

The Second Stuart Restoration According to Prince Charles Stuart

INTRODUCTION

The Jacobite movement was one of the strongest threats to the British throne through most of the first half of the eighteenth century as the immediate descendants of deposed King James II of England and VII of Scotland (hereafter simply James II) vainly tried to regain the British throne. One of the chief charges against them, however, was that since James II wanted to restore the old Roman church and establish an absolute monarchy, his son (called James III and VIII or the “Old Pretender“) and grandson (Prince Charles, a.k.a. “Bonnie Prince Charlie“ and the “Young Pretender“, later known as Charles III) naturally wanted the same. While both men were Roman Catholic, this alone does not tell us that they wanted a restoration of the papacy as well. They did leave behind a program for the hoped-for restoration, and it is this program, embodied by two decrees of Prince Charles, which is examined in this paper. However, when one looks at the program, one sees a far more generous program therein and sees no pretensions of absolute monarchy.

BACKGROUND

In the year 1685, James II ascended to the respective thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Unlike his brother, the preceding King Charles II, he was openly a Roman Catholic and was a believer in divine right monarchy. Due to these beliefs and the birth of a son in 1688, the British government called on his son-in-law King William of Holland and Protestant daughter Mary to take the throne themselves to ensure Protestantism and prevent any ideas of absolutism from being entrenched. William’s invasion drove James from Great Britain for the rest of his life, while William and Mary were crowned joint sovereigns over the land. This “Glorious Revolution” resulted in the Bill of Rights in 1689, which among other things forbade Catholic succession to the throne and upheld Parliament as the final authority of the nation, with the monarch in a more limited role.

Ex-King James made a number of attempts to regain the throne, but all of them

failed and he died in exile in France in 1701. His son, also called James, took up the Jacobite cause. His 1708 attempt at the throne was a miserable failure, while his 1715 attempt came closer to victory. Since the death of Queen Anne (James II's second daughter) in 1711, the German house of Hanover ruled over England. Kings George I and II knew little of the English language and cared little for England. This led some to call for the return of the Stuart dynasty to the throne. The 1715 attempt gained a Scottish coronation for Prince James, now "King James VIII" of Scotland (but hereafter referred to as James III), but he was forced back into exile soon afterwards. In 1745, Jacobite fever was rising again, and James' son Charles, known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, answered the call to fight for his father's rightful throne. This attempt almost succeeded, but was stopped short at the Battle of Culloden on 16 April 1746, soon after which Charles was back in exile. ((Mammoth 671))

During the revolt led by Charles on behalf of his father, he published a number of decrees in his capacity as "Prince Regent", the most important of which are his *Manifesto*, proclaimed on 16 May 1745, and his *Declaration*, published on 10 October of that year. In these one can find a good idea of the desires of the House of Stuart with respect to governing Britain. The *Manifesto* is chiefly a call to arms to the British subjects against their Hanoverian rulers. It begins with a number of promises to Charles' supporters and threats of consequences to his enemies. Charles continues with orders for the authorities presently in place. After this, he affirms the various rights of all the people of England, Scotland and Ireland and supports the rule of law. He finishes the *Manifesto* with further commands to the various magistrates to fund and support his uprising and publish his views. (Lion 232-4)

The *Declaration* begins with a joyful tone as it has been published when Charles was "Master of the ancient Kingdom of Scotland" ((ibid 234)) and confident of an inevitable victory in England as well. He then goes on to reiterate that the rights of the people and institutions of Britain will not be trampled on, but rather affirmed by a new government. He goes on to deal with the subjects of the national debt as well as the Stuart views of the Act of Union of 1707. He spends the rest of the *Declaration* defending the Jacobites against the accusations of their enemies, appealing for more support from the people, and making accusations against the Hanovers. Following this is

a brief conclusion. From these two documents, the public Stuart program for British law and constitution will be examined and evaluated. (Lion 234-7)

THE LAW AND VARIOUS RIGHTS

One of the main fears about the offspring of James II is that they shared his desire for the king to have absolute power, similar to that of the French and other rulers. Some expected rule by decree rather than by law. However, when one looks at the proposals of the royal Stuarts, one finds something else:

“We do hereby further promise and declare, in his Majesty’s Name,... that as soon as ever that happy State is obtained [i.e., the restoration of James VIII], he will, by and with the Advice of a free Parliament, wherein no Corruption, or undue influence whatsoever shall be used to bypass the Votes of the Electors, or Elected; settle, confirm, and secure all the Rights... of each of his respective Kingdoms,” ((233))

Here, Charles promises the freedom of Parliament, an opposition to corruption and manipulation of voters, and the king’s intent to keep the rights currently enjoyed by the British people. He goes on to declare that the “Laws of the Land” will “ever be the unalterable Rule of his Majesty’s government, and our own Actions”, ((ibid)) thus again trying to reassure the people that their desire is not for an institution of rule by decree, but rather a respect and reliance upon Law as the final authority in the nation. He declares that “our present Attempt is not undertaken, in order to enslave a free people, but to redress and remove the Encroachments made upon them” ((ibid, 234)) by the present Hanoverian government. Finally, he promises that those laws passed since the Revolution will be confirmed unless deemed contrary to the best interests of the people. ((ibid 235))

There is, however, no call for a figurehead monarch. While the general tone of the message is that Parliament will be free to govern where it befits them, there are also numerous examples where there is reference to the restored dynasty granting Parliamentary acts, for instance. Also, he denounces the perceived abuses of Parliament, including their long sessions and “harsh” laws, and blames them for the “miserable Situation of the Kingdom at Home and Abroad.” ((236)) He does however affirm that “the King, on his Restoration, will refuse nothing that a free Parliament can ask, for the

Security of the Religion, Laws, and Liberty of his people.” ((ibid)) With all of this it seems that the Stuarts do not support rule by decree, but they also want the King to have ultimate veto power over Parliament, a situation far different than was in place at the time.

The 1707 Act of Union officially and fully unified the Kingdoms of England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain, thereby abolishing the separate Scottish Parliament and making the *English* Parliament into a united *British* Parliament in London. Charles in his *Manifesto* makes reference to the “respective Kingdoms,” but goes far beyond this in his *Declaration*. “With respect to the pretended Union of the two Nations, the King cannot possibly ratify it,” ((ibid)) thus establishing Stuart opposition to the Act and desire for its repeal. This position is taken due to the “repeated Remonstrances against it from each Kingdom,” ((ibid)) as well as their belief that the main purpose of the Act of Union “was the Exclusion of the Royal Family from their undoubted Right to the Crown.” ((ibid))

RELIGION AND THE ENGLISH CHURCH

James II ’s conversion to Catholicism was a chief factor in the opposition against him during and after his reign. James did not help his position by appointing numerous Catholics into political and even Church positions during his reign. It was widely believed that James’ goal was a return of Britain to Catholicism and the Church to be subject to the Pope. While James II may have desired this, James III and Charles seemed to believe otherwise. The Prince promises the integrity and independence of the Anglican church, declaring that his father was “fully resolved to maintain the Church of England, as by Law established, and likewise the Protestant Churches of Scotland and Ireland, conformable to the Laws of each representative Kingdom...” ((233)) This would seem to rule out any attempt to once again subject the British Church to the Pope, pledging the defense of this Protestant church, even if its head is Catholic.

That the Stuarts wished for Catholic emancipation is a given, seeing as they themselves were Catholics who were barred from an office due to their religion. Their ideas about nonconformists and dissenters are actually quite progressive for their age. The “Prince Regent” promises “Toleration to all Protestant Dissenters” ((ibid)) and that

the Stuart family was “utterly averse to all Persecution and Oppressions, whatsoever, particularly on Account of Conscience and Religion” ((ibid)) James, he said, wanted to “re-instate all his Subjects in the full Enjoyment of their Religion...” and did not desire “to impose upon any a Religion which they dislike, but to secure them all in the Enjoyment of those which are respectively at present established among them...” ((234-5)) Finally he reassures the leadership of the churches that “if it shall be deemed proper that any further Security be given to the established Church or Clergy, we hereby promise... that [James III] shall pass any Law that his Parliament shall judge necessary for that purpose.” ((235))

