

CHAPTER 1

In order for the reader to better understand the tumultuous hundred years between the Battle of Copenhagen in 1660 to the ascension of our present king (1766), I have decided it best to concentrate the readers' interest in three areas: social and administrative changes, agricultural reforms and the Schleswig/Holstein Question, which I readily admit to being remiss developing to this time.

I have already faithfully reported the loss of Scania (and Halland) in 1658 to Sweden and the Dutch intervention in Scandinavian affairs to keep the Sound a toll-free waterway from the Baltic to the North Seas. While in terms of revenue lost from this channel was difficult for the kingdom to absorb, it did lead to the victory at Copenhagen and the more important development of the Danish infrastructure.

Following the campaign, the burghers and clergy combined at the Diet of 1660 to dramatically reduce the powers of the other estate, the nobility, who had proved itself not only the natural enemy of the monarchy, but the burghers and clergy as well. Until this time, the nobles had exercised disproportionate control over the Riget (monarchy) by the direct election of the king, often waiting until the death of the previous king to make their will known. Civil war was not unknown as nobles supported different claims to the throne and it created a frail monarch who was forced to sign charters hampering his powers and ability to justly rule. In a single stroke, the Diet provided the king, Frederick III, hereditary rights for his family and absolute authority. The power of the aristocracy was crushed.

As an aside, allow me to once again thank our most gracious monarch for allowing me to report these accounts as I have interpreted them. While it is necessary to examine the abilities of individual kings in order to comprehend the development of the State, it nevertheless must also be distressing to have your family scrutinized in such a manner. That Christian (VII) would allow this author that latitude and liberty speaks well of his understanding that issues must be portrayed as they were, not as we wished they had occurred.

Having announced my admiration for His Noble Majesty in this record, allow me to further develop the political events as they occurred. In 1665, the king decreed the kongelov (sometimes known as Lex Regia) or the King's Law. This document had several important features, but only two are germane to this history. First, the kongelov rejected district or regional laws which varied from one location to the next in favor of a codified legal system for the entire nation (with some exceptions which will be discussed later). By standardizing the civil and criminal laws of the kingdom, it led to the second compelling quality, the further limitation of noble authority.

It is important to note, however, that the kongelov only affected the Kongeriget (Denmark and Norway), but not die Herzgtümer (the Duchies, Schleswig and Holstein). The precise reasons for this anomaly will be more readily understood when I direct my attention to the Schleswig/Holstein question. For the time being, it is enough to record that most of the region was under the control of the Riget's relative and direct control was limited by die Herzgtümer's association with the Holy Roman Empire.

Because of the 1660 Diet at Copenhagen, further reinforced by the kongelov, the nobility's authority in Denmark was greatly limited and it required only an additional shove to push them into the abyss. This was done in a single stroke by Christian V in 1671 in which he created a new, two-tiered noble class. The high nobles, the lensgreve (counts) and lensbaroner (barons) were introduced into the Danish aristocracy this year. As well, petty nobles (rangadel) were created. The effect on the old nobility of German titles was to destroy their political prominence. To fill the void created by the destruction of the old aristocracy, Christian V created the Table of Ranks for the civil service and military to ensure that promotions were based on qualifications and not by right of birth.

By the reign of Frederick IV (1699-1730) the Riget was secure and marks the height of absolute monarchical authority in Denmark. With his death and the ascension of Christian VI (1730-1746), the direct control of government began to slip through the fingers of the king to reside with the konsejl, the Royal Council.

The pinnacle of the Crown's power under Frederick IV can be understood by his various and diverse actions. Following the Great Northern War, Frederick began to sell the royal lands of the monarch in order to decrease the debt of the kingdom. He came close to completely discharging the financial obligations by the time of his death. Moreover, Frederick created the first two hundred forty ryttersholer (rural schools) for those without means, but who had a potentially promising child. These educational efforts were applauded and supported by the Danish Lutheran Church, which was committed to the academic advancement of the kingdom's youth.

