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CHAPTER ONE

*The Origins of
Party Government*

In considering the origins of party government, we face this problem: parties are universal, but party government is recent. Parties are universal because in politics men act for motives which can be and are stated in opinions. Opinions are disputable, especially opinions about the most important topics, opinions on which citizens and regimes stake their lives. Being disputable, such opinions attract and repel: they create partisans. Politics seems to be essentially partisan. There have been many regimes without visible parties and perhaps some entirely without parties. But partyless regimes are not non-partisan. They may suppress the parties which might dispute the opinions they have established, but they cannot suppress the disputability of their opinions. Parties are potential in every regime where they are not actual; and where they are actual, there are also potential parties lurking beneath every opinion taken for granted by the actual parties. The secret records of all regimes reveal private parties of politicians or courtiers not visible to the citizens or subjects, and historians have exposed the disputable assumptions of regimes which believed themselves to be founded on rock.

Since politics is essentially partisan, and since the essence of politics is clear to any unbiased observer, it is not surprising that party government is now almost ubiquitous. There is almost no regime which does not claim to have party government—which does not use, avow its use, and praise its use of a party or parties. There is almost no regime which is

not proud of having a party or parties. Party is understood to be the birthright of new regimes, and the conflict of our times between Western liberalism and communism seems not to involve the existence of party government, but only the practice of essentially different party regimes. Thus assured that party government is accepted almost everywhere, political scientists have studied those problems of party which presuppose the existence of party government: the selection of leaders by a party, the representativeness of different kinds of parties, the functions of party, the nature of a "party system," and so forth. These complex and sophisticated problems arise because the simple reason for partisanship—the holding of disputable opinions—seems to be sufficient justification for party government.

Yet if party government seems inevitable, it is perplexing that it should be so recent. Two centuries ago there was no party government, and the few early examples of party government have been widely imitated only recently. The origins of party government are not coeval with Western civilization, nor with modern political philosophy, nor even with the founding of contemporary regimes. In America, party was begun by a founder of the regime, Jefferson, in opposition to other founders and as a modification of their work. In Britain, party was first praised by a statesman, Burke, who claimed to be defending the regime of the Whig revolution, but who defended it by modifying it. Burke and Jefferson, as founders of party government, were at first alone in their praise of party. Famous men—the Federalists in America, the Old Whigs in Britain—men whom we rightly regard as the founders of our contemporary regimes, men who are not otherwise so remote from contemporary beliefs, opposed party government with a vehemence equal to the energy with which they upheld the cause of liberty. If it is perplexing that party government is so recent, it is startling that earlier advocates of liberty and founders of free constitutions opposed party government. Indeed, it is too mild to say that they opposed party government; they would have been astounded to see it taken for granted by sober men living under free constitutions. We must appraise the near-ubiquity of party government today in the light of its complete absence in the past.

On this evidence it seems necessary to distinguish parties from party government. Parties are universal, but party government is the result of the recent discovery that parties can be respectable. Because the reason for partisanship is so simple and compelling, the respectability, not the existence, of party is the distinguishing mark of party government. In 1769, the year before Burke published his "Thoughts on the Cause of the

Present Discontents," he wrote that "party divisions whether on the whole operating for good or evil, are things inseparable from free government."¹ By contrast, in the "Thoughts" he presented a *defense* of party, as a worthy and necessary instrument of free government under certain conditions. If Burke thought in 1769 that parties were inseparable from free government, why did he make so long an argument in 1770 to recommend them? By "party divisions," Burke in 1769 meant the small groups contending in Parliament, within view of the people; in 1770, he defended these groups as "on the whole operating for good." It was one thing for Burke to identify an institution as inseparable from free government, whether or not it was a deformity, and another thing for him to argue that an institution long considered a deformity was really a beauty of free government.

The respectability of party can be better understood if one distinguishes between the public and the private constitutions of a country. The public constitution is the arrangement of rule which appears to the public and is taught in the schools; the private constitution is the way in which the regime "really works" behind the scenes. Honest men often find a perplexing discrepancy between the two, for the distinction between the public and private constitutions does not quite correspond to the distinction between public and private ends. Honest men wrongly believe that what cannot be avowed in public cannot be for the good of the public. Those who seek only private advantage can be plausible in public, however; and unpublicized action may be necessary to prevent the success of private association for private advantage. Parties have perhaps always existed in the private constitutions of countries, more openly in free constitutions; and some have acted for private advantage and some for the public good. Only very recently have parties been awarded status in the public constitution by a change in the public estimation of party. It is true that no party, not even the Communist party of the Soviet Union, has full status in the public constitution. However much the law may recognize and regulate party activity, no party has the legal status of a legislature or an executive, by which its program would count as law or decree. Nevertheless, a party or parties are now held everywhere to be essential to the law and thus allowed to reflect some of the majesty of the law. It is certainly no longer public decorum to deplore parties to the point of wishing for their disappearance.

