

ABSOLUTISM AND CONSTITUTIONALISM: THE BRITISH CIVIL WARS

1603-1689

CONSTITUTIONALISM

- the limitation of government by law
- balance between the authority and power of the government and the rights and liberties of the subjects
- written or unwritten
- power comes from the government's acceptance and respect of that document's rule of law and the people to look at the constitution as the protector of their rights and liberties.
- Constitutional republic
- Constitutional monarchy

THE BRITISH MONARCHY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



Elizabeth I



James I



Charles I

CHANGES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

- Increased wealth of the gentry
- Agricultural techniques improved crop yields
- The expanded cloth industry
- Fortunes overseas in the colonies
- Increased social mobility.
- Bottom Line: Commons members wanted political power to correspond to their economic strength.



CHARLES I (R. 1625-49)

- dissolved parliament in 1629
- levied taxes unequally eg. “shipping money”
- Called parliament into session again in 1640 to respond to rebellion in Scotland



WILLIAM LAUD (1573-1645) ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

- Imposed ritual and ceremony in celebration of Eucharist
- Created Court of High Commission to enforce changes.
- 1637 Imposed new prayer book and bishoprics in Scotland



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- Parliament passes the Triennial Act 1641
 - Impeachment of Laud, abolition of Court of High Commission
- Irish rebellion begins



THE WARS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR)

- Charles and the British Parliament raise separate armies to fight for power to rule Britain
- 1642-49, more than 50,000 die
- Involves Scotland, Ireland, continental Europe and the English Colonies in North America.
- Three Distinct Phases
 - Charles captured at the end of Phase I
 - Charles I beheaded at the end of Phase II
 - Oliver Cromwell subjugates Ireland and the end of Phase III

THE PROTECTORATE PERIOD (1653-58)

- Head of the Parliamentary “New Army” during the trial of treason and execution of Charles I
- Re-conquer of Ireland/ Drogheda Massacre 1649
- Navigation Acts (1651)
- Instrument of Government (1653)
- Outlawed theater, sports, free press and Roman Catholicism
- Welcomed Jews back to England after four hundred years.



Oliver Cromwell (r. 1653-58)

RESTORATION OF THE MONARCHY

- Cromwell dies in 1658 and succeeded by his son Robert
- 1660 Charles II, eldest son of executed Charles I returns to the throne.
- Passes Test Act of 1673
 - Requires all to receive the Eucharist in a Church of England
- 1670 Secret Agreement with Louis XIV to re-Catholicize England



THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

- James II, Catholic brother to Charles II ascends the throne
- Appoints Catholics to positions of power
- James II flees to France
- Parliament offers the throne to James' protestant daughter and her husband (and cousin) William of Orange
- 1689 Constitutional Monarchy established with a Bill of Rights