But the commitment to strengthening Denmark's financial posture and royal authority was not followed through by his successor, Christian VI. Because of his extravagance, notably for the construction of palaces (an aspiration followed by his son), the debt of the nation increased dramatically following Frederick's death. To understand the implications of this extravagant lifestyle allow me to place some meager facts before you. The population of the kingdom, including Norway and the Duchies in 1735 was 1.4 million. These subjects were saddled with an annual royal budget of four to four and a half million Rigsdalers. Of this sum, one half million went directly to the king's own purse while a like sum supported his family and the court. The next biggest expenditure was for the military and navy followed by the civilian administration. I hasten to point out to the reader that none of the budget was used for the construction of the many palatial homes of Christian or his son. The money necessary to build these structures was obtained by increasing the kingdom's debt to others.

Nor can one ignore the fact that Christian VI abrogated his royal prerogatives by isolating himself from the workings of government. To comprehend this travesty, one must examine the multi-tiered system further. In political power, immediately subservient to the monarch was the konsejl (Royal Council). They and they alone, held real power in Denmark. The next level was the kolleger (government bureaus) who had regional responsibilities. Beneath them were the Danish and German Chancelleries. The Danish Chancellery had administrative and judicial control of Denmark and Norway, while the German Chancellery performed the same tasks for the Duchies. The president of the German Chancellery was also the de facto foreign minister of Denmark. In addition to this powerful position, the president of the kommershollegium (Board

of Trade) and kentekammer (Exchequer), along with the military and naval representatives held enormous sway in the Danish government. The next levels down were the stifers which were further broken down into amters, which were administered by royal bailiffs and clerks. Last in the pecking order were the byfogder who were appointed mayors replacing most of the city magistrates.

The natural inclination, I suppose, is to applaud the organizational abilities of Christian. And this would have been true had he actually controlled his own konsejl instead of allowing himself to be controlled by them so that he could pursue his petty interests. The net result of the government's design was to keep the king's subjects from their monarch. Since the Danes have always considered their first loyalty to the king and not the manor-owner or the noble of their district, this would inevitably lead to the further demise of the Crown. Christian VI, and later Frederick V, had forgotten their absolute powers were granted by the Diet of 1660, not given him by the nobility. Frederick V's failure to acknowledge the centennial of Danish absolutism was a clear signal to the peasants that they no longer had the direct protection of the king against the nobility, old or new.

*In further support of this assertion of malfeasance of office, allow me to elaborate on the areas of finance and advisors. The Credit Bank of Copenhagen was established in 1736, purportedly to support **ALL** commercial ventures. Were this so, it would have been of great assistance to all aspects of Danish society. What it quickly became, however, was a lending agency for the largest merchant houses of the realm that really did not require help inasmuch as they were already well established.*

The second indictment stems from Christian VI's and Frederick V's infatuation with the Germans. During their rule the court, military and civil government, except amters, conducted all business in German. Not only did this have a negative effect of further divorcing the king from his subjects, the result was to employ Germans to run the apparatus of the government. Under Frederick V's reign of twenty years, only one Dane and one Holsteiner were members of the vaunted konsejl! Indeed, this self-serving vacancy of royal authority allowed the rise of the German Johan Hartvig Ernst Berstorff as the dominant figure in Danish politics by 1751. This German pretender got along like a thief with Count Adam Gottlieb Moltke who administered the offices of Mecklenburg and was a close friend of Frederick V, so that Danish policy, foreign and domestic, often became nothing more than an extension of Prussian, Swedish, Russian or French policy.

Praise be to God that Denmark remained neutral during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). However, Bernstorff used the conflict to undermine the Danish military and used their supposed lack of preparedness to fight (Whom, one wonders since we were not in a war), as reason to bring the Comte de Saint-Germain from France, where the king had wisely dismissed him, to promote him to a Danish field marshal. The following year, 1761, he enlisted the assistance of Henrick Carl Schimmelmann from Hamburg to run (some would say ruin) the financial affairs of the kingdom. Within a year, Schimmelmann convinced the Royal Council to pass an erstrakatt (poll tax) of one Rigsdaler on every man, woman and child in the realm, ostensibly to defray expenses of the military and court. The Hamburgian did not understand that there was not

enough Rigsdalers circulating in the realm to pay the erstrakatt. Danes refused to pay the tax and it was quickly revoked.

