

AP EURO SEMINAR

Compare and contrast political liberalism with political conservatism in the first half of the nineteenth Century in Europe.

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Period 7

Overview

In the first half of the 19th century in Europe, there were two basic views on political issues. Classical liberalism is a philosophy based on the belief in a strong free market. As may be apparent in the name as well, it is a view in which there is a very low amount of government intrusion in personal affairs, such as religion or speech, but a reasonable amount in affairs such as law. The government only serves as a protective tool, but doesn't have the authority to become a controlling one. The opposite end of the spectrum would be classical conservatism. According to this philosophy, equality, respect, and status aren't something to be earned; rather, they are part of a natural moral order. It stresses natural law as opposed to political law, and a culture ruled by the highest class, and supported by the lowest (being the rural, working class). Classical liberalism is what came to be the basis of the two major political stances today.

Key Points of Liberalism

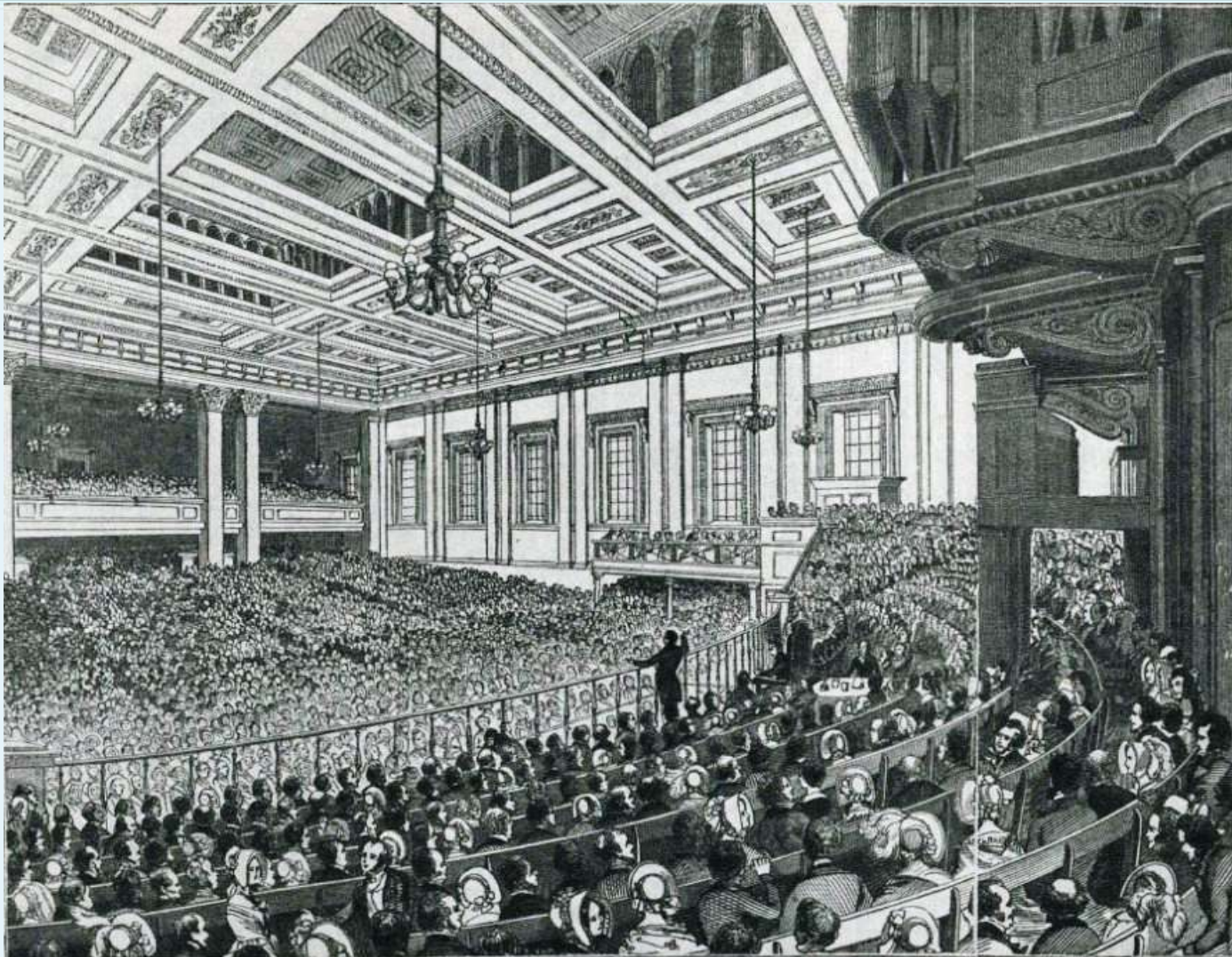
- Emphasis on free market
- Individual freedom as a natural right
- Fair protection and treatment by the government
- Urban economic base

Key Points of Conservatism

- Controlled market
- Natural law over political law
- Emphasis on moral order
- Agrarian base over urban base
- Control by the highest class

Popularity of Liberalism

- Liberalism was a reaction to Conservatism, and rapidly gained popularity and standing with the general community as they began to realize that it gave them more rights.
- The upper class remained loyal to Conservatism, as it benefited them more.



A meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League, Exeter Hall, 1846.

Proponents of Liberalism

- John Locke

- Contributed the *Second treatise of Government*, which introduced the concepts of individualism, consent, the government serving as a protective and lawful force exclusively, and religious toleration.

Proponents of Liberalism (cont.)

- Adam Smith

- Published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, introducing the central concepts of a free-market economy.

Proponents of Conservatism

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 - Contributed *Lay Sermons*, *Biographia Literaria*, and *Aids to Reflection*. These works provided strong support to the conservative ideas of hierarchy, natural law, and the need for a traditionally religious culture.

Proponents of Conservatism

- Thomas Carlyle
 - Argued for traditional Conservative notions, such as aristocracy and hierarchy, but believed that British society was being degraded by plutocrats, socialists, and other entities, which he believed were exploiting the poor and perpetuating class resentment.

A 19th-century political cartoon demonstrating the conflict between Conservative and Liberal interests.

Caption: “American workman (to John Bull) – Mr. Bull, if free trade is such a blessing, why are your agricultural interests in such wretched condition? Why do your manufacturers cry out for 'Fair Trade', and why does your skilled English workman come to this Country instead of American workers going going to England?”

What we have inherited from the 19th century is a mixture of conservative and liberal ideals, a free market economy regulated, but not controlled, by the government.