



Abstract from Article

THE POLITICAL THEORY OF COVENANT: BIBLICAL ORIGINS AND MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

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Published: *Publius 10 (1980), 3-31.*

Abstract

Human, and hence scholarly, concern with politics focuses on three general themes: (1) the pursuit of political justice to achieve the good political order; (2) the search for understanding of the empirical reality of political power and its exercise; and (3) the creation of an appropriate civic environment through civil society and civil community capable of integrating the first two to produce a good political life. Political science as a discipline was founded and has developed in pursuit of those three concerns. In that pursuit, political scientists have uncovered or identified certain architectonic principles, seminal ideas, and plain political truths which capture the reality of political life or some significant segment of it, and relate that reality to larger principles of justice and political order and to very practical yet normative purposes. One of the major recurring principles of political import which informs and encompasses all three themes is covenant – an idea which defines practical justice, shapes political behavior, and directs humans towards an appropriately civic synthesis of the two. As such, covenant is an idea whose importance is akin to natural law in defining justice, and to natural right in delineating the origins and proper constitution of political science. While somewhat eclipsed since the shift to organic and then positivistic theories of politics which began in the mid-nineteenth century, it persists as factor shaping political behavior in those civil societies whose foundations are grounded in the effort to translate covenant ideas into political reality, and in others attempting to build democratic order on federalist rather than Jacobin principles. In the crisis of transition from the modern to the post-modern eras, covenant is resurfacing as a significant political force just as it did in the transition from the late medieval to the modern era which took place from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

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