

Spring 2015 History & Heritage -- #2

(A Seasonal Catechism for the Study of Western and American Civilization)

Fear of “Popery” --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 293-300)

This motive, above even concern for Parliament’s powers, drove politically influential Whigs to depose King James II in Britain’s so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688? An unflattering reference to the seeming renewal of Catholicism under James, the motive was felt acutely by all Englishmen of unambiguous Protestant persuasion. Moreover, mighty Whig families granted monastic lands by Henry VIII back in the 1500’s still worried a Catholic king might confiscate and return their holdings to the Roman Church.

Tories --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 293-300)

This political faction, heir to the Civil War’s Cavaliers, was the weaker of two opposing parties in Britain from the Restoration of the 1600’s into the 1800’s? It stood for the complementary rule of church and state (bishops and kings) and preference for small-scale farming in a context of what Cardinal Newman called “loyalty to persons.” Such loyalty aimed for social cohesion fulfilled through the sacred duties men owe one another, service chiefly to their near relations, brothers in the faith, and countrymen.

“A Revolution not Made, but Prevented” --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 293-300)

This intriguing phrase was used by parliamentarian Edmund Burke (1729-1797) to describe, retrospectively, what manner of revolution occurred in Britain in 1688? Burke’s point was that the upper-class Whigs who toppled James II in a bloodless coup were, far from being revolutionaries, conservatives. They were actually resisting, he believed, a revolutionary king who sought to reassert Catholicism and circumvent Parliament, thereby subverting religion, customs, and rights centuries in the making.

Whigs --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 293-300)

This political faction, somewhat an heir to the Civil War’s Roundheads, was the more dominant of two parties in Britain from the Restoration of the 1600’s into the 1800’s? It stood for the restraint of kings, the primacy of Parliament’s powers, and greater religious toleration or recognition of the rights of Dissenters (non-Anglicans). Whereas their foes favored small farmers and the nobility, the parliamentary party embraced great landholders (including noblemen) and the rising class of merchants and manufacturers.

Bill of Rights --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 293-300)

This political declaration (1689), wrought by parliamentary Whigs and honored by the Crown (William & Mary), remains one of England’s landmark constitutional documents? The declaration, much like the U.S. Constitution a century later, makes no highfalutin, abstract statements about the universal condition or rights of man. Rather, it limits itself to obligating kings, unlike the example of James II, to uphold and defend Protestantism, the prerogatives of Parliament, and the old laws and customs of free Englishmen.