Party government has spread everywhere as a result of the revolution of opinion regarding party. This striking change must impress the student of politics. When he reflects upon it, he will seek its origin, for the origin

is a possible source of understanding which he cannot overlook. Some changes occur inadvertently and may be understood best by those who can use hindsight. Other changes are intentional, and may be understood better by their makers than by those who live with the result but do not reflect on the original alternative. The "founders of party," if we use the term precisely, would be the makers of this striking change, but we cannot decide whether they merit the title unless we know who they were and what their intentions were.

The purpose of this study is to explain the reasons why Edmund Burke undertook to present the first argument in Britain for the respectability of party. Burke's "Thoughts" contains the first such argument anywhere since Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*.² We do not intend to make a psychological analysis of Burke's argument or to seek out reasons for his argument other than those he gave or implied. If Burke's reasons are inadequate, their inadequacy should appear after full consideration, and they should be replaced by a better argument. Nor do we intend to trace the influence of his argument in British politics from its appearance to its adoption by the Foxite Whigs and the successors of Pitt. Since this study is about Burke's political philosophy and the origins of party government, its premise must be that these two topics are connected. The premise is that party government is chiefly a matter of opinion regarding party, and that being a matter of opinion, it is a cause of argument. It follows that in order to understand the origins of party government in Britain, one must give the most studious attention to Burke's argument in favor of party.

Previous studies of the origins of party government in Britain have not accepted this premise and have not adequately considered Burke's argument. They have sought the origins of party government in the origins of the Whigs and Tories or in the coming of democracy to Britain or in the first toleration of opposition. Although these opinions will be treated in the interpretation of Burke's argument, it is proper to introduce them here as challenges to the premise of this study.

Whigs and Tories

The names "Whig" and "Tory" date from the Exclusion Bill crisis of 1680-81. In the attempt to exclude the Duke of York from the throne, the Earl of Shaftesbury gathered his adherents in Parliament and led them in the elections fought on this issue. The King organized his forces in defense of his prerogative, and the two parties collided in full view of the public. "Never before had political clubs existed with so elaborate an organiza-

tion or so formidable an influence," says Macaulay; and henceforth "Whig" and "Tory" "spread as widely as the English race," to "last as long as the English literature." Churchill says, more explicitly, "There had been *sides* in the Great Rebellion; henceforward there would be *parties*, less picturesque, but no less fierce."³ The careful organization, the demagogic tactics, and the discipline of the first Whigs under Shaftesbury have recently been described by J. R. Jones, and the Whigs' anticipation of modern methods made clear. But these first Whig partisans were too eager and their Tory opponents too reluctant for the settled impermanence and comfortable oscillation of party government. Neither party was willing to accept the right of the other party; and no party leader, Shaftesbury included, meant to sustain permanently the organization and the discipline required for the success of the event.⁴ The Whigs brought forth the Exclusion Bill to meet an emergency, and always meant their party to die when success had been achieved. Charles II copied the Whigs in their methods and in this intention. For both sides, party was an emergency resource never intended as a fixture in the public constitution.

Moreover, this issue was resolved in 1689, when a bill excluding Catholics from the throne was passed as part of the Revolution Settlement. The issue had been lost to the King's party in 1682, but it was not then resolved. James II, using his prerogative to advance the cause of Catholicism, strained the loyalty of the Tories and made the Whigs rebellious. After three years of such rule, having disgusted his friends and emboldened his enemies, he quit the throne and left the makers of the Revolution a rare opportunity—the opportunity of resolving the issue on which the Whigs and Tories had first arisen instead of securing a partisan victory for the Whigs. It is generally recognized by historians that the Revolution Settlement was not a victory for Shaftesbury: for Macaulay, the hero of the Revolution is William of Orange, while, for Trevelyan, the spirit of the Revolution is the spirit of the "Trimmer"—of Lord Halifax, the celebrated antipartisan. Indeed, the Whig historians are disinclined to give credit to the makers of the Revolution for their artful use of this opportunity, and they do not sufficiently explain the secular principles which made possible a non-partisan resolution of the religious issues between the parties.⁵

In his "Thoughts" Burke presented the first argument in Britain for party government, but at the beginning of this pamphlet he alluded to the welcome fact that "the great parties which formerly divided and agitated the kingdom are known to be in a manner entirely dissolved."⁶ The great parties to which he refers are the seventeenth-century parties which were

divided on the issues of the divine right of kings, and of papacy and episcopacy. Burke implies that the dissolution of these great parties was necessary to the respectability of parties. It could not be respectable for gentlemen to join a party, much less to join different parties, until the parties had resolved these crucial issues. For Burke, respectable party government meant government by parties which were not great. Party government was based on the disappearance of the great parties. Although the party names and some of their practices continued, their essence was new: they were now, in some sense, small parties. To the extent that the Whigs and Tories accepted the Revolution Settlement, as they did increasingly through the first half of the eighteenth century, they disowned their inheritance from the Exclusion Bill crisis and became small parties.

