

In the latter years of the Middle Age, owing to the blending of feudalism with the newly organized central government, there was a very noticeable absence of both despotism and demagoguery. This was, perhaps, the only time in the course of human government when there was something approximating a balance in the political scales, an avoidance of absolutism either of the king or of the people. Though, of course, the state was by no means thoroughly organized, there was a clearly defined political theory — a theory whose maxims of public right, buried for long years, were again brought to the surface of that violent cataclysm of the French Revolution. These maxims of Thirteenth Century government are the basic principles of our present public policy. We have come to think of them as our own creation; yet it is to that so-called period of darkness that we owe it that no tax can be imposed without the consent of the taxpayer; no law is valid unless accepted by those who owe it obedience; no sentence is lawful unless pronounced by the peers of the accused.

Partisan historians with pet theories to establish, regardless of the truth or falsity of the particulars upon which these theories rest, have created serious and lamentable misapprehension regarding the position of the mediæval church in the question of civil power. I am no theologian, and therefore will not have the rashness to enter a field where I might easily go astray. However, on the strength of my Catholic training, I feel warranted in saying this much; the divine origin of civil as of all power, has always been taught by the church; but the divine right of kings, never. Royal absolutism, or as Pope puts it,

“The right divine of kings to govern wrong,”

a theory of government which reached its highest development in Henry VIII. of England and the Grand Monarque, Louis XIV. of France, a man who could stand up and say in all his autocratic pride, *L'Etat, C'est moi*; this theory, I say, was foreign to the spirit of the Middle Age. It was the result of those dynastic struggles, the struggles of power that gave a special character to the period between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. So far from being an advocate of royal absolutism, we find that the church holds that the king or chief magistrate, whatever may be his title, is simply the executor of the will of the people he governs,—and furthermore, that if this chief magistrate should abuse his trust, and rule his

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