Militarily, and again for the lover of German things, Saint-Germain revamped the krigskoncelli and called in the Gerneralkrigsdircktorium. Not only did this change the name of the military apparatus, it affected the control of the military from the king to the konsejl, but it served to give Saint-Germain direct access to the king as the president of the agency.

Ironically, Berstorff and Saint-Germain created two opposing factions. Bernstorff led the "Excellencies," or old guard, who saw their function as peace, prosperity, stability and noblesse oblige. In contrast, Saint-Germain continually demanded reforms of every facet of society. And where was the king, Frederick V, during this faction fight? He had become a hopeless alcoholic debaucher who refused to remove his mouth from his cup long enough to deal with matters of State.

Nykoby had changed little since its reconstruction following the fire that ravaged the town during the fourteenth century after the Black Plague had visited there. The thoroughfares in 1766 were a bit wider and there was a new fountain in the town's square which depicted the ascendancy and maintenance of the Oldenburg family in Denmark. The houses were as neat in appearance as any Nordic village and the smell of the sea and bakery and candle shop did much to disguise the fetid odor of human sewage which permeated the town. From time to time, this noxious odor was dispelled by running hogs through the streets at night to feed on the waste or, unplanned but equally effective, the occasional fire which cleansed sections of the town.

But one becomes accustomed to these smells, ignoring the worst of them and reveling in the best. Or so it seemed to Ditlev Oodam as he made his way through the Town of Nykoby on his way to the village's *ryttersholer* of which he had been the headmaster for seven years. The rural school had been built as one of a quarter thousand Frederick IV ordered constructed in the early 1720's. Nykoby was not really qualified for the facility because of its size, but the town's council had demonstrated to the King that Nykoby had contributed far in excess of its fair share of manpower in the recent war with Sweden. A school for Nykoby, so ordered!

It was not that Ditlev did not enjoy the walk. The uncommonly warm spring evening carried the scent of the sea on its breeze making the stroll very inviting. As well, he truly did enjoy the sights and sounds of the village of his birth. He was unhappy, however, for two reasons. First, this was his second journey along this path to the school this day; and while it was not far, just under two miles, it did become tiresome. But this inconvenience was fairly trivial in comparison to the second reason. The board governing the curriculum of the *ryttersholer* had called a special session of the body to discuss the radical ideas being suggested to the students in the school. As headmaster, not to mention being the sole instructor, Ditlev was the target for the school board's displeasure with the curricula and ordered to attend this evening's session in order to confer with them regarding the going-ons in the school.

Oodam mentally shrugged as he cut across the path leading to the single-room framed building. His fate was in the hands of God, *or gods*, and there was little he could actually do about it. Certainly, he would be allowed to present his reasons for the things he taught in school, but he also was sage enough to know that what he had to say would sway the board's opinion but little. Instead, their decision would be based on what the town's people with children had told them what they thought of the new ideas.

As well, he understood that although there was a board of seven, it would come down to what the majority of three men believed. Borg Lieben, the Lutheran Minister would be the most likely to vote against his heretical ideas as displeasing to the God he knew. Oodam hoped his ballot would be negated by Ernst Lindermann, the stormy blacksmith of Nykoby who, unlike the Pastor, had children of school age. Not only did the two not like each other personally, they were often at odds over the interpretation of *Biblical* scripture, something Lieben saw as his sole

prerogative. These two old antagonists could almost always be counted on to cancel each other's vote.

That left Abel Swartz, the patriarch of the financial empire who had decided ten years ago it would be easier to have himself appointed *byfogder* of the community, rather than find someone else to fill the position and then spend all his time watching that he didn't do something stupid. Normally, the man's religion, *he WAS a Jew after all*, would have precluded him from either the post of mayor or president of the school board. His prestige in the kingdom, however, negated the common prejudices, at least at the local level of government.

One would also consider it likely that there would be hostility between the Lutheran Minister and Swartz, but this was not the case. Abel's father had contributed substantially to the new church of Nykoby when fire had engulfed the old one, and had donated his entire labor force for the duration of the construction. No, there was no problem between the two.