The Revolution Settlement was the foundation of party government in Britain because it destroyed the basis of the great parties. The great parties did not just subside to the size and temper of the parties which are factors in party government; they did not become small merely because British statesmen were exhausted and disgusted by civil war and had decided to dispute over lesser matters for lesser prizes. They were made small by the settling of religious controversy and the plain rejection of the divine right of kings. The Sacheverell trial in 1710 showed that the issues resolved in 1688-89 could be raised again, and that *if* they were raised, they would be as hot as ever. The eighteenth-century parties were not lukewarm seventeenth-century parties; they were made on a new foundation.⁷

But only the foundation of party government was made by the Revolution Settlement. Although the eighteenth-century parties were small parties, they were not said to be respectable until the publication of Burke's pamphlet, some eighty years after the Revolution. Nor did this pamphlet immediately succeed in giving a better reputation to party. For a time the Rockingham party (and not all of its members at that) stood alone as the party whose doctrine was partisanship, making a record to show that parties can be lacking in greatness. It was not enough to destroy the basis of the great parties; it was necessary also to demonstrate two further points: that small parties would not become great by heating up the issues they raised; and that there was no harm in small parties—indeed, that there was even positive good in them. Burke's "Thoughts" is based on the Revolution Settlement, and on this basis he argues the two further points necessary to justify and to begin party government.

The Coming of Democracy

Another opinion sees the origin of party government in the coming of democracy to Britain. This is the opinion of M. Ostrogorski, a pioneer student of the history of party government, and of Max Weber.⁸ They argue that the *ancien régime* in Britain was destroyed neither in 1688 nor in 1746 (the last defeat of the Stuart Pretender); it was destroyed in 1832, when the middle class first made its separate power felt in the passage of the Reform Act. Before 1832 there were parties of aristocratic groups (Weber calls them parties of notables), which were so restrained that their divisions did not disturb the harmony of society.⁹ These aristocratic parties were sometimes annoyed by maverick Radicals in Parliament, but from 1750 to 1850 they were challenged by extra-Parliamentary reform movements such as the Wilkesite Society for the Defence of the Bill of Rights, the Protestant Association, the Catholic Association, Dr. Price's Revolution Society, the Anti-Corn-Law League, and many others. Historians have produced many studies of these movements, taking them to be precursors of democratic and socialist parties or early substitutes for such parties. Democracy and socialism were not willingly embraced by the aristocratic parties in Parliament, but had to be forced upon them. For some reason, however, the aristocratic parties did not resist to the point of civil war, as had the seventeenth-century parties. Instead, they accepted the opportunity to reach for votes from among those who had agitated against them, and they accepted the necessity of extra-Parliamentary organization to effect this purpose. According to Ostrogorski and Weber, the origin of party government is not to be found in the origin of the parties themselves but in the origin of extra-Parliamentary organization in the parties. They consider the origin of party government in the light of democracy and socialism and hence place emphasis on the organization of parties. Ostrogorski's book is entitled *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*.

Although this argument has been the occasion for many useful works on parties, it is unhistorical and misleading. It neglects the overriding concern of British statesmen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarding parties. Ostrogorski and Weber remark that there was an aristocratic party government in the eighteenth century, and they are not ignorant that there was no such party government in the seventeenth century. But they proceed as if this difference were made insignificant by the coming of democracy and socialism. Ostrogorski and Weber make the same error in regard to British politics that Anglo-Saxons are accused of making in regard to politics on the Continent: they underestimate the

importance of the religious issue. They underestimate the importance of the settlement of the religious issue in 1688–89.

