

FITZPATRICK'S WAR

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April 18, 2022

Fitzpatrick's War, a prophetic 2004 work of fiction, which I read on a whim, has, somewhat to my surprise, stuck deeply in my mind. Not only does the book echo events that have happened since its publication, it also bids fair to predict the broad outlines of the immediate future. What is more, *Fitzpatrick's War* caused me to think about two other topics that interest me, which as it happens are the central themes of this book. First, as our civilization falls backwards in confusion, can we arrest and reverse apparently-inevitable decline? And, not obviously related, but in fact necessarily related, what will God's judgment be on violence, even arguably-justified violence, that is the certain result of civilizational upheaval?

The book itself is the annotated autobiography, published in 2591, of Sir Robert Mayfair Bruce, sometime boon companion and trusted civil engineer to Lord Isaac Prophet Fitzpatrick, ruler of the Yukon Confederacy, who conquered the entire globe before he turned thirty, and died in 2427, at the age of thirty-one. The original Yukons, who coalesced in the early twenty-first century, were not from the Yukon; they were called "Yukons" as an insult, to imply they were remote from civilization. They were North American farmers, originally organized as the "New Agrarians" (analogous to the Grange movement, perhaps), and because they were the only major group in the West based firmly in reality, they came to supply to the rest of the West first food, then all essential commodities.

In the frame of the book, the events of the Storm Years, the mid-twenty-first century, are largely obscure and difficult to recover. But everyone agrees they were extremely chaotic and violent. In the mid-twenty-first century, as society decayed, and government became increasingly a criminal racket with a fanatic (though largely unspecified) ideological overlay, the Yukons grew in power, since only they could provide the basics of life, which they did in exchange for being left alone by the central government. Various conflicts within this dying society inevitably arose, often centered on the use and misuse of technology. Thus, the Yukons cooperated with the government to destroy the "Brain

Lords," what we now call the Lords of Tech—Mark Zuckerberg, Marc Benioff, and so forth. "The one objective fact we know about [the Brain Lords] is that their enemies [crippled] their computers and then annihilated every last one of them." Sounds like a good plan to me. Where do I sign up?

Such a fragile power balance, between the Yukons and the federal government, could not last. One man, Bartholomew Iz, a public school teacher turned lawyer, whom the Yukons know as "the Enemy of God," rose to control the government and embarked on a campaign of global mass murder. This included using fake vaccines, the "People's Program," to kill a billion people (the Yukons refused the vaccines; they were purebloods, just like Tucker Carlson and me). The Yukons, attacked by Iz with nuclear weapons and having finally had enough, defeated Iz and put an end to the farce that America had become. A footnote tells us: "Jared Harriman (2072–2151), [was] the first Yukon painter of note. His panoramic *A Visit to the Capitol* depicts the Yukon First Infantry Division entering the American Capitol Building on July 7, 2086, and the slaughter of the remaining American politicians among the members' benches and on the floor in front of the speaker's podium. Copies of *A Visit to the Capitol* were for many years posted in Yukon classrooms and homes as a visual moral lesson to the young." Iz was impaled in front of the Capitol. Huh. Any resemblance to recent events is purely coincidental, but perhaps not not predictive.

From that day to this, the Yukons have governed what was Canada and the United States, as well as Australia and Britain, the latter "wrested from the Moslem invaders" who conquered the rest of Europe and still rule there. The Yukon social structure is essentially modernized feudalism. The political system is a mixed one, involving a hereditary Senate, elected Consuls, and other elements only vaguely depicted. A limited franchise exists, but for the most part, everyone votes as the local Lord asks, and the Senate does not do more than "maintain a portion of the military, deliver the mail, and issue the war tax in times of trouble." The capital is in what was Missouri, but the average citizen has almost no contact or dealings with the national government. Technology in Bruce's time (for complicated reasons) does not involve electricity, although the Yukons are quite advanced in other ways (but decentralized in all aspects, such as not allowing giant enterprises of any type). In practice,

no electricity means the Yukons primarily rely on steam power, using alcohol and biodiesel as fuel. Zeppelins are the primary air transport, although there are also fighter and bomber airplanes. Large sailing ships are used for international trade. And so on, though Fitzpatrick, or rather his minions, invents new ways of bringing war to other nations, even the farthest-flung.

