perfect unity where kings are not elevated above humanity:

For that indeed is no true Monarchy,
Which makes Kings more then Men, Men less then Beasts,
But that which works a perfect Unity,
Where Kings as heads, and Men as members rest,
With mutual ends like Twinns, each helping other,
In service of the Common-wealth, their Mother. (513)

The metaphor of “Twinns” emphasizes the close and interdependent relationship between rulers and subjects, each contributing to the well-being of the commonwealth, which is likened to a shared mother. This section about peace is concluded with a reference to the expected end of these modern tyrannies:

But to conclude, as Modern Tyranny
Hath not in any kind established
A State by peace unto prosperity
Of people, or of honor to the head;
But rather to the prejudice, or shame
Of both, like torrents, spread abroad ill name. (520)

Greville contends that tyranny brings about detrimental consequences, prejudicing both the well-being of the populace and the dignity of those in power. Besides, the oppressive rule not only harms the immediate victims but also tarnishes the reputation and standing of the tyrant and the state as a whole. This results in the fall of the state.

On the topic of war, Greville points out that having a warrior king can be advantageous for a monarchy as he sees the warrior king as a source stability and security for the realm. Martial skills and royal authority are potent forces for maintaining order and defending the kingdom against external threats (525-527). Greville clearly underlines the danger of appearing averse to war, as he believes that the best remedy against any aggression is preparedness. Historical examples are cited to illustrate the importance of maintaining military strength, fortifying borders, and having disciplined troops even in times of peace (535). Greville names many instances which indicate that strong nations protected themselves through well-fortified borders, contrasting this with instances where the lack of such defences led to invasions, as in the case of England (536-539). Discussing the necessity of war and especially the necessity of being excellent in that discipline Greville turns to Ottomans once more:

Only let Princes that will Martial be,
Reform that common stained Discipline,
Which is the Base of unprosperity,
Sin against nature, Chance, and Pow’r Divine,
Wherein I fear the Turk doth us excell.
They keeping deeds, we words of doing well. (574)

Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. According to this theory, the Roman Empire is the last empire before the establishment of a divine or messianic kingdom. Different interpretations exist regarding the fulfilment of this prophecy, and its significance has been discussed in both religious and historical contexts. See Swain, J. W. (1940) “The Theory of the Four Monarchies Opposition History under the Roman Empire” *Classical Philology*, 35 (1), pp. 1-21.

Mentioning the need for an improvement in military practices, Greville sets this deficiency as a fundamental cause of “unprosperity” presenting it as a deviation from nature, chance, and divine power. Furthermore, he expresses that the Turks outperform Christians in this aspect. While the Turks take effective actions in military matters, according to Greville, others merely talk about doing well without translating their words into meaningful deeds. This is the first and the only instance that Greville presents Ottoman State in a positive light. The strength of the Ottoman army and the necessity of a united body of Christian forces to win over them is a reoccurring theme among the writings of the Essex circle. The “fatal discord” among Christians, which is seen as the main cause of the military failures against the Ottomans, is seen as an outcome of the aggressive expansionist policies of Spain (Gajda, 2012, p.85).

Through the following lines, however, Greville presents a solution for the existing disadvantage:

For whatsoever odds in Man or Beast
Between the Christian, and the Turk there be,
By delicacy, hardness, industry or rest,
Our fatal discord, or their unity;
Yet we that thus on disadvantage stand,
Stand fast, because he makes his wars by Land.

Whereas each man of understanding spirit
Knows well, that if this Mighty Tyrant would
Have chang'd his war, and so his ways of merit,
From Land, and made the waving Ocean mould
Of all his Expeditions undertaken,
The Christian Churches had long since been shaken. (576-577)

These lines first make a list of the differences between Christians and Turks such as fragility, hardness, industry, or rest—qualities that could contribute to advantages or disadvantages in terms of military endeavours. Despite these differences and the existing disunity between Christian princes, Greville notes that Christians, who are seemingly at a disadvantage, manage to “stand fast”. The reason for this is the choice of the Ottoman sultan to focus his military on land rather than on the sea. These lines can be seen as a reference to the victory of the united Christian forces against Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto. The victory was celebrated in almost all Christian states, and was seen as an indication of the approaching end of the Ottoman might (Chew, 1937, p. 125-130).

4. The law of Nature and God’s plan for Christians

In his *A Treatie of Warres* Greville explores the role of the warfare in a state and comments on the multifaceted nature of war. While reflecting on the causes and consequences of war through numerous historical and religious references Greville contrasts peace and war, questions the role of religion in conflict and cautions against the abuse of power. Despite being a part of God’s plan, Greville suggests that war should never be pursued for its own sake, especially by those who aspire to a higher, spiritual existence (59).¹⁹ In this piece, Greville also discusses the Ottoman state and the role of wars in its foundation, initial expansion and current condition.

¹⁹ For all passages from *A Treatie of Warres* see: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A02226.0001.001/1:5?rgn=div1;view=fulltext> stanza numbers are indicated after the quotes.

Greville observes that states are drawn to war as it can be seen as a way of expanding an empire and increasing power. He also states that the same tool that is once employed for growth ultimately leads to the ruin of empires. Greville explains the reasoning behind this paradox: when people get used to war, experiencing the benefits of peace, enjoying health and happiness makes them restless and they become unable to embrace any art or skill other than war (15). Under the rule of king that are fond of war, even religion becomes tailored to accommodate and endure the harsh necessities of conquest (16).