On the contrary, Burke referred to the religious issue when he called the seventeenth-century parties “the great parties.” Hume also meant religious parties when he said: “Parties from principle, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps, the most extraordinary and unaccountable *phenomenon* that has yet appeared in human affairs.”¹⁰ With this uncharacteristic vehemence, Hume contrasted the parties of interest, found at all times, with the parties of (religious) principle, found only in modern times. The writings of Aristotle and Thucydides and of the ancient historians of the Roman Republic are full of the conflicts of the rich and poor, but almost silent about religious parties.¹¹ In a way, Ostrogorski and Weber, with their emphasis on democracy and socialism, are closer to the ancient view of parties than to the viewpoint of the early modern statesmen and political philosophers. But neither Greece nor Rome knew party government: even though the conflicts of the rich and the poor were the central issue of politics, their parties were never allowed respectability in the public constitution. Parties were considered fatal, not vital to the health of the regime; and the party conflict was fought fiercely in the belief that the bane of party could be removed with the defeat of the opposing party.¹² The philosophers who proposed a solution to the party conflict of the rich and the poor chose the remedy of mixed government, not party government. They mixed the parties into the constitution, hoping to settle their conflict by yielding something to the interest and opinions of each. In their proposals they tried to settle the conflict, not merely to reduce its scope; and they gave concessions to the parties in order to acquire their allegiance and to induce them to be parties no longer.¹³

Modern party government was made possible, in Burke’s view, by the settling of the religious issue. Therefore modern party government presupposes the *raising* of the religious issue. It presupposes the existence, before the destruction, of “the most extraordinary and unaccountable” great parties, “known only to modern times.” Further, we shall see by an examination of Bolingbroke’s thought on natural religion that the religious issue, once raised, had to be settled in a certain way so that it would not be raised again. In regard to the religious issue, the “aristocratic” British parties of the eighteenth century were liberal; on this fundamental point they were all opponents of the *ancien régime*. It is generally agreed that in Britain both liberalism and party government preceded democracy and socialism and that the first British liberals were converted aristocrats.

When, on the Continent, the religious issue still lives to complicate party divisions on the social issue, how can it be supposed that in Britain the settling of the religious issue had no important effect on the consequent divisions over the social question? The *settling* of the religious issue in modern Britain could not be expected to have had the same effect as the *absence* of the religious issue in ancient party politics. According to Burke, the settling of the religious issue made party government possible in modern Britain. When considering the problem of party government, Ostrogorski and Weber begin with the derivative issues of democracy and socialism, issues which took their shape from the settling of the religious issue. Their study of the organization of parties needs to be supplemented by studies of early opinions about party government.

It may seem hard to accuse Max Weber of overlooking the importance of the religious issue in the coming of party government. He was the leader of the school of opinion which teaches that the modern world as a whole, including party government, grew from Protestantism or from certain Puritan sects. The “formal” freedom of modern government permits and encourages parties based on differences of principle which may develop from followings of charismatic leaders and which take the place of traditional groupings in traditional societies. Weber agrees with Hume that parties of principle are known only to modern times, but denies that they are unaccountable; instead, he argues that they are characteristic of modern government. Modern government is a consequence of modern beliefs, and in Britain modern beliefs are an outgrowth or an inheritance (it is not clear which)¹⁴ of *one* of the great parties. Since modern British government has emerged from one of the great parties, the settlement of the religious issue in 1688–89 did not itself dissolve the great parties. It was merely the sign that the Puritan doctrine had been transformed. The doctrinal basis of party government was present in certain Puritan doctrines of religious toleration that had only to be secularized, somehow, in order to appeal to both of the great parties. These doctrines were, of course, not secularized by the religious Puritans, who were fanatics for toleration; nor were they secularized in the Revolution Settlement, which presupposed that they were secularized. Although Weber looked for this secularization in the doctrines of certain Puritan sects, he might have considered that a secular doctrine is needed to secularize a religious belief.¹⁵ Because he believed that modern government results from an inner transformation of Protestantism, he did not consider the settling of the religious issue decisive. To Weber, the settlement merely signaled the success of the transformation.

The Toleration of Opposition

This argument leads to a third opinion: that party government arose when toleration of opposition was established. In this view, toleration of opposition is the secular product of religious toleration, and parties are secularized sects or congregations. The great religious parties became the parties of party government just as the idea of toleration was extended from religious to political freedom. The great parties were not dissolved but were rather worn down by the general disgust with the effect of theological rancor and enervated by the growing diffidence of their own members. Party government, in this view, is the result of disgust and diffidence—in sum, of disillusionment. The fanatics of the great parties opened their eyes to the consequences of their divine-right principles, for example, the threat of French domination in Europe, and began to doubt them. At first they did not abandon their principles, but they began to question their right to destroy opponents for the sake of their principles and began to concede the right of opponents to oppose.

