

Rex Publica: A Nation of Kings

By Dr. Andrew Groft

Of the First of Modern Republics

At the conclusion of the American War for Independence, at least some wanted a king. Possibly the sentiment was illustrative of that part of human nature that reverts to what we know, even when what we know is reprehensible.

The last major battle of the Revolutionary War was the battle of Yorktown in 1781. Almost a year later, troops were still scattered throughout the country, poorly cared for due to the lack of assistance from Congress. The American economy lay in shambles, people were dissatisfied, distressed and on the brink of civil war. The answer for many, especially in the Army, was to make Washington king. In response to this sentiment, Washington wrote to Col. Lewis Nicola, “If you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself or your posterity, or respect for me, ...banish these thoughts from your mind.”¹ It seems odd that Washington was so remarkably opposed to a kingly government when the war-torn, infant nation was in such desperate need of order and a singular voice. It is even stranger when one considers that kingly governments were, at that time, the standard form—and what could be better than a righteous king the likes of George Washington?

But Washington knew something of kingly states, something that inevitably leads them to tyranny. Whether it is was a single ruler, a group of rulers, or the power of the majority in democratic states, the ingredient, tyranny, would make the best of all political forms turn bad. Worse, the kingly state would always destroy the virtue of man. In each case, one is compelled to ask exactly what it is that does the turning, the destroying. And couldn't the virtue of man be protected if tyranny was simply alleviated—holding fast to righteous kings? Since tyranny is bred from the deception that happiness comes from power, and that power is derived from harnessing the obeisance of the masses, no state is safe unless its citizens remain vigilant. The truth is that happiness comes from virtue, and human virtue is achieved when individuals attend to the work for which they were created. Not some work imposed upon them by other humans for the sake of power, but the work that their creator intended them to perform during their earthly sojourn, a work that only they can fully come to understand and do.

Growing Up

In 1775, Americans were showing signs of growing up. In a letter relating his thoughts on government to the leaders of various state governments, John Adams said,

“But must not all commissions run in the name of the king? No. Why may they not as well run thus, ‘the colony of _____ to A.B. greeting’, and tested by the governor? And why not writs, instead of running in the name of the king, run thus, ‘The colony of _____ to the Sheriff’, and be

tested by the chief justice. Why may not indictments conclude, 'against the peace of the colony of _____ and the dignity of the same.'?"²

In other words, why does everything have to be done in the name of the king? We are grownups; our parents and grandparents have forged a life for ourselves in this wilderness. We can, and should, handle our own affairs.

Family then State

The words kin and rex are two very old words that have more to do with Statesmanship than has ever been explored in the discourses of political philosophy. A Statesman is someone whose life's work is dedicated the preservation and strengthening of the State so that individuals and families can live in peace and relative security. This being the case, it is critical that before all else, we consider the definition of the State.

A state is a government. And according to Aristotle, the state is born, not when the man and woman unite into a family to survive and perpetuates the race, and not when the extended family or tribe comes together to offer variety, community and mutual assistance. The state is born when several tribes unite in community for the purpose of self-sufficiency. So a state is not merely a government over people, it is a government of multiple families/tribes. And before the state, is the Family.

Man is not self-sufficient: he needs woman, and she needs him, to ensure continuance. Even a married couple having children is still not self-sufficient: They need others, usually extended family, to help them survive. Still, the extended family/tribe is not completely self-sufficient: It needs other tribes for commerce, protection and mates for their children.

When village tribes come together in this way, the state is born. And the first dialogue we hear from man in this condition could be:

I am the perpetuator of my own kind, my kin. I am the chief or king of my little family. When our extended family came together to form our village tribe, Grandfather became the center of our community. He represented our kind, our kin; therefore he became our tribal king. He was chief among us, thus, he became our village chief. His goal was to give us life and wisdom that we might live in order, peace and continuance. All this was proper and orderly. Now our tribe is combining with other tribes, which is necessary to be self-sufficing or self-sufficient. But who then will be chief among us? Their king...or ours?

A king is chief of his own kind, family or extended family. So when several tribes came together, family governance gave way to something new called the state. And the state's most local manifestation is the city or polis. The family and tribe, of like kind or kin, is the proper place for a king. The state is not.