The story, in very short, is how Bruce, a commoner but a decorated military veteran (hence the “Sir”) of the occasional wars with Mexico, is raised by the young Lord Fitzpatrick to high position, and then used, with his own eager connivance, despite his moral qualms, by Fitzpatrick to advance his project of conquering the world. Fitzpatrick succeeds spectacularly, but loses himself within his own mind, as did Alexander the Great. He is then assassinated, in Neopolis, his model city built in the desert outside Samarkand. There is much more to the plot, but suffice it that Bruce ultimately retires to his family’s farms in the Pacific Northwest, and spends the rest of his long life (the Yukons have an extended life span) trying to get right with God, afraid of judgment for his sins. Totally aside from the points I am going to raise below, the book is an excellent read, and a great way to spend several hours. It is by turns funny, mordant, heroic, and deeply insightful, and as I say, it will make you think.

I suppose this book can be read on multiple levels. On one level, it can be read as a sort of revenge fantasy for people on the Right (though there is no evidence it is so intended by Judson, or that his politics lean Right). Whatever the events of the twenty-fifth century, the events for five centuries before are a straightforward application, within the technological frame Judson sets up, of reality reasserting itself on a Western society that had gone completely off the rails. And the Yukons are, in fact, the type of society that would be most likely to rise ascendant from the ashes. (Much of their society could be considered Foundationalist, in fact.) The exception is their partial technological primitivism. As with the retro future society posited by John Michael Greer in *Retrotopia*, where advanced science is either rejected or suppressed, you can’t force primitivism, even partial primitivism, a point James Poulos is lately fond of making. Thinking one can is a form of nostalgia. Certainly taboos and stigma can prevent a society from a great deal of misbehavior, and a well-run society has plenty of both, but they are not magic tools, and

if history teaches us anything, it is that military technology in general will inevitably force the development and use of technology overall.

On a more obvious level, the core theme of the book is how the Yukons address the decadence and decline that have ultimately destroyed every human civilization. Why this happens is, of course, a besetting focus of historians. Although in modern times explanations such as runaway complexity (favored by Joseph Tainter) have become popular, more often moral or spiritual factors are adduced, by everyone from innumerable classical authors, to Ibn Khaldun, to Oswald Spengler, to Arnold Toynbee, to John Glubb. Fitting the usual pattern, for the centuries since their origin the Yukons have remained strong by rigorously demanding virtue of everyone, but especially of the ruling classes. Vice is punished, virtue rewarded. Strict social rules governing most aspects of life are ubiquitous (marrying by twenty-five is *de facto* required, for example). In short, "As Yukons, our activities must be somehow related to work, worship, or warfare. Everything else diverts us from our necessary duties."

But in the time of Fitzpatrick, the ruling classes have become rotten, as shown by the rise of Fitzpatrick, a man recognizable in other great figures from history. He is charming, sociopathic, convinced of his destiny, and a man who does not sit and count the cost. He is irreligious and laughs at Yukon traditions and customs; he says, for example, the correct interpretation of the story of Jonah is not duty and conforming one's will to God, but that "we should each be heroes pursuing our own ecstasy." Yet Fitzpatrick dreams great dreams, and as T. E. Lawrence said, "the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible." Unshackled by his victories from any need to even pay lip service to the traditional demanding virtue of the Yukons, he quickly falls into Oriental despotism, and both surrounds himself with, and grants great power and riches, to the worst, most corrupt and decadent, elements of the ruling classes. When he dies, a woman (Lady Chelsea Virtue Shay, the "Chrysanthemum Woman," a relative by marriage to Fitzpatrick), seizes power and she, her family, and her very many allies terrorize and plunder the rest of the Yukons. But the core of Yukon virtue still remains among the common people, and a quarter-century later the commoners, along with the handful of elites still virtuous, slaughter

the Chrysanthemum Woman and all those associated with her, without mercy, and restore the forms and virtue of the original Yukon society, thereby short-circuiting a fatal fall into terminal decadence. At the time of this book (150 years after Fitzpatrick's death), the Yukons are much as they were four hundred years before—strong, united, dynamic, and virtuous.