At the same time, turning their attention to opportunities for commercial profit and to thoughts of secure advancement in the professions, the former partisans gave a calculating allegiance to a new political science of balance and maneuver. While partisan energies were otherwise employed, Locke, Halifax, and Bolingbroke took control of the opinions of statesmen and partisans and quietly stifled the source of partisanship, the Puritan and Stuart principles of divine right. Managerial politicians like Harley and Walpole replaced the thunderous statesmen of the seventeenth century and seduced the disillusioned partisans with petty favors and pettier promises. The Tories gradually lost their courtly principles as they joined in the general revulsion against James II. But in the new regime they held their old grudge against the Whigs, while they inconsistently clamored for equal privileges with the Whigs. The result was a composite: they kept enough old Toryism to maintain the two-party dualism of the seventeenth century but dropped their divine-right principles to insure the loyalty and harmlessness of their opposition.

Kurt Kluxen has made the most recent and complete presentation of this view.¹⁶ It is on the whole a true picture, but it has two difficulties. In the first place, having accurately represented the managerial realism of the new political science, it neglects the confidence of that political science. The aim of Bolingbroke, on whom Kluxen concentrates his study, was not merely to quiet the conflict of the seventeenth-century parties; that would have been the aim of any reasonable statesman ruling a distracted people. Bolingbroke's aim was to make a society on rational prin-

ciples, a new society not liable to the partisan conflicts inspired by prejudice, especially religious prejudice. The confidence of this purpose, in its way, was as high as the fanaticism of the seventeenth-century parties. As will be explained, Bolingbroke opposed the privileges of the ruling Whigs, not because he wanted similar privileges, but because he really believed that such privileges were unnecessary to the working of the constitution. He did not plan his opposition party as the first in a long succession of opposition parties, nor did he mean to be only the first opponent of government with the deliberate intent not to make himself a hero of the constitution. His party was, on the contrary, planned as the *last* party, the party whose aim was to destroy every future excuse for party.

Burke thought he saw the danger of this high confidence, and brought forth his argument for party government to prevent its evil effects. Thus in Britain the first argument for party government *was* produced by disillusionment, or by anticipated disillusionment. Burke was disillusioned with Bolingbroke's program for preventing all potentially partisan prejudices from influencing the British constitution. Instead of being disgusted with religious civil war, he was fearful of this thorough attempt to make religious civil war impossible. Kluxen's view does not account for the confidence which the first attempt to be thoroughly and unashamedly realistic inspired. Men who had this confidence led the opposition to party government as well as the opposition to the ruling Whigs.

Second, even if opposition be recognized as loyal and legal, this is not enough to establish party government. Opposition is loyal and legal in a free constitution, but not every free constitution has party government. Parties have been held by many to be the bane of free constitutions. After 1688 it was usual to look for methods by which opposition could be prevented from becoming party opposition. In the eighteenth century there was a distinction, familiar to readers of Namier, between legitimate opposition and "formed," or party, opposition.¹⁷ Since Britain had a free constitution, it was thought respectable for a politician to oppose the king's policy; in Parliament he could speak to persuade others to his opinion and gather their votes against the king's policy. But in his dealings with the king, he was expected to grieve or sulk by himself. Any attempt to act with others in a "formed opposition" was considered an attack on the discretion of the king and was thought to be prompted by a desire for "place" or a disaffection with the constitution. A man should not obscure his own merit and the merit of his opinions by adding to them the influence of other men and their opinions; if he did, he confessed that he loved himself more than his merit. Not all politicians held this belief with full strict-

ness, nor did all practice it. In a well-known constitutional incident in 1746; the Pelhams agreed to resign together, having secured the support of Pitt; and George II was forced to take them back on better terms.¹⁸ But certainly a permanent or sine die organization of opposition was not considered respectable.

As long as these beliefs were dominant, the king could act more or less independently as his own prime minister, and the cabinet, led by *its* prime minister, could at best make an isolated attack on a particular position.¹⁹ The Rockingham party, under the direction of Burke, was the first party to challenge the dominant opinion and adopt the permanent respectability of formed opposition. For Bolingbroke, formed opposition was justified only by the intent to remove every cause of such opposition. Thus the relation of opposition to party government is not simple; it is complicated by the difference between a tolerated, legal opposition and a respectable, formed opposition. Bolingbroke's program against the respectability of parties was an early and enthusiastic exercise of the right of legal opposition, which developed after the Settlement of 1688-89.

These three opinions, all contrary to the premise of this study, agree that the justification of party is only a response to the particular circumstances of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Party government was not intended or planned or founded, they assert. It grew out of the conflict of the Whigs and Tories, or perhaps out of the conflict of the Roundheads and Cavaliers. It grew out of the secular democratic movements of the late eighteenth century and ultimately from the religious democratic movements of the seventeenth century. It grew out of the attempt of Tory politicians to make a place for themselves and their ideas in the essentially Whig regime established in 1688. From this common conclusion that party government is a response to circumstances, it follows that the study of the origin of party government is no great help to the study of party government now. Circumstances are different today, and we could only learn the extent of the difference by studying the origin of party government. In particular, the *opinions* of statesmen and political philosophers regarding party government would be impertinent today.