And there was no difficulty between Lindermann and Swartz. For five years following its invention, Abel's father had followed the workings of the Credit Bank of Copenhagen and after half a decade, was increasingly dissatisfied with its operation. The inequities of the financial system galled him. Farmers, shopkeepers and small merchants were unable to borrow from the institution. The only people who could make a loan were those who did not need it. As a result of his discontent with the Credit Bank, the Swartz family created a lending firm and established it with 250,000 *Rigsdalers*. These funds were available on the basis of merit, not established wealth. In its twenty-five years, not a single loan recipient had defaulted and many had been able to begin their family's business with these funds, including Ernst Lindermann.

Indeed, Abel Swartz was the voice of reason the entire community listened to. He could have easily used his financial position to sway people to his way of thinking, but this he refused

to do preferring the power of persuasion. Ditlev knew the deciding ballot would come from Herr Swartz.

As Oodam raced up the stairs to the school he noticed that there were already lamps lit in the building. He paused to consider the probability that the board had been meeting for some time already and his appearance was merely a formality.

He opened the door to his future.

His assumption that the assembly was already in session was correct. All seven members were huddled around the simple teacher's desk at the head of the classroom, Lieben and Lindermann sitting on opposite sides of the table with Abel Swartz in the center.

"Herr Oodam, do please come in," beckoned Abel in a conciliatory voice.

"Thank you for coming, Ditlev," Ernst Lindermann said appreciatively. "I know you put in long days here and it's a bit unfair to have you come back at night."

"Not at all, Herr Lindermann," Oodam answered sliding into a student's chair (*Lindermann's second child's*) toward the front of the room and settling himself in.

"We should come directly to the point, Herr Oodam," Swartz said taking control of the meeting.

"It would be appreciated, Herr Byfogder," Ditlev answered.

"Pastor Lieben, why don't you begin," Abel added.

The tall, gaunt, pock-marked-face Minister rose so that the board would be addressed instead of a simple school teacher.

"My friends," Borg began, "I've heard many complaints from my flock that Herr Oodam is teaching a curriculum contrary to the Word of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior."

"Could you be more specific?" Lindermann interrupted the Pastor in a pleasant enough voice.

"I would be happy to elaborate," agreed Lieben.

"The specifics of the accusation against the schoolmaster are that: first, he teaches disloyalty to the Crown. Secondly, Herr Oodam has been overheard saying knowledge, not scripture, is the path to God. Thirdly, he has suggested that the child of a tenant farmer is innately the intellectual equal of the child of the highest *lensgreve*. Fourthly, it has been reliably reported that the headmaster has forced our children against their will to read seditious, heretic and pagan documents instead of proper material selected by this board, or better yet, limiting himself to the *Holy Bible*. Lastly, it has come to my attention that when Herr Oodam does bother to use or quote from the scripture, it is without benefit of clerical guidance. As a consequence, information imparted to our children has been misleading, perverted or patently false." The Minister of the Faith and Conscience of the Church returned to his seat after reading from his prepared notes.

There was a scant amount of murmurs around the room as time hung suspended while the board discussed the accusations. Ditlev himself had a difficult time digesting the contents of Lieben's diatribe. For the life of him, he could not fathom the origin of the Pastor's indictment. It was as if he had just been notified that he was expected to fly without wings. Oodam would have understood the words, but not the message.

Swartz broke the silence. "Does anyone have anything to add before we provide Herr Oodam the chance to address these issues?"

"Issues?" questioned Lindermann. "They sounded more as if they were a blanket indictment by the king's court and the hangman's waiting outside."

"I object to Herr Lindermann's analogy," the Minister stated. "We are to discover the truth of these . . . these issues, as you have called them, Herr Swartz."

But Ernst was not done. "And I object to your constant reference and use of the term "our children." To my recollection, you have fathered nothing!"

Abel Swartz watched the Pastor redden. At thirty-seven he was still unmarried. A situation which gave rise to gossip in Nykoby, some of which had reached his ears.

"That is reprehensible," retorted Borg.

"I quite agree," Lindermann replied, intentionally misunderstanding his meaning.