And so the questions deepen. If kings were meant rule over their own kind or kin, what form of government shall we choose when the state comes into being? Who will govern

when different families—who don't naturally share the same king—begin to live together in the state? This is the beginning of the subjects of political economy and political philosophy. This is the beginning of the volumes written by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, and numerous other including Jefferson and Tocqueville. This question is the genesis of much of what has been called “The Great Debate”, but a new way of seeing this debate is beginning to unfold, and its simplicity is surprising.

In the family, the King is the proper governmental form, and honor is the mainspring. In the state, the Republic is the proper governmental form, and virtue is the mainspring.

Kin and Rex

Contemplate the meaning of a few key words. Consider the words *Kin*, which comes from *Gen or Genetic* (origin of life), *King* (representative individual of the origin of life) and *Thing* (“the one”, sometimes meaning either the king or the representative council of the origin of life). All of these words are inextricably tied to *Family*. Add the feminine letter ‘U’ to king and the word *kuing*, *kuin* or *queen* emerges. Also consider the Latin word, *Rex*, which is the parent word of *Roi* (king), *Royal* (princely, of the same blood line, or owned by the king), and *Res* (“the one”, the king, or the representative council of the origin of life)—again, all of which are closely tied to *Family*, and contain within themselves both the masculine and feminine parts that are essential to giving and protecting life. Finally, consider the word *Statesman*, which is the man or woman who makes his or her life’s work the preservation of the state, or the preservation of the orderly workings of multiple tribes.

There is a proper ruling structure for the family and tribe, which becomes improper when multiple tribes combine to create the State—a king has no proper place in the State except as he works with other kings to perpetuate the ordered environment needed for mankind to fulfill their virtue. The king is reserved to the family and tribe only. But the earliest of states were either too childish to switch to the proper ruling structure of the state, or because of ignorance or coercion, they simply allowed the family form that they had grown accustomed to under their tribal governments to extend into the state. This was the first, and continues to be the most recurring mistake in the Political Philosophy of man.

Can a king from a different tribe represent me when he is not even of my immediate or extended family? He cannot, or should not; and the reason is simple. A family king raises his progeny to be all that he is and more. It is his work, his happiness and his primary goal to tutor, teach, nurture and rear in a way that will ensure that his children will grow: to adulthood (not remain in children), to royalty (part of the line of the father), to kingship in an immediate family (proper parenthood), and to kingship of the extended family (tribal king or patriarch). This is a sentiment of perpetuation, continuance and of love that—although manifested occasionally in the rare leader who has risen above a

desire for earthly power—does not (cannot?) last outside the confines of the family. In fact, it is this desire for earthly power that is the cause of tyranny. Where kingship is a man and woman who give, protect and perpetuate life, a tyrant is an individual who exploits the lives of others for his own gain.

Then how can a king bring his family into a state if in so doing he curses his progeny to perpetual childhood? Historically, the tribal king has entered the state in one of three ways: 1- He coerced his way to becoming the state king—ensuring that his family would remain royal, but misunderstanding the nature of state kings and their tendency to digress into tyranny and slavery; 2- He entered the state allowing another family king to rule, and hoping that his children would still grow to be true adults and kings within the family—a hope that can never be if you are not of the “royal line” in a monarchical state; or 3- He demanded that a new form be created allowing all families and tribes to maintain their royal status, taking turns at the helm of governance, carefully watching the actions of those who lead for a limited time, and rearing and educating his princes to do likewise.

Family kings who chose the third option knew that no true royal lines can be protected and maintained unless the third option is established and preserved at all hazards. Even if his family rose in power by the first method, he knew that true kingship, true royalty, would not remain in his or any other’s family for long if the state allowed a single king. Although the family must hold to it, the state must reject the king. If not, the Monarch will rule over a nation of children, and the tyrant will, sooner or later, rear his ugly head! And whether sooner, or later, the tyrant will emerge and the virtue of individuals will be lost.

Mainsprings

Earlier it was mentioned that,

“In the family, the King is the proper governmental form, and honor is the mainspring. In the state, the Republic is the proper governmental form, and virtue is the mainspring.”