At this point Greville presents a second comparison of the “religion of Mahomet” and Christianity. Islam, according to Greville is centred around “conflict and risk”, as the teachings of the Prophet are focused primarily on the art of warfare. Islam, therefore, is not concerned with how to use power responsibly but only with acquiring it (17). This feature of the religion turns Muslim courts into a military camp, where the law of the sword is the predominant form of preaching and thus Muslim rulers reject virtues of peace, seeing them effeminate. “Christians Gospell”, on the other hand, values “the ioyfull embassie of peace” (18). There are some men that see themselves above the Church, according to Greville, and they use their positions to incite conflict instead of promoting peace. These individuals stir up contention by manipulating opinions and provoking kings to wage wars. Greville finds it ironic that those who should be promoting peace are, in fact, contributing to conflict they even label their losses in the resulting conflict as martyrdom, suggesting a distortion of religious ideals for personal or political gain. Here again Greville presents the idea of innate corruption of Islam in comparison to principally intact Christianity, despite its abuse by the Church authorities.

In *A Treatie of Warres*, Greville focuses on two important issues of his age: the role of the divine intervention in the reasons for and the results of wars and the natural law of the rise and fall of empires. Both issues, in the seventeenth-century England were discussed in connection to the Muslim-Christian conflicts. God’s plan for Christian states, apparent lack of divine support in military conflicts with the Ottomans and the sufferings of Christians under the Muslim rule have become frequently visited topics since the writings of the Renaissance humanists, getting even more attention after the religious controversies of the Reformation. Greville, like numerous predecessors of him, believes that wars have their origins in divine displeasure, and thus they should be seen as a consequence of divine judgment or punishment. God uses one nation against the other in order to fulfil his divine plans (33). God’s intervention, moreover, can be a means of testing his subjects or to make his known:

Nor by the Warres doth God reuenge alone,
He sometimes tries, and trauelleth the good,
Sometimes againe, to haue his honor knowne,
He makes corne grow, where Troy it selfe once stood:
Lets Fate passe from him, on the wheeles of time,
And change to make the falling ballance clime. (34)

God, in his own ways, allows fate to unfold, and the “wheels of time” enforces the inevitable nature of historical changes. That’s why, Greville concludes, the empires rise and fall one after another:

Needfull it therefore is, and cleerely true,
That all great Empires, Cities, Seats of Power
Must rise and fall, waxe old, and not renew,

Some by disease, that from without deuour,
Others euen by disorders in them bred,
Seene onely, and discouer'd in the dead. (38)

Greville also suggests that, if one state or empire would flourish forever, or one family would reign for an endless time, if the conditions of one state did not change over time, God would appear partial or biased in his dealings with certain individuals or groups, he might even seem cruel or unjust (35). Therefore, the rise and fall of states should be seen as a part of their nature simply. People must not disregard or reject the power of God, according to Greville, relying instead on their own human intellect and judgment to determine their fate. This could only be explained as a form of hubris or overreliance on human capabilities (36).

This reflections on the human struggle to reconcile the concept of a benevolent and just God with the existence of suffering and perceived injustices in the world makes it possible for Greville to openly discuss the issue of Christian-Muslim conflict. Ottoman Empire has been one of those states which “Make it their end to raigne in euey place / To warre for Honour, for Reuenge and Pleasure / Thinking the strong should keepe the weake in awe / And euey Inequalitie giue Law” according to Greville (61). These are the circumstances under which they rose. In this state that can only be a “wildernesse of euils”, according to Greville, “none prosper highly, but the perfect diuels” (63).

Christians, on the other hand, are abandoned by God, as they chose to worship “God and the World” together:

Too good for great things, and too great for good;
Their Princes serue their Priest, yet that Priest is
Growth King, euen by the arts of flesh and blood;
Blind Superstition hauing built vp this,
...
Thus waue we Christians still betwixt two aires;
Nor leaue the world for God, nor God for it;
While these Turkes climing vp vnited staires,
About the Superstitions double wit;
Leaue vs as to the lewish bondage heires,
A Saboth rest for selfe-confusion fit:
Since States will then leaue warre, when men begin
For Gods sake to abhorre this world of sinne. (67-8)

These lines suggest that Christians, as they find themselves torn between two conflicting priorities—God and the world, the Turks seem to exhibit a clearer sense of purpose and direction. Their choice of the world makes them tyrants, but also powerful. By forsaking the world for God, Christians would turn to be tyrants as well. Or if they chose God, they may find a state of rest or peace akin to a Sabbath, suggesting a need for a departure from the turmoil caused by worldly concerns. The abandonment of war by states may only occur when individuals collectively reject the sinful aspects of the world for the sake of God. This chose would free them from the “scourge” of God and the natural order of the world would assure the fall of the Ottoman empire.

5. Conclusion

As the discussion above indicates, Greville's genuine interest in the Ottoman State, its history and its relations with Europe was doubled by this political stance on more urgent matter for the English court, the rivalry with Spain, and the Catholic world in general. Greville's representation of the Ottoman State in his treatises, as a state that is based on an abuse of power by the Sultan as well as the religious authorities can be read as a replica of his ideas on the Spanish power and its connection to the Catholic Church. Ottomans, founded as a tyranny, managed to rise through abusing the religious beliefs and aggressive, expansionist military policies. The discord among Christians, according the Greville, and their inability to follow the principles of their religion, hastened the rise of the Ottomans, turning them into one of the strongest forces the world. The Law of nature, however, which imposes the cyclical rise and fall of the empires ensures the approaching fall of the Ottoman state. Thus, Christians have to mend the cracks among them, to choose God and unite against this mighty tyrant. Greville's comments in his treatises makes it clear that Greville discusses Anglo-Ottoman relations within the broader frame of Anglo-Spanish rivalry.

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