REFUTING ACCUSATIONS

Prince Charles spends a great deal of his *Declaration* refuting the accusations of his family’s opponents. As mentioned before, he claims that they do not wish to “enslave a free people.” Charles rebukes as false “dreadful Threats of Popery, Slavery, Tyranny, and arbitrary Power... by France and Spain.” ((235)) He goes on further to say that though his father is called a “Blood-thirsty Tyrant” who wants to force his rule and iron fist on everyone, he himself will declare “the naked Truth.” (ibid))

He recounts his personal funding of the beginning of his expedition, as well as his promises of pardons and “Liberty of Conscience”, and pledges to “grant whatever a free Parliament shall propose for the Happiness of a People.” ((ibid)) He speaks of the exile of his family, trying to appeal to the pity of the people so that they might be more willing to assist him in his quest.

He defends himself against accusations of being a foreign puppet by pointing out that his expedition was carried out with his own money and work. Furthermore, he accuses his detractors of hypocrisy as there is talk of the “Elector of Hanover’s Allies being called over to protect his Government against the King’s subjects” ((236)) and replies that if foreigners can help the house of Hanover, that it is only fair that other foreigners should be allowed to help the house of Stuart. He then challenges the Hanovers to send only British troops from their side against only British troops from his own to see who will win. ((236-7))

PROMISES, ORDERS, AND THREATS

Much if not most of the *Manifesto* deals with orders issued by the Pretenders as well as promises to those who will do their duty and support them wholeheartedly. The first offer is “a free, full and general Pardon for all Treasons, Rebellions, and Offences whatsoever... against our Royal Grandfather, his present Majesty, and ourselves.” ((232)) This offer of pardon is given to those who will join the fight as soon as possible, pledge their allegiance to King James and renounce that of King George and those who support him. Those who are in the armed forces of Britain may receive this if they leave the army before it enters into battle against the Jacobite revolt. ((232))

Charles promises unspecified rewards to those who “appear more signally zealous for the Recovery of his Majesty’s just Rights...” ((ibid)) Military officers who defect to his side are promised “the same, or a higher Post in our Service than that which at present he enjoys, with full payment of whatever Arrears may be due to him at the Time of his declaring for us... as soon as ever the Kingdoms shall be in a State of Tranquility” ((233)) Enlistedmen and sailors are promised back pay as well as an additional full year’s pay at the time of peace. ((ibid))

The Prince Regent spends much of his time making specific orders to various officials. Collectors of taxes, duties, and the like are ordered to hand over the treasury to the forces of the Stuarts. All men between the ages of sixteen and sixty are “drafted” into the army and ordered to take whatever munitions and weapons they are able to lay hold of. Civil officials are given the order to proclaim the restoration movement throughout the realm and publicly pledge their loyalty to King James III and Crown Prince Charles. ((233-4))

Those who oppose the “rightful king” and his son are threatened with the consequences, though not immediate execution or imprisonment as might be expected. In perhaps another reassuring of his respect for the Law, as well as to not appear arbitrary, Charles says that those who do not proclaim his father as king will be “proceeded against according to the Law” ((234)) as well as warning “all his Majesty’s Subjects, That we shall leave to the *Rigour of the Law* all those who shall from henceforth oppose us...” ((ibid - emphasis mine))

CONCLUSION

On the surface at least, it would seem that any accusations of divine-right rule and Catholic restoration are baseless when one looks at the words of the Stuarts themselves. The Jacobite program does call for a stronger monarch than was in place at the time, though he is an executive power rather than an absolute ruler. The security of the respective national Protestant churches is guaranteed, as well as the complete freedom of worship and belief. There is a great respect for the established law within these pages. Finally, the Prince in his declarations acts a ruler would, with respect to orders, promises and the like. While we cannot look into the motives and thoughts of these men, it would seem that at least from their words that their program for Britain would not be terribly different from what they enjoyed at the time. The views on monarchy might be somewhat conservative (or slightly reactionary), but there was no call for an absolutist regime. Jacobite views on religion were somewhat more progressive than most countries, whether Protestant or Catholic. When all is said and done, however, we can never truly know how their plan would have worked out, since the battle of Culloden in 1746 crushed any hopes of a Second Stuart Restoration.