Montesquieu tells us that the primary forms of governance are Monarchy, Tyranny and Republic³. Each of these forms has a mainspring—or a characteristic that more than any other causes the form to work. The mainspring is that single attribute without which, the form would fail (think of a clock that has many springs, but without the *main* spring, the secondary springs would never have the chance to fulfill their purposes and the clock could not work). The mainsprings of Monarchy, Tyranny and Republic have been proven practically uncontroversial. Writers of poetry and prose have touched on these self-evident truths for hundreds of years. In fact, even the Bible makes it clear that Honor, Fear and Virtue are the three primary mainsprings.

Look up every reference in the Holy Bible for the word Honor, and you will find that in almost every case Honor is tied to the family, and how one should reverence the father and mother (or king) of his family.

So, the mainspring of parenthood going all the way back to Genesis is Honor. Honor is what allows the familial structure of parents and children to work. The fifth commandment reminds us, “Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother”. And again in the New Testament, “Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

The mainspring of Monarchy is Honor. But this form was never meant to stray outside of the family or tribe. And it is because monarchy is transferred where it doesn't belong—from the family to the state—that royal (remember, of or belonging to the king) subjects remain as children, unable to grow up, unable to become adults and to become kings of their own kin. For what state king would think to rear a nation of rivals.

Look up every reference in the Holy Bible for the word Fear, and you will find that in almost every case it is tied to the dysfunctional family—or almost as a lesser mainspring than honor. Even when fear is used as a type of reverence or awe for God, it is clear that love and honor are higher. The God of Heaven would rather we honor him than fear him, but if fear is the only way we will follow, it is better than not following him at all. You will also note that the idea of “Fearing the Lord” is most used in Deuteronomy when the Lord gave a strict set of laws to the wayward and dysfunctional children of Israel. Interestingly, *Fear* as a mainspring is almost non-existent in the New Testament except occasionally and when writers are referencing the Old Testament. And in any case, we are never to fear man.

So the mainspring of the dysfunctional families is fear. Dads and Moms who are not honorable, and whose children fail to honor them, resort to fear as a means of keeping order. The only difference between tyranny and monarchy is this ingredient: one is honorable, uses honorable means to rule, and is therefore honored (and respected) by his people/children; and the other is afraid, uses fear as a means to rule, and is therefore feared (and resented) by his people/children.

Virtue is a less common reference in the Holy Bible, and we must turn to the writings of Plato and Aristotle to better understand its meaning. But as the Greek definitions become clear, it is easy to see that the Bible defines virtue in almost perfect analogy. According to the early Greeks, a thing had virtue if it did what its creator intended it to do. So the virtue of the knife is to cut well, since that is what the blacksmith or metalwright intended it to do. And the virtue of the human is to do that which his creator intended him to do. God created us for a purpose, and when we fulfill that purpose, we exhibit virtue. It can also be said that when man honors himself, he is virtuous. Honoring yourself and your unique calling in life, being what you were created to be, these are attributes of virtue.

Considering the mainsprings of governmental forms becomes germane to our inquiry when one considers the possibility that there is only one proper form of the state, and that is the Republic. It is the Republic that offers the best chance at giving man the opportunity to be what he was created to be, and to protect his family and the proper family structure as he combines with other tribes and enters the state.

Rex Publica

In September of 1787, at the close of the Constitutional Convention, a woman by the name of Mrs. Powell waited outside Independence Hall to know firsthand what the convention had created. When the familiar Philadelphian emerged, she asked him, “Well Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?”

Benjamin Franklin responded, “A republic...if you can keep it.”⁴

Why “a republic *if* you can keep it”? Why not “a republic”, period? Would you say “a monarchy if you can keep it”? Whether or not Dr. Franklin deeply understood what he was saying or not, a republic is both the proper form of the state and extremely difficult to keep. It is the proper form of the state because it allows families to maintain their royal nature (something that God has created them for, and charged them to do), and it is difficult to keep because it requires that the family maintain its royal nature in the midst of turmoil, chicanery, power-grabbing, educational mediocrity, complacency and the temptation to self-centeredness and apathy. The republic requires kings and queens who give, protect and perpetuate life, not tyrants who exploit it.