But if, on the other hand, the respectability of party did not simply succeed the practice of party, it may be allowed that party government was deliberately founded. If party government was founded when party was shown to be respectable and when this conclusion was agreed to by the ruling authorities, the opinions of the founders may be relevant today. If party government was at first an object of choice and chosen for particular reasons, those reasons may tell us something of the character of party

government today. Our premise that opinions about party were once important implies that party government has an intelligible character and that because it has an intelligible character, it has in some degree a permanent character. In the American presidential election of 1960, for example, the religious issue was raised in the competition of the two parties. This was widely regarded as unfortunate, but why should it be so? An understanding of the religious issue in the origin of party government may provide an answer, not so much because we directly inherit that former experience as because the problem is similar. In any case, we do not wish to force the premise of this study on the reader by means of these brief objections to three contrary opinions. The purpose is only to gain his attention for the study which follows.

The Traditional View of Party

If it is maintained that party government was only a response to circumstances, there is still a possible argument for the importance of opinions on party. The decisive factor in the practice of parties before Burke's "Thoughts" was the operation of the traditional view of party. This view frowns upon party, but does not exclude the occasional use of party. It is compatible even with the habitual toleration of parties. Hence it may be inferred that the respectability of party was not a necessary response to the practices of parties, whether occasional or usual. The practices of parties could be understood and justified according to the traditional view without the respectability of party and without party government.

Rarely can one speak of *the* traditional view, but it is possible here. It is remarkable that before the late eighteenth century, statesmen and political philosophers were nearly unanimous in the opinion that party was evil. They thought that every society must be substantially free from dissent on some most precious topics; if opinions on those topics are questionable and liable to partisan division, it is vital that they be settled. But serious or "great" parties will be concerned precisely with those topics, and they must be avoided at any cost, save the sacrifice of principle. On the other hand, frivolous or "small" parties are dangerous and corrupting. They are dangerous because great divisions can grow from small beginnings, as, for example, in the disputes between the High-Heels and the Low-Heels and the Big-Endians and their opponents in the land of Lilliput.²⁰ Parties which manage to remain frivolous are distracting to serious statesmen, degrading to the innocent politicians whom they entice, and ultimately subservient to the irresponsible ambition of the politicians who profit from them. It is not where the serious issues are settled that frivo-

lous parties cause no harm, but where there are no serious matters from which men can be distracted. Jefferson once expressed his hostility to light-hearted partisanship and doubted that it could remain light-hearted: "The good are rare enough at best. There is no reason to subdivide them by artificial lines. But whether we shall ever be able so far to perfect the principles of society, as that political opinions shall, in its intercourse, be as inoffensive as those of philosophy, mechanics, or any other, may well be doubted."²¹ In sum, according to the traditional view parties are trouble, or they make trouble; and if not, they are inexcusable.

But the traditional view is not entirely opposed to partisanship. Party was excluded, as we have said, from the public constitution; but it was allowed a place in the private constitution, as a dangerous instrument which might serve the public good. Party was held to be an evil always, since, even at best, when it is adopted for good motives, it causes dissension and sets a bad example.²² But there might come an occasion when this evil would have to be accepted in order to save the most precious principles of the regime. In 1757, Lord Hardwicke wrote that opposition parties are "the most wicked combinations that men can enter into, worse and more corrupt than any administration that I ever yet saw."²³ But he provided for an exception to this principle in case of absolute necessity, and he must have had in mind the conspiracy of the Whig and Tory lords against James II in 1688.

This must be a silent exception. Because early writers on party were so fulsome about its general evil and so reticent about its very infrequent necessity, they leave an impression of stuffiness and artlessness very annoying to modern students of party. Some modern students have therefore accepted the honor of having discovered party for contemporary political science.²⁴ But these students do not see the subtlety of the traditional view, whereby no responsible person would broadcast the workings of a dangerous instrument which he knew was likely to be misused—although he might have to use it himself. Such a person could *study* party, and thus, by separating himself from those who simply shun evil, become in a sense a member of a party. But he would not publish the results of his study, for they would indeed be useful to all, to good men and traitors alike. Yet good men, in the traditional view, would use party only to abolish the occasion for party. An open defense of party in general would therefore destroy the usefulness of party to good men and would serve uniquely the interests of evil men. In order to serve its occasional good purpose, party must be kept out of the public constitution. The traditional view of party was based on a naïvely strict distinction between public and private,

as if what is for the public good could always be avowed in public; but it included a silent exception to serve knowing statesmen in emergencies. It was a view attuned to the practice of politics in a less confiding and less organized age.

