

K. Puritanism in England

1. When Anglicans fled England to escape the persecutions of “Bloody Mary,” many went to Europe where they were exposed to Calvinism.
2. They wanted a purer kind of religion like that for England, so they became known as “Puritans.”
3. Although they did not like Anglicanism, the Puritans could not rebel against Queen Elizabeth. If they fought against her, this would weaken the country, and make it easier for Spain to conquer England.
4. Since Elizabeth did not marry and had no children, the Puritans were hopeful that her heir would be willing to make important changes. (Her cousin, and the expected heir, was James of Scotland, who was a Calvinist.)

L. Puritanism under the Early Stuart Kings

1. In 1603, when James became James I of England, he agreed to meet with Puritan leaders. James was unwilling to make other changes to Anglicanism, however, and he resented all the of the pressures put on him by the people, because he believed in the “divine right of kings.” (In his view, God chose kings, and gave them the right to rule. Normal people, in this view, should simply do whatever the king orders!)
2. Seeing that the king would not help change Anglicanism, the Puritans began to join the parliament, because they saw this as the only part of the government that could act against their “divine right” ruler, and perhaps reform the religion of England.
3. Over the next decades, many Puritans simply left England. (They became the “pilgrims” of American history, starting in 1620 at Plymouth rock.) Those that stayed put ever more pressure on James and his heirs until no compromise was possible.

M. The English Civil War and Rise of Toleration

1. From 1642 to 1649, a civil war raged between the king's supporters and the Puritan/parliamentary side.
2. After an important victory by the Puritan military commander, Oliver Cromwell, king Charles I (the son of James I) was captured and executed!
3. Oliver Cromwell then became a kind of king himself, as “Lord Protector” of England. He allowed different kinds of Christianity (except Catholicism), which made his rule popular, but he had no way of creating a lasting dynasty.
4. When the Cromwell died and the English returned to having kings, they were afraid of being forced back to Catholicism, and when James II became king in 1685, they knew he had lived in exile in France and was Catholic.
5. James II made no moves to change any aspect of religion for the people, but when he had a son in 1688, the possibility of a Catholic dynasty drove the people to rebellion.
6. James realized he had basically no supporters and fled the country in the nearly bloodless “Glorious Revolution” of 1688.
7. Before accepting a new king in 1689, the English passed the Bill of Rights and Act of Toleration of 1689 which gave legal protection to all non-Catholics.