

CONSENT, COERCION, AND LIMIT

The Medieval Origins of Parliamentary Democracy

The concepts of popular consent and limit, as applied to the exercise of political authority, are fundamental features of parliamentary democracy. Both these concepts played a role in medieval political theorizing, although the meaning and significance of political consent in this thought has not been well understood. In a careful, scholarly survey of the major political texts from Augustine to Ockham, Arthur Monahan analyses the contribution of medieval thought to the development of these two concepts and to the correlative concept of coercion.

In addition, he deals with the development of these concepts in Roman and canon law and in the practices of the emerging states of France and England and the Italian city-states, as well as considering works in legal and administrative theory and constitutional documents. In each case his interpretations are placed in the wider context of developments in law, church, and administrative reforms. The result is the first complete study of these three crucial terms as used in the Middle Ages, as well as an excellent summary of work done in a number of specialized fields over the last twenty-five years.

The book is of considerable importance not only to medieval studies but to the history of political theory and to political theory itself. It brings together and explains the relevance of a vast amount of material previously known only to a few specialists, documenting Monahan's argument that later political thought has been significantly influenced by medieval formulations of the concepts of consent, coercion, and limit.

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