"Gentlemen, please!" Swartz verbally stepped between the two. "We are here to examine Herr Oodam to determine if he is teaching our children in a suitable and responsible manner."

The blacksmith nodded his head to the mediator. Lieben threw his hands up in disgust, but also in surrender.

"Good," Swartz smiled. "Now, Herr Oodam, we would like you to speak to these issues if you would be so kind."

"I'm at your service," Ditlev answered in a courtly manner. "But I could not help but notice that Herr Lieben was reading from a paper the accusations against me. I wonder if I may use his notes."

"Certainly not!" the Minister said indignantly.

"Why, Ditlev?" Ernst asked.

"To ensure that I did not misunderstand the charges and to make certain I answer each question fully and to the satisfaction of the board," he responded without hesitation.

"Sounds fair to me," Lindermann made his comment to Swartz.

"It does," Abel concurred.

"Herr Byfogder! These papers also contain many personal annotations," protested the Pastor.

"I'm certain Ditlev knows where you stand," an angry blacksmith rejoined. "He's not simple minded."

"I agree with Herr Lindermann. I know Herr Oodam will be honor-bound to ignore everything on the papers except the specifications he is to address," Abel said in a reasonable voice, leaving the Minister speechless.

"Thank you, Herr Byfogder," Ditlev said rising from his place to fetch the papers from Lieben. Only reluctantly did the Pastor surrender them.

The schoolmaster spent a few minutes reading and considering his course of argument. Although not all of these men were formally educated, they were all extremely perceptive. A wrong choice of word or phrase could place his job in jeopardy; therefore, he decided to attack the matter with as simple of a vocabulary as possible to ensure they each understood his position.

He rose from his chair. "Herr Byfogder, members of the board, allow me to make a summary statement before discussing each of these issues in turn."

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; Jesus Christ his only begotten Son as our Lord and Savior; and the Holy Spirit," Ditlev began piously. "Further, I believe that God granted us the ability to distinguish right from wrong. I believe man is born into sin and can only be saved through the Son." There was general nod of agreement and even the Minister was forced to concede that Oodam was professing his faith in a Godly manner.

"But because I do believe man has the God-given ability and right to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, if you will, that the only means we have of electing to do good and not evil is through knowledge of what constitutes right and wrong," Oodam concluded.

"What nonsense!" barked the Minister. "Salvation is by faith and faith alone!"

"Let the lad have his say, Borg." Ernst purposely did not use his title to insult him. But it was a passive insult he didn't think Swartz would correct. He was right.

"Now, as to the first of these allegations that I have preached disloyalty to the *Riget*," he returned to his argument. "Nothing could be further from the truth. I confess I have said on occasion that there are and have been different forms of governments for different people. That was not to imply that ours was wrong and another nation's right, it simply meant different. I do concede, however, that in Denmark there has always been a strong relationship between the king and the folk, an agreement of sorts. It has been our history that as long as the king has provided good government by taking care of the needs of the people, the people have felt an obligation to follow his rule. But were a king's rule proven to be deleterious to the kingdom and the people, then the monarch has broken the agreement and neither side is obligated to fulfill their original commitment."

"Sedition!" called Lieben along with some clearing of throats at the table.

"Not at all," Ditlev continued. "What would you and other ministers in Denmark do, Herr Lieben, if tomorrow the Danish Lutheran Church decided all pastors were to preach that Jehovah alone was God and there was no Trinity?" Ditlev didn't think about it at the time, but it was a good analogy to use with Herr Swartz present.

"Demand they recant their heresy!"

"And if they would not?"

"The faithful would go their own way," admitted Borg.

"Thank you," Ditlev said without smiling.

"Hardly the same thing," argued Lieben realizing the trap he had fallen into.

"Exactly the same, Pastor. One is a disagreement of religious dogma, the other political," declared Oodam. "If a man cannot be free to dispute and depart from a body which has fundamentally opposing ideas, then that man is no man."

Young Oodam made his points there, thought Swartz. "Continue please."

"Yes, thank you, Herr Byfogder," Ditlev acknowledged the request. "Also called into question is my desire for the students to pursue knowledge. I touched on this in my opening statement, but allow me to illustrate further."