Within this view there was a difference of opinion on what to do about parties, assuming that they were generally evil. The older opinion, described above, was that they should be suppressed; but certain modern political philosophers, Hume for example, argued that in a free country parties must probably be tolerated. Hume said: "To abolish all distinctions of party may not be practicable, perhaps not desirable in a free government."²⁵ *The Federalist* No. 10 similarly maintained that since the causes of faction are latent in human nature, factions cannot be suppressed without loss of liberty; they must be moderated in their effects. In both cases the opinion that parties may be tolerated is accompanied by an argument to show that they may be made and kept tolerable. Moderated factions and tolerable parties give free men a place to spend their energy while distracting them from worse mischief. From this standpoint, a society of moderated factions is far preferable to a lethargic, factionless society whose subjects grow dull or resentful.

But this toleration of parties is not the same as a belief in the respectability of party.²⁶ Even when the toleration of parties is thought to bring strength to a free state, the difference remains, for many a necessary activity is not considered respectable or fit for the public eye. The strength generated from tolerated parties is in any case not accountable to the parties themselves, which merely express the energy of free men, but to freedom as a principle. If the great parties could be made small and kept small by the extension of principles which allay and distract religious fervor, men could live freely without holding parties to be respectable. They could praise freedom without praising its most unfortunate by-product, parties; and they could be as alert to the dangers which come from the very principles of freedom as to those which come from outside enemies.

Acknowledging the difference between toleration of parties and respectability of parties, one might still assert that Hume's opinion is a temporary station in a progression from the suppression to the respectability of party. But Hume's opinion on the toleration of party is a *substitute* for the respectability of party; rather than a tentative new view, it is an accommodation to the traditional view of party. By demonstrating that parties could be tolerated without being held respectable, Hume's opinion made Burke's argument for the respectability of party harder, not easier. As we shall see, Burke's argument was directed against Bolingbroke's con-

viction that parties should not be tolerated; Burke thus seems to take Hume as an ally. But Hume repudiated the modern parties of religious principle. He tried to show that a difference of principle makes partisanship dangerous more surely than a conflict of ambition, whereas Burke tried to show that statesmen could act on principle only if they combined in parties. Both men desired a free constitution, which Hume thought must be defended *against* parties and which Burke thought could be defended only *with* parties.

One must therefore distinguish the foundation of party government from the beginning of party government. The foundation of party government, the Revolution Settlement which reduced the great parties to small parties, could justify Bolingbroke's opinion that parties were now intolerable, Hume's that they were now tolerable, and Burke's that they were now respectable. We conclude that the traditional view of party could hold its own against the practice of party and even against the developments which provided the foundation for party government. It had to be opposed successfully by a contrary view. That Burke's view of party succeeded the traditional view is no proof of its truth, since opinions do not always become dominant by superior argument. But after this introductory investigation one cannot say that argument was irrelevant to the origin of party government. The aim of this study is to know the arguments for and against party government as they were presented at its origin.

Moreover, the argument about party government is not settled, for the traditional view of party has not yet been overcome. It lives today in popular opinion, which distinguishes between "statesman" and "politician," and often uses "political" (in the United States) or "party political" (in Britain) as terms of opprobrium. Modern students of party oppose such usage as "an anomaly," "fashionable denigration" or sneering, and as showing a "moral bias."²⁷ Indeed, they offer their justification of party chiefly against its popular disrepute. One political scientist has said: "It was not until the present century that a sizable body of expert, respectable opinion arose confidently to assert that parties are a necessary feature of responsible popular government."²⁸ This statement has the character of a reassurance to popular doubts, suggesting that the people should bow to an opinion which is sizable, respectable, confidently stated in the twentieth century, and expert. The last quality seems to be decisive: the people are told that experts in political science have found that parties are necessary to responsible popular government. One may consider the truth of this expert finding by examining the political philosophy of Burke, who knew politics before party was respectable.

Statesmanship and Party Government

Burke so insisted on the distinction between reform and innovation that we dare not, without investigation, describe his argument for the respectability of party as one or the other. But if the existence of a change is established and its importance sufficiently suggested, we may inquire into the character of the change. The change Burke promoted was from statesmanship to party government. Statesmanship is the capacity to do what is good in the circumstances, a capacity in which men, as individuals, are variously accomplished. Since they are variously accomplished in this, they are unequal; and statesmanship is essentially an unequal capacity. As such, it must be defined by its best example, not by an average sample; for we cannot know what a statesman can do unless we know the limit of human capacity, that is, what a great man would do. The study of statesmanship is therefore chiefly the study of great men, and reliance on statesmanship is a reliance on the performance and example of great statesmen. The replacement of statesmanship by party is an attempt to avoid dependence on great men.

