

Moral Reasoning 74:
The Theory and Practice
of Republican Government

Lecture 06:
The Co-Evolution of Monarchy and
Republican Form in Stuart England

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Stuart England – Major Themes

- I. The Elizabethan Model
- II. Divine Right of Kings
- III. James I and Charles I – Legitimacy Fading
- IV. The Rise of the Commons

Elizabethan Model

- A. Crown as head of Church and State
 - (1) Divine right
 - (2) Defense of Protestantism
 - (3) Church as instrument of rule
- B. Parliament as Council to King
 - Irony: Parliament grows out of Crown, empowered by Crown
 - Elizabeth extends representation to towns (32 boroughs, 64 members, added to Parliament)
- C. Petitions and Petition of Right
 - Non-binding and supplicating, but they require response. At level of representation, place debts upon Crown.

Discussion – Religion and Republicanism

Fact: A state religion is a given in the co-evolution of English monarchy and self-government.

1. What do we make of Machiavelli's argument that a well-order republic must rely upon religion as a means of social control?
2. Is there any such defensible role for religion in politics today?

Divine Right of Kings

- A. Political necessity of James I
- B. Response to emerging ideas re social contract

James VI and I, *Trew Law of Monarchies*: "... The king towards his people is rightly compare to a father of children, and to a head of a body composed of divers members, for as fathers the good princes and magistrates of the people of God acknowledged themselves to their subjects. ... And the proper office of a king towards his subjects agrees very well with the office of the head towards the body and all members thereof, for from the head, being the seat of judgment, proceeds the care and foresight of guiding, and preventing all evil that may come to the body or any part thereof. The head cares for the body: so does the king for his people."

Problem: This constrains as well as enables.

III. Legitimacy Fading

- A. Thirty Years' War (b. 1618)

New taxes

- Subsidy
- Forced loan (Five Knights Case [1627])
- Ship Impositions (case of 1637)
- Increased \$, but Political conflict

- B. Duke of Buckingham

Again, divine right limits powers of crown

IV. Rise of Commons

- A. Crown's Dependence on Parliament for funds leads to claims of liberties.

Petition of Right (1628): "They do therefore humbly pray your most excellent Majesty that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax or such like charge without common consent by act of parliament. . . .and that your Majesty would be pleased to remove the said soldiers and mariners, and that your people may not be so burdened in time to come."

IV. Rise of Parliament

Petition of Right [continued]:

"All which they most humbly pray of your most excellent Majesty as their rights and liberties according to the laws and statutes of this realm, and that your Majesty would also vouchsafe to declare that the awards, doings, and proceedings to the prejudice of your people in any of the premises shall not be drawn hereafter into consequence or example. And that your Majesty would also be graciously pleased for the further comfort and safety of your people to declare your royal will and pleasure, that in the thing aforesaid all your officers and ministers shall serve you according to the laws and statutes of this realm as they tender the honour of your Majesty and the prosperity of this kingdom."

Dissolution (and Dependence upon) Parliament

Dissolution (1629), then reconvention due to needed funds (1640).

Morgan [p. 35]: "They [Parliament] could not, however, take their eyes off the throne while so many of the king's subjects seemed bent on sharing it, and in the course of pulling down others they had moved ever closer to sharing it themselves." The movement for power sharing accelerated, primarily because "the king's majesty had somehow been tarnished, his divinity diluted, by the company he kept during the years he had avoided theirs. The 'visible God' had crept too far from the true God. The kings body natural had betrayed his body politic."

Dependence of Popular Sovereignty Notions upon Strength of Monarchy

“If English-speaking people anywhere want to know the source of the self-government which is their peculiar contribution to the world in the sphere of politics, it is to be found as far back as the Tudor tradition – perhaps even earlier – of co-operation between government and subject: a co-operation to be found nowhere else in the Europe of that day. For the origin of English liberties we have to go back further to the fact – paradoxically enough – that the medieval English kings were more powerful than their continental counterparts, the country more integrated and more governable.”

A. L. Rowse [Oxford], *The England of Elizabeth* (1950), 350.

Questions

Could a regime that grew self-government be more stable and more free because of its origins in monarchy? Why?

Does the commitment of the crown to the welfare of all people presuppose a kind of democracy and political equality?
