

The British Civil Wars (The Great Rebellion, or The Wars of the Three Kingdoms)

Summary: Last week we talked about absolutism and the French version of absolutism in the reign of Louis XIV. This week, we'll look at the rise of Constitutionalism and its rise in Britain in a peculiar and dramatic string of historical events throughout the 17th century that challenged monarchical rule. Starting with the death of Elizabeth I and ending with the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1689, England executed one king, experienced a very bloody civil war, experimented with military dictatorship, restored the son of the murdered king and finally after a bloodless revolution, established a constitutional monarchy. This lecture will bring you through those historical events, and try to shed some light on what happened and why constitutionalism and the limitations of the monarchy ended the era.

I. The Decline of Royal Absolutism in England

- a. Elizabeth I
- b. James I
- c. Changes in the House of Commons
 - Economic and Social changes of the 17th century
 - Attitude toward Taxes
- d. Charles I
 - Dissolution of Parliament in 1629

II. Religious Tensions

- a. Dominance of Calvinists
- b. Influence and power of Puritans
- c. Monarchical lenience toward Roman Catholics
 - William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury (1573-1645)
 - Court of High Commission

III. Scottish Revolt 1640 and its consequences

- a. The Long Parliament (1640-1660)
- b. Triennial Act 1641
- c. Impeachment of Laud and Abolishment of Court of High Commission

IV. The English Civil War or The Wars of the Three Kingdoms

- a. Irish Rebellion
- b. The End of the Long Parliament
- c. 1649 execution of Charles I

V. The Interregnum (1649-1660) or military dictatorship

- A. Army control of Government, Oliver Cromwell
- B. 1649 Drogheda, Ireland rebellion and massacre
- C. Navigation Acts (1651)
- D. Return of Jews to England

VI. The Restoration of the English Monarchy

Additional resources: <http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/>