Burke was writing about Chatham when he said that acting in a corps tends to reduce the value of a distinguished individual, but he could have been writing about himself. He was a great statesman who sought not merely to reduce Britain's reliance on his single capacity, but to reduce her reliance on the capacity of any great statesman. He promoted this change by introducing parties into the public constitution, by making party government the respectable instrument of honest men of principle. Defining "party" as a body of men united on some particular principle, he made parties available to good men in association against bad men. But a principle on which good men can agree to associate publicly must be an honest principle, a principle which shocks no sensibilities and which sacrifices some of the clear discernment of an "individual who is of any distinguished value" to procure the association of good men. It is not that a statesman is unprincipled or above principle; it is rather that his principle loses its refinement in the translation to public speech, and thence to party program. In such translation, a principle must be defensible as well as practicable; and defensible not to a public ready to be impressed by great statesmen, but to a party eager to correct a seeming unconformity and to a public taught to reward partisanship. A party principle is necessarily attuned to lesser capacities than is a statesman's principle. Burke conceived the respectability of party because he was willing to accept the less exact principle in exchange for a lessened reliance on statesmen; for great statesmen are unreliable, at least in the sense

that they may not always be available. Burke believed that the regularity of honest men could compensate for their lack of discrimination, and that party government could substitute for statesmanship.

The reputation Burke deserves as a founder of party government casts a shadow upon the argument he made for the respectability of party; for the founding of party government is not a partisan act, but an act of statesmanship. To understand this act, one must make a careful interpretation of Burke's "Thoughts," beginning with the surface appearance of the pamphlet. At the start Burke stated his reservations about intervening to divulge the cause of the present discontents, with some appearance of vagueness. Upon reflection, however, one may conclude that Burke's delicacy and vagueness are related and that he perpetrated a legend upon his eighteenth-century readers in order to make them act—not to a narrowly partisan end, but for the amendment of the constitution. He has used a statesman's rhetoric in describing a danger with a view to its remedy. But the essence of his remedy is to reduce dependence on statesmanship. Burke's argument in the "Thoughts" moves from statesmanship to party government, from its subtle and tentative beginning to the broad confidence and blunt proposal at its end.

The "Thoughts" is a reply; it offers a remedy to a danger of tyranny. Burke brought party to view as a defensive tactic. His antagonist is not named and has to be identified; we have supposed him to be Bolingbroke, through his influence upon "a certain political school" active in the 1760's. To know Bolingbroke's influence means to know his intention, and we find that his intention was to use party as an *offensive* tactic. But since the program of his party was hostility to partisanship, he intended only the respectability of his own party, and that only for as long as the corrupt aristocratic parties survived. Burke proposed the respectability of party to counter the menace of a party whose program was hostility to partisanship. His defensive conception of party more nearly resembles the modern democratic party system than does the single-party reform espoused by Bolingbroke. Yet in the conflict of Bolingbroke and Burke, implied in the defensive argument of Burke, is found the origin of party government in Britain. The programmatic aspiration of Bolingbroke's party and the settled responsibility of Burke's party system have endured as opposite and complementary elements in the modern democratic party system.

Having identified and examined Burke's antagonist, we can proceed to show how Burke's defense of party results from his participation in modern political philosophy, from his adherence to the doctrine of the

natural rights of man. We find his conception of the British constitution to be popular government surprisingly like the popular government of *The Federalist*—modified, made elegant, and effected by the rule of gentlemen. Party, or the party system, is a remedy for the weaknesses of popular government and is suited to the modest political capacity of gentlemen.

But Burke the statesman, who introduced this change, did not consider that the constitution could continue indefinitely without other interventions from superior statesmen; the "rules of prudence" which permit the respectability of party are not so certain and effectual. Although there is a movement in the "Thoughts" from statesmanship to party government, there remains a tension between the two. In the last chapters we attempt to discover in Burke's other writings a reconciliation of these two principles, which Burke calls "actual virtue" and "presumptive virtue." Nowadays the problem of statesmanship and party government remains, but is hidden under the dominance of party government. The party system gets credit for statesmanship because statesmen must act in parties, and partisans believe that they have satisfied the claim of greatness when they have demanded party leadership. Let it be suggested that this problem is best studied at the time of the origin of party government, when the alternative was clearer.