The Latin, *Res Publica*, is only sufficient in telling us that a republic is the people’s business, or the people’s thing. *Rex Publica* is the origin of the word Republic, and reminds us of the two central forms: that of the family and that of the state. Republic means much more than simply “it is the people’s thing”. Rather, a republic says in its very etymology that the people are kings. The word republic acknowledges the kingly nature of every family in the commonwealth and the royal nature of each family’s bloodline. *Rex Publica* also recognizes that it is the duty of the people to be kings and queens in their immediate and extended family structures. Those hoping to “keep [their republic]” are under the mandate not only to, take turns at the helm of governance, carefully watch the actions of those who lead for a limited time, and rear and educate princes to do likewise; they must also pay the heavy price to be honorable in their families, and to be virtuous (by honoring themselves and doing what they were created to do) in the state. By so doing, both the mainsprings of the family and of the state are maintained.

It is critical at this point that one not mistake the character of the royal families for those examples of the haughty, pompous, gold-monger, demigod kings so common in history. Whether or not there have been few kings and queens of the state who were truly honorable is secondary to the fact that they have always been out of place in the political economy of human beings. Kings digress from honored to revered to tolerable to fearful and finally to insufferable. And this digression will continue to do so because they are holding a position of power that is unnatural when found outside of the family. Men were meant to grow into men, not remain children. But, as was said earlier, what king wishes to rear a nation of rivals? If kings of the state actually sought to raise their

subjects to adulthood and kingship, maybe the monarchy would be a legitimate state form, but this has shown to be, over the course of multiple generations, impossible, and has never been seen in the history of man.

L.Q. Cincinnatus, walked away from the dictatorial monarchy he could have taken in ancient Rome to preserve the republic, as did Solon. In Greece, Publius Valerius did the same. In America, it was Washington who insisted on stepping down. Because what royal line of the state has ever remained honorable through more than a few generations? And what royal line, even if they remained honorable for more than a few generations, has ever made its people into men who could, without restraint, be all that their creator intended them? None, but the King whose "...kingdom is not of this world". The political freedom as well as the social responsibility inherent in the Rex Publica is the only political environment within the parameters of the state that has any possibility of encouraging the virtue of mankind. And until a nation of multiple families and tribes chooses to live up to the responsibilities of the Republic, pomp and pageantry will continue to replace quality and character, specious adornment will replace moral fiber, fear and lies will replace virtue and honor, and Tyrants will continue to reign in blood and terror over the face of the earth.

There are myriads of stories of single tyrants and tyrannical oligarchies that have enticed the people by kind words and flattering proposals of security, only to enslave and hold captive. But don't limit your thinking to ragged servants or men behind bars. Enslavement, bondage and captivity are just as shameful, and just as detrimental to virtue when the man willingly sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. When men are lured into dependence and addiction, they are slaves, they are captives, and they cannot become who and what they were meant to become. Not only them, but their children are taught this pernicious doctrine. And whether the state is run by one, by few, by many or by all, addiction, dependence and slavery become the characteristics of the tyrannical state.

Alexis de Tocqueville warned republican nations to beware of this trap when he tried to describe what takes place when a republic begins its gentle decline from a nation of kings—taking turns at the helm—to a nation of children being cared for by an ever centralizing power. After illustrating to the reader's mind a fallen republic that has lost, almost entirely, its virtue, he says,

"Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?"

A Nation of Kings

When the family fails to live up to its proper roles, the villainy of a few men will always attempt to circumvent political order for personal gain. These men will connive and cajole, and seek to convince at every step that life would be easier and more secure if people would just surrender power into their hands. Sadly, two characteristics of mankind, the one being their insatiable desire for power and the other their childish willingness to let other men rule them, become the perfect seedbed for tyranny.

It is the duty of those who would stand with Benjamin Franklin and “...keep [the republic]” to actually do something about it—to dedicate their life’s work to strengthening and preserving of the proper order of the state. These are Statesmen, and whether it be in the realm of education, marriage, child rearing, courtship and dating, business, entrepreneurship, media, religion or any other part of civic life, they will strengthen and preserve the proper state by seeking to understand republic: what it means, and what must be done to keep it. The American Founding Fathers drafted auxiliary precautions in the US Constitution, but they were, as the label connotes, auxiliary, assistive, supportive, supplementary, and secondary. Secondary to what really makes a republic. Not a lot of people voting, or even representative government. And certainly not a national king, but a nation of kings...a Rex Publica.