"Not only do I believe God gave man the ability to decide right and wrong, good and evil, He allowed us the ability to come to a conclusion of the goodness or evilness through thought. I can assure you that by education and contemplation, I have a stronger relationship with God than most."

"Yes, fancy words," Borg retorted. "But what of faith? The scriptures say by faith alone can you be saved."

"I concur completely," agreed Ditlev. "Any reasoning man can ponder any question in the universe. And yet the more often he does so, the more often he finds, in some areas, a transformation must take place when thought becomes faith."

"And at what point is that?" one of the more curious board members asked, momentarily stunning the assembly that he would speak.

"I cannot answer that, sir," Ditlev replied honestly. "For each of us it is different, yet the same. We must find our own limitations."

"You have said that the nobles - the king's son, for that matter - offspring are no more capable of learning and leadership than the lowest peasant," the Minister wanted to move on, unwilling to allow Oodam too much time to impart his belief structure to the board.

"Undeniably, this is true," confessed Ditlev unrepentantly.

"Oh? What do you base this on, Ditlev?" Lindermann asked in frank curiosity.

"Having observed the children of the village over several years and recording their academic improvements in comparison to their family's status, prompted me to ask other headmasters around the district to keep similar journals," Oodam revealed his social experiment.

"I'm afraid to ask, but I will," a dubious Minister said. "What did this nonsense reveal?"

"To be perfectly honest, Pastor Lieben, the sample was far too small to come to any definitive conclusions," the schoolmaster answered. "If we wanted a more comprehensive study from which to deduce conclusions, it should be done throughout Zealand - perhaps, the kingdom - over a period of twenty years, or so. I should also include girls as well as boys."

"What?" Lieben denounced the radical idea in a single word. "This is contrary to the laws of God and man. Women have their place in the divine scheme of things; that is the home, children and giving attention to her husband's needs. At best, and only for those families of means, the girl child can be taught music, *Biblical* instruction and the social graces. Anything beyond this is incomprehensible!"

"To use your word, Minister, *Nonsense*," retorted Oodam. "Girls are as capable of learning as much as boys from poor homes can have a greater ability than those born to privilege. May I remind Pastor Lieben of our own great queen, Margrethe?"

"You've proven my point," responded Borg. "She was an exceptional woman of **NOBLE** birth. Under those circumstances, one could expect her to thrive."

"And what of Catherine of Russia? She can hardly be described as coming from **NOBLE** stock," Ditlev said.

"How dare you compare that whore to our Queen?"

"I think they compare easily," Oodam said in comfort. "Both seem to have had an affinity for foreign matters at the expense of domestic issues for one thing."

"We've strayed too far afield, Herr Oodam," remonstrated Herr Swartz. "You need to confine yourself to the specifics of the allegations, rather than creating new problems for yourself."

"My apologies, Herr Byfogder," a contrite Ditlev said. "I will try to limit myself."

"Thank you," replied Abel.

The schoolmaster inclined his head to the mayor. "My point, gentlemen, is that the surroundings of the child: family, income, diet, etc., dictates his ability to learn. If, for instance, his parents were educated and make use of this skill for the boy's benefit, he will do better in school than a comparable child whose parents are illiterates."

"You've just made my argument for heredity, Herr Oodam," the Pastor smiled. "Thank you!"

"I don't think so, but as I have said the tests are inconclusive as yet," Ditlev continued to represent the facts as accurately as he could. "But my professional inclination is the child - all things being equal - who has the better home life and opportunities will do the best, regardless of to what biological parents they are born."

"You're advocating separating children from their natural parents?" sputtered Lieben.

"Not at all. This was a hypothetical example, nothing more."

"Before we get bogged down again, Herr Oodam. Would you care to discuss alleged seditious materials that you have used in your classroom?" Herr Swartz prompted.

"I'd like to hear that, as well," a more confident Minister said.

"Yes. Alright, sir," the headmaster agreed. He would have rather continued on the topic he had under scrutiny, but he supposed Abel was doing him a favor. By moving along, the board would be less inclined to forget his responses.

"I have the pupils read a variety of works. I confess, I do not myself agree with all of the authors' conclusions."