Perhaps this is plausible, but other outcomes seem a lot more likely, judging from the historical record. Such a renewal has never occurred. However, the big reveal (spoiler alert!) of the book is that all this has been planned, more or less. Intermittently throughout the book appear members of a Yukon secret society, the Timermen (so called because of the mechanical watches they carry). They were formed at Purdue University in the Storm Years and are the only ones who can still use electricity, though they pose as a mere beneficent organization, like the Shriners. It turns out their real purpose is to keep Yukon civilization from following the normal cycles of history, and to do that, playing a very long game, they aim to keep the Yukons in the “first stage of civilization”—strong, confident, expansionary, what Glubb would call the Age of Pioneers. Most of all, they aim to keep the Yukons virtuous. The problem for civilizations, as the Timermen see it, is that the ruling classes are always tending to ruin as they acquire wealth, and this problem snowballs until it corrupts every aspect of the civilization. Thus, the Timermen schemed to completely destroy the ruling classes of the Yukons before that could happen, and regenerate them from below. (We can ignore that this is a *deus ex machina*, and that nowhere is it explained how the Timermen are themselves kept virtuous and focused on their goal. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*)

The solution of the Timermen is, essentially, to separate the wheat from the chaff, and then incinerate the chaff. They do this by using a honeypot, the lure of all the wealth of the earth, causing the chaff to surface themselves (after the Timermen assassinate Fitzpatrick), in a way that allows them to be culled. A clever trick. But, sadly, it's not practical, because there is no, and will never be, any organization like the Timermen. This “solution” requires some force standing outside the main structures of society, and more powerful than the main structures of society. Such a force, at least such a temporal force, cannot exist. (This is, of course, the reason there is no such thing as “international

law," something thousands of naïve first-year law students discover to their regret, immediately before they disappear into the bowels of large law firms to review endless documents for their masters, morphing into pasty fat imitations of their former selves who forget their goal in entering law school was to be "international lawyers.") Thus, sadly, *Fitzpatrick's War* does not point the way to restoring our own civilization. And even if one had such power, in practice the dividing line between the corrupt elites and the virtuous elites is always shifting and unclear—not to mention that it is rare, indeed, that the common people have avoided the corruption infecting the ruling classes. No, it's a taller order than simply sorting out the chaff and getting rid of it, I'm afraid.

Is there anything we can do? I'm always recommending aggressive action to curb our own rotten elites, and I'm all for getting rid of as much chaff as can be reasonably identified—but I don't think that will reset our civilization to Stage One. It might buy us a new lease on life, as the end of the Roman Republic did for the Romans, or it might make it possible to run a decent, if not spectacular, civilization for some centuries to come. After all, there have been civilizations that did not collapse but puttered on, such as Ancient Egypt, though such examples are rare and very old. I am pretty sure Westerners, in their nature, are not capable of maintaining a civilization in stasis. I suspect, although I am sad about it, that a complete fracture of our civilization is necessary for a reset that will allow subsequent grand forward movement. Not a collapse, necessarily, as I have recently discussed, but certainly the total dissolution and reformation of our political and social structures, after the defenestration of our ruling class.

The secondary theme of *Fitzpatrick's War*, but the primary internal focus of Bruce's own thoughts, is the moral freight of killing, direct and indirect, in the pursuit of civilizational glory, or in the course of civilizational upheaval. Killing has always accompanied the heroic age of civilizations, and although Westerners (i.e., Christians), contrary to the propaganda of their modern enemies, were always more restrained than pagans, they were more than a little bloodstained. Hernan Cortés at least had the excuse that the Aztecs were nasty and evil and that he was doing the world a favor; but the Aztecs are long gone. Bruce faces this question for his own participation in Fitzpatrick's actions, which include killing tens of millions in battle, and hundreds of millions, if

not billions, by starvation using bioengineered locusts. He also faces it second-hand, in the actions of the Yukons in the twenty-first century. Not only did the Yukons wipe out the American central government, they wiped out the cities by no longer supplying them food. And as the globe fell into anarchy when electricity failed, they only accepted culturally-aligned European refugees. Thus, billions throughout the world died from disease and starvation.

The Yukons see this as, or tell themselves it was, God's will. As one student-teacher colloquy goes, "But why did the early Yukons not fear the judgment of God? . . . They did, sir. Fate had put them in an impossible situation, sir. Either they would allow themselves and their families to be destroyed, or they could destroy their enemies. They chose the latter option. . . . They had no choice. God gave us Grace, and He also gave us the instinct for self-preservation. The early Yukons obeyed the instinct he gave them. They perhaps fell short of God's grace, but . . . so has everyone else, sir." Unsurprisingly, Yukon generals can find plenty of Old Testament quotations supporting war; lost on them is the subtle theology that ties many of those injunctions to their own very particular situation. Yet they do not lose their strong faith. "For the Yukons have always pined for the final victory, when we shall be free of the burden of History and the Lord will come and tell us these long years of suffering—both the suffering we have endured and that we have inflicted—were necessary for His plan."

This moral problem strikes me as a particular conundrum for me. After all, I call for civilizational renewal after a fracture, likely under a charismatic Man of Destiny, at the same time I call for Christianity as the dominant religion of the country. That sounds as if, and history tells us, this is a recipe for a man like Fitzpatrick, or perhaps one like Oliver Cromwell, and a lot of dead people. On the other hand, we should not lightly dismiss the truth that the enemies of God are also our own enemies. Stephen de Young's *God is a Man of War* analyzes this question as it exists in the Old Testament. He focuses on characteristics unique to that time and place, such as demonic clans of giants, and let's not forget that God spoke directly to the prophets of the Israelites, commanding wars of extermination. But let's also not pass too quickly over the possibility that we, or rather not you and me, but those who rule us, and their minions, are the quite literal successors of Amalek,

and of the Aztecs. Any society that kills tens of millions of babies in the womb, or mutilates children in the service of an insane ideology of so-called gender fluidity, or presumes to dictate its poisonous doctrines around the globe by force, should not presume that it is not also under the judgment of God. It was not for nothing the Yukons gave Bartholomew Iz his wholly-accurate moniker, the Enemy of God, and taught it to generation after generation of children. Still, God has not spoken to us, or at least to me, on the matter, and it seems unlikely he plans to, though who can know His plans?

God did speak to King David, and Fitzpatrick sees himself, or tries to see himself, as King David. Bruce assures Fitzpatrick, before he begins his wars, that for a rare few men, "Ordinary standards do not apply to them. They are doing God's work here on earth, and as we do not know God's motives or ends we cannot judge His servants. . . . You will be said to be God's beloved." Fitzpatrick takes this to the bank, and to his ultimate destruction. Is only Fitzpatrick morally responsible? Or those who did not turn him from his path? Or all the Yukons? I'm not sure.

But, on the other hand, is Fitzpatrick's line of thinking always wrong? After all, God did permit King David, and others, to slaughter their, and His, enemies, for which he did not ask forgiveness, and King David is a saint in all Christian traditions. No doubt Cortés, if he thought about it, would have pointed this out in his own defense. Obviously, this is a dangerous line of thought, but it is not ludicrous. Maybe the Yukons were right, that at least in their twenty-first century actions, they did neither individual nor collective wrong. God permits great suffering, not (as David Bentley Hart has noted) as part of some great synthesis or plan (whatever the Yukons tell themselves), but because we live in a fallen world. Is every deliberate, or knowing, imposition of suffering an evil? Perhaps not (self-defense comes to mind as an easy riposte), but nonetheless, a man should tread very carefully, and not forget that violence easily corrupts, and obscures, the message of Christ.

We can be certain this question will face us in the future, because it is necessarily the case that conflicts viewed as messianic, as resolving fundamental moral differences, become total, and these are the conflicts looming in our immediate future. Such conflicts were a besetting focus of Carl Schmitt, who repeatedly criticized the twentieth-century Western addiction to making all wars existential moral questions, because it

inevitably led to intemperate wars of extermination. Very recently, we have seen this same tendency on display in America's bizarre reaction to the war in Ukraine. To be sure, what will result in that war is still unclear, because the clownish, uninformed, short-attention-span nature of the West makes it harder to sustain the messianism necessary to get people to accept sacrifice, even if they buy the ludicrous propaganda force fed to us to sway us to support the Ukrainians as a moral imperative. For now, if there is one thing people in America today will not accept, it is sacrifice—most definitely not for some randos in a distant place called Kiev. Yet as the gyre widens, this will not always be true, as troubles visit our own nation directly, and the ancient attendant, perhaps irresolvable, moral questions around which this book revolves will visit us again.