"Then why have them read the material?" Lindermann interrupted the teacher.

"Because I think that if a person is to be able to successfully argue against or for a proposition, it's first necessary for him to know what that position is. Else while, it is fallacy and faulty logic," Ditlev concluded.

"Perhaps," conceded Swartz. "But the nature of the themes. Everything from agricultural reforms to political changes to the nature of God in the universe. Are these suitable for young minds?"

"If carefully explained and examined together, yes I do Herr Byfogder," Ditlev agreed.

Lieben sat in silence. He considered it best to allow this assertion to pass unchallenged. Otherwise, the board may consider his presentation of the facts as a matter of a personal vendetta, rather than of community concern.

"Last is this matter of *Biblical* interpretation," Abel announced since there was no further discussion on the texts used in class. He was surprised to learn that Oodam had used sections of the *Talmud*, but he was shocked to see him using the *Koran*, as well. He considered it possible that the other members of the board had not objected more vehemently because they were uncertain which books he considered relevant.

"I've said what I think I should on this matter in my preamble," Ditlev was content with what he had previously articulated. "however, and for the sake of extending those principles I

have already outlined, I will say one final thing. I believe that each person has the right to form a personal relationship with God and that no power on earth has the right to interfere or intercede in that association."

"What of the Church?" inquired Lieben.

"Unnecessary."

"What?" another board member gasped on behalf of the Minister who was having a difficult time restraining himself.

"Oh, I suppose it serves its purpose as a place of fellowship where dialogue can be exchanged between like-minded people," conceded Ditlev. "But I'm not sure that farmers stopping to discuss topics of mutual interest don't do as well. But that's not the question. Do I think the Church is necessary? No, I personally don't except as I have elaborated. God and salvation is a personal matter between man and his Maker. All the Church - this or those in the past - does is confuse that concept."

The board sat in stone silence. Some radical ideas in this age of revolutionary and abstract concepts were to be expected. The French and German influences on the kingdom were undeniable and they were bound to taint an educated man's thinking. *But this?* Swartz wondered. This was a direct assault on a national institution, a cornerstone of society's stability. Could such attacks be left unchallenged and the purveyor undisciplined?"

"Herr Oodam, if no one has any further questions, you are free to leave," Abel directed.

"If the board has no objections, Herr Byfogder, I will wait outside," Ditlev asked. "I presume the board will determine if I am to retain my position or not. If not, I would appreciate knowing as soon as possible."

"As you wish," Swartz allowed.

"Thank you, Herr Byfogder, gentlemen," Ditlev said before taking his leave and to await his fate and future outdoors.

"Well, what did I tell you?" Lieben charged the moment Oodamn left the schoolhouse.

"Tell us what, Herr Minister? Tell us that you wish to dismiss our school master for the most frivolous reasons possible?" the old blacksmith charged.

Hoping to avoid further strife on the board, Abel quickly reclaimed control. "I think we should look at each of Borg's charges individually and take a vote on each of them. Is there agreement on the principle?"

Around the table, six other heads nodded their assent.

"Alright, we'll do them in the order that Minister Lieben presented them," Byfogder Swartz announced fairly. "First is this issue of disloyalty to the Crown. Does anyone need further clarification or elaboration?"

"I think it's clear that Herr Oodamn was only using examples to demonstrate to our children that there are other forms of acceptable government, but that it depends on different people at different times," one of the board members suggested tentatively.

"If we allow that train of thought to continue, do not be surprised when your children come home preaching revolution," cautioned Lieben.

"If the discovery of truth isn't allowed, then how will they be able to consider other issues critically," yet a different board member suggested.

"Vote," Lindermann said the single word, compelling the others to take a stand.

"All those in favor of supporting this charge?" Swartz said.

1 to 6. "It would seem that Herr Oodamn is exonerated of this charge," Abel reported faithfully without announcing the crushing repudiation of this charge.

"As to second charge that knowledge is the path to God . . ." Abel let that dangle before the group.

"If I may, Herr Minister," ventured one of the members, "Isn't faith based on knowledge? I mean, if you didn't have the knowledge to read the *Good Book*, how could you have the faith necessary to accept the word of God Almighty?"

Deflated, Borg Lieben could do nothing but nod his head in understanding of the question.

"Vote," demanded Ernst once again.

2 to 5, better than I would have thought on that one, Swartz considered them lucky to have passed muster on that charge.

"Next we have this matter of *innate intelligence* that Ditlev is exploring. Discussion?" the Byfogder asked.

The ryttersholer board looked at each other before any of them had the temerity to offer an opinion.

"I don't think any research, Herr Oodamn is conducting is contrary to any good teaching practices," one of them finally said.

"Vote," for the third time Ernst said the single word.

6 to 1, Abel noted with some satisfaction. *Well, it wasn't a temporal matter, so it was easy to support the teacher, wasn't it?*

"The fourth charge," Swartz shuffled through his own notes to make sure he got it right, "is forcing our students to read questionable material."

"Read *seditions, heresy, and pagan documents*, Herr Swartz," Lieben offered helpfully.

"Thank you, Herr Minister," Abel paused. "Discussion?"

"I find this troubling," one of the board members offered. "I understand the teacher wants our students to explore new materials, but contaminating their minds . . . well, I just don't think it's proper," he spoke his heart.

"I think it is fitting and proper, sir," Lindermann had restrained himself remarkably well during the discussion, but on this topic he warmed. "I don't want my son accepted what dribble the Crown puts out without the ability of looking at all sides of an issue."

"Yes, but your family has been long known as being opposed to the House of Oldenburg," Lieben replied.

"True," confessed Ernst, "but not without reasons."

"Your family's *reasons* are not being questioned here, Herr Lindermann," Borg Lieben said. "I say vote."

4-3, Abel noted. *That's too close.* The three members of the board who voted with the Minister were notorious pro-monarchy, and they could be depended on to support the King if it was disclosed he was Satan incarnate.

"The final charge is quoting from the Scripture without pastoral assistance to explain the true meaning," Abel said. "What that . . ."

"If I may, Herr Byfogder Minister Lieben interjected. Borg was an educated man. That meant he could at least do simple arithmetic. He knew that if he could link the fifth charge to the fourth, and convince only one of the hold outs to cross over, he'd be exonerated and victorious. He didn't need to win all the accusations, just one of them.

"This charge is directly linked to the fourth," Borg clarified. "except it has to do with religious matter."

"You afraid of being put out of a job, if your parishioners are able to interpret the word of God by themselves?" Lindermann asked sarcastically.

"I am NOT," Borg assured them all. "I am concerned for not all of my parishioners' souls, but even the likely damned, such as yourself," Borg smiled to show there were no hard feelings.

"Vote."

The evening had turned particularly splendid for this time of year Oodam noticed as he wandered outside while the debate continued within. He found himself attracted to a mound not far from the school. The children played here during recess as he had done so himself in his youth. They - as did he - claimed the mound was haunted, but he put no stock in such things, even if most of the town's people did.

For Ditlev, it was a place of solitude where one could go and consider issues greater than oneself. *To contemplate the splendor of nature. To try and grasp the significance of the heavens. To think, thus recognizing one's own existence.*

"Ditlev!"

"Over here," he responded to Lindermann's call.

"I'll get to the point. The vote was against you," the blacksmith didn't mince words. "I'm sorry. I did what I could, but your ideas on the need for a Church . . . well, that frightened them."

"I understand," Oodam said simply.

"What now?" Lindermann inquired.

"Oh, I don't know," Ditlev had not really considered this possibility before. He always thought he would retire here and live on his pension. "Maybe I'll go to the peninsula. I understand that people around Hamburg are not afraid of exploring new ideas," he showed the first unkind thought of the day.

"Here," Ernst handed him a single, folded paper ignoring the slight. "I got them to give you a full recommendation. It may well help you find employment."

"Well, I thank them for that!" Ditlev expressed his false gratitude. "I do thank you, Ernst, for what you did for me."

"I wish it could have been more," the blacksmith replied. "God, I'm sick about this."

"Don't concern yourself. Something will turn up," Ditlev comforted him.

The first Enlightened man made preparations to leave his home for the Hamburg